

THE VIEW FROM FORTINGALL: THE WORLDS OF THE *BOOK OF THE DEAN OF LISMORE*

Between the publication of W. J. Watson's edition in 1937 and the present, much progress has been made in the analysis of the Gaelic texts contained in the *Book of the Dean of Lismore* (*B*). This has prompted some discussion of the origins and prevalence of the 'quasi-phonetic system', orthography and script applied to these texts. Other historical contexts that have been invoked in connection with *B* are the Lordship of the Isles, and the Renaissance. Even so, our knowledge of the worlds behind *B*, and of the identity and motives of its compilers, has advanced little since Watson wrote the introduction to his edition – the historical component of which in fact draws extensively upon Skene's groundbreaking and typically penetrating introduction to McLauchlan's edition of 1862 (McLauchlan 1862: i–iv). Such a gap between literary and historical enquiry is all too familiar in Scottish Gaelic studies, and this paper seeks to begin the work of bringing them into harness with reference to *B*. Such an approach is apposite, indeed essential, given that literature and history alike were central concerns of *B*'s compilers, whose work was also informed, we shall argue, by an historicist sensibility.¹

The dean of Lismore in question belonged, of course, to Clann Ghriogair, the MacGregors. His earliest known appearance in record is 9 March 1503 (Breadalbane Muns., 1/31), and he died on 12 December 1551, the eve of St. Lucia's Day (Innes 1855: 121). He was the first known member of his kindred to bear the forename Seumas (James). We can only speculate as to the reasons for this. It might represent a nod in the direction either of his mother's people, who were probably Grants; or even of the ruling Stewart dynasty itself (*cf.* Bannerman 1986: 53).²

The 'book' which bears Seumas's title, now housed in the National Library of Scotland (NLS Advocates' MS. 72.1.37, p. 27), is the single most precious manuscript to have survived from late-medieval Gaelic Scotland. The dates which appear to have been entered into *B* on a contemporary basis run from 1512 to 1542

(Black, ‘Catalogue’), suggesting that it was compiled largely or wholly in the lifetime of James V. To an entry on p. 82 stating that James V ‘rengnis now in gret felicite’, has been added, ‘Deyt in Fawkland the xii day of December anno xlii’; this is the last date to appear in *B*. Of the four individuals who appear to identify themselves by name within *B*, three are Seumas, his brother Donnchadh, and their father Dubhghall Maol (*B*, pp. 27, 144, 185, 314).³ Donnchadh is one of the best represented of the Scottish poets within it, with five poems (*B*, pp. 7, 28, 64, 208, 223). Their particular lineage was based at Tulaich a’ Mhuilinn, hard by Fortingall at the mouth of Glen Lyon, near the east end of Loch Tay in Perthshire (Watson 1937: xiv–xv). Fortingall lay on the eastern edge of the tract of country known as Breadalbane, defined in a document of 1518 as extending from Carn Droma (modern Tyndrum) on the Argyll/Perthshire boundary in the west, to the ford of the River Lyon in the east (AT, 24 November). Fortingall was also the site of the church that served the parish of that name, part of the diocese of Dunkeld.

On his death Seumas was described as vicar of Fortingall, and *firmarius* of the same, which Skene and Watson took to mean that he was the tenant of the lands that went with the church (Innes 1855: 121; McLauchlan 1862: iii; Watson 1937: xv). It will be suggested that his lineage’s connection with Fortingall, and participation in cultural activity, can be traced back to c. 1400 and Seumas’s great-grandfather, who also held the vicarage there. So did Seumas’s son Dubhghall, who is on record as vicar of Fortingall in 1544 (Breadalbane Muns., 24/1/4), and who was probably partly or wholly responsible for the compilation of another manuscript, misleadingly dubbed ‘The Chronicle of Fortirgall’ by its modern editor, Cosmo Innes.⁴ His description of it – ‘a small 4to book of paper, much decayed and imperfect’ – invites comparisons with *B* which are borne out by its contents and character, for in addition to a chronicle, it contained a number of prose and verse items in Latin and Scots, some of them apparently copied verbatim from *B*; and a single Gaelic poem employing a version of *B*’s Scots-based orthography. This book (now missing, and thus only available in Innes’s edition), and its chronicle, will be referred to below as the *Book of Fortingall* and *Chron. Fortingall* respectively (Innes 1855: viii–xi, 109–48;

Black, 'Catalogue'; Mapstone 1985: 307–10; Meek 1989: 138).

The pattern of commitment to church and culture over several generations aligns these MacGregors with the learned orders who were a conspicuous feature of society in late-medieval Gaelic Scotland and Ireland, and specifically with other ecclesiastical lineages with literary interests such as the MacLachlans of Kilbride and the MacPhails of Muckairn (Bannerman 1977: 1–34; Bannerman 1986: 150–51; MacGregor 1998: 32). It is clear that they did not monopolise the vicarage of Fortingall between 1400 and 1550.⁵ Nevertheless, they almost certainly maintained a physical presence on the very doorstep of the church throughout this era, regardless of whether family members were in service there (Watson 1937: xiv–xv, xxxv). Perhaps the separate notice of Seumas as *firmarius* of Fortingall is a pointer to this permanent presence on lands belonging to the church.

Fortingall may now appear an unlikely candidate for the title of one of the foremost literary centres of late-medieval Scotland, whence emanated a web of cultural networks and pathways extending from Gaelic to Lowland Scotland, Ireland, and beyond. We need to be alert to its location on one of the two major communicative arteries running across Druim Alban, close to the point where they converge before following the Tay into the heart of Atholl, crossing the Highland Boundary Fault at Dunkeld. Centuries earlier, these had been the conduits by which the influence of Iona had reached eastern Scotland (Taylor 1999: 50, 57–60; Taylor 2000: 111–114, 130; *cf.* Gillies 1938: 58–9), and the historic associations between Dunkeld diocese on the one hand, and Iona and the diocese of Argyll on the other, lingered on into the later middle ages (Barrell 2003: 26). In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, this was how Clann Ghriogair expanded into Breadalbane from its *dùthaich* of Glen Strae in Lorn, at the north end of Loch Awe, reaching Fortingall and Loch Tay side via Glen Lyon. Strikingly, Seumas MacGregor's own lineage seems to have become established at Fortingall well in advance of the main eastwards migration of their kindred, perhaps therefore forming a target and a beachhead. In the first half of the sixteenth century it was gravitating into upper Strath Tay, towards Dunkeld and the diocesan capital. A MacGregor kin-

group which came to prominence as burgesses and landholders in Perth in the second half of the sixteenth century, ultimately making the provostship, may have been an offshoot of this lineage (MacGregor 1989: 70–133, esp. 111–2; 165–7). Once we visualise Fortingall as a point on an axis stretching from Lismore and Iona in the west to Dunkeld – in the era of bishops like George Brown and Gavin Douglas – and Perth in the east, the cultural possibilities rapidly begin to multiply.

B is the primary, indeed almost the sole reservoir of classical Gaelic verse to exist on the Scottish side. Its mere existence renders it an enigma, whether we seek to account for this through the accident of survival when so much else is presumed to have perished, or in other ways. But it is on separate grounds that it has won for itself the reputation as ‘one of the most intriguing and baffling collections of Gaelic poetry in existence’ (Ó Cuív 1973: 15), one being its exceptional diversity. *B* contains Gaelic poetry from Scotland and Ireland, and preserves poetry otherwise unknown in the much better attested Irish tradition (O’Rahilly 1935: 32; Ó Cuív 1973: 15; Gillies 1990: 198).⁶ This poetry ranges over the full panoply of genres: panegyric, religious, heroic, courtly and satiric. It is the work of professional poets of varying status, of ecclesiastics, and of lay amateurs, including women, representing a range of social strata within the aristocracy and perhaps beyond. Much of the generic sweep and innovation of the poetry rests upon the contribution of these amateurs. *B* makes fluid use of three languages, Latin, Gaelic and Scots, to the extent of rendering its Gaelic contents in an orthography based on Middle Scots. There are snippets of poetry from Lowland Scotland and England, and a mass of prose material, mainly in Latin and Scots. History is principally represented by a chronicle (henceforth *Chron. B*) whose compilation and contents provide a valuable point of comparison with the amassing of the poetic corpus; and by excerpts from the Lowland chronicle tradition. Other topics included are music, topography, physiology, astronomy, chronology, law, religion, morality and superstition. The moral register moves from the sacred to the thoroughly profane.

An almost bureaucratic cataloguing mindset is at its most obvious in the lists which pepper *B* – of Scottish kings, Gaelic musicians and

Irish place-names (*cf.* Meek 1986–8: 61–2, 66–7) – and may also explain the recording of textual variants upon the manuscript itself. This applies to phrases, lines and verses within poems, sometimes even to whole poems (Gillies 1983: 60); but also to historical material, for example the much worked-over obit of Mael Coluim III, Malcolm Canmore (*B*, p. 186). This famous dimension of ‘visible emendation’ (Meek 1996: 270) is in turn a part of the dynamic quality of *B*. It is not static and completed but a living thing, incorporating literary criticism of its texts, ongoing editorial efforts to achieve definitive versions, an almost contrary creative impulse enjoining others to make additions, and embryonic literary cycles in which poems may be composed in response to others (Meek 1987: 131–60; Meek 1996: 270–1; Gillies 1981: 264, 277–9; 1983: 64, 72). All of this impressive intellectual ferment is then leavened with the utterly prosaic and mundane, so that now canonical texts such as *A phaidrín do dhúisg mo dhéar*, *Laoidh Dhiarmaid* and *Ní h-éibhneas gan Chloinn Domhnaill* wrestle for space alongside shopping lists and records of meal deliveries.

Neither in some of these specifics nor as a whole can *B* be paralleled within the late-medieval Gaelic and Lowland Scots literary traditions as we possess them. Its orthography, use of secretary hand rather than Gaelic script, and employment of paper rather than vellum, are quite enough in themselves to distance it from all other surviving classical Gaelic *duanaireadha* or poem-books (Ó Cuív 1973: 14–15). So are its plurality of scribes and the sometimes anarchic air of ‘work in progress’ generated by their editorial approach. These features, particularly the latter, also distinguish it from the great Scots poetic compendia of the sixteenth century such as the Asloan Manuscript, which it otherwise resembles in physical appearance and aspects of its contents (van Buuren 1996: 15–51; *cf.* Fox and Ringler 1980; Craigie 1919–27; Craigie 1920). Its extreme diversity of subject matter, including its homespun domestic memoranda, are alien to the Gaelic and Scots formal literary traditions alike, and recall the medieval commonplace book tradition (Bawcutt 1990: 59–68). Yet such a designation is at odds with the public aura which *B* presents, its sense of collaboration and participation (see MacGregor *forthcoming*).

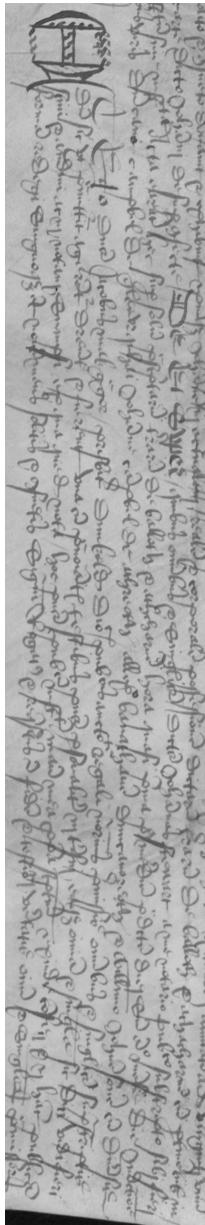


Plate I: Detail from notarial instrument drawn up by Seumas MacGregor, 24 February 1503; note *dincano rooch* and *willelmo johnesone* among the witnesses.
National Archives of Scotland, Breadalbane Muniments, GDI12/1/31. Reproduced by permission of the Keeper

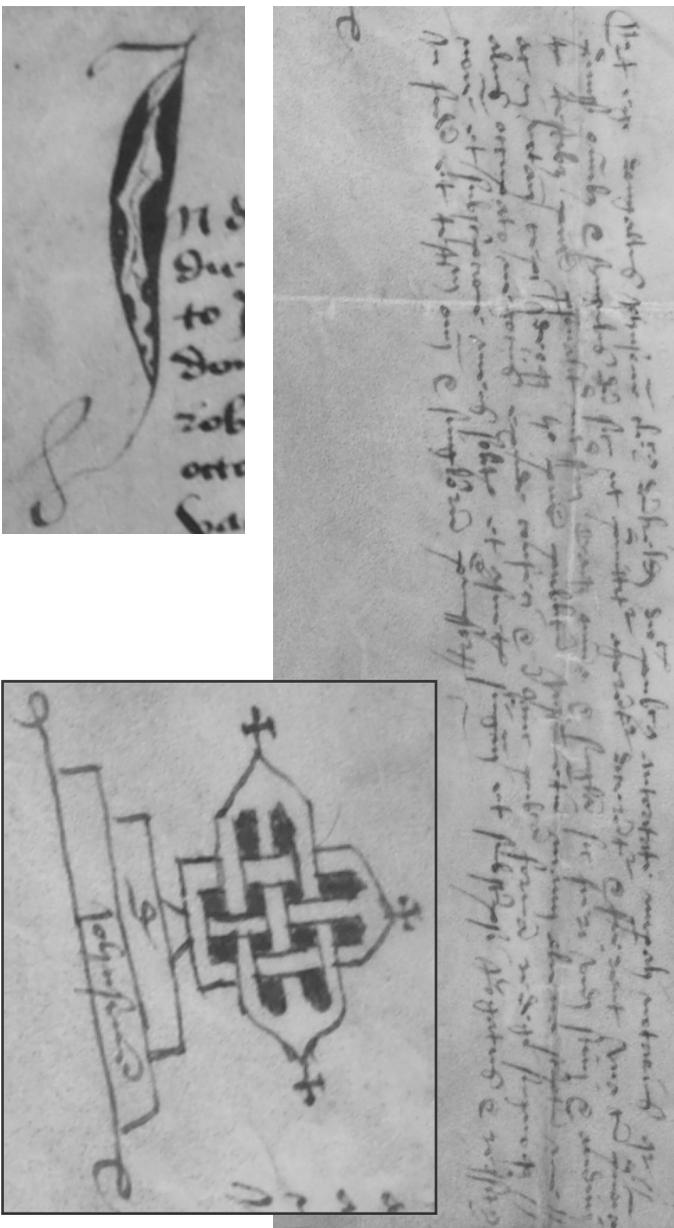


Plate III. Detail from notarial instrument drawn up by Dubhghall Maol MacGregor, 1 May 1508.
National Archives of Scotland, Breadalbane Muniments, GD 112/7/4/811.
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Both the dean and his father were notaries public, and the earliest document thus far known to have been drawn up by Seumas in that capacity, in 1503, together with a late specimen from 1538, form a useful point of departure (see plates I and II). We see immediately the secretary hand and the interplay and melding of the three languages used throughout *B*. The earlier deed is entirely in Latin, the later largely in Scots with Latin top and tail, while in each case we have the rendering of Gaelic into a Scots-based orthography which constitutes one of the most controversial aspects of *B*: *duncanus reoch* (1503), *johannes mcconquhy roy* (1538), and *johannes leycht* (1538). Seumas represents his Gaelic surname in the Latin deed by the Scotticised forms *makgregor/mcgregor*, in the Scots deed by the Latin genitive *gregorii*. The use of the Latin genitive to represent a surname in contexts like this is exceptionally rare (MacGregor 2000: 140), and since we find Seumas doing so again on occasion (AT, 11 February 1520; Breadalbane Muns., 2/34/12 (11 July 1525); 2/147/2/1), and his father described likewise in 1482 (Fraser 1883: 3. 261–2), it may be a family affectation.

Another key unresolved issue concerning *B* is the number of scribes who contributed to writing it. Estimates have ranged from the hard core who seem to identify themselves by name within it, with Donnchadh mac Dhubhghaill Mhaoil as a possible main scribe, to ‘a coterie of poets, scribes and other ecclesiastics ... many different hands were involved’ (Meek 1982: 1. 5–6, 19–27; Meek 1989: 134 and n. 14; Black, ‘Catalogue’; cf. Gillies 1981: 288).⁷ A means of clarification as yet untried would be to compare *B* with the corpus of notarial instruments drawn up by Seumas and his father (for a specimen of Dubhghall’s hand from 1508, see Plate III).⁸ As one might expect, there are clear signs of development in Seumas’s hand between 1503 and 1538, and since it appears as if *B* was compiled over a generation between c. 1512 and c. 1542, it is possible that development of this sort may explain or contribute to the apparent plurality of hands. There may be other, more minor, points of contact between these documents and *B* that might further illuminate its composition. The deeds of 1503 and 1508 bear some ornamentation of initials which is absent in that of 1538, and which could usefully be compared with the occasional decoration found in *B* (Meek 1996:

257–8; *cf.* Breadalbane Muns., 1/34). The abbreviation ‘etc’, a feature of Seumas’s notarial style, is ubiquitous throughout *B* (Black: ‘Catalogue’, which however interprets this abbreviation as ‘rct’; Gillies 1978: 25, 31; Gillies 1981: 280; Meek 1997: 33; Quiggin 1937: 18, 20, 84).

The witness lists of these documents provide interesting evidence for milieu. The *willelmus johnesone* of 1503 and *gregorius dougalsone* of 1538 are to be identified respectively with Uilleam mac Eoin, uncle of Seumas, and Griogair mac Dhubhghaill, brother of Seumas. The list of 1503 begins with Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy, best represented of any Scottish poet in *B*. One of those poems is a eulogy of the ‘redoubtable male organ’ belonging to a ‘Donnchadh riabhach’. Professor Gillies’s edition asks whether we should see this person as the poet himself, and the poem as an exercise in self-congratulation; or whether we should capitalise the epithet as identifying a quite separate persona conspicuous in local society (Gillies 1983: 59–60). Support for the latter interpretation is provided by the presence of *duncanus reoch* alongside our poet in the 1503 witness list, the epithet rendered as it appears in version A of the poem in *B* (Gillies 1983: 66). Donnchadh Riabhach appears as such in numerous other documents, in contexts which make it clear that he was a very close political associate of Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy, and this sits comfortably with the evidence of the poem. For an individual to be identified by descriptive epithet alone, without accompanying patronymic, surname or occupational sobriquet, is rare in Breadalbane deeds of the period. A pointer to his social status, and perhaps his social function, is provided by a reference to ‘Duncan Reochistoun’, Baile Dhonnchaidh Riabhaich, by Loch Tay, in 1541 (ER: 17. 729). He was probably dead by then, as the township was leased to another; and the death of a Donnchadh Riabhach MacGille-Chonail is recorded in 1526 (Innes 1855: 119 (*Obitus Duncani Reoch McGillechonnyl*); *cf.* Breadalbane Muns., 2/71/14 (6/7 November 1523): *Duncanus rewoch mcgillechonil*). This may allow the further identification with *duncanus reouch makgill quhamyll* who was in the company of Cailean first earl of Argyll and Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy when they took part in the seizure of James III at Lauder in 1482 (Breadalbane Muns.,

3/6; cf. MacDougall 1982: 167). *B*, we should note, has two separate notices of the hanging of Cochrane at Lauder (*B*, pp. 44, 184).⁹

To broach a more systematic analysis of *B*'s milieu, the best starting-point remains the introduction to Watson's edition. Following Skene, Watson identified *B*'s key compilers as Dubhghall Maol and his sons Seumas and Donnchadh, based at Tulaich a' Mhuilinn, and suggested that their lineage's connection with Fortingall may have begun with Dubhghall Maol's grandfather. Watson's original contribution was to invoke the poem on p. 143 of *B* as anticipating its compilation, and he printed this first in his edition. It is by Fionnlagh Mac an Aba, whom we can with confidence equate with Fionnlagh, chief of the MacNabs of Bovain or Glen Dochart, who died in 1525 (Gregory 1831: 327). The poem projects the creation of a *duanaire* or poetic anthology, and suggests that a Dubhghall mac Eoin, the poet's *companach* or boon-companion, should write it, assisted by a Griogair. Fionnlagh has already collected relevant material from an *pacaire*, the packman, and more can be obtained from *na sracairean* or *na lorganaich* (these last equated by Watson with *Cliar Sheanchain*, itinerant minstrel bands), who are well known to Dubhghall. The collection is to be presented to MacCailein, chief of the Campbells. Watson identified Dubhghall mac Eoin with Dubhghall Maol, and (more tentatively) Griogair with a *Gregor Dougal(l)son* on record in *Chron. Fortingall* in 1552 and 1555, this last date being the record of his death (Innes 1855: 123, 125). I believe this is indeed the son of Dubhghall Maol and brother of Seumas and Donnchadh who witnessed the deed of 1538, and who was a reasonably significant landholder on Loch Tayside and in upper Strath Tay (MacGregor 1989: 166). Finally, Watson suggested that Dubhghall Maol delegated the task of compilation to Seumas and Donnchadh (Watson 1937: xiv–xvii; 2–5).

Watson's interpretation of this poem has evoked responses whose enthusiasm varies (Gillies 1976–8: 259; Meek 1996: 256), but is highly compatible with the historical context, as we shall see. An additional dimension which he may have missed, however, is the poem's tone. As already noted, the contents of *B* as we have them, even restricting them to their poetic element, hardly conform to those

of the typical *duanaire*, while those identified by Fionnlagh MacNab as informants seem distinctly lowbrow. The whole seems an unlikely offering to be presented with all due solemnity to MacCailein for approval. If this poem amounts to a manifesto, then, it is surely composed with mischief in mind and Fionnlagh MacNab's tongue firmly in his cheek; and this would be in tune with the playful, subversive spirit animating the poetic contributions of lay amateurs to *B*, among whom was at least one earl of Argyll.

This consistency of tone could be another reason for accepting the poem as a mission statement. All the essentials are there: an instigator or catalyst for the project, in Fionnlagh MacNab; compilers (described as a *comunn* or collective), initially Dubhghall Maol and Griogair; sources, in the shape of *na pacairean vel sim.*; criteria for selection, namely artistry (v. 7c) and comprehensiveness (v. 9); and a patron who provides a spur and focus for collection, and an arbiter of its worth: 'bring unto MacCailein no poem lacking artistry to be read' (v. 7 c-d). This last could be taken as a form of dedication of both poem and project, whose point depends on the fact that the MacCailein concerned is entirely in tune with the irreverent nature of the enterprise. For all that Fionnlagh is referring only to poetry, his statement of the comprehensive ideal is, as we have seen, particularly pertinent to *B* as a whole:

*Ná biodh annsan domhan-sa
do shagart ná do thuathach
'gá bhfuil ní 'na gcomhghar-san
nach cuirthear é san Duanair.*

'Let there not be in this world one single priest nor layman
who has aught by him that is not put in the Song-book' (v. 9).

What this leaves less clear is whether we should take Fionnlagh's remarks about sources at face value. That he points Dubhghall Maol in the direction of somewhat dubious individuals and groups could simply be part of the parody. On the other hand, could the geographical distribution pattern of the poetry in *B* map out the routes frequented by these itinerants? Could their mediating social and cultural role account for the vernacularisation of language which

has affected all of the Gaelic verse between the point of its composition and the point of its entering *B*, irrespective of the fact that some of it has been composed in vernacularised forms of classical Gaelic to start with (Gillies 1977: 48; Gillies 1978: 18–19; Meek 1997: 3–4; MacGregor 1999: 136)? To what extent might they have acted as the source of poetic texts, whether through oral recitation, or the provision of the written exemplars which clearly lie behind some texts in *B*, or both, thereby contributing to the phenomenon of ‘visible emendation’ already referred to (Gillies 1978: 24, 31, 35, 41; Gillies 1979–80: 83–4; Gillies 1981: 278; Gillies 1983: 60–63, 72; Meek 1996: 268–71; Meek 1997: 28–9)?¹⁰

One source which neatly fleshes out the reality and intimacy of the relationships hinted at in Fionnlagh’s poem comes eight years after compilation of *B* apparently ceased. This is the testament of Eoin Campbell – chief of the Glen Orchy kindred, and grandson of the Donnchadh whose poetry features in *B* – drawn up at the Isle of Loch Tay on 2 June 1550, shortly before Eoin’s death on 5 July (Breadalbane Muns., 3/21; cf. MacGregor 1989: 287, n. 12). The witnesses included Fionnlagh, chief of the MacNabs, and grandson of the Fionnlagh of *B*; Seumas MacGregor and his son Dubhghall, both described as chaplains; and *Gregorius Dowgallson* – Seumas’s brother Griogair again. Other members of the dean’s family were named as beneficiaries, while Eoin also asked his brother and successor Cailean Liath, ‘to do wele to my wiff and bairnis and all kynd servandis and in speciall Finlay McNab of Bowayn’. Fionnlagh’s then wife Katherine was a natural daughter of Eoin (Breadalbane Muns., 2/34/16; Gillies 1938: 96).

This same social nexus can readily be projected back into the era of compilation of *B*. The closeness of the bond between the poet-chief Fionnlagh MacNab and his *companach* Dubhghall Maol was borne out at the end of Fionnlagh’s life. On 11 December 1524, four months before his death, and clearly failing, he appointed three procurators to take over his affairs, one of whom was Dubhghall Maol (Breadalbane Muns., 2/34/8). The others were his own son and heir Eoin, and Aindrea Toiseach of Monzie, just north of Crieff (Watson 1993: 243); and if we take this last name back to *B*, we find an *Aindrea Tóiseach* as author of two or three poems within it (*B*, pp.

69, (?)115, 181; *cf.* Black, ‘Catalogue’, O’Rahilly 1934: 53–4, and Breadalbane Muns., 1/25; 2/34/9, 10, 12 (11 July 1525)). Fionnlagh had succeeded his father Pàdraig as head of his kindred in 1488, and from the outset of his chiefship, and possibly earlier, he featured in the retinue of Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy (Breadalbane Muns., 3/ 8, 9; Fraser 1858: 258). In 1503 Donnchadh acted as witness in a series of transactions involving Fionnlagh (Breadalbane Muns., 2/34/6). Fionnlagh’s wife was a Mariota Campbell, of unknown ancestry (Innes 1855: 119), and in his last illness, he may well have had the services of Eoin Lighich, one of the MacLachlans of Craiginterve, the medical lineage patronised by the earls of Argyll and Campbells of Glen Orchy (Breadalbane Muns., 2/34/11; AT, 7 July 1575; Bannerman 1977: 7). Perhaps most interesting of all is his presence in the retinue of Gilleasbuig earl of Argyll at Inverness in 1498 (Innes 1859: 87–8).¹¹

The Campbells’ relationship with the MacGregors, specifically the dean’s lineage, in this earlier era can best be appreciated by first establishing a later perspective. For Breadalbane, the death of Eoin Campbell of Glen Orchy and accession of Cailean Liath in 1550 was the hinge upon which the century turned. Cailean Liath transformed the lordship of his kindred through a massive phase of secondary expansion which changed the face of the landscape, and had profound, almost wholly negative effects for erstwhile familiars like the MacGregors and MacNabs. His idea of ‘doing well’ to Fionnlagh MacNab was, in 1552, to coerce him into selling him the historic MacNab lands. A much more explicit form of subordination replaced a benevolent, apparently looser, clientship (MacGregor 1989: 200–265, esp. 235–8).

For the family of the dean of Lismore, the watershed was not absolute, for they benefited from one instance of post-1550 patronage by Cailean Liath, when in the summer of 1558 sir Dubhghall MacGregor, son of the dean, was advanced to the chancellorship of Lismore (Innes 1855: 128; MacGregor 1989: 76, 274–5). But ultimately they suffered from the policy pursued by Cailean Liath and his son Donnchadh Dubh, of introducing non-indigenous personnel into their retinue and key administrative posts, at the expense of previously favoured native lineages. The dean died, as we

saw, on 12 December 1551. At Whitsunday, 5 June 1552, his brother Griogair was evicted from Balloch at the east end of Loch Tay by Cailean Liath, as a prelude to the building there of Balloch (later Taymouth) Castle, the focal point of his new lordship (Innes 1855: 123; MacGregor 1989: 200–265, esp. 232–3, 251–6, 274–5). Cailean Liath's actions here were in line with his treatment of Clann Ghriogair as a whole. As with the MacNabs, but more so, his attempts to forge a much more explicit and oppressive subordination precipitated a major feud in the 1560s, culminating in his execution of the MacGregor chief Griogair Ruadh in 1570, and during which one of the dean's sons, Griogair, was slain by a servant of Cailean Liath, in 1565 (MacGregor 1989: 284–403, esp. 346–8).

What all this means is that the political and social context which spawned *B* only just outlived it, and was obliterated after 1550. The world which the dean and others of his brothers were departing in death in the 1550s and 1560s must have seemed far removed from that in which they had spent most of their lives. It is no surprise that cultural expression in Breadalbane took very different forms in the two halves of the sixteenth century. After 1550, the little Gaelic poetry that has survived is MacGregor poetry, or rather song, of feud, crisis and struggle for survival, in the vernacular rather than classical mould (Watson 1976: 237–46; Thomson 1989: 68, 70–71). In the poetry and history written for or by them after 1550, as well as in their correspondence, the Campbells of Glen Orchy reveal a pronounced orientation towards the use of Scots (Innes 1855: i–vi, xi–xv; Dawson 1997). *B* is a cultural reflex of a milieu in which the relationships of the MacNabs and MacGregors with the Campbells of Glen Orchy had a very different dynamic. It is hard to envisage the court of Cailean Liath as a natural forum for the sort of literary activity observable in *B*.

In his discussion of Fionnlagh MacNab's poem in *B*, Watson stated that its reference to MacCailein 'suggests that hostile relations between the MacGregors and Campbells did not preclude friendly intercourse between Dugall MacGregor and the Campbell chief' (Watson 1937: xvii).¹² As others have done, Watson was assuming in the light of later history that the relationship between these kindreds must have been confrontational from the first. This, however, was

not the case. The MacGregors came into being in the later fourteenth century, within the lordship of Glen Orchy, specifically the lands of Glen Strae. They were dominant within this lordship for a time, but lost this position to the Campbells, expanding rapidly eastwards, and whose chief in 1432 granted his property lands within the lordship to his son Cailean, progenitor of the Campbells of Glen Orchy. This did not entail the physical displacement of the MacGregors. An accommodation was reached whereby the MacGregors continued to hold their Glen Strae lands as vassals of the Campbell chiefs, and became a client kindred of the Campbells. The key to this clientship was military service, expressed most significantly in joint expansion of MacGregors and the Campbells of Glen Orchy eastwards into Breadalbane and adjacent areas, ultimately resulting in the creation of a very extensive Campbell lordship east of Druim Alban. By 1513, when Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy died at Flodden with his chief Gillesbuig earl of Argyll, his kindred was already dominant within Breadalbane, and MacGregor military power was fundamental to this (MacGregor 1989: 10–199).

Between 1513 and 1550, the Campbells of Glen Orchy experienced stagnation and decline. Symptomatic of this was their loss of the services of the MacGregors, transferred by the earl of Argyll to Eoin Campbell of Cawdor, the new rising star in the Campbell firmament. The MacGregors played a role in the establishment of this new Campbell branch in the east and west Highlands, although the evidence is thinner, and the process spawned much less in the way of actual MacGregor settlement (MacGregor 1989: 118–26).

Beyond military service and joint settlement, clientship also took the form of the favouring of specific MacGregor lineages by the Campbells. One such provided the keepers of the Glen Orchy fortress of Kilchurn Castle for most of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (MacGregor 1989: 75–8). But the outstanding instance to which we must now turn was the lineage of the dean of Lismore. In the colophon on p. 144 of *B*, the dean's brother Donnchadh names his father as Dubhghall Maol and his grandfather as Eoin Riabhach. On the basis of the following entry in *Chron. Fortingall*, Skene and Watson were prepared to extend the pedigree one generation further:

Dec 1542 – Obitus Katherine Neyn Ayn Weyll sponse Johannis McAyn Rawych VcGewycar apud Aychly (Innes 1855: 121).¹³

They identified *Ayn Rawych* or Eoin Riabhach with Dubhghall Maol's father, implying that Eoin Riabhach was mac a' Bhiocair, 'the son of the vicar' (McLauchlan 1862: ii; Watson 1937: xv).

On 30 July 1406 Robert Bishop of Dunkeld issued a precept charging that sir Eoin of Glen Orchy, priest of the diocese of Argyll, be given possession of the vicarage pensionary of Fortingall (HMC 1870-: 7, pt. ii (Atholl Charters). 706, no. 19). Such a designation, based on a place-name, 'might mean that the person concerned was lord of the place, or that he belonged to the ruling family, and/or that he was a native' (Steer and Bannerman 1977: 125). The early MacGregor connection with the lordship of Glen Orchy has already been noted, and Eoin's bearing this designation at this particular date makes it possible that he was a member of the MacGregor ruling family. To identify him with *Am Biocair*, the apparent progenitor of the lineage of the dean of Lismore, would be to explain how and when its association with Fortingall began, and can plausibly be linked to a significant dating horizon embodied in *B*, as we shall see.

There is abundant evidence to add to the testament of Eoin Campbell of Glen Orchy, bearing out the closeness of the relationship between this lineage and the Campbells between the later fifteenth century and 1550. Three of the dean's brothers, Griogair, Eoin and Uilleam, were part of a Campbell grouping involved in a violent fracas in Perth in 1527 over a dispute concerning the abbacy of Coupar Angus. Griogair and Eoin, and their brother Dubhghall, were among the seven MacGregors included in a list of 200 of the kin, friends and servants of Gilleasbuig earl of Argyll drawn up in 1536. The documents so far uncovered in which Seumas or his father, or both of them, are involved, whether as witnesses, baillies or notaries public, are overwhelmingly Campbell-related. Most directly concern the earls of Argyll or the Glen Orchy chiefs, and many, dating between 1494 and 1512, feature Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy (MacGregor 1989: 76–7 and n. 30, 78, 80–81, 422–3).

Furthermore, it was to the Campbells that Seumas owed his position as dean of Lismore. After 1470 the earls of Argyll were also

lords of Lorn, one third of which was held by the Glen Orchy chiefs as their vassals. With Lorn went the patronage of ecclesiastical benefices within the lordship, and on 18 December 1470 Cailean earl of Argyll granted Cailean Campbell of Glen Orchy and his son – the Donnchadh of *B* – in liferent, ‘the thynde gyfte and advocatioun of all the kyrkis and benefices of Lorn’. In 1553, following a dispute concerning these benefices, it was decided that in future Cailean Liath of Glen Orchy should present to the chancellery and chantry of Lismore, and that the earl and master of Argyll should present to the deanery and treasurer’ship. We do not know what arrangements pertained between 1470 and 1553, but can conclude that it was through the patronage of either the earl of Argyll or Campbell of Glen Orchy that Seumas became dean of Lismore prior to 10 March 1514. It can be argued that his appointment forms part of a pattern; that the Campbells may have consciously used preferment to the offices of the cathedral church of Lismore to bring on protégés who had a particular interest in Gaelic culture, or for whom a particular cultural role was envisaged (MacGregor 1998: 27–9; *cf.* Gillies 1976–8: 287, n. 4).

It is clear then that far from being an aberration, out of kilter with its political context, *B* fits that context like a glove. It was the cultural corollary of the MacGregors’ status as favoured Campbell dependants, a reflection of the closeness of the kindreds as surely as was their joint expansion into Breadalbane. This is the best basis of understanding from which to commence a preliminary analysis of the contents of *B* in place and time, beginning with the spatial distribution of the Gaelic poetry of Scottish provenance.¹⁴ Caution is essential given that a number of these poems cannot be localised either by author – some are anonymous or by poets as yet unidentified – or by content. We also need to acknowledge the danger of assuming the existence of one homogenous pattern deriving from a single, and necessarily political, stimulus. Bannerman suggested that the pattern,

beginning, as it does, at Fortingall with poems by Duncan MacGregor, the dean’s brother, and proceeding west from there along a narrow corridor as far as Loch Awe, and then opening

out dramatically to include a poem addressed to MacLeod of Lewis at one end of the Lordship and another to MacNeill of Gigha at the other end, would be an extraordinary one seen in any light other than that of the Lordship of the Isles (Steer and Bannerman 1977: 206).

That a Lordship consciousness is present in *B* is most obvious in the clutch of poems concerning Eoin lord of the Isles, his son Aonghas Òg, and the tumultuous events of the 1490s (Watson 1937: 66–99). Nevertheless, the case for believing that the political sway of the MacDonald lords ever extended into western Perthshire has now been undermined (MacGregor 2000: 144). This is easily the most fruitful zone for Scottish poetry in *B*, yet even leaving it aside we can readily identify the work of Scottish poets from other areas clearly outwith the Lordship: to Donnchadh Mór from Lennox, noted by Bannerman (Watson 1937: 248–9), we could swiftly add Fearchar mac Phádraig Grannd, or Grant (Matheson 1945–7), and Aindrea Toiseach of Monzie. Relevant also, perhaps, is the venomous poetic assault on Ailéin mac Ruaidhrí, chief of the Clanranald, by Fionnlagh an Bard Ruadh, which is in starkest contrast to the MacMhuirich panegyric on the same subject, and may embody a self-consciously ‘mainland’ and anti-Isles perspective (Watson 1937: 134–9, 285).

A more satisfactory match is provided by the sphere of influence achieved by the Campbells within Gaelic Scotland by the first half of the sixteenth century. In 1521, for example, it was seen as encompassing the Lordship of the Isles, Argyll, Lorn, Knapdale, Kintyre, Breadalbane, Balquhidder, Menteith, Strathearn and the Lennox (MacGregor 1989: 86–91). The inclusion of the Lordship of the Isles is consistent with the ambitions of the earls of Argyll, at their clearest in the period between the forfeiture of c. 1493 and c. 1530, to don the mantle of the MacDonald lords (Steer and Bannerman 1977: 211–2). Hence the Lordship dimension to *B* is perfectly compatible with Campbell influence and aspirations, and we can bolster this with other points: that at present no poem of Scottish provenance in *B* can with certainty be dated to later than 1518; Fionnlagh MacNab’s placing of MacCailein at the apex of the

world of *B* in his ‘manifesto’ poem; and the contrast between the predominantly elegiac strain to the MacDonald poetry in *B* and the highly optimistic and elevated poetic treatments of both the second and third earls of Argyll as natural champions and saviours of the Gaels (Watson 1937: 82–99, 106–25, 158–65). All this is not to suggest that we should view *B* as a sustained and deliberate exercise in pro-Campbell propaganda, but rather that, from a strictly political perspective, the caste of its poetry accurately mirrors the affiliations of its compilers, and the ambitions of their patrons, in the era of compilation.

That *B* contains a preponderance of Breadalbane and Rannoch poetry broadly reflects the achievement of political supremacy throughout most of this region by the Campbells of Glen Orchy by 1513, assisted both by their MacGregor clients and the very close relationship they enjoyed with the earls of Argyll down to that point.¹⁵ As one might expect, professional praise poetry in *B*, issuing from centres of secular power such as the Isle of Loch Tay, Balloch and Garth, all near to Fortingall, provides a form of rough commentary upon the successive phases in this process, and the interplay between politics and culture. The lineage whom the Campbells displaced as the most powerful single kindred in Breadalbane were those Stewarts whose origins – and here we rely upon genealogical evidence contained in poems in *B*, and apparently nowhere else – point to descent from Galtair earl of Atholl and his grandson Sir Raibeart, both executed in 1437 for their roles in the assassination of James I. They had their main fortress at Garth, in the shadow of Schiehallion. The scope of their lordship is illustrated by the other designations also applied to them – ‘of Fortingall’ and ‘of Rannoch’ – and they also possessed Glen Lyon (MacGregor 1989: 137–8, 142). *B* contains work by at least one professional poet who can be associated with this lineage. Eoin, son of Sir Raibeart, who died in 1475 (Gregory 1831: 321), is the subject of an anonymous eulogy, and also the main human focus of a poem purporting to concern the destruction of wolves, by Giolla Críost Táilliúr (Watson 1937: 184–93, 176–9). Giolla Críost is also the author of three other substantial poems in *B*, whose subject matter marks him out as one of the most sophisticated and intriguing poets within it (O’Rahilly

1935: 36, 47, 50; Quiggin 1913: 123).¹⁶ *B* also contains two poems on prominent MacGregors who died in 1518 and 1519, respectively by An Giolla Glas mac an Táilliúir, and Dubhghall mac an Ghiolla Ghlais (Watson 1937: 196–211). Watson points out of the first that ‘the style and tone suggest old age’, and of the second that the poet ‘was evidently learned and highly trained; the present poem is one of the finest in the Dean’s collection’ (Watson 1937: 299). An attractive interpretation of the evidence would be that here we have three successive generations of a highly accomplished professional poetic lineage, patronised initially by the Stewarts of Garth, but which, once these Stewarts went into eclipse early in the sixteenth century, became principally attached to one of the kindreds who supplanted them, the MacGregors.

Further evidence for the interplay of politics and culture in Rannoch relates to another local professional poet, An Bard Mac an t-Saoir. Of his three poems in *B*, two form a pair, taking as their theme *long na ndrochbhan*, the ‘Ship of Evil Women’. The ships in question are respectively localised on Loch Rannoch and Loch Inch, further north into Badenoch (Watson 1937: 218–33). Watson expressed natural puzzlement as to these settings (Watson 1937: 302), but remarkably, a later history of the Macintoshes provides an answer. According to this text, following the imprisonment of the Macintosh chief Fearchar in 1493, the Camerons of Lochaber, Appin and Rannoch raided the Braes of Badenoch and Strathnairn. Uilleam, the acting Macintosh chief, retaliated in the first instance with a sudden attack upon Appin and Rannoch; and, so the history adds:

It was this William that in his expedition to Rannoch and Appin took the Bard McIntyre (of whom the McIntires in Badenoch are descended) under his protection. This McIntyre was a notable Rymer, it was he that composed that excellent Irish epitaph called [...] in joynt commendation of Farquhar McConchie and William McLachlan Badenoch Lairds of McIntosh (Munro *forthcoming*).¹⁷

Fearchar and Uilleam are stated to have died in 1514 and 1515 respectively. Presumably An Bard Mac an t-Saoir became attached

to the Macintoshes, not long after 1493, and did move physically to Badenoch at some point, given that he left descendants there. Here we have a convincing explanation for the settings of these poems, and even the possibility that the Rannoch one is earlier. It may be too that An Bard Mac an t-Saoir was previously patronised by the Stewarts of Garth, and that both his movement to another patron, and the instability in Rannoch which triggered it, were symptomatic of the political pressures operating upon them both locally and nationally at the close of the fifteenth century (MacGregor 1989: 141, 144–7, 150, 175–8).

The death of Donnchadh Campbell at Flodden in 1513 marked a watershed in the fortunes of his kindred, and brings to an end an active role for it in terms of contributions to *B*. We find no poetry to or by the chief or anyone else of that lineage after 1513. Nor are there any panegyrics to the MacGregor chief or other members of its ruling family after the death of Eoin Dubh in 1519. In the case of the MacGregors this did not put a stop to their expansion and success: indeed their occupation of Rannoch took place shortly afterwards, c. 1520 (MacGregor 1989: 190). Hence it may be best not to read too much into these lacunae, which are consistent with the general waning of the creative poetic dimension to *B*. Indeed, *B* seems to contain no formal poetry composed for the Campbells of Glen Orchy from any period, and this despite the fact that we know, as we would in any case have assumed, that professional poets – doubtless the MacEwens – were in their service, one of whom performed for James IV when he was in the locality in 1506 (MacGregor 1989: 132–3). Nevertheless, in the case of the Campbells of Glen Orchy, we know that after 1513 their difficulties were counterpointed by the rise to greater prominence of a branch of their own lineage, the Campbells of Lawers, despite the fact that its own progenitor was another casualty of Flodden, and to the point where the supplanting of the former by the latter probably became a real possibility (MacGregor 1989: 119–20). *B* may again be reflective of this process. A poem by the Dean's brother to an Eoin, son of Cailean, may address the first chief of the Campbells of Lawers (*B*, p. 7; GD50/80, f. 6r). *B* contains two eulogies of Seumas, Eoin's son and successor, the most formal and fulsome of which associates him very

closely with Cailean third earl of Argyll (Watson 1937: 106–25; *B*, p. 198; Gillies 1976–8: 258, 286). In view of the fact that the special relationship between the Campbells of Glen Orchy and the earls did not survive 1513, the coupling may be significant (MacGregor 1989: 112–3, 118–9).

It is not only at the macro-political level and in its formal poetry that *B* bears the imprint of the *imperium* of MacCailein and his kindred. In a literary and much less regimented spirit, it directs us towards the significant power centres within the Campbell universe in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries – the courts of the earls of Argyll and the Campbells of Glen Orchy – and to the existence there of a circle or circles of aristocratic amateur poets, composing, criticising and adding to poetry in the manner of a parlour game for their own entertainment, in courtly and satiric modes and appropriate metres. Their preoccupation is with ‘that ever-present mediaeval genre, the “Argument about Women”’, to which is subjoined the moral condition of the clergy. Their approach is typified by sexual frankness, humour and in-jokes, and satire born less of indignation than of indulgence and affection, aimed at those within the circle or known to it (Gillies 1977: 35–53).¹⁸

B contains five poems which could all be the work of Cailean first earl of Argyll (d. 1493), his wife Iseabal (d. 1510), and their daughter, also Iseabal (MacGregor 1999: 152, n. 122; Gillies 1977: 36–7, 41–2; Gillies 1976–8: 286–7). A nuclear family grouping like this would provide a logical core upon which such literary activity might be grafted. The first line of the poem by the countess, *Éistibh, a lucht an tìghe-se* (‘Listen, people of this house’), evokes the domestic setting of this ‘Inveraray circle’. Her theme is maintained in the next poem in *B*, by Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy, and if ‘the two poems form a sort of *jeu parti* on the same subject’ (Gillies 1983: 72), this might be a reason for regarding Donnchadh, the most prolific of the courtly and satiric poets in *B*, as part of this circle rather than the hub of a separate ‘Breadalbane circle’ of the same hue. In an age of peripatetic lordship, it would be unwise in any case to draw rigid lines of demarcation, all the more so given the very close bonds and frequent contact between the Campbells of Glen Orchy and their chiefs before 1513, an era in which, as charters

of entail make clear, the former stood next to the latter in the Campbell hierarchy (MacGregor 1989: 112–3).

Nevertheless, there are grounds for favouring a scenario of two circles, distinct yet related. Their gravitation from Lorn and Kilchurn Castle, their original power-base, to Breadalbane is demonstrated by the importance which their fortress on the Isle of Loch Tay came to hold for the first two Glen Orchy chiefs. Situated at the east end of the loch, close to the Breadalbane residence of the MacGregor chief at Balloch, and to Fortingall, the number of deeds concluded there suggests that it was the administrative centre of Campbell of Glen Orchy lordship in Breadalbane down to 1513 (MacGregor 1989: 143–4, 151). Soon thereafter it lost that position to Finlarig, at the west end of the loch, where Sir Cailean, the third chief, built a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, ‘to be ane buriall for himselff and his posteritie’, which was consecrated in 1517 (Innes 1855: 17; Breadalbane Muns., 3/12). The Glen Orchy chiefs had possessed the right to use a portable altar for family worship since 1437 (Breadalbane Muns., 3/2), but the extensive works carried out by Cailean’s predecessor Donnchadh to the Isle of Loch Tay included not only a great hall and ‘chalmeris’, but also a chapel (Innes 1855: 16). There was a major fire here on Palm Sunday, 31 March 1509, *ex negligentia servorum* (Gregory 1831: 323). Another of *B*’s satiric poets, sir Donnchadh MacDiarmaid (Quiggin 1937: 72; Gillies 1977: 44), is on record at the Isle of Loch Tay on 13 January 1510, witnessing a charter in favour of Donnchadh Campbell drawn up by Dubhghall Maol MacGregor (Breadalbane Muns., 1/36). He is here described as a chaplain (*capellanus*), and if this be with reference to the household of Donnchadh Campbell, then we remember that countess Iseabal’s poem is a paean to the virility of *mo shagart tuarastail*, ‘my personal chaplain’; and that it was as chaplains that the dean of Lismore and his son Dubhghall both witnessed the will of Eoin Campbell of Glen Orchy in 1550. We remember also the earlier instance of sir Richard Holland, whose *Buke of the Howlat* was dedicated to the wife of the earl of Moray, whom he served as chaplain (Bawcutt and Riddy 1987: 43–84). Perhaps household chaplains were integral or even pivotal figures within these circles, whether as poets or as the stuff of poetry; witness also the defence of

the clergy by An Pearsún, ‘the Parson’ (Gillies 1977: 39, 42). Again there may be an echo here of the ‘manifesto poem’ of Fionnlagh MacNab, and his diktat that the poetry of both clergy and laymen be collected.¹⁹

The putative ‘Breadalbane circle’ might also have included the dean’s brother Donnchadh mac Dubhghaill Mhaoil, one of whose five poems in *B* is in this vein, and perhaps also Domhnall Liath mac Dhubhghaill MhicGriogair, who may be another brother (Quiggin 1937: 73–4, 80–81; Gillies 1977: 42, 47). That Donnchadh Campbell’s poetry inhabits a Breadalbane rather than Inveraray milieu is certainly supported by the identification already provided for Donnchadh Riabhach, and the likely *dùthchas* of Domhnall Donn Mac an Fhleisteir or Fletcher (Gillies 1983: 76–82), although his satire on Lachlann Mac an Bhreatnaigh may point to the west (Gillies 1981: 263–76; Bannerman 1991: 6–7). Another of his poems deals in characteristically subversive fashion with the convention of the love messenger, and names the latter as a Domhnall MacNab (Gillies 1978: 24–30). We have a clutch of references between 1487 and 1513 to a Domhnall MacNab in contexts suggesting that he was a member of the ruling family of the MacNabs of Glen Dochart, and showing him rubbing shoulders with personnel central to *B*: the dean and his father, Fionnlagh MacNab, and most commonly Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy himself (Breadalbane Muns., 2/34/4 (1 January, 22 March 1487), 6 (16 March 1503); 3/9; 1/35; 2/71/10). Attempts to reconfigure and repeople these ‘circles’, and to identify the local personalities drawn into their poetry, are destined to remain partial given the anonymity of many poems of this class in *B*. But there is still work to be done on poets such as Ailéin mac Dhubhghaill Bháin (Gillies 1977: 40) who at present are only names to us; and on the husbands, wives and daughters who are the target of the short epigrams found throughout *B* (Gillies 1977: 47).

Fuller knowledge of these personnel might reveal to what extent *B*’s poetic networks, substantially commensurate as they clearly are with this Campbell world and its centres, nevertheless possess a dimension personal and specific to *B*’s MacGregor compilers, and radiating outwards from Fortingall in chains of kinship, friendship and other connections. Such a scenario might underly the

contributions of Fionnlagh MacNab, and Fionnlagh's friend Aindrea Tóiseach of Monzie. We have noted that in its Breadalbane aspect, the expansion pattern of the dean's lineage seems to prefigure that of Clann Ghriogair as a whole. Given that after 1513 the MacGregors seem to have played some role in the establishment of the lordship of the Campbells of Cawdor, it is therefore interesting that our earliest reference to Dubghall Maol, the dean's father, is in a document involving Eoin, son and heir of the chief of the Grants, in 1482. Eoin died later that year, and is the subject of a notably detailed obit in *Chron. B*, while his sister's daughter was married to the MacGregor chief Eoin Dubh at the time of his death in 1519. Dubghall Maol himself married a Grant – *Katherine Neyn Donyll VcClawe*, as she is described in her obit in *Chron. Fortingall*, and presumably the mother of Donnchadh and Seumas (MacGregor 1989: 123–5). Here may conceivably lie the explanations for the statement in Donnchadh's eulogy of Eoin Dubh that 'the blood of Grants is the blood that is in thy cheek' (Watson 1937: 216–7), and the modest grouping of poetry from the eastern Highlands in *B*. In this category are Donnchadh Mac An Phearsúin (if this be the surname MacPherson), and the poem by An Barún Eóghan Mac Combaigh, addressed to Alasdair Macintosh; and, more securely, Fearchar mac Phádraig Grant (Watson 1937: 194–5, 246–7, 297; Matheson 1945–7: 156–7; Gillies 1977: 43). Fearchar's contribution fits snugly with the 'Argument about Women' theme, serving as a reminder that artistic imperatives sit alongside those of kinship and political lordship in shaping *B*'s pathways and horizons. In the same vein, *B* contains lists of Scottish and Irish *clàrsairean* and other musicians, and the Scottish contingent hails from a highly diverse catchment area which cuts across political boundaries: Kintyre, Ardnamurchan, Mull, Uist, Lewis, Skye, Strathglass, Atholl and Fearn in Angus (Bannerman 1991: 6–7, 14).

That Fortingall is the epicentre of *B*'s web is much more immediately apparent from the distribution pattern of the entries in *Chron. B* (*B*, pp. 186–97) and *Chron. Fortingall*. Both consist of three parts: obits of kings of Scots from Mael Coluim III to James IV; a catalogue of major Scottish battles from Bannockburn to Flodden, and a local chronicle. Analysis of the provenance of entries

in the chronicles accords with other indications to the effect that both were compiled at Fortingall, largely if not wholly by members of the dean's lineage.²⁰ Hence they enable us to place these MacGregors at the centre of their world, and gain another perspective upon their horizons. Entries gain in density and specificity the nearer to Fortingall they fall. Overall, the best-represented kindred are the MacGregors, followed by the Campbells. Very rarely do the chronicles look west, and in fact their single entry on the Isles is the obit of Eoin Campbell, bishop of the Isles, and a member of the Glen Orchy kindred. A Lordship of the Isles dimension is therefore wholly absent, and instead, when the chronicles look beyond their Breadalbane heartland, it is usually to lineages and kindreds from the eastern, central and southern Highlands, including the Gordons, Grants, earls of Atholl, Clann Donnchaidh or Robertsons, Murrays, Drummonds and Buchanans. Perth and Dunkeld feature among the places of death and burial, and a number of entries relate to the deaths of bishops and members of the cathedral chapter of Dunkeld (Gregory 1831: 317–28; Innes 1855: 109–42).

We can conveniently maintain our focus on the chronicles in turning now to map out the contents of *B* over time. In both *Chron. B* and *Chron. Fortingall*, the entries of local significance commence in 1390. *Chron. B* ends in 1542, *Chron. Fortingall* in 1579. For the era in which they overlap, 1390 to 1542, *Chron. B* has 82, *Chron. Fortingall* 119 entries. 13 are unique to *Chron. B*, 50 to *Chron. Fortingall*, while they share 69 entries. This implies that neither chronicle derives wholly from the other, and that both derive from a common source, compilation of which presumably commenced c. 1390. Each text has a marked emphasis upon Clann Ghriogair, especially in its earliest entries. The first three entries in each chronicle (one of which is unique to each, giving four in total) concern the MacGregor ruling family, while the death of every MacGregor chief is recorded down to 1528.

1406 is close enough to 1390 to suggest that on coming to Fortingall sir Eoin of Glen Orchy, *Am Biocair*, the progenitor of the lineage of the Dean of Lismore, continued or commenced the keeping of the common source from which *Chron. B* and *Chron. Fortingall* derive. His belonging to the MacGregor ruling family

would explain the chronicles' initial exclusive emphasis upon that lineage. A glimpse of the existence of the common source, and its ongoing compilation, is the annal noting the coronation of James III in 1460 in *Chron. B*, which describes him as 'our present king of Scots' (*B*, p. 187; cf. Gillies 1983: 62). The 'promiscuous' order of entries in *Chron. Fortingall* (Innes 1855: x), and much of *Chron. B*, might be explained if their source was written into a liturgical text kept at the church of Fortingall, as with the chronicle maintained in an ecclesiastical calendar at Fearn in Easter Ross in the later middle ages (Adam 1991). The chronicles' entries are all solemn events, overwhelmingly obituaries, of local or national importance, which would be consistent with their preservation for the purpose of anniversarial remembrance and prayer during the mass.

In the light of the activities of his descendants, did *Am Biocair* commence or continue the compilation of anything else besides the common source in 1406? We have already noted that the editorial work of Gillies and Meek on poetry in *B*, principally the heroic ballads and the courtly and satiric poems by amateurs, has demonstrated the existence of written exemplars, employing the same type of phonetic system based on Scots, underlying the bulk of these texts.²¹ In the instance of the heroic ballads, Meek concludes 'that most of these items were probably transcribed from manuscripts, and not recorded from oral transmission as has generally been maintained' (Meek 1996: 269). The chronological profile of the datable verse of Scottish provenance in *B* commences shortly after 1400, with a eulogy to Eoin Borb, son and heir of Uilleam MacLeod of Dunvegan, and who had succeeded his father as chief of his kindred by the time of Harlaw in 1411 (Watson 1937: 261). Next comes a poem composed between 1415 and 1440, and thereafter there is a steady acceleration which peaks between the later fifteenth century and c. 1520, after which there is a very sharp and decisive tailing off.

There is, then, a potential correlation between the coming of the progenitor of the lineage of the Dean of Lismore to Fortingall, the commencement of a chronicle there, and the coming on stream of the datable verse of Scottish provenance in *B*. The last element in this argument necessitates consideration of some poems which predate

1400, and might be deemed to be ‘Scottish’. These are, firstly, the sheaf of thirteenth-century poems by one of the earliest exponents of classical Gaelic poetry to be active in Scotland, Muireadhach Albanach Ó Dálaigh himself (O’Rahilly 1935: 56); and secondly, the famous ‘MacSween poem’, datable to the early fourteenth century, most probably c. 1310, going by the historical context which seems to best match the events it purports to describe, namely the sea-borne invasion of Knapdale from Ireland by Eoin mac Suibhne (John MacSween), to recover his patrimony from the Stewarts of Menteith (Meek 1997: 1–49). These dates may look anomalous when compared to the chronological profile of the datable Scottish poetry, but sit comfortably with the datable poems ascribed to Irish authors, of which O’Rahilly remarks that ‘nearly all of these belong to the period 1200–1500’. These include several poems of the early thirteenth century by Muireadhach Albanach’s brother, Donnchadh Mór, while O’Rahilly’s indexes throw up dates for other poems such as c. 1300, before 1309, and c. 1328 (O’Rahilly 1935: 32, 41, no. 58, 51, no. 144, 52, no. 148, 56; *cf.* 43, no. 80, and Quiggin 1913: 105). However, Gillies has observed that of the eight poems ascribed to Muireadhach in *B*, five ‘are not found in Irish sources, and a sixth shares only its opening verses with Irish versions’, and has plausibly pointed to the MacMhuirich lineage founded by Muireadhach, and members of it who were contemporary with the dean, as the likeliest entry point for this material into *B* (Gillies 1990: 158–9).

On the internal evidence of the poem on Eoin MacSween, Meek has argued that ‘the perspective of the poem implies that it was composed in Ireland’, and that its subject ‘is perceived as belonging to Ireland ... the poem was evidently composed after MacSween was naturalized in Ireland’ (Meek 1997: 6, 19). Although a counter argument advancing a Scottish provenance for the poem, or Scottish identity for the poet, Artúr Dall MacGurcaigh, has been made (Ó Mainnín 1999: 28–9, n. 76), Meek’s analysis is consistent with the chronological profile of the verse of Irish provenance in *B*. It needs to be stressed that the point at issue is not the nationality of figures such as Artúr Dall MacGurcaigh. Seeking to compartmentalise all the poetry in *B* into ‘Irish’ and ‘Scottish’ camps, as some scholars have tended to do (Watson 1937; O’Rahilly 1935: 54–6, and *cf.* 54,

n. 2), arguably becomes anachronistic when faced with poets such as this, or subjects like the MacSweens, the ultimate Irish Sea kindred who were equally at home in Ireland, Scotland and the waters between them. From the perspective of a study of *B* and its compilers, what matters are the pathways by which these poems reached them, and in the case of the MacSween poem at least, Irish pathways appear more plausible.

The final points to be made on the chronological profile of the contents of *B* concern the relationship between creation and compilation. As just noted, *B*'s verse of Irish provenance does not extend beyond c. 1500. The peak period of creation of the verse of Scottish provenance is signposted by certain key dates: the events associated with the forfeiture of the MacDonald Lordship of the Isles in the 1490s; the deaths of the single most prolific poet in *B*, Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy, in 1513, and of Eoin Dubh – chief of the MacGregors since 1461, and most eulogised individual within *B* – in 1519. This seems to be a decisive terminal point, for the latest poem in *B* datable with any accuracy is an elegy whose subject died in 1518. No other poem can presently be said to have been composed beyond this point: one poem can be dated no more precisely than 1513x1527 (Watson 1937: 106–25, 196–203, 283, 298). The impression is strengthened that the two poems ascribed to an earl or earls of Argyll, one of them naming its author as ‘Cailean math’, ‘good Colin’, were both the work of the first earl, who died in 1493, and not the third earl, who also bore that forename, but who did not succeed until 1513; and that the amateur poetry of the ‘Inveraray circle’ revolved around the first earl, his wife and daughter. The golden age of the creation of the Scottish verse in *B* therefore appears to be contiguous with the heyday of Campbell and MacGregor joint expansion into Breadalbane.

Analysis of *Chron. B*, however, reveals a different profile. Entries peak at 29 for the 1520s, equivalent to the total number of entries for the three decades between 1490 and 1520. The peak corresponds to the period in which the chronicle was created, and becomes a contemporary witness. All the entries down to the death notice of Eoin Dubh on 24–26 May 1519 have been written down by one scribe at the one time, which probably fell between then and a point

subsequent to either September 1522 at the earliest, or 4 March 1524 at the latest. Between 24–26 May 1519 and the end of 1522 *Chron. B* contains three entries, in contrast to eight for 1523, commencing in January. Thereafter, entries occur on a more or less contemporary basis, and, from 20 April 1525, in more strictly chronological order, until 1529. The two entries for that year, the later of which, recording the death of Cailean third earl of Argyll, is dated 13 October, are followed on p. 197 of *B* by only one other item, a memorandum in Scots noting the return of James V and his entourage from France in 1536. Scots is used for no other entry in *Chron. B*, whose four other entries postdating 1529 are placed elsewhere within it, including a further, final entry of national rather than local significance in 1542 (*B*, pp. 189–97).²²

If 13 October 1529 represents the end of main activity in *Chron. B*, then this is very close to the erection of a cross on Làirig Monadh Marcaich, ‘the high pass between Kenmore and Glen Cuaich’ (Watson 1937: xiv; cf. Gillies 1938: 380), on 1 October by Dubhghall Maol – the last recorded act of his old age.²³ Three years earlier, he had been responsible for the repair of the base of a cross at the parish church of Inchadin, near to Fortingall at the mouth of Loch Tay (Innes 1855: 120). This was where his lineage was buried, in the choir on the south side of the high altar (Gregory 1831: 324; Innes 1855: 122–3, 125, 132–3). The coincidence is arresting, and points to Dubhghall Maol’s involvement in the compilation of *Chron. B* in its contemporary phase, and its effective cessation as occurring when he was probably close to death.

Furthermore, the substance of *Chron. B* alters significantly after 24–26 May 1519. Entries become fuller, because of an accretion of detail consisting of combinations of the following elements: recording of the date of burial as well as the date of death; the precise place of burial, where this took place within a church; brief reference to the moral character of the deceased; solicitude for the soul of the deceased; dominical letter, and concluding amen.²⁴ Only some of these traits are visible, and then on a sporadic basis, in the chronicle’s earlier phase.²⁵ Apart from the notice of Flodden, the sole pre-1519 entries to contain two of them are the obits of Dubhghall Maol’s wife and brother in 1511, a further pointer to the authorship

of his lineage, perhaps himself (Gregory 1831: 324). The obit of Eoin Dubh exhibits three of them, including the earliest occurrence of separate dates for death and burial. The consistency of their application thereafter confirms that this was the era in which *Chron. B* was made, and attained full maturity.

However, this did not mean that it had become synonymous with, or supplanted, the common source, for between 24–26 May 1519 and 1542, the same pattern prevails whereby *Chron. B* and *Chron. Fortingall* share common entries, while each also has entries unique to itself. Hence we cannot automatically conclude that these changes represent innovation on the part of *Chron. B*, and the personal predilection of its compiler or compilers. This is certainly one of a range of options which present themselves in terms of how we conceptualise the relationship between *Chron. B* and the common source, before and after 24–26 May 1519. But it is also possible that *Chron. B* is simply copying what it found in the common source, and that the latter had either from the first applied this degree of detail to its entries – in which case *Chron. B* has largely elided this from its ‘first phase’ – or undergone the same transformation observed by *Chron. B* – in which case *Chron. B* is faithfully derivative throughout.

Even so, the balance of probabilities favours the attachment of significance to the change in *Chron. B*. The grounds for downplaying the significance of that change assume the existence of rigid lines of demarcation between *Chron. B* and the common source in the 1520s, with the latter in the dominant role. Yet in this period the compilation of both texts must have been proceeding simultaneously, in very close physical proximity, and through the agency of closely related, or identical, personnel. In addition to the likely role of Dubhghall Maol, there is the potential significance of the death of Domhnall MacNaughton, vicar of Fortingall since at least 1506/7 (Hannay 1915: 90–91), on 9 June 1520 or 1521 (Innes 1855: 117; Gregory 1831: 325). Even assuming that the compilation of the common source was the responsibility of the vicar of Fortingall rather than the dean’s lineage, there remains the possibility that Seumas followed Domhnall and assumed that responsibility, whether or not he also played a role in the compilation of *Chron. B*. Equally

pertinent is that in *Chron B*'s contemporary phase, its developed treatment of death and burial is scrupulously and totally ignored by *Chron. Fortingall*, both in entries they share, and in those unique to the latter.²⁶

The death of Eoin Dubh in 1519 therefore represents a threshold between two distinct artistic eras embodied in *B*, a hinge between past and present, poetry and history. It stands at the end of a decade which had witnessed a transferral of cultural energy from active poetic creation to the scholarly and editorial activity which went into assembling and analysing that corpus, along with *B*'s prose contents, a process under way by 1512. That so very little of the Gaelic poetry in *B* was composed across the thirty years of its compilation has important implications. The disjunction is surely central to the phenomenon of variant readings and texts which is *B*'s signature, even where the poetry concerned was of relatively recent and adjacent origin. It makes it easier to understand how *B*'s texts of a poet like Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy, who was clearly very well known to the compilers, nevertheless reveal that most of them were obtained from manuscript sources. Donnchadh was dead before compilation began in earnest, and dead long enough to give life to variant recensions of his poems. In the same vein, the text of what later came to be known as the heroic ballad, 'Bás Chonlaich', but which is found in *B* as the apologue of an elegy composed c. 1490, reveals that it was already spawning variants which are recorded in *B* (Meek 1986–8: 56–7).²⁷

The palpable sense of detachment from even the recent past suggests a conscious historicism at work. Flodden was in its own way as traumatic for the Campbells as the 1490s were for the MacDonalds, and although their ruling lineage and the kindred as a whole recovered well, the death of Donnchadh Campbell ushered in a much more anxious, volatile era for the Glen Orchy branch, and its lordship in Breadalbane. *B* looks back across the watershed to the golden age of poetic creation contemporaneous with the self-confident formation of that lordship, and may give voice to an insecurity and retrospection at once regional and national. Flodden has marked and shaped *B*'s psychology and contents in the era of its compilation, as has the further death in 1519 of Eoin Dubh, another

architect of that lordship during his long and highly successful chiefship from 1461, and whose obit in *Chron B* concludes, *quo die magnus planctus erat in Glenwrquhay*, ‘on which day there was great lamentation in Glen Orchy’.²⁸ Veneration of the dead and remembrance of past glories resonates in *B*’s lists of Scottish kings and battles; in its inclusion of a group of poems collectively mourning the downfall of the MacDonalds and their lordship; in the predominantly elegiac tone of its heroic ballads, with their preoccupation with warrior-death, the *ars moriendi*, and commemoration of the passing of an heroic age (Meek 1986–8: 64–6); and in the dwelling upon death and burial, and the repose and welfare of the souls of the departed, in *Chron. B*’s contemporary phase in the 1520s – verbal equivalents, perhaps, of what Dubhghall Maol also expressed in stone at the close of his life.

It remains to discuss the two themes which dominate the contents of *B*, in all its languages and at all its levels, and in whose exploration we see its compilers’ networks at their most extensive, and the intellectual *raison d’être* for them. The first is the kingship of the Scots, for which *B* draws most conspicuously upon the late medieval Lowland chronicle tradition. On pp. 242–3 we find the pedigree of David I back to Noah, which has been copied verbatim from either John of Fordun’s *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, or the *Scotichronicon* of Fordun’s continuator, Walter Bower (Skene 1871–2: 1. 251–2; Watt 1989–98: 3. 170–71). On pp. 78–82, under the heading, ‘Heir beginnis the names of all Scottis kingis send their realme begane in that quhat buik and chepter ye sal find thair stori’, there occurs a list of 105 kings of Scots, from Fergus I to James V. This has been copied directly from the printed edition (possibly 1533, certainly 1533x38) of John Bellenden’s translation of Hector Boece’s *Scotorum Historiae* (Batho and Husbands: 1941: 2. 445–6; Maitland 1821: 1. xcvi–ciii).²⁹ As already noted, *Chron. B* commences with a list of the obituaries and reign-lengths of the kings of Scots from Malcolm Canmore to James IV. Malcolm’s own, much emended entry (*B*, p. 186, ll. 1–3) originally gave his reign-length as 36 years; this has been changed to 25 years. The latter is what is given in the printed edition of Bellenden, but the former is what appears both in Boece’s original Latin version, published in

Paris in 1527, and in certain manuscripts of Bellenden (Maitland 1821: 2. 287; Boece 1527: f. 269; Batho and Husbands 1941: 2. 175, 438–43). The compilers of *B* therefore had access to Boece in at least two different forms.

The influence of Fordun or Bower is also clear upon some of these obituaries, for example those of Malcolm Canmore, Edgar and David I (*B*, p. 186, ll. 1–3, 8–9, 12–15; Skene 1871–2: 1. 219, 227, 234 and n. 3). However, the dates of death and reign-lengths depart from those provided by Boece and Fordun/Bower with increasing frequency as time goes on, pointing to the influence of a source or sources as yet unidentified. *B* also contains a sketch of the royal pedigree from Malcolm Canmore to James I, and two Latin quatrains concerning the kings of Scots (*B*, pp. 83–4; 27, 243). One of these, on Malcolm Canmore, is to be found not in Fordun but in Bower, suggesting that it was a manuscript of *Scotichronicon* which the compilers of *B* were following (Watt 1989–98: 3. 78–9). Lastly, a poem by the dean’s brother Donnchadh in praise of the MacGregor chief Eoin Dubh is the earliest developed expression of the idea that the MacGregors were of royal descent, and makes its case through an *ardríomh* or ‘high enumeration’ of Eoin Dubh’s pedigree, in the mould of *An Duan Albanach* and a poem to the first Marquis of Argyll in the mid-seventeenth century (Jackson 1957: 125–37; Watson 1931: 139–51; cf. MacInnes 1981: 144–5). Donnchadh asserts of Eoin Dubh that:

*Tearc aithris a fhine ann
D’uaislibh Gaoidheal ná glanGhall,
Focht na fréimhe agá bhfuil
Do locht léighthe na leabhar.*

‘Rare is the counterpart of his line among the nobles of the Gaels or of the bright Saxons, who make enquiry of his lineage from those who are readers of books’.

(Watson 1937: 212–3)

In a prose version of Eoin Dubh’s genealogy, Donnchadh states that he ‘wrote this from the history books of the kings and great men’ in 1512 (*B*, p. 144). However, neither Fordun/Bower nor Boece seems

to be the basis of the numerical scheme elaborated in his ‘high enumeration’, pointing again towards the use of sources as yet unknown.

The Campbells represent one pathway by which such material could have entered *B*. Between the forfeiture of the Lordship of the Isles c. 1493 and the death of the third earl of Argyll in 1529, the tide of Campbell influence over affairs, both in Gaelic Scotland and at court and in central government, flowed equally strongly. The second and third earls were successively Masters of the King’s Household. Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy was a familiar and armour-bearer of James IV, a Lord of Council between 1493 and 1500, knighted between 1503 and 1506, and, along with Gilleasbuig, the second earl, one of the commissioners appointed to set lands within the Lordship of the Isles in 1500 and 1506 (MacGregor 1989: 114–5).³⁰ Regionally, confirmation of the seriousness of Campbell attempts to succeed the MacDonalds as Lords of the Isles was their predominance at Iona throughout this period (Steer and Bannerman 1977: 115–8, 211). One tangible consequence for the MacGregors was the week which James IV spent at Achadh Innis Chalainn, the residence of a Macgregor noble lineage at the foot of Beinn Dòbhrain, in autumn 1506, during which he received gifts from the MacGregor chief Eoin Dubh, and was entertained by the poet of Donnchadh Campbell of Glenorchy, and the *clàrsair* of Gilleasbuig earl of Argyll (MacGregor 1989: 132–3). While it is not necessary to posit such an occasion as the origin of *B*’s interest in MacGregor royal descent, or the history of James’s predecessors, it could have been a contributory factor.

The Campbells were strongly linked to Hector Boece. In the preface to his history, dated at Aberdeen on 1 April 1526, Boece thanked Cailean third earl of Argyll, and his kinsman Eoin Campbell, treasurer of Scotland, for providing him with sources from Iona upon which Boece had based his account of the very earliest Scottish kings (Boece 1527: f. iii). While there is no obvious indication that *B* has any contribution to make to the famous controversy over the authenticity of Boece’s claims (Royan 2001: 42–62; Mason 2002: 100–101), it cannot be doubted that had such material existed at Iona, the connections of *B*’s compilers would

have given them ready access to it in an era when the Campbells were influential there. Boece the man brings himself even closer to *B* with his statement that his source for the appearance of a sea monster in the Gareloch in 1510 was a *Duncanus Campusbellus eques auratus vir non minore integritate quam maiorum prosapia insignis*, ‘Sir Duncan Campbell, a man distinguished no less in integrity than in his ancestral origins’ (Boece 1527: ff. vii–viii). This can only be Donnchadh, poet-chief of the Glen Orchy Campbells, and the contact with Boece must have been between then and Donnchadh’s death at Flodden in 1513 – the very period in which the dean’s brother was at work on the MacGregor ‘royal’ pedigree.

Boece possessed a manuscript of Fordun/Bower, and hence could represent the point of entry of this material into *B* (Watt 1989–98: 9. 202). But Dunkeld or Perth are also possibilities.³¹ In the later fifteenth century an abridged version of Bower’s *Scotichronicon* was made by sir Patrick Russell, a monk, and twice prior, of the Carthusian Charterhouse of Perth founded by James I (Watt 1989–98: 9. 196–7; Gillies 1938: 93). The Charterhouse was endowed with an extensive estate in Breadalbane – principally at the western end of Loch Tay, and on its southern shore – known as the lordship of Glen Dochart, where its principal tenants and agents were the MacNab chiefs (MacGregor 1989: 59, 64, 207–8). This if nothing else would suggest a need for multilingual abilities on their part, and regular contact with Perth. The Scots signature of Fionnlagh, the MacNab poet-chief apparently central to *B*, has survived, while part of his final illness was spent in Perth, perhaps the Charterhouse (Breadalbane Muns., 2/34/6 (5 January 1503: *finlay mc nab of bothvane*), 10).³² At Dunkeld, caput of the diocese within which Fortingall lay, and which the dean and his father served, another manuscript of Bower, in part deriving from that of sir Patrick Russell, was copied between 1497 and 1515 at the behest of bishop George Brown (Watt 1989–98: 9. 197–8).³³ Brown’s successor Gavin Douglas had connections, we should remember, to Boece’s adapter cum translator, John Bellenden (MacDonald 1996: 185).

Evidence for contact with other poetic cultures consists of the stanza beginning ‘Luffaris be war and tak gwd heid about’, from Henryson’s *Testament of Cresseid* (*B*, p. 92b; Fox 1981: xcvi–xcvii);

an anonymous Scots poetic version of part of that ‘enormous diatribe against women and marriage’ (Green 1984: 47), Juvenal’s sixth satire (ll. 28ff.), beginning ‘Quhat alyt ye man to ved a vyff’ (*B*, p. 48); two stanzas from the Scots poem sometimes attributed to Dunbar, and attributed in *B* to Chaucer, generally known as the *Ballate aganis Evill Women*, for which *B* seems to be the earliest witness (*B*, p. 77; Craigie 1927: 2. 124; Bawcutt 1998: 1. 30–31; 6–9); an anonymous quatrain beginning ‘Gyf that zor wyf be deid’ (*B*, p. 144); and two stanzas on Sampson and Delilah from the English poet John Lydgate’s *The Fall of Princes* (*B*, p. 184; Bergen 1924: 1. 180 (i. ll. 6371–7), 182 (i. ll. 6441–7)). The attributions of the pieces from Henryson and Lydgate – ‘In bocas that wes full gwd’; ‘Quod bochas anent dalyda and sampson’ – are to Lydgate’s ultimate source, Boccaccio (Bergen 1924: 1. x). The erroneous ascription of the Henryson stanza perhaps reflects Boccaccio’s status as ‘an authority on Troy and on anti-feminism’ (Fox 1981: xcvi–xcvii).³⁴ It is blatantly obvious that *B*’s compilers were single-mindedly targeting texts on ‘The Argument about Women’ which is such a predominant theme of *B*’s Gaelic poetry by amateurs. Less obvious is whether the intent was their own personal gratification, or that of *B*’s literary circles where this theme took pride of place, or even the provision of models for *B*’s Gaelic verse in this strain, which is largely misogynist.

Finally, the models for some of the Gaelic poetry of Scottish origin in *B* were spread so widely across the terrain and languages of late-medieval Europe as to make identification of the specific sources involved a matter for detailed analysis, although continental influence is certainly feasible. The ultimate, if very recent exemplar for the two ‘Ship of Evil Women’ poems by An Bard Mac An t-Saoir was Sebastian Brant’s *Das Narren Schyff*, ‘The Ship of Fools’, first printed in German at Basle in 1494, but which gained wider currency, especially in France, through the Latin version by James Locher, first printed at Basle in 1497. What has been called a ‘sort of appendix’ to Brant (as mediated by Locher) was a Latin text dealing specifically with women by Jodocus Badius Ascensius, which appeared first in 1500, preceded by a French translation, *Nef des Folles*, probably published in 1498. The first English version of

Brant (again as mediated by Locher) was published in 1509 (Gillies 1977: 46–7, 50, n. 22; Pompen 1925: 7–8, 14–19, 103, 311). The dating information we possess for *An Bard Mac An t-Saoir* allows the possibility of his gaining swift access to an earlier, most probably Latin version, rather than waiting for that in English. Two of the four poems by Giolla Críost Táilliúr are contributions to the genre of religious exempla which is so prominent in *B*. One (*B*, p. 271) is based upon the parable of the man in the tree and the unicorn found in the popular medieval tale, *Barlaam and Josaphat* (Quiggin 1913: 123; Woodward and Mattingly 1914: 187–91). The other (*B*, p. 120) is a version of what Quiggin calls ‘the North French story of the monk who spent 300 years in his garden listening to the song of a bird’, but which seems to have been very widely dispersed, possibly through Cistercian channels (Quiggin 1913: 123).³⁵ These poets shared a Rannoch connection, perhaps even the same patrons, and may have known each other.

Three points may be made in conclusion. Firstly, the contacts and networks available to the MacGregor compilers of *B* were extensive enough to allow them to range from Fortingall across the cultures of late-medieval Britain and Ireland, and beyond, in selective pursuit of what attracted them. The second point concerns the sophistication of the primary cultural milieu to which *B* gives witness. There may be a danger of seeing this as something peculiar to its compilers, and imposed by them upon *B* by dint of their diversity of interests and connections. In fact, as the work of poets like Giolla Críost Táilliúr and *An Bard Mac An t-Saoir* testifies, this sophistication, and these contacts, were no artificial editorial creation, but inherent in the Breadalbane to which the editors belonged. In this sense at least, *B* is no aberration or anachronism, but a faithful cultural index of its time and place.

Thirdly, *B* can be set against the unfolding of three successive phases of lordship in Breadalbane. The first, from 1461 and the accession of Eoin Dubh MacGregor, to 1513 and the death of Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy, saw their kindreds operate in tandem to dominate this lordship. This was the era in which, overwhelmingly, *B*’s verse of Scottish provenance was composed, and this political optimism has left a particular mark upon the glad

self-confidence of its amateur poetry. The second phase, opening with Flodden in 1513 and the death of Eoin Dubh in 1519, and closing with the death of James V in 1542, was the era in which, overwhelmingly, *B* was compiled. Flodden shook and scarred Breadalbane, and precipitated an era of profound uncertainty and volatility there, as the Campbells of Glen Orchy struggled for their political lives. Culturally, this engendered a very different mindset of retrospection and remembrance which influenced both the fact of *B*'s compilation, and the caste of much of its contents. The third phase, commencing in earnest in 1550, was in every sense an era of Reformation, as Cailean Liath resurrected the moribund lordship of his immediate predecessors, and invested it with a new ethos. One cultural link across the divide was the *Book of Fortingall*, whose chronicle steps into the breach as *Chron. B* fades out in the 1530s, and which seems to become contemporary, on the evidence of its treatment of death and burial, and other indications, in winter 1554–5 (Innes 1855: 124). The similarity and overlap of their contents makes it clear that the compiler or compilers of the *Book of Fortingall* had possession of, or access to, *B*.³⁶ The likely candidate is Dubhghall MacGregor, son of the dean, whose career closely paralleled that of his father in his holding of the vicarage of Fortingall, and his promotion to the chancellorship of Lismore through Campbell preferment in 1558. In all this there is a plausible continuity which invites the conclusion that in the *Book of Fortingall*, Dubhghall was perpetuating a family tradition, and creating a sequel to *B*. Yet he and his father belonged to different epochs. In comparison to *B* what the *Book of Fortingall* represents is attenuation, imitation, derivation (cf. Mapstone 1985: 309), and – in the way in which *Chron. Fortingall* latterly loses form, discipline, objectivity and linguistic integrity – degradation. There could be no more eloquent and poignant commentary on the social, political and cultural trajectory of Breadalbane in the sixteenth century, and the contraction and eclipse of the worlds of the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*.

NOTES

¹ Cf. Bawcutt 2005: 48. My thanks to Prof. Bawcutt for sending me a copy of this article and also to Maggie Scott of Scottish Language Dictionaries. For a

valuable contribution to scholarship on *B* which came to my attention too late for incorporation here, see Ó Mainnín 2002. My greatest debt is to the scholarship of Professors Donald Meek and William Gillies. Note that in what follows names given in Gaelic are usually represented in modern orthography, except where classical forms are attested in the surviving sources.

- 2 In the light of the latter point, and the close relationship that we shall see existed between the dean's lineage and the Campbells, relevant also may be the fact that the second head of the Lawers branch of the Campbells of Glen Orchy, who was roughly speaking a contemporary of the dean, succeeding his father after Flodden in 1513, and dying in 1562 (Innes 1855: 130), was also named Seumas.
- 3 A list in *B*, p. 74, mainly concerned with the procurement of meal, states that 'Johne & Dougald gat a boll ... in pertht for my fader'. There are further references to 'Dugall my brodir', to 'Dougall and Johne' and to 'Johne' alone. Seumas and Donnchadh did indeed have brothers so named: see p. 25. The fourth individual is Uilleam Drummond, curate in Fortingall, but it may be questioned whether the notarial fragment in *B* referring to him in the first person must needs have been written by him (*B*, p. 301). He is probably to be identified with the sir Uilleam Drummond, chaplain, on record twice in 1540, in connection with the lands of Stix (near Balloch and not far from Fortingall, at the mouth of Loch Tay), pertaining to the head of the Drummonds, part of which had been occupied by the dean's lineage since c. 1480 (MacGregor 1989: 138, 165–6). On the second occasion the dean himself is a fellow witness (Breadalbane Muns., 2/147/2/5, 6). 1540 is very late in the life cycle of *B*.
- 4 The compiler (or one of them) of the chronicle in this manuscript informs us in the first person that he said his first mass in 1531, came to the cure of Fortingall in 1532, and acknowledged the chief of the MacGregors. If Dubhghall son of the dean were the compiler, then it is in the third person that he is noted as having built a new house beside the church of Fortingall, and become chancellor of Lismore, in 1558. Under 16 November 1571, the chronicle notes the death of Griogair, son of the vicar of Fortingall, in the house of his father in Fortingall, and his burial there on the same day (Innes 1855: 120–21, 128, 137).
- 5 For a supplication in 1450 by John *Donaldi* to be provided to the vicarage of Fortingall, previously resigned by Alexander *Donaldi*, see CSSR 1997: 99. Sir Ragnall Coly was vicar of Fortingall in 1479 (Stewart 1879: 74–5, and facsimile), and sir Domhnall MacNaughton died as vicar of Fortingall in 1520 or 1521 (Innes 1855: 117; Gregory 1831: 325).
- 6 It is an interesting commentary upon the networks available to *B*'s compilers that it also contains what may be the earliest extant witnesses of two Scots texts, namely the *Ballate of Evill Women*, and a single stanza of the

- Testament of Cresseid* (Mapstone 1985: 307).
- ⁷ See n. 3.
- ⁸ For a preliminary and incomplete list, see MacGregor 1989: 422–3.
- ⁹ For individuals identified only by the epithets *ravar* (reamhar) and *ker* (ciar), see Breadalbane Muns., 3/9. For other deeds describing Donnchadh Riabhach as such see Breadalbane Muns., 1/34 (7 June 1508); MacGregor Coll. (Menzie's Writs), 186/1/iv/14, 19 January 1512 (in both cases he is addressed as a baillie, and empowered to give sasine); and Breadalbane Muns., 3/9 (19 October 1488: *duncanus revaich*), which, as with events in 1482, places him in very close political alignment with Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy. I am much indebted to Dr. Donald McWhannell for drawing my attention to some of these references, and for suggesting the equation with Donnchadh Riabhach MacGille-Chonail.
- ¹⁰ On the debate concerning the roles of oral versus written sources in *B*, see Meek 1996: 268–71. On possible dictation errors in the transmission in one poem in *B*, see Gillies 1979–80: 83–4.
- ¹¹ Rev. William Gillies has erred in his reconstruction of the succession to the chiefship of the MacNabs either side of 1500 (Gillies 1938: 94–5). Perhaps influenced by a later endorsement, he dates a crown precept of sasine in favour of Eoin, son and heir of the deceased Fionnlagh MacNab of Bovain, and granted at Edinburgh on 6 July and in the twelfth regnal year, to 1499 (Breadalbane Muns., 2/34/5). However, it must belong not to the reign of James IV but James V, and to July 1525 when, as other documents confirm (Breadalbane Muns., 2/34/12), Eoin MacNab succeeded his father, the Fionnlagh of *B*, following the latter's death on 13 April. *Chron. B* and *Chron. Fortingall*, which we might have expected to keep us fully informed on this issue, record only the deaths of Pádraig MacNab (who was married to a Campbell of Strachur), in 1488, and of the Fionnlagh of *B* in 1525. Fionnlagh was predeceased by his eldest son and heir, also Pádraig (Breadalbane Muns., 2/71/7), but I know of no authority for Gillies's statement that the latter died with Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy at Flodden.
- ¹² Subsequent editors were more circumspect on this point: see Gillies 1976–8: 259, 264; Meek 1996: 255.
- ¹³ 'Aychly' should be identified with the place between Fortingall and the junction of the Lyon with the Keltney Burn, opposite Drumcharry Easter, which appears on the map in *The Book of Garth and Fortingall* as 'Achloa', and in the 1769 survey of Loch Tayside as 'Achlea' and 'Achloy' (Campbell 1888: McArthur 1936: 66–7, 71; Gillies 1938: 410).
- ¹⁴ For discussion of the distribution pattern of *B*'s poems addressed to Irish lords, see Meek 1996: 266.
- ¹⁵ Poets whom we can most readily associate with this zone are Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy himself, with nine poems; the dean's brother

Donnchadh (five poems); Fionnlagh an Bard Ruadh (six poems); Fionnlagh MacNab, chief of the MacNabs (two poems); the likely lineage represented by three poets, Giolla Críost Táilliúr, An Giolla Glas mac an Táilliuir, and Dubhghall mac an Ghiolla Ghlais, who among them contribute six poems; An Bard Mac an t-Saoir (three poems); Giolla Pádraig Mac Lachlainn (two poems), and sir Donnchadh MacDiarmaid (one poem). In terms of the MacGregors, their main professional poet in this period was Fionnlagh an Bard Ruadh. His poem in praise of the house or fortress of the MacGregor chief Eoin Dubh (d. 1519) does not specify its locale, but names his wife as *Ealasaíd a Gleann Liamhunn*, ‘Elizabeth from Glen Lyon’, while elsewhere he mentions *teaghlach airmghéar Mheic Ghriogóir i mBealach*, ‘the keen-weaponed household of MacGregor in Balloch’ (Watson 1937: 144–5, 156–7).

- ¹⁶ The attribution of the poem on wolves (*B*, p. 23) calls Giolla Críost Táilliúr ‘bod in stuyck’, *bod an stuic*. If this be with reference to the lands of Stix, or *Na Stuiceannan* (Watson 1993: 517; MacGregor 1989: 165), then this would link Giolla Críost to the dean’s lineage (see n. 3). *B*, p. 275, also by him, is *Réadla na cruinne corp Críost*. On his two other poems (*B*, pp. 120, 271), see p. *43. At 16, 31, 24 and 18 qq. respectively, these poems constitute a significant corpus.
- ¹⁷ I am very grateful to Jean Munro for giving me access to her forthcoming edition of this Macintosh history by Lachlann Macintosh of Kinrara, the English and apparently original version of a text which hitherto has only been available in the abridged Latin version known as *De Origine et Incremento Makintoshiorum* (MacFarlane 1900: 1. 144–406).
- ¹⁸ As Gillies points out of *Mairg bean nach bí ag éantsagart*, (‘Woe to the woman whom no priest possesses’), which makes reference to the sexual excesses of the deans, ‘one must bear in mind that the poem was, after all, composed by the Dean of Lismore’s brother Duncan’ (Gillies 1983: 71). We know that Seumas fathered two sons, who received dispensation for illegitimacy in 1558 (RSS: 5 pt. 1. 70)
- ¹⁹ Sir Eoin MacCairbre, chaplain, is on record as such on numerous occasions between 1503 and 1539, in contexts linking him closely to the Campbells of Glen Orchy (Breadalbane Muns., 2/71/ 3, 7, 10, 14, 18; 2/34/8, 12 (11 July 1525). He is described as chaplain perpetual of the chaplainry of Finlarig on 1 April 1525 (Breadalbane Muns., 2/34/11). Sir Donnchadh MacDiarmid also witnessed a charter granted by Donnchadh Campbell on 23 November 1510 (Breadalbane Muns., 2/40/5). He is again described there as a chaplain, as is his fellow witness *Malcolm Wrycht*. For other references to the latter (sometimes as *Malcolm Worycht*) in the same period and context, see Breadalbane Muns., 2/71/10, 12; 1/36. The remission granted in January 1483 to Cailean earl of Argyll and Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy after Lauder included a *Patricius Clerksone capellanus* (Breadalbane Muns., 3/6).

- ²⁰ See also n. 4.
- ²¹ Meek 1997: 28–9, notes that the exemplar apparently underlying the MacSween poem is rather different from the ‘norm’ in terms of its phonetic system, and speculates that it may be older. Cf. Higgitt 2000: 336–45.
- ²² The entries from 1390 to 24–26 May 1519 occur on pp. 189–93 of *B*, and, ignoring obvious additions, exhibit consistency in terms of hand, ink, and appearance on the page. They do not observe chronological order, although latterly there is some sign of stabilisation in this respect: the second to sixth entries on p. 193 all fall between December 1516 and 24–26 May 1519. The remaining four entries are dated July 1522, 16 September 1522, April 1515 and 15–30 October 1542. None of these entries seems to be in the same hand as operated previously. The first two seem to share the same hand, and were probably added together. The only entries on pp. 189–93 which postdate 24–26 May 1519 are additions. Pp. 194–7 contain entries from January 1523 to 5 September 1536, and no entries predating 24–26 May 1519. The first entry on p. 194 is an addition. The remaining entries on this page are all in the same hand, which differs from the main hand of pp. 189–93, and resembles that which made additions to the bottom margins of pp. 189–92. The earliest entry is dated January 1523 (wrongly read as 1526 in Gregory 1831: 327), and the latest 4 March 1524. After p. 194, although precise analysis is difficult, the hands and inks involved seem to vary, and the entries lack the regularity of layout of those on pp. 189–93. In the light of suggestions that *B* ‘was compiled piecemeal and the gatherings brought together subsequent to writing’, and that the order of folios underwent alteration after compilation (Black, ‘Catalogue’; Meek 1982: 1. 3–4), it should be noted that pp. 188–99 in *B* all bear the same watermark.
- ²³ On the strategic importance of the route via Kenmore and Glen Cuaich, see Haldane 1997: 81, 102, 112. It may have been well known to Dubhghall Maol, given the direct access it afforded to Dunkeld and Perth. A’ Chrois, ‘The Cross’, survives as a placename on the OS 1: 50 000 map of Glen Quaich (NO 811421). Perhaps it marked the point at which the traveller gained the first or last glimpse of Fortingall. The dean’s lineage may have had links with the lands of Garrow and Ledchroisk in Glen Quaich (Breadalbane Muns., 2/147/2/8, 11; Gillies 1938; 374).
- ²⁴ Worth noting also are one instance of precise time of death (15 March 1525), and one of precise time of burial (31 October 1527); and identification of the day of death in terms of the liturgical calendar (13 April 1525; 12 April 1528; 29 September 1529). The death notice for 25 May 1529 gives the location of burial as ‘in the cemetery of Fortingall close to the window of the High Altar’ (Gregory 1831: 326–8).
- ²⁵ Precise location of burial: 19 April 1390; 10 March 1491; 14 August 1493 (Gregory 1831: 324, erroneously reads 1483); 22 June 1498; 22 July 1511; 9 October 1511. Dominical letters: 22 July 1511, 9 October 1511; 9 September

- 1513; 7 April 1516. Solicitude for the souls of the dead: 9 September 1513, the entry on Flodden (Gregory 1831: 320, 322, 324).
- ²⁶ *Chron. Fortingall* only adopts such an approach to death and burial from winter 1554–5 onwards. It contains two earlier expressions of solicitude for the souls of the dead (12 December 1516, 24–26 May 1519), and one earlier instance of precise location of burial (17 January 1436). Before 1519, it also tends to cite place of burial less regularly than *Chron. B*.
- ²⁷ It is possible that some emendation of *B*'s poetic texts took place after 1542, by the compiler(s) of the *Book of Fortingall*. *B* was clearly in the possession of, or accessible to, him or them, as evinced not only by the likely copying across of prose items from *B* to the *Book of Fortingall* (Mapstone 1985: 307–10), but also the possibility that *Chron. Fortingall* draws upon *Chron. B*, while some additions to *Chron. B* almost certainly derive from *Chron. Fortingall*. Note also that the *Book of Fortingall* contained 'a list of Scotch Kings from Boece' (Innes 1855: x). The minor orthographic variations which Mapstone notes between the stanza from the *Testament of Cresseid* as it appears in *B* and the *Book of Fortingall* need not preclude the former being the source drawn upon by the latter (Mapstone 1985: 309). Similar variations occur between entries held in common by *Chron. B* and *Chron. Fortingall*, while Meek notes that the Scots-based spelling system in which the *Book of Fortingall*'s sole Gaelic poem is written seems to differ somewhat from that employed in *B* (Meek 1989: 138) Cf. Gillies 1983: 62.
- ²⁸ Gregory 1831: 325, read *planetus*.
- ²⁹ In the case of five kings the book and chapter references given in *B* diverge minimally from those given in Maitland's edition. For the existence of slight variations among copies of the printed edition of Bellenden, see Batho and Husbands 1941: 2. 443–4.
- ³⁰ Specimens of the signature of Donnchadh Campbell of Glen Orchy survive, in a notably competent hand (Breadalbane Muns., 1/24 (*Du(n)ca(n) Ca(m)pbell of gle(n)vrquhay*); 1/38 (*Duncan Campbe[] of glenwrquhay*)).
- ³¹ *B*, p. 312, contains two fragmentary letters in Scots, which at one time formed part of its binding. One begins, 'Sir I vyt ye I byd fra Sir Collyn in Sant Johnnstwnn', perhaps with reference to Cailean, third chief of the Glenorchy Campbells from 1513 to his death in 1523 (Innes 1855: 17), and who had already been knighted by 3 November 1513 (Breadalbane Muns., 2/46/1). The other ends, 'I man be in Dunkeld this next Sunday and than spek with zow'. See also *B*, p. 74, for a list of transactions, most concerning meal, in which Dunkeld and Perth feature prominently.
- ³² Fionnlagh's wife Mariota died in Perth (at the Charterhouse?) on 4 July 1526 (Innes 1855: 119). John Armour, a burges of Perth who witnessed a deed involving Fionnlagh drawn up there on 5 January 1503 (Breadalbane Muns., 2/34/6), has his death noted in *Chron. Fortingall* (Innes 1855: 119). Fionnlagh's son and successor Eoin could also sign his name (Breadalbane

- Muns., 2/34/13: *jhon maknab*). For other evidence linking the MacNabs with the Charterhouse and Perth, see Breadalbane Muns., 2/34/6 (9 January 1503), 7; Gillies 1938: 93–4.
- ³³ Presumably this was the manuscript of *Scotichronicon* used by Alexander Myln in his *Vitae episcoporum Dunkeldensium* (MacQueen 1991: 354). It is worth noting that the Latin quatrain on Malcolm Canmore found in both *B* and *Bower* is also reproduced in the compilation known as *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scocie*, which has been linked to Myln (Turnbull 1842: xiv–xv, 62).
- ³⁴ Cailean third earl of Argyll is known to have possessed an edition of Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae* printed at Strasbourg in 1494 (Bawcutt 1990: 64). A manuscript of Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* now in Boston Public Library was owned by 'Sir Duncane Campbell of Glenenorquhay, knyht.' (Edwards 1971–3: 89–90). This is almost certainly not the second but the seventh chief, who succeeded in 1583, and whose known literary interests included ownership of two copies of *The Buikie of King Alexander the Conqueroure*, Sir Gilbert Hay's translation of the French *Roman de Alexander*, and the romance *Florimond of Albany* (Innes 1855: vi; Bawcutt 1991: 265).
- ³⁵ I have to thank members of *The Colloquium for Scottish Medieval and Renaissance Studies* for their comments on a version of this paper delivered at Pitlochry on 9 January 2005, suggesting that versions of the tale of the monk and the bird survive from Germany, Spain, Ireland and Denmark, and that the Cistercians may have been a medium of diffusion. On fifteenth-century Gaelic versions of Irish provenance, see Flower 1926: 559.
- ³⁶ See n. 27.

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