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Benjamin T. Hudson

From *Senchus* to *histoire*:
Traditions of King Duncan I



The kings of Scotland prior to the reign of Malcolm III, popularly known as Malcolm Canmore (Malcolm "Bighead") have rarely been considered in connection with Scottish historical literature. Macbeth, largely due to Shakespeare's drama, has been the exception. For the medieval period alone, Nora Chadwick's examination of the Macbeth legend showed that a number of literary traditions, both native and foreign, can be detected in later medieval literature.¹ Macbeth was not alone in having a variety of legends cluster about his memory; his historical and literary contemporary Duncan earned his share of legends too. This can be seen in a comparison of the accounts about Duncan preserved in historical literature, such as the *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* of John of Fordun and the *Original Chronicle of Scotland* by Andrew of Wyntoun.² Such a com-

¹Nora Chadwick, "The Story of Macbeth," *Scottish Gaelic Studies* (1949), 187-221; 7 (1951), 1-25. In my paper names have been given in their anglicized form whenever possible.

²*Johannis de Fordun Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. W. F. Skene, *Historians of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1871-2): Book IV, Chapter 44. Andrew of Wyntoun, *The Orygnale Chronykil of Scotland* (from the creation to 1408), ed. David Laing, *Historians of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1872-9), vols. II, III, IX; and *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed., F. J. Amours, *Scottish Text Society* (Edinburgh, 1903-14): Book VI, Chapter 16. In

parison not only suggests some of the historical and literary memorials of early Scotland that were current in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but also gives some clue to interpretation and composition of those records.

The historical writings of Fordun and Wyntoun reflect literary traditions of more than three hundred years. Modern distinctions between history and literature were not necessarily observed in medieval Scottish literature. The writings of Fordun, Wyntoun and their predecessors can best be understood if the historical record for Duncan is presented. While Fordun and Wyntoun were writing historical narrative, they were limited by the materials at their disposal. The first half of the eleventh century was a politically disturbed time among the Scots; the accounts of Fordun and Wyntoun reflect that confusion.

Duncan, correctly Donnchad mac Crinain, reigned from 30 November 1035 to 16 August 1040.³ He came to the throne through the machinations of his grandfather and immediate predecessor Malcolm II. Duncan was the son of Malcolm's daughter Bethoc and Crinan the hereditary abbot of the Columban monastery at Dunkeld, a church that was virtually a royal chapel for two centuries. Malcolm was one of the most important of the early Scottish kings and the real architect of the medieval Scottish kingdom. During his reign the Scots annexed Lothian from the Haddington Tyne to the river Tweed and the ancient British kingdom of Strathclyde, the last of the independent British kingdoms north of Hadrian's Wall, was absorbed into the Scottish domain. More importantly, for this study, Malcolm was actively laboring to unite all the Scots under his rule.

Since the Scottish migrations from Dal Riata into *Pictavia*, in the early ninth century, there had been two kingdoms of the Scots: one north of the Grampians and the other south. The northern kingdom was ruled by the dynasty of Cenel Loairn, of which Macbeth was a member, while the southern kingdom was ruled by the dynasty of Cenel nGabrain, the dynasty of Malcolm and Duncan; the two kingdoms were separated by the

this paper reference to both Fordun and Wyntoun is by book and chapter; for Wyntoun this paper follows the edition of Amours and the divisions used by him for the earliest recension.

³The best collection of materials concerning Duncan and his reign is in A. O. Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1922) I, 576-83. Anderson is following the chronicle of Marianus Scotus in his assignment of dates for the death of Duncan; Marianus gives two dates: August 14 and August 16; the latter is more likely to be correct. In fact the *nativitas* of Mary, the day of Duncan's death, was celebrated on August 16 by the *Scotti* rather than August 15 as in the Roman calendar; see *Martyrology of Oengus*, ed. W. Stokes (repr. Dublin, 1984), p. 176.

river Dee.⁴ For generations the two dynasties had fought for overlordship of all the Scots; but they had not allowed their animosity to interfere with diplomacy, in the form of marriage. One branch of Cenél nGabráin held lands in Fife.⁵ In the first quarter of the eleventh century there was sent from the Fife family to Cenél Loairn a princess named Gruoch, a distant cousin of Duncan, whose first husband was a cousin of Macbeth named Gilla Comgáin. They produced a son named Lulach before Gilla Comgáin was burned to death in 1033.

The burning of Gilla Comgáin leads to an unfortunate aspect of eleventh century Scottish history: civil war within both Cenél nGabráin and Cenél Loairn. Duncan's grandfather Malcolm II had taken the Cenél nGabráin kingship in 1005 at the conclusion of a civil war that had plagued his dynasty since 961. Malcolm slew his cousin Kenneth III in 1005 and in 1033 Malcolm slew a prince of the Fife family, Gruoch's nephew. The murder of the Fife prince apparently was insurance that Duncan's claim to be king would not be challenged by someone whose fitness to be king was equal to, or better than, his own.⁶

Among Cenél Loairn, a similar war was raging. Macbeth's father Findláech was slain by his nephews in 1020; one of them, Malcolm mac Máel Brigti, succeeded him as king. On Malcolm's death in 1029, Macbeth succeeded to the kingship. When considering the murder of Gilla Comgáin, another nephew of Findláech and the brother of Malcolm mac Máel Brigti, suspicion must fall on Macbeth, a suspicion that becomes almost certain when Macbeth married Gilla Comgáin's widow, apparently an effort to restore peace among the warring factions.

Macbeth's grasp on the northern kingship appears to have been tenuous. One indication is his marriage to Gruoch, an effort to reconcile the family that had slain his father. Another indication is that Macbeth apparently submitted to Malcolm II and ruled his lands as Malcolm's *subregulus*. Malcolm II, for his part, was then the overlord of all the Scots, although his immediate rule was limited to the lands south of the Grampians. Macbeth must have submitted soon after his accession to the

⁴See *An Historical Geography of Scotland, c. 400-c. 1600*, ed. P. MacNeill and R. Nicholson (St. Andrews, 1975), pp. 20-21.

⁵W. F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland, An History of Ancient Alba*, 2nd ed., (Edinburgh, 1886), III, 64.

⁶For the Cenél nGabráin civil war, see A. A. M. Duncan, *Scotland: the making of the kingdom*, (Edinburgh, 1975), pp. 112-4; for Malcolm's machinations on Duncan's behalf see G. W. S. Barrow, *Kingship and Unity*, (London, 1981), pp. 26-7.

Cenél Loairn kingship, if not before, as he was a member of Malcolm's party when Malcolm met the English king Cnut in 1031.⁷ Macbeth's submission would account for the description of Macbeth as Duncan's *dux* by the contemporary chronicler Marianus Scotus; in the eleventh century, *dux* had the meaning of subordinate ruler, as well as the meaning of military commander.

The instability attending Macbeth's reign in the north was also present during Duncan's reign in the south. The murders Malcolm committed on Duncan's behalf had alienated a branch of his dynasty and appear to be an anticipation that Duncan's claims to the kingship, based on his mother's kinship to the royal dynasty, were likely to meet with opposition. In order to give Duncan an independent base of power, Malcolm set Duncan up as king over the newly acquired kingdom of Strathclyde, also known as Cumbria.⁸ To add support, Duncan married into the family of the Northumbrian earl, Siward, who would later lead an invasion of Scotland on behalf of Malcolm Canmore.⁹ Duncan's brother, Maldred, also married into the Northumbrian aristocracy and his descendants would prosper on the Anglo-Scottish border.

Although only three specific military events are known from Duncan's reign, it is clear that his reign was not successful. In the year 1038, the territory of Strathclyde was raided by the Northumbrians. Duncan retaliated in 1040 by leading a raid against the Northumbrian cathedral town of Durham. His raid was a complete failure; the Scots were driven from Durham and Duncan retreated northwards. Macbeth may have been a member of Duncan's army; one of the duties of a *dux* was to act as a commander in the army of his overlord. Later that year Duncan made a royal circuit of Macbeth's lands. The Cenél Loairn feud had ended, in Macbeth's favor, and Duncan's defeat at Durham may have convinced Macbeth that Duncan's overlordship could be challenged after the disasters of 1038-1040. On 16 August 1040, near Elgin, Duncan's troops were challenged by Macbeth's forces, and in the ensuing battle Duncan was slain.

⁷The names of the Scottish kings are recorded in the Laud version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, s.a. 1031, see *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, ed. C. Plummer and J. Earle (Oxford, 1892-9), I, 1959. In the text Macbeth's name is rendered as *Maelbaethe*. There was confusion of the names Macbeth and Maelbaethe during the Middle Ages, see G. W. S. Barrow, *Regesta Regum Scottorum* (Edinburgh, 1960), I, 314.

⁸Malcolm III was identified as a son of the king of the Cumbrians by the English chronicler popularly known as Florence of Worcester; see *English Historical Documents*, ed. D. C. Douglas and G. W. Greenaway, 2nd edn. (London, 1981), II, 222, s.a. 1054.

⁹Fordun claims that Duncan married a kinswoman, *consanguinia*, of Siward, (IV, 44).

Macbeth assumed the kingship of both the northern and southern kingdoms and had direct rule over all the Scots, rather than a vague overlordship over them.

Contemporary estimations of Duncan's reign are furnished by the records preserved in Irish chronicles: the *Annals of Ulster*, the *Annals of Tigernach*, and the chronicle of Marianus Scotus.¹⁰ The Irish took more than casual interest in both Malcolm II and Duncan because Malcolm's mother was a Leinster woman.¹¹ Irish fascination with Malcolm is reflected in his obituary in the *Annals of Tigernach* (s.a. 1034), where he is called the glory of the whole of Western Europe. Marianus Scotus begins his record of Scottish material with Malcolm's death and gives the only precise chronological information for Duncan's accession and death; he states that Malcolm died 25 November 1034 and Duncan reigned from 30 November 1034 until 16 August 1040. Both *Tigernach* and *Ulster* state that Duncan was slain by his own people, *a suis occisus est*, testifying to his lordship of Macbeth's lands.

Within two generations of his death, estimations of Duncan's reign and character appear in Scottish historical literature. An early poetic account of Duncan's reign is provided by a contemporary verse history of the kings of Ireland and Scotland known as the *Prophecy of Berchan*, composed in the second half of the eleventh century.¹² *Berchan* used sobriquets to identify the kings, but comparison of reign lengths with the order of the kings in the poem allows for fairly certain identification. In the verses (stanzas 187-90) dealing with Duncan, he is called the "man of many diseases":

(187) "He [Duncan] who will take the kingship [of Scotland] after
him [Malcolm II] without delay, a king whose name is the man

¹⁰G. Mac Niocaill & S. Mac Airt, *The Annals of Ulster* (Dublin, 1983); W. Stokes, "The Fragmentary Annals of Tigernach" in *Revue Celtique* 17 (1896), pp. 378-9; *Mariani Scotti Chronicon* in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, V, 556-7. Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History* contains convenient translations, I, 571-2.

¹¹A. O. Anderson, "Prophecy of Berchan," *Zeitschrift Für celtische Philologie* 18 (1929), 1-56; stanza 181, calls her "a woman of Leinster," while stanza 182 places her home in the Liffey valley.

¹²"The Prophecy of Berchan," 18 (1929), 1-56; the stanzas referring to Duncan are numbers 187-90. A more recent edition and translation of the Scottish verses in *Berchan* is by B. T. Hudson, "Aspects of Scottish Kingship: A.D. 840-1058" (Oxford, D. Phil. 1983), pp. 261-88.

of many diseases; the king will not be young, but he will be old, he will turn against the hostages of the Gaels (i.e. the Scots).

- (188) Alba [Scotland] will not be attacked in his time—the man of many diseases of many melodies—the standard of good gold arousing battle; he will be a prosperous old man.
- (189) Joy to Alba which he will govern, but short the time he will enjoy her. Five and a half years, a bright space, over Alba in high-kingship.
- (190) After that the diseased king will take [the kingship], his name is the man of many diseases. He will die of that disease, that will be his high deed.¹³

A reading of *Berchan* shows that two sets of verses on Duncan were prepared: one set of verses, stanzas 187-9, were favorable to Duncan, while one stanza, 190, is unfavorable. Stanzas 187 and 190 both begin with the standard introduction to a reign with the phrase "x will take the kingship." One might suggest that the favorable verses were composed independently of the unfavorable verse; the superfluous introduction to stanza 190 is understandable in such a context.¹⁴ The stanza declares that Duncan did nothing of importance, a picture in keeping with the contemporary records. Stanzas 187-9, however, claim that Duncan was an old man and that he died before he had the opportunity to prove his merit. The reference in *Berchan* to Duncan's old age might be a comment on his poor health, in light of the *Annals of Tigernach's* insistence that he was not old. The favorable stanzas in *Berchan* call Duncan a prosperous old man and the same designation of wealth is applied to his brother Maldred in an English tract attributed to Symeon of Durham.¹⁵ Apparently the family was exceptionally well-off, even by the standards ordinarily applied to the

¹³This prose paraphrase follows the text edited by Anderson "The Prophecy of Berchan," stanzas 187-90. In order to make the translation conform to modern English usage there has been some emendation of obscure or corrupt passages. Anderson printed a translation of the Scottish section of *Berchan* in *Early Sources of Scottish History*, the stanzas on Duncan are in I, 582.

¹⁴Anderson, "The Prophecy of Berchan," p. 4, would date the composition of the entire Scottish section to the period 1074-93.

¹⁵*De Primo Saxonum Adventu in Symeonis monachi opera omnia*, ed. Thomas Arnold, Rolls Series (London, 1882-5), II, 383. The relevant passage is translated by A. O. Anderson in *Scottish Annals from English Chronicles* (London, 1908), p. 81, n. 1.

aristocracy. In comparison to Duncan, Macbeth fares well in the *Berchan* poem; he is called the good king whose death was a tragedy to Scotland (stanzas 191-3). The statement in *Berchan* (stanza 188) that Scotland was peaceful during Duncan's reign is echoed by Fordun (IV, 44) who claims that Scotland was not attacked during Duncan's reign. Even if one assumes that the attack on Strathclyde and the failed raid on Durham were "foreign" events, Duncan's battle with Macbeth would indicate at least one hostile attack.

The *Berchan* verses show a curious difference of opinion about Duncan. They suggest that within a half-century of Duncan's death there was the deliberate introduction of dynastic bias into Scottish historical records, a bias that would be carried into later accounts. The writer of stanza 190 in *Berchan* may have been attached to St. Andrews and a partisan of the family allied with Macbeth.¹⁶ The *Berchan* verses on the Fife family are very favorable while the verses on Duncan's family were less than enthusiastic. Stanzas 187-9 in *Berchan* suggest a connection with the court of Duncan's son Malcolm Canmore. The *Berchan* verses on Malcolm wrongly place his death at Rome and incorrectly give the years in his reign as thirty-seven (stanza 197) instead of the true number of thirty-five. The writer of the verses on Malcolm Canmore apparently was writing during the Malcolm's lifetime, and the mention of Rome may have been an attempt to influence Malcolm and urge him to make a pilgrimage there.¹⁷ The two versions had been incorporated in all versions of *Berchan* by the seventeenth century, when Michael O'Clery made his copy of the poem. The *Prophecy of Berchan* indicates that differing traditions about Duncan were current by the end of the eleventh century.

The evidence of dynastic bias that has been suggested for the *Prophecy of Berchan* is not so fantastic when one realizes that, from the tenth to the thirteenth century, there had been a steady revision of Scottish historical records both within and without Scotland. To a great extent, modern interpretations of early Scottish history are based on two revisions of the historical records: one carried out during the reign of Duncan's great-great-grandson, William the Lion, about the year 1167, and a second revision

¹⁶St. Andrews is the only Scottish church mentioned in the poem, see stanzas 154 and 161. There is an unusual amount of detail concerning kings who made their home in Fife. M. O. Anderson, in *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1973), p. 50, also suggests that there may have been two parallel traditions conflated in *Berchan*. She would identify one tradition as that of a regnal list also used by the king-lists she identifies as group X and suggests (p. 51) that it might have an Irish origin.

¹⁷Anderson, "Berchan," p. 55, note to stanza 198.

carried out during the reign of William's son Alexander II (1214-1249).¹⁸ Part of the revision was clearly an effort by antiquarians to reflect current political realities. This is seen in the revision of the royal Scottish genealogies from the tenth to twelfth centuries. The tenth century genealogies mention not one, but two dynasties within Cenél nGabráin, reflecting their equal status.¹⁹ That situation of rough parity is reflected by Fordun (IV, 34) who notes that those different branches of the royal dynasty, the family of Constantine and the family of Malcolm, were competing for the kingship in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Fordun presents the competition as Malcolm II defending his right to the kingship against usurpers, while Wyntoun (VI, 10) presents the battles as mere dynastic infighting. The decline of Cenél nGabráin in the mid-eleventh century, together with the supremacy of Cenél Loairn during Macbeth's reign, is reflected in the eleventh-century genealogical tracts compiled in Ireland. The eleventh-century lists end with the Cenél Loairn king Mael snechtai (died 1085) while the Cenél nGabráin list ends with Malcolm II (died 1034), completely ignoring Duncan.²⁰ Not until the twelfth century genealogy preserved in *The Book of Leinster*, compiled during the reign of William the Lion, is the Cenél nGabráin list brought up to David I (died 1153). In that list the rival Cenél nGabráin family, in Fife, is mentioned in a supplement but not in the main list.²¹

A late eleventh-century poem does survive whose provenance is known; it was commissioned by Duncan's son Malcolm Canmore and is a verse history of the Scottish kings known as the *Duan Albanach*, "The Scottish Poem."²² In that poem, Duncan's reign is increased to six years and he is called "pure, wise Duncan." As Malcolm Canmore was still alive at the time of the poem's composition, the poem could not have been

¹⁸Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, p. 52.

¹⁹The tenth century genealogies are conveniently edited by J. Bannerman in *Studies in the History of Dalriada* (Edinburgh, 1974), 65-6.

²⁰Both the Bodleian MS. Rawlinson B. 502 and the *Book of Leinster* genealogies have been edited by M. A. O'Brien, *Corpus Genealogiarum Hiberniae* (Dublin, repr. 1976), 328-30 and 426.

²¹For the king lists see Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, pp. 261-91. The lists vary in their omissions, most accidental, but they always omit two kings: Eochaid ap Rhun (fl. 878) and Amlaib mac Cuilen (d. 976).

²²This poem has been edited several times; the edition used here is that made by K. H. Jackson in *Scottish Historical Review* 36 (1957), 125-37.

composed later than 1093, the year of Malcolm's death. The information in *Duan Albanach* is repeated by another document prepared during the reign of Malcolm Canmore, possibly at his court, known as King-List B.²³ In List B Duncan is given a reign of six years and the list ends with Malcolm Canmore, who is not assigned a length for his reign indicating that he was still alive at the time.

In historical literature written during the reign of Malcolm Canmore, there is a tradition in which Duncan was remembered in the records connected with the court of his son as a king who reigned six years and was famous for his gentler qualities. For at least two of the three records, *Duan Albanach* and King-List B, the patron may have been Malcolm Canmore himself. The devotion of Malcolm Canmore to the memory of his father was genuine. The name Duncan was given by Malcolm to his son by Ingiborg, the daughter of the lord of the Orkney Isles; Duncan II would reign briefly in 1094.

Co-existing with the court records was a literary tradition that remembered Duncan in less favorable terms, an estimation given in *Berchan* stanza 190. That less favorable view may have held the ascendancy after the eleventh century. After the reign of Malcolm Canmore, the reign of Duncan appears to have been somewhat forgotten. Duncan is not included in the twelfth century king-list preserved in a manuscript commonly known as Poppleton, but in the genealogy attached to that king-list he is named as the father of Malcolm Canmore and the ancestor of William the Lion.²⁴

The restoration of Duncan and the earliest notice of some information later found in the works of Fordun and Wyntoun occurred during the reign of Alexander II. A Latin poem on the Scottish kings, with the modern title *Verse Chronicle* and compiled in its extant form during Alexander's reign, presents information about Duncan that may have come from a variety of sources.²⁵ The name of Duncan's mother, Bethoc, is given and

²³The manuscript is Oxford, Bodleian MS Laud 610, the entry on Duncan is f. 87 (89) r.b. This list is printed by Anderson in *Kings and Kingship*, pp. 261-3.

²⁴Poppleton lists the kings Malcolm II, Macbeth, Lulach and on to William the Lion, see Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, p. 254; Malcolm Canmore is identified in that list as *filius Dunec*. In the genealogy of William the Lion, Duncan is called the *nepos* of Malcolm II, see *Kings and Kingship*, p. 256.

²⁵This chronicle survives in several texts, a convenient edition is that in the *Chronicle of Melrose*, ed. A. O. & M. O. Anderson and W. C. Dickinson (London, 1936). The verses are scattered among the annals for the various kings; the verses relevant to this study are collected on p. xl.

the location of Duncan's death outside Elgin is mentioned. Within the *Verse Chronicle* there is an ambiguous passage on Duncan claiming: *senis annis rex erat Albani*. The passage may be interpreted two ways. *Senis* may be intended as a declining of *seni*, "six each," giving the meaning, "he was king of Alba six years."²⁶ Such a use may reflect the influence of *Duan Albanach*. Or *senis* may be read as the genitive singular of *senex*, "old", resulting in a stilted translation, "of old age [in] years was he, the king of Alba." If the second reading is intended by the author, then that may be evidence of continuity in literary tradition as first seen in stanza 187 of the *Prophecy of Berchan*. Either interpretation suggests a continuation with the traditions earlier seen in the records from the court of Malcolm Canmore.

Those pieces of information may be connected with the efforts of Alexander II on behalf of his ancestor. On the twenty-first of April in 1235, Alexander II endowed a mass-chaplaincy at Elgin cathedral for the soul of Duncan.²⁷ Three marks were given annually from the royal burgh of Elgin for that purpose. Alexander's interest in Duncan may account for a renewed interest in him, both literary and historical.

Not only can specific pieces of literature be identified with certain views, but certain times can be identified with an interest in Duncan: the reigns of Malcolm Canmore and Alexander II. While that interest may reflect no more than the records that are now extant, or, in the case of Malcolm, a certain filial piety, there are political considerations for both kings that may have influenced the literature of the time. Both kings were actively involved in affairs in the lands formerly ruled by the Cenél Loairn kings. Malcolm Canmore was active in his efforts to establish his lordship over Moray; he led an invasion there, and he needed to establish that those rights were his by virtue of his father's overlordship.²⁸ At the same time the reign of Macbeth would need to be discredited, to discourage opposition both in Moray and in Fife. At that time the king in the north was Mael snechtai, a son of Macbeth's step-son Lulach. The nature of Dun-

²⁶That is the meaning assumed by Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*.

²⁷Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*, I, 581, note 7. Alexander's charter is printed in *Registrum Episcopatus Moraviensis*, Bannatyne Club no. 58, (Edinburgh, 1837), no. 36.

²⁸Malcolm launched an invasion of Moray in 1078 according to ASC D, see Plummer and Earle, ed., *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, I, 213.

can's death, which was really no more treacherous than his grandfather's murders, needed to be exaggerated.²⁹

In 1130 the last Cenél Loairn ruler, Oengus, was slain and Cenél nGabráin was triumphant in the person of Malcolm's son David I. Yet David's great-grandson Alexander II faced a series of rebellions and uprising in the former Cenél Loairn lands. In 1221 he had to lead an army to Inverness to quiet the region; in 1222 the bishop of Caithness was burned alive at Halkirk by rebels; and in 1228 a royal army returned to Inverness to put down a rebellion by a certain Gillescop.³⁰ Duncan in death may have been a convenient symbol by which the victorious dynasty could establish its right to overlordship. Such reason would explain Alexander's endowment at Elgin almost two hundred years after Duncan's death and could also explain the appearance of more information about Duncan in *Verse Chronicle*. A political application for records of Duncan's reign might also explain the divergences in the histories of Fordun and Wyntoun.

The *Verse Chronicle* is a late observable stage in the development of the Duncan tradition in the written records. Both Fordun and Wyntoun used the *Verse Chronicle*, and sections of the *Verse Chronicle* were copied into the second and third recensions of Wyntoun's work. When Fordun's and Wyntoun's accounts are read, however, one sees that there appear to have been two slightly divergent traditions existing side by side. One tradition has been identified in the accounts of *Berchan* stanzas 187-9 and *Duan Albanach*. The second tradition is seen in *Berchan* stanza 190 and negatively suggested by the omission of Duncan from the chronicle in the Poppleton manuscript.

Little is known of the lives and careers³¹ of either Fordun or Wyntoun. Fordun was a cleric, probably at Aberdeen. His account of Duncan is given in his chronicle, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, completed between 1380 and 1385. Fordun obviously intended his work to be a scholarly production, a synthesis of various records. Stylistically, Fordun was imitating the works of earlier writers, such as Bede and William of Malmesbury,

²⁹This may explain why Macbeth is mentioned, in the thirteenth century *Verse Chronicle*, as one born of Findláech, an effort to make clear his membership in another dynasty.

³⁰This summary follows Duncan, *Scotland: The making of the Kingdom*, pp. 527-9.

³¹The few facts known about Fordun are conveniently summarized by Skene, ed., *Chronica*, I, ix-xv; for Wyntoun, see Amours, ed., *Original Chronicle*, pp. xxx-xl.

and claimed that he used materials available in Latin and Gaelic manuscripts.

A generation after Fordun's labors the *Original Chronicle of the Scottish Nation* by Andrew of Wyntoun appeared. Wyntoun was the prior of St. Serf's of Loch Leven, a dependency of St. Andrews, and his activities as prior had prepared him for his historical writing. In defense of the rights of St. Serf's he made several appearances in the Court of the Official of the Diocese and on one occasion he produced, from the *archivum seu armarium publicum* of the cathedral of St. Andrews, the "Register of the Priory of the Cathedral church of St. Andrews."³² There were three recensions of Wyntoun's work, a fact not apparent until the appearance of F. J. Amours' edition in 1903-1914; the first version of his *Original Chronicle* was completed circa 1420.³³ Like Fordun, Wyntoun was attempting a synthesized version of Scottish history; unlike Fordun, however, Wyntoun was writing for the intelligent general audience. Not only was his chronicle really a lengthy versified history, but it was written in the vernacular of the lowlands, in Scots.³⁴

Fordun has been praised for the scholarly importance of his researches into Scottish history and his apparent lack of national bias, although Hans Utz has suggested that there is evidence of dynastic bias in Fordun's account.³⁵ Other recent re-appraisals, however, have suggested that the construction of his chronicle was, in fact, a nationalistic venture and, moreover, in his reconstruction of pre-Norman Scottish history, Fordun attempted to use the records at his disposal to recreate history con-

³²O. Tyndall Bruce, ed., *Liber Cartarum Prioratus Sancti Andree in Scotia*, Bannatyne Club no. 69, (Edinburgh, 1841), p. 15 and p. ix.

³³Andrew of Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle*, has been edited in two editions incorporating the three main recensions. The middle version is most conveniently available in David Laing's re-editing of David Macpherson's 1795 text in the *Historians of Scotland* series (Edinburgh 1872-9). Sir W. A. Craigie noted the deficiencies of Laing's edition, and some of the complexities of the various recensions in "The St. Andrews MS of Wyntoun's Chronicle," *Anglia* 20 (1893) 363-80. His call for an edition of the earlier and later versions was answered by F. J. Amours who edited them for the Scottish Text Society (1903-14).

³⁴The immediate patron was Sir John Wemyss; for a discussion see Wyntoun, *Original Chronicle*, pp. xli-xliii.

³⁵For Fordun's researches, see W. W. Scott, "Fordun's description of the inauguration of Alexander II," *Scottish Historical Review* 50 (1971) 200. For an analysis of Fordun's political interpretation, see: Hans Utz, "Traces of Nationalism in Fordun's *Chronicle*," *Scottish Studies*, ed. D. Strauss and H. W. Drescher (Frankfurt, 1986), pp. 139-49. Utz suggests that Fordun's interpretation of history was dynastic rather than wholly nationalistic, p. 142.

forming to his own theories, not always with happy results.³⁶ Wyntoun has been seen as a mere reworker of Fordun's material, with the incorporation of a few original items, and his neglect in mentioning Fordun has been seen as ungenerous.³⁷ Amours has suggested, however, that Wyntoun may have considered Fordun a suspect guide, at best, and that far from reworking Fordun's material, Wyntoun produced his narrative as an improved version.³⁸

In their respective treatments of Duncan's reign, one can gain some estimation of the differences in sources and views reflected in the productions of Wyntoun and Fordun. Fordun's assessment of Duncan and his reign is also found in the later accounts that were the predecessors of Shakespeare's drama. According to Fordun, Duncan was the noble king whose great fault was trusting too well his enemies, led by Macbeth. Duncan is compared to the Roman emperors Vespasian and Titus; the comparison with Titus re-enforces the notion of a good, but ineffective, king. Fordun supplies the information that Duncan was slain, by Macbeth himself, at *Bothgofnane*, near Elgin.³⁹ From his account, it is clear that Duncan was making a royal circuit, customary for the Gaelic overlord, through his territories.⁴⁰ Macbeth is distinguished merely as the leader of the family of the former kings Constantine III (reigned 995-997) and Gryme, or, correctly, Kenneth III (reigned 997-1005; IV, 44). Those kings had been defeated by supporters of Duncan's grandfather, Malcolm II (reigned 1005-1034); according to Fordun the families of those kings had slain Malcolm at Glamis, (IV, 41). The implication by Fordun is that Macbeth was one of the dissidents within the dynasty of Malcolm.

At several points in his narrative, Fordun is slightly confused. First, Malcolm belonged to Cenél nGabráin, as did Constantine and Kenneth; but Constantine belonged to a branch of that dynasty distinct from Malcolm or Kenneth. Secondly, Constantine and Kenneth were not members

³⁶For an estimation of nationalism in Fordun's work see: Roger Mason, "Kingship, Tyranny and the Right to Resist in Fifteenth century Scotland," *Scottish Historical Review* 66 (1987), 144-7. Fordun's efforts at reconstructing early Scottish history are discussed in B. T. Hudson, "Elech and the Scots in Strathclyde," *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 15 (1988), 147-8.

³⁷Graham Webster, *Medieval Scotland* (Ithaca, NY, 1975), p. 47.

³⁸Wyntoun, *Original Chronicle*, pp. xxxix-xl.

³⁹Skene identified *Bothgofnane* as Pitgaveny: *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, II, 420.

⁴⁰For a discussion of the royal circuit, see, F. J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-kings* (London, 1973), p. 45.

of Macbeth's dynasty. Macbeth belonged to Cenél Loairn, at least on his father's side; his father, Findláech, had ruled as king over the lands north of the Grampians. Third, Fordun claims that Constantine was slain by Malcolm's uncle Kenneth; Fordun then claims that Kenneth died in the battle and the kingship was taken by a colleague of Constantine named Gryme. According to the contemporary records that is quite wrong, because Constantine was succeeded as king by Malcolm's cousin Kenneth, who was slain by Malcolm. The Scots were embroiled in a civil war during the early eleventh century and Fordun's divergences from the historical record suggest either that the records used by Fordun had been revised at a later date, or that Fordun was selecting material from a variety of records, written or oral, and made some editorial decisions.

Wyntoun's account of Duncan's reign is similar to that given by Fordun to the extent that Duncan is portrayed as a good king, following in the footsteps of his grandfather (VI, 16). Wyntoun then introduces material not in Fordun's work. He claims that Duncan, already the father of two children, fathered a third on the daughter of a miller at Forteviot. The illegitimate child was Malcolm III or Malcolm "Canmore" ("Bighead"); he would reign from 1058-1093. Wyntoun continues to diverge from the account given by Fordun by claiming that Macbeth was not merely the leader of the opposition to Duncan, but was Duncan's nephew, the son of his sister.⁴¹ Thus the crime of regicide is further compounded by the more grievous sin, in medieval eyes, of kinslaying.

Fordun's account shows signs of access to literary traditions connected with the court of Duncan's descendants Malcolm Canmore and Alexander II. One sign of that is the reference to Duncan's death. Fordun gives the precise name of the place together with the precise details of the events leading to Duncan's death. Wyntoun does not. Fordun presents Duncan much as the revised verses in *Berchan*: Duncan was a good king with little opportunity to prove his worth. A discreet silence substitutes for Duncan's military failures or the murderous machinations of his grandfather.

The account given by Wyntoun, however, is interesting in the details it provides. While one can not discount the possibility that Wyntoun's details were the product of his imagination, Amours' research indicates that Wyntoun was an extremely conservative historian and little given to speculation, unlike Fordun.⁴² More importantly, Wyntoun had access to

⁴¹Wyntoun uses the term *eme* to describe Duncan's relationship to Macbeth (VI, 16). There are various translations of *eme*, including mere relationship, but Wyntoun states in the text that Macbeth was Duncan's nephew.

⁴²Wyntoun, *Original Chronicle*, p. xl.

records connected with St. Andrews that are no longer extant, including the now-lost "Great Register" of St. Andrews.⁴³ Wyntoun also mentions a Gospel in the cathedral that contained information on the early church of St. Andrews; it was possibly from that Gospel that he took the names of several early bishops.⁴⁴ Wyntoun claims that Duncan's liaison with the miller's daughter took place in Forteviot, formerly the capital of the early Scottish kings; Forteviot was within the diocese of St. Andrews. Forteviot is not far distant from Dunkeld, where Duncan's father was abbot, and Forteviot was a favorite residence of Malcolm Canmore.

Wyntoun does not give a name to the mother of Malcolm Canmore. Her name is mentioned in only one source, King-List I, extant in a fourteenth century manuscript; there she is called Suthen.⁴⁵ Fordun's claim that Duncan wed a kinswoman of Siward has led to the consideration of Suthen's membership in the Northumbrian aristocracy.⁴⁶ The name Suthen, however, appears to be a corrupted spelling of the Gaelic name *Suithcearn*; it is not a name one would expect from a Dano-English family. For his part, Fordun is curiously silent about the details of Malcolm's early life, although he does record that Malcolm fled Scotland two years after his father's death. Wyntoun, on the other hand, mentions only the status of Malcolm's supposed mother.

⁴³Wyntoun exhibited the "Great Register" in a lawsuit at St. Andrews: Bruce, *Liber Cartarum*, p. 11 and p. xi.

⁴⁴See *Original Chronicle*, IV, 9 and 20, for the names of the bishops. Wyntoun also records that Bishop Fothad was expelled from St. Andrews by King Illdolb; this is supported by the Irish *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters*, ed. John O'Donovan (Dublin, 1856), II, 683, s.a. 961, where Fothad has the title "scribe and bishop of the Hebrides" in his obituary.

⁴⁵The name is entered above the main text, in the same hand; personal examination of the manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian MS Latin misc. c75, ff. 53 & 54) suggests that the name was an afterthought to the text. That manuscript was formerly Sir Thomas Phillipps MS 3119 and cited as such by Mrs. Anderson who printed her text not from the manuscript but from the edition of W. Skene, *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots and other early memorials of early Scottish History* (Edinburgh, 1867), no. 36. The relevant section on the Scottish kings is conveniently edited by Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, p. 284: *mater eius Suthen vocatur*. Anderson considered Suthen the kinswoman of Siward of Northumbria mentioned by Fordun, see *Kings and Kingship*, p. 63, no. 80. Wyntoun, however, states that the wedded wife of Duncan was not Malcolm's mother, yet Fordun claims that she was, and is emphatic in his claim.

⁴⁶Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, p. 63; see above note 9.

Wyntoun is not disturbed by the information about Malcolm's birth. In a discourse on the descendants of Malcolm Canmore, Wyntoun is eloquent in his approval of the humble origins of Malcolm's mother.⁴⁷ While the liaison between Duncan and the miller's daughter is unique to Wyntoun, the genealogical information about the descendants of that union can be traced to the twelfth century. An early version of that narrative is by Ailred of Rievaulx in his *Genealogia Regum Anglorum*, written between 1153 and 1154.⁴⁸ Included in that list are the future Henry II of England, his mother Matilda, his grandmother Matilda and his great-aunt Maria, countess of Boulogne. A similar list is given in the Poppleton manuscript; omitted from that list is Henry II, but included is King Stephen of England.⁴⁹ Wyntoun adds to that list King Robert II of Scotland and Pope Clement VII.

Wyntoun's immediate source of information may have been the "Great Register" of St. Andrews. From a surviving list of its contents is an item titled *Genealogia regum Angliae ab Henrico 2do, ascendendo ad Noah, per matre*.⁵⁰ The title of the *Genealogia* suggests that it had some connection to the *Genealogia Regum Anglorum* of Ailred of Rievaulx. Information similar to that given by Wyntoun is also given by Fordun, but in slightly different form. His discussion of the descendants of Malcolm Canmore and Margaret is deferred until the narrative on David I. Fordun may have used the same document as Wyntoun; he gives a genealogy for Margaret in a chapter titled *De eadem genealogia ex parte matris, secundum Baldredum, deducta usque ad Sem filium Noe, et ab eo usque Seth, filium Adae patris omnium* (V, 52). Scattered throughout his fifth book are genealogical references to the descendants of Margaret (V, 29 and 31). *Baldredus* is Ailred of Rievaulx and Skene demonstrated that for the preceding genealogical information, Fordun was using a copy of Ailred's *Genealogia Regum*.⁵¹

The literary motif of a king's illegitimate son claiming the kingship is common in medieval legend; there are elements in the story as told by

⁴⁷A panegyric on the descendants of that union is given in Book VI, 16; there it occupies 42 lines.

⁴⁸Printed in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia cursus completus. Patres ... ecclesiae latinae*, vol. 195, columns 711-38; the relevant information in column 736.

⁴⁹Printed by Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, pp. 254-5.

⁵⁰Printed by Bruce, *Liber Cartarum*, p. xxvi.

⁵¹Skene, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, II, 426, note to chapter 35.

Wyntoun that fit the "Legend of the Hero's Birth."⁵² Wyntoun claims that land at Forteviot, called the "Batwyrd's land," was set aside for the maintenance of mother and child; furthermore, he says that the mother later married a local man. At Forteviot there was a parcel of land known as the "Miller's Acre" as late as the fourteenth century.⁵³ Such precise information about Forteviot and the activities of the local people was available to Wyntoun through the records at St. Andrews because the parish of Forteviot was within the diocese. Details about lands were contained in the registers kept at St. Andrews; land grants were also recorded in Gospels, similar to the one Wyntoun quotes for his information on Bishop Fothad.⁵⁴

Such casual relations between kings and commoners were not unusual; prior to the thirteenth century there are various instances of the progeny from casual liaisons advancing to the kingship. One example is the twelfth century Norse king Haraldr Gilli, the son of King Magnus Barefoot and a woman from the Hebrides; he was only one of the several Norse kings whose parentage was casual.⁵⁵ William I of England was known to his contemporaries as William Fitzbastard, testimony to his illegitimate birth. Prior to Duncan, no record survives with the names of the mothers of the Scottish kings.⁵⁶ Wyntoun implies that Duncan was a relatively young man who liked hunting and pretty girls; moreover, his own children were young at the time of his death. This accords with other sources, such as the *Annals of Tigernach*; Duncan's father, Crínán, was slain in battle in 1045. This, too, is in keeping with the unflattering verse on Duncan presented in *Berchan*, where no mention is made of great age, although the favorable verses insist that he was an old man.

⁵²Byrne, *Irish kings and High-kings*, pp. 66-7; Byrne uses the example of Cormac mac Airt.

⁵³*Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland*, ed. F. Groome (Edinburgh, 1882-5), III, 49: Forteviot.

⁵⁴The registers of St. Andrews contained land charters for various dependencies, such as Lock Leven; see Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, pp. 54-5.

⁵⁵The issue of marriage and legitimacy in early Scandinavia is addressed by Jenny Jochens, "The Politics of Reproduction: Medieval Norwegian Kingship," *American Historical Review* 92 (1987), 327-49.

⁵⁶An exception of sorts is for Malcolm II; the name of his mother is not known, but it is known that she was from Ireland, see *Berchan*, stanza 181 and note 20 above.

What is apparent in a comparison of accounts about Duncan given by Fordun and Wyntoun is that they are not necessarily contradictory, but, rather, complementary. The different traditions may be a reflection of the different view-point of the materials that were available. Fordun's home was in the region that had been the home territory of Malcolm Canmore's branch of Cenel nGabrain—Angus and the Mearns. In the records from Malcolm's court, such as *Duan Albanach*, Duncan was remembered as a good king and his ill-health may have been remembered as old age. Wyntoun, on the other hand, was writing in Fife, in the home territory of Duncan's dynastic rivals. Wyntoun's material reflects a non-partisan view; Duncan's reign was not seen through rose-tinted spectacles and Macbeth was not considered merely a villain.⁵⁷ Wyntoun mentions that Macbeth ruled well as king, a conclusion supported by the contemporary records. Wyntoun, however, is no partisan of Macbeth. He condemned the murder of Duncan in strong terms and his description of the machinations by Malcolm Canmore to depose Macbeth are comparable to the description given by Fordun. That Wyntoun relates more information about Macbeth than does Fordun was noted by Nora Chadwick, who considered Wyntoun almost an encyclopedia of medieval legends about Macbeth.⁵⁸ Wyntoun was in a position to have access to material concerning both Duncan and Macbeth; in the eleventh century St. Serf's was the recipient of land grants from Macbeth and Gruoch as well as from Malcolm Canmore; notices of their grants still survive.⁵⁹ St. Serf's also possessed a library at least as early as the eleventh century; although a twelfth century inventory shows that most of the identifiable manuscripts were liturgical texts, one should remember that such texts were often utilized as registers for charters and records of pertinent historical memorabilia.⁶⁰ Wyntoun's information on Macbeth's kinship to Duncan and the circumstances surrounding the

⁵⁷The "Prophecy of Berchan," had a Fife orientation and presents a picture of Scottish history slanted in that direction. See B. T. Hudson, *Aspects of Scottish Kingship, A.D. 840-1058*, p. 265.

⁵⁸Chadwick, "The Story of Macbeth," *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 6 (1949), 192.

⁵⁹These grants are printed by A. Lawrie, *Early Scottish Charters prior to 1153* (Glasgow, 1905): Macbeth and Gruoch, no. 5, pp. 5-6; and Malcolm and Margaret, no. 8, p. 7.

⁶⁰An inventory of the library was taken in the twelfth century and is printed by A. Hadden and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, repr. 1964), II, 227-8. An example of a gospel containing land records is the *Book of Deer*, ed. K. H. Jackson (Cambridge, 1970).

parentage of Malcolm Canmore are details that could have been available to someone with access to the records of the diocese of St. Andrews.

The relationship of Macbeth to Duncan is a problem that may influence the interpretation of the different literary traditions. A. O. Anderson investigated the question, but failed to present any conclusions.⁶¹ He noted, however, that kinship between Malcolm II and Macbeth was claimed by the *Chronicle of Huntingdon*, an English chronicle that was used by Edward I in his efforts to adjudicate the Scottish crown; there Macbeth is called Malcolm's *nepos*.⁶² The information in the *Chronicle of Huntingdon* is important; it has been demonstrated that incorporated in that chronicle is a narrative cognate to the brief Scottish chronicle in the Poppleton manuscript.⁶³ One may suggest that there was some kinship between Macbeth and Duncan, a kinship that was closer than a relationship implied by Macbeth's marriage to Gruoch. Wyntoun claims that Macbeth was a frequent guest of Duncan (VI, 15) and insists that Duncan and Macbeth were related; but his suggestion that Duncan was Macbeth's uncle is unlikely. Wyntoun calls Duncan Macbeth's *eme*; that may be a faulty translation of the Latin *nepos*. In medieval Latin texts *nepos* could mean an undefined kinship as well as the specific meaning of grandson and, by the late middle ages, it could be translated as nephew. In the *Chronicle of Melrose* the word *nepos* is used to describe the relationship of Duncan to Malcolm II; in the *Chronicle of Huntingdon*, *nepos* is used to define the relationship of Macbeth to Malcolm II. Later writers, such as Hector Boece, claim that Macbeth's mother was the daughter of Malcolm II and gave her the name *Doad*.⁶⁴

Additional support for Wyntoun's claim of kinship between Duncan and Macbeth comes from *Berchan* (st. 193), where Macbeth is said to have

⁶¹A. O. Anderson, "Macbeth's relationship to Malcolm II," *Scottish Historical Review* 25, (1928), 372; the same information is given by Anderson in his *Early Sources of Scottish History*, I, 579, n. 8.

⁶²The relevant passage from the *Chronicle of Huntingdon* was published by Francis Palgrave in *Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland and the transactions between the crowns of Scotland and England (21 Hen. III - 35 Ed. I)*, Public Record Office (London, 1837), I, 100.

⁶³Edward J. Cowan, "The Scottish Chronicle in the Poppleton Manuscript," *Innes Review* 32, (1981), 18.

⁶⁴*The Chronicle of Scotland Compiled by Hector Boece, Translated into Scots by John Belleden, 1531*, edited by Edith C. Batho and H. Winifred Husbands, Scottish Text Society, 3rd Series, 15 (1941), II, 143.

survived his fight with Malcolm Canmore at the battle of Lumphanan and to have died the next day at Scone. In short, it is claimed that Macbeth deliberately sought refuge in the lands that, supposedly, belonged to his rivals. Fordun gives negative support to such a relationship; he claims that Macbeth was the leader of the family of Constantine, yet at the same time he goes to some lengths to assert that Malcolm II had only one child, who was Duncan's mother (IV, 39). The question is far from resolved and one must not be too hasty in setting aside Wyntoun's claim of close kinship between Duncan and Macbeth.

If Wyntoun is correct in proposing a kinship between Duncan and Macbeth as well as the circumstances surrounding the birth of Malcolm Canmore, then the absence of that information from Fordun's account suggests one of two things. Either there is a bias, conscious or unconscious, in Fordun's narrative, or he did not search as diligently for his material as has been suggested. Wyntoun was using materials from St. Andrews that are no longer extant, including the "Great Register"; the question is, did Wyntoun get his information about Duncan from a St. Andrews source? The answer is probably yes, especially in light of St. Andrews' connections with Forteviot and Macbeth. Fordun, however, must have been aware of the various materials available at St. Andrews; indeed, his chronicle makes use of the "Great Register." Interestingly, the parish church of Fordoun, Fordun's home, was within the diocese of St. Andrews.

In conclusion, one can see at least two divergent traditions in medieval Scottish literature when the history of Duncan is examined. Mrs. Anderson has set out the lines of descent for the material used by Fordun and Wyntoun in their narratives on early Scottish kingship.⁶⁵ What is clear is that there was dynastic bias in Fordun's account of Duncan's reign, but the introduction of dynastic bias may have occurred much earlier than proposed by Utz in his study of Fordun's chronicle.⁶⁶ The problems presented not just by Duncan's reign, but also his qualifications for the kingship, may be the reason for the early and different estimations of him. Those parallel traditions can be seen as early as the eleventh century in the *Prophecy of Berchan*. One tradition, critical of Duncan, might be placed in Fife in the records kept at St. Andrews. Another tradition, favorable to Duncan, can be identified as early as the reign of Malcolm Canmore.

⁶⁵Anderson, *Kings and Kingship*, p. 243, has a schematic outline of the conclusions presented at various points in the narrative.

⁶⁶Utz, "Traces of Nationalism in Fordun's *Chronicle*," p. 142.

Fordun has been rightly praised for the real value of his work as a historical narrative of medieval Scotland; Wyntoun, on the other hand, has not fared as well. Yet both men preserve valuable traditions of historical and literary memory. The difference in the accounts of Duncan's career given by Fordun and by Wyntoun may not be merely difference in materials, but, rather, in the viewpoint of those materials and the ultimate goal of the writer. When reading Fordun's narrative, then, one must be aware of the distinct possibility that Fordun was deliberately omitting or editing materials to conform to his interpretation of history. This need not be considered in a wholly unfavorable sense; doubtless there were some conflicting traditions that could not be reconciled and Fordun may have done no more than choose one version rather than another. Wyntoun, on the other hand, used an encyclopedic approach in presenting the materials for his narrative and was not distressed by the resulting contradictions, either implied or apparent.

During his lifetime, Duncan was an unsuccessful king with a dubious right to the kingship. Yet the success of his son Malcolm Canmore in recapturing the kingship, and the success of his descendants in holding that kingship, ensured that Duncan's reign was far more interesting to later generations than it might have been otherwise. In this examination of the various estimations of Duncan's reign, it has been suggested that one can detect different interpretations of Duncan's reign and those interpretations may reflect provincialism in Scottish literature. Reflections of literary provincialism are quite possibly reflections of opposition to, or support for, Duncan and his dynasty within Scotland. The words themselves may reflect the deeply held feelings of friends and foes.

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