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Gregory Kratzmann

Political Satire and the Scottish Reformation

Political satire, whether written in prose or verse, whether written in 1560 or 1960, tends to have a very short shelf-life—the interest and relevance of the subjects addressed diminish very rapidly when they are no longer topical, unless (as in the case of Swift or Orwell) those subjects are clad in particularly beguiling fictional dress. When constructing a text of *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, George Bannatyne saw fit to leave out what he describes as "the grave mater thairof, becaws the samyne abuse is weill reformit in Scotland," and to preserve in his anthology "only sertane mirry interludis thairof, very plesand."¹ This was done little more than a decade after the 1552 performance of the play. The probability that Bannatyne's practice as an editor reflects a conservative political stance—if not anti-Reformist at least pro-Marian²—highlights another challenge offered by political satire, which is that the polemical satire of one historical moment is open to reinterpretation by the readers and writer of later periods. For Henry Charteris, the Edinburgh printer who brought out an edition of Lyndsay's poems in the same year that Bannatyne completed his anthology, the topical matter of *Ane Satyre* and the poems is seen to be highly relevant to

¹*The Bannatyne Manuscript*, Introduction by Denton Fox and William Ringler (Scolar Facsimile, London, 1980), f. 168^f.

²Alisdair MacDonald, "The Bannatyne Manuscript—A Marian Anthology," *Innes Review*, 37 (1986), 36-47.

the political and religious condition of Scotland in 1568, to the extent that Lyndsay's writing is held up as a model for contemporary authors serving the cause of Reformation.³ (In terms of neither commentary nor editorial practice, it should be added, do Bannatyne's or Charteris's approaches to Lyndsay reflect the kind of radical reshaping of satirical discourse that we find in Crowley's influential mid-sixteenth century edition of *Piers Plowman*.)

In this century, critical and scholarly interest in the poetic satires of early Reformation Scotland has been minimal. One of the problems is the availability of texts—the most recent edition of the species of poetry with which I am concerned in this paper is Cranstoun's Scottish Text Society edition, which is now a century old.⁴ As those who have used it will know, it is accurate in its transcriptions, but the Notes are deficient. There are poems which Cranstoun was unable to include which remain unpublished. The problem of the inaccessibility of primary texts is, of course, a symptom of the lack of interest which I have just mentioned. The problem is not, admittedly, peculiar to the study of Scottish Reformation satire, as anyone who has tried to gain access to the works of English Reformation writers such as Luke Shepherd and Thomas Churchyard will know. I imagine that all of us are only too ready to acknowledge the contribution which a number of anthologies have made to the understanding of medieval and renaissance Scottish literature in recent years, but even here we search in vain for the most trenchant and insistently topical poetic texts. The name of Robert Sempill, a prolific and very competent poet, is invariable associated with Reformation satire (when it is discussed at all), and so it is surprising to find that editors have consistently chosen one or another of the three bawdy poems which occur in the "ballettis mirry" section of the Bannatyne Manuscript. Although one of them—"The Defence of Crissell Sandelandis"—does have a satirical edge, addressed as it is to overzealous magistrates, and naming a number of prominent citizens, it is a more genial kind of satire than we find in the printed political broadsides of Sempill. A continuity of editorial taste between the Bannatyne MS and recent anthologies is indicated by Allan Ramsay's inclusion of these same poems in *The Ever Green* of 1724. The liberal humanist attitude to letters which has dominated the study of literature (albeit in a variety of ways) since the eighteenth century has much to answer for in the neglect of satirical discourse and in the resulting moulding of taste. The neglect particularly affects the study of satire which is uncompromisingly

³Preface to "The Warkis," in *The Works of Sir David Lindsay of the Mount*, ed. Douglas Hamer, 4 vols., STS, 3rd Series, 1, 2, 6, 8 (1931-36).

⁴*Satirical Poems of the Time of the Reformation*, ed. James Cranstoun, STS, 20, 24, 28, 30 (1891-93).

partisan and polemical; the verse pamphlet readily becomes marginalized as ephemera because it cannot be assimilated by the kind of taste which centralizes writing which is valued for its ability (to use Arnold's words on Chaucer) to "survey the world from a central, a truly human point of view." The poetry of Sempill (and other work of the kind) has too often been rather glibly dismissed as being "famous for [its] coarseness" (by C. S. Lewis), and for its anticipation of tabloid journalism (by Agnes Mure Mackenzie and Kurt Wittig).⁵ "Coarseness" is much more acceptable in the treatment of the body female than it is in commentary upon the body politic, it would seem. I don't wish to labor this point, but there are parallels between critical attitudes to Scottish polemical writing of this period (prose as well as verse) and the long-prevalent association of "bilious" with the name of Bale, the slightly earlier English Reformation propagandist.⁶

Criticism has been wary of sixteenth-century topical satire for another, if not unrelated, reason, which is the assumption that its historical specificity places it more in the domain of the political and religious historian than in the (traditionally) less time-centered realm of the literary historian. Historians, for their part, tend to suffer from a similar wariness: when they refer to the poems at all, these figure only as footnotes to other kinds of witness, such as contemporary histories, letters, and documents of state. Roderick Lyall begins his essay on forms of satire in Middle Scots literature with the unarguable proposition that "the marches between literary criticism and historiography are as wild, as forbidding, and as treacherous as the more literal marches which played such an important role in the political and social history of medieval Scotland."⁷ His own comments on Reformation satire represent a rare attempt to traverse some of this difficult terrain. The documentary evidence offered by poetry *is* very valuable, supplementing as it does that of prose evidence which is seldom any less partisan than Sempill at his most extreme. Not surprisingly, poetry offers comment on the series of turbulent events which took place after 1560—the murder of Darnley and the Queen's marriage to Bothwell, the killing of the Earl of Moray, the civil strife associated with the occupancy of Edinburgh Castle by Grange and

⁵C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford, 1954), p. 113; Agnes Mure Mackenzie, "The Renaissance Poets," in *Scottish Poetry: A Critical Survey*, ed. James Kinsley (London, 1955), p. 46; Kurt Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh and London, 1958), p. 127.

⁶For a welcome corrective, see John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton, 1982).

⁷"Complaint, Satire and Inveective in Middle Scots Literature," in *Church, Society and Politics: Scotland 1408-1919*, ed. Norman Macdougall (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 44.

Maitland, and so on. Like Knox's writing, this is never poetry which is afraid to name names, and the extent to which it does so marks it off from the English polemical satire of a slightly earlier period. (It has been observed that deliberate obscurity was a strong convention of Tudor satire—this is an obscurity bred of the fear of retribution, in a state which was much more strongly centralized than mid-sixteenth century Scotland.)⁸ The danger of using poems as documents is that it is all too easy to emphasize similarity at the expense of difference. From a first reading of one poem after another it is perhaps excusable to take away a dominant impression of homogeneity—one remembers the sustained vitriolic abuse of the Hamiltons and Maitland of Lethington, the veneration of Moray, Methven, and even Darnley, and the strong note of Old Testament prophecy in which the typology of Scotland as Israel figures so prominently. Closer scrutiny, however, should modify this view, by showing that the differences between poems—and particularly between poems which address the same historical circumstance—indicate variation which extends beyond the rhetorical variations which related to genre and verse structure. These variations are of considerable interest from a literary-historical point of view, but their larger significance lies in the appeal to different kinds of response.

It is in the area of rhetoric and the kind of audience response to which it seems to appeal that a productive collaboration might result from the respective approaches of the historian and the literary critic. In an essay entitled "Covenant and Commonweal: the language of politics in Reformation Scotland,"⁹ Roger Mason analyzes two different modes of rhetoric which are discernible in the public documents of the Reformers, modes which he describes as the languages of covenant and commonweal respectively. Mason infers (with some success, I think), "from the language in which the rebels chose to legitimate their actions something about how Scots in general perceived and reacted to what was happening around them. . . . The Congregation, like all politicians in search of support, were acutely sensitive to the expectations of their audience, and their propaganda came in consequence to be couched in the terms which they believed would win them the greatest sympathy and approval among their countrymen." The language of the covenant, which is overtly religious in character, assumes a bond between God and the righteous, and it is underpinned by an ideology which is definable as the godly subject's duty to that bond in his relations with the temporally constituted authority of prince and magistrate. The rhetoric of the commonweal is not overtly religious; its basis lies in the rights and liberties of the individual

⁸King, *English Reformation Literature*, p. 253.

⁹*Church, Society and Politics*, pp. 97-126.

subjects and the estates to which they belong, and it assumes that in the godly commonwealth there will be interdependence of governor and governed. Obviously the ideologies which the two kinds of language reflect are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but there is a significant difference of emphasis. Mason's essay refers to the deployment of language in these terms by Lyndsay and the author of *The Complaynt of Scotland*, but there is a silence (apart from a reference to Richard Maitland) about what might be fruitful area in which the terminology could be applied—the polemical verse satire with which we are concerned here.

In some of the poems, one or other of these rhetorical modes is predominant, while in others we find a combination of the two. In works which draw upon the ideology of the covenant, language is the verbal analogue of the "sweard of just defence" which the Faithful Congregatioun threatened to unsheath upon Mary of Guise in 1559. A relatively muted illustration of the use of covenanting language is to be found in "Ane Ballat declaring the nobill and gude inclination of our King," probably by Sempill, in which the main speaker is a mourning "bony boy," perhaps to be understood as the voice of the infant Prince. (The title of the "ballat" is conducive to this interpretation, it can be argued.) "Bludie Bothwell" is execrated, and the lords "that to our Kirk hes done subscriue" are exhorted to revenge the murder (which is characterized as blasphemy) before God's Justice overtakes them. I am not able to discuss the poem in detail here, but the following stanza illustrates an appeal which is based on the obligations of a religious bond:

O 3e that to our Kirk has done subscriue,
Thir Ecanis try alsweill traist I may,
Gif 3e do not, the tyme will cum beliue
That God to 3ow will rais sum Josuay,
Quhilk sall 3our bairnies gar sing 'wallaway',
And 3e 3our selfis be put downe with shame:
Remember on the vgsun latter day
Quhen 3e rewaird sall ressaif for 3oure blame. (ll. 129-36)

Another poem on the same subject, "The Testament and Tragedie of . . . King Henrie Stewart," has both a different generic form and a different thematic emphasis, but it too reminds the lords of the religious bond which should override any consideration of personal safety. This work gives a new application to the genre of the *de casibus*, the vogue for which had been renewed by Baldwin, Palfreyman and others in Reformation England. The Darnley "Testament" is a particularly interesting propaganda document because of the way in which its insistence on the speaker's fault in falling prey to sensuality by marrying a papist and submitting himself to papist rites conflicts with the insistence on his innocence. Although both poems execrate

Mary as a Jezebel and a Dalilah, we cannot fall into the easy assumption that the death of Darnley (who seems to have been almost universally disliked) was used for narrowly propagandist purposes. It is possible that at least the first of the poems sounds a personal note, that its heavily affective style reflects a pro-Lennox stance, as the Douglas lords are invited to consider the treatment meted by Elizabeth to the Countess of Lennox and her younger son. Before leaving this poem, it is worth recording the supreme confidence which it articulates in poetry, both Latin and vernacular, as instrument of political power.

My bony boy, thy murning dois me harme,
 Bot thy sweit figureit speiche dois me delyte;
 In poetrie I traist ȝow be na barne,
 Quhilk dois reheirs the Poetis auld indyte.
 At thir traytouris I find thow hes dispyte,
 And I a Penstrall is and [I] can sing.
 Wald thow in Poetrie thy mater wryte,
 In thair dispyte thy scellat sall I ring.

Albeit my hart be fillit full of syte,
 And mony troublis tumbland in my mynde,
 ȝit vnderneath this hauthorne sall I wryte,
 Or my forwereit body preis to dyne,
 In Poetrie narratioun of the cryme,
 Quhilk thow may sing, except that thow be red,
 In Inglis toung, quhan will gif place and tyme;
 And than in Latine leid I think to spred

My veiris prompt in style Rethoricall,
 Quhilk pas sall to the Cane of Tartarie,
 And Peirs sall erthe and air Etheriall
 The wickit workis done in Britannie.
 "My bony boy," quod I, "fair mot the fa!"
 With that he rais and reikit me this bill,
 And tuik gude nycht and shuik our handis twa.
 Sa we departit soir againis our will. (*ll.* 209-32)

When we turn to another large group of poems, those which address themselves to the murder of the Regent Moray, there is a torrent of urgent exhortations to revenge, accompanied by reminders of the obligations to which the covenant of the protestant lords should bind them. Sempill's "The Regentis Tragedie ending with ane Exhortatioun" (C. XII) is remarkable for the extent to which it draws upon the language of the covenant, articulating a Knoxian confidence in the inevitability of God's intervention in the cause of his faithful:

Ouer thir twa housis, for thair deids inding,
The hand of God dois ouer thair heidis hing
Thame to distroy; I dout not, in our dayis,
Hepburnis will wraik for wyrrying of the King.
Bot Hammiltounis? Fy! this was ane foular thing.
Is this 3our ferme Religioun? 3ais? 3ais?
Sic tyme sall cum, as Thomas sayis,
Hirdmen sall hunt 3ow vpthrow Garranis gyll,
Castand thair Patlis, and lat the pleuch stand still. (ll. 64-72)

The authority of Knox himself is invoked, in a stanza which exhorts the lords to rouse themselves from fear and to remember the justice of their cause: "3e hard 3our self what Knox spak at the preiching" (l. 90). This may well be an allusion to the text which Knox chose for the sermon he preached at Moray's funeral: "Blessed are they that die in the Lord." The combination of urgency and anxiety which pervades "The Regentis Tragedie" cannot be appreciated without some understanding of the historical moment to which the poem belongs. The ending of the first part makes it clear that it was written within a matter of days before the meeting of the Hamiltons and their supporters on February 20, 1570—"Thair semblie beis on Sunday, I heir say,/ In Glasgow towne." There is an underlying awareness of the fragility of the coalition between the supporters of Mary and the supporters of the King which had seemed to be strong when Moray had convened a meeting to discuss the matter of the Queen's divorce from Bothwell only a few months before, as the speaker exhorts his audience not to delay a show of force, whether because of their anxieties about the possible response of the French (ll. 139-41), or because of what news might come from Elizabeth ("3e dar not mum quhill Saidlar cum/ To se quhat Ingland sendis": ll. 166-7). There is also reference to the Protestant lords' dismay at the gathering of the forces of Boyd, Argyll, and Huntly (ll. 100-08), two of whom had attended the Regent's conference in the previous July.¹⁰ The poet's own anxiety about the erosion of commitment to the confederacy is further evinced by the implicit recognition of the division of opinion concerning the possibility of Lennox as Regent—"Gif he want grace to gyde that place,/ Cheis outhir twa or thre (ll. 182-3), and by the further recognition that some of the Lords wish to support the Queen. Whatever the speaker might want to happen, it is clear that he is acutely aware of the complicated realities of the political situation, and that it is unlikely that his urgings of God's Justice, the

¹⁰For further information, see Gordon Donaldson, *All the Queen's Men: Power and Politics in Mary Stewart's Scotland* (London, 1983), pp. 117-9.

invocation of Knox's name, and the taunts of effeminacy are likely to be effective; this is amplified in the conclusion of the Envoy:

Bot sen I se it will nocht be
That meter will nocht make it,
The feynd mak cair, I say na mair:
I rew that euer I spak it.

At the poem's transition from "tragedie" to exhortation, there is some indication that it was intended for presentation at an assembly of the King's party: "Now Lordis and Lairdis *assemblit in this place!* . . . As gude in paper as speik it in 3our face." Hence the poem would seem to be topical and occasional in a very specific way, and this gives additional point to the speaker's awareness that what he describes as his "sempill veirs" may well give offence. In point of rhetorical strategy and versification Sempill's poetic language is more than "sempill," but a paper of this kind does not allow scope for expansion upon its verbal artistry.

Mason, in making a distinction between two kinds of discourse within the public statements of the reformers, is able to show that a transition from one kind of rhetoric to the other can be associated with a particular set of historical circumstances in the latter part of the year 1559.¹¹ It is not possible to draw a parallel with the deployment of these ideolects in the satirical poetry which belongs to years after 1560, although of course it is hardly surprising that language which appeals so strongly to the values of the godly commonweal should be prominent in the writings of earlier reform-minded Catholic satirists, notably Lyndsay. What we find in many of the broadside works of the early years of the Reformation is a combination of these two appeals to the reader, a combination which for some works might more accurately be described as a tension. Again, it is not possible to enumerate examples, so I will mention only one poem in this context, "Ane Declaratioun of the Lordis Just Quarrell," which appeared in 1567. It consists of an overheard dialogue between Philandrius ("the benevolent") and Erideilus ("the craven"); not surprisingly, Philandrius is the principal speaker, and he vanquishes his opponent with ease. What he calls "the weill of the countrie," to which the maintenance of justice and liberty are essential, is urged several times, but the greater part of his argument is concerned with the legitimacy of exercising control over a Prince who has fallen prey to vice. "Guide men," he says, have the power to depose even a king. The kind of discourse to be found here articulates a radical position which reflects Knox's attempt to reach an accommodation with the Pauline dictum "Let every soul be sub-

¹¹"Covenant and Commonweal," pp. 106-8.

ject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1):

Rycht sa gif Princes sa thame self abuse,
That of force subiectis man put to thair hand,
Guid men sould not than to reforme refuse,
Thocht all at ainis concur not on thair band;
Naimly, gif Iustice on thair partie stand,
And maist consent gif quha wald rackin rycht,
Sen God has gein to thame baith streth and mycht.

3ea, thocht it war ane King for to depose,
For certaine crymis, I think the subiectis may,
Or fylthy faultouris fast in prisone close,
Rather than lat ane haill countrie decay.
They sould not sturre, thocht sum men wald say nay.
To ane purpose the haill will neuer conclude:
They haue aneuch hes force and quarrell gude.

May thay not put ane ordoure to the heid,
Quha in beginning did the heid vp mak?
May thay not set ane better in the steid,
Gif it fra vice can not be callit back?
Les this be done, Realmes will ga to wrak,
Namely, quhen that the cryme is sa patent,
That nouthur misters Juge nor argument. (*ll.* 141-61)

Knox had argued that it was possible for an inferior power, acting with a conviction that it was in accord with God's law, to oppose itself by force to its temporal superior when that magistrate failed to discharge the office to which he—or she—had been divinely appointed. The single-minded argument of one who had assumed the role of prophet was likely to alarm more of the Protestant lords than it was meant to persuade, in 1567 no less than in 1559. It is a position which was much more daring in 1567 than it was fifteen years later, when Buchanan wrote that the "nobilitie of Scotland" had "the power to correct thair kingis."¹² In 1571 the reformer Bishop of Galloway requested prayers for Mary in no less a place than St. Giles': "The more wicked she be, her subjects should pray for her to bring her to the spirit of repentance . . . No inferior subject has power to deprive or depose their lawful magistrate."¹³ The poem produces a list of tyrants (many of

¹²Jenny Wormald, *Court, Kirk and Community: Scotland 1470-1625* (London, 1981), pp. 147-48.

¹³Donaldson, *All the Queen's Men*, p. 121.

them local) removed in former times, and this rhetorical catalogue is carefully and pointedly arranged to conclude with its most recent exemplum, significantly that of a queen. Joanna, Queen of Naples, was suspected of being implicated in the murder of her husband, and after a succession of further marriages was herself put to death. The account of Joanna's grisly end—"Euen so sho endit, smorit with a bed"—must surely justify the reader in being skeptical about the sincerity of the speaker's hope that the nobility can exercise "gude consall" to restore a commonwealth with the queen at its head (*ll.* 218-24).

I would like now to make some reference to poems in which the language of the commonweal figures prominently. One of them is "The Lamentatioun of Lady Scotland," printed by Lepreuk in 1572. I have commented elsewhere on the merit of this poem,¹⁴ which Cranstoun dismisses as "one of the most tedious works" in his selection. Both formally and thematically, the writing is marked by a strong Lyndsayan influence, although the total effect is one of creative assimilation, not only of Lyndsay, but also of Henryson and other earlier poetry. The idea of the central female persona owes less to Sempill's Maddie of the kail-mercat than it does to the main figure of the prose *Complaynt of Scotland*, written two decades earlier. In no other contemporary satire does the idea of the Commonwealth, defined both as community of estates and the common people, have such powerful emotive force. (Here is worth recalling Lyndsay's practice in the *Three Estates*, where the significance of John the Commonweal—banished husband of the grieving Lady Scotland of the later work—is sharpened by his association with Pauper, the oppressed husbandman.) The "Lamentatioun" has a notable absence of vituperation and even of specificity in its reference to historical personages: the mood is one more of sorrow than of anger, which perhaps befits the maternal construction of the speaker. The decline of Mary into "bawderie" is mentioned, and the Marians in control of the Castle are re-proved for the "ambitioun and vane glor" which have done such hurt to the commonweal, but this is moderate stuff compared with what we have seen in some of the other poems discussed here. The main emphasis is upon the injury which civil war has done to the powerless, who are defined as the "commouns." In a manner which is reminiscent of Lyndsay, the estates are anatomized in turn. In the address to the Kirk, there is a detailed complaint about the "hypocrasie" which remains manifest, witnessed in the decay of church buildings. The address to "colleges and Uniuersitie" laments the insufficiency of preaching, although there is little of that specific complaint about the state's financial provision for the kirk which is to be found in

¹⁴"Sixteenth-Century Secular Poetry," in *The History of Scottish Literature . . . Origins to 1660*, ed. R. D. S. Jack (Aberdeen, 1988), pp. 116-8.

Davidson's "Ane Diallog betuix a Clerk and a Courteour" (XLII). In view of the prevailing democratic standpoint of this poem it is interesting to see that a critical view is taken of the commons, who continue to harbor the vices Falset and Dissait who should have been hanged after Lyndsay's Reformation Parliament. The wives of the burgesses, whose direct speech is very entertaining, come in for particular scrutiny. (There is a counterpart to this in the treatment of high-born women in other satires; for example, in "Ane Admonitioun to my Lord Regentis Grace" (XXVII), in which John Maitland addresses the Earl of Mar, warning him of the danger of bringing English military force into Scotland. This poem is enlivened by the stringently personal observation about the Countess of Mar towards the end:

Thairfoir be no^t sylitt as a bellie blind,
Nor latt thy selff be led vpoun the yce;
Nor, to content thy marrowis cowatyce,
Putt not Φ i selff in perrell ffor to perreiss (ll. 115-8)

Annabella Murray, Countess of Mar, had the distinction of attracting the reproof of conservatives and radicals alike, since Knox had earlier tried to explain Mar's refusal to subscribe the First Book of Discipline because of his wife's obstinacy—"a very Jezebel," he calls her.¹⁵ The treatment of this same noblewoman in "The Lamentatioun of Lady Scotland" provides an equally ironic instance of the power of rhetoric to refashion whatever her historical actuality may have been; here, the Regent and protector of the young king is styled affectionately as "gude Lord Deddy," happy in the support of his "Lady Minnie" (ll. 135-8). That the author of this poem saw a place for laughter in a poem concerned with the state of the commonwealth is suggested by its curious coda about a greedy prelate of the Old Kirk. This belongs to an older tradition of anticlerical satire which is illustrated by the satirical poems included in the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, and by the antifraternal rhyme attributed to the Earl of Glencairn in the first book of Knox's *Historie of the Reformatioun in Scotland*.

A very different sort of commonweal poem which deals even more plangently with the plight of the "commounis" is "The Lamentatioun of the Commounis of Scotland," printed in the same year as "The Lamentatioun of Lady Scotland," and possibly intended as a companion piece. The rhetoric of both is strongly circumstantial and experiential, which makes their polemic very distinctive. "The Lamentatioun of the Commounis" addresses Kirkcaldy of Grange, at the time when the Queen's supporters were in command of Edinburgh Castle. The vituperative rhetoric, and the appeals for

¹⁵Jasper Ridley, *John Knox* (Oxford, 1968), p. 379.

God's vengeance on the oppressors, are characteristic of works associated with Sempill's name, but there they acquire a particular force through the sustained emphasis upon the sufferings of the citizens of Edinburgh as they attempt to maintain livelihood under siege conditions. At this time, when Knox had removed himself to the relative safety of St. Andrews, the supporters of Lennox had been forced to move about on hands and knees in their assembly in the Canongate to avoid the cannon fire from the Castle. For modern historians, the "Creeping Parliament" has, not surprisingly, occasioned some scholarly smiles, but there is little in the "The Lamentatioun of the Commounis" to offer such diversion. The poem uses the first person plural to voice the sufferings of the various trades—colliers, carriers, carters, tinkers, tailors—but then there is a dramatic shift to the singular when a male and female speaker in turn address their persecutors (the effect of the following passage is obscured somewhat in Cranstoun's edition by the absence of quotation marks):

Bot, sen with sith 3e Commounis do complene,
 With sob full sair richt trewly sall I tell,
 I, James Dalzell, Indwellar in the Dene,
 Be Grange, smaikis, I wait, send be himsell,
 Hes schot my wyfe throw birsket, lyre, and fell;
 Scho, greit with barne, syne gaif the gaist with plane:
 Than cryit my bairnis with mony 3out and zell,
 Blaming thy tressoun that had thair Mother slane.

Thay reuthles Ruffeis but reuth with crueltie
 Did slay my husband but caus into my sicht;
 Downie Ros by Name, ane Cuitlar of craft trewlie,
 With Gunnis him gord but mercy on the nicht.
 I and my bairnis sall craif Goddis plaigues ful richt
 To fall the, Grange, thou cruell Cokadraill!
 With fourtie ma nor did on Pharo licht:
 Blaming thy tressoun that causis vs bewaill. (*ll.* 73-88)

This kind of poetry, highly specific and appealing unashamedly to the emotions, is very different from the work of Richard Maitland, which adopts a more general and reflective attitude to the ills of the commonwealth which result from civil strife. Drawing on the conventions of an older style of complaint poetry, Maitland warns the members of both factions of the ruin which threatens "this haill cuntrie" ("Of the troubilous tymes," Folio MS CIV).

There is not time to say more about the diversity, in terms of style, form, attitude, and range of subject matter which sixteenth-century verse satire in Scotland has to show. I would like to conclude with some brief

comments about contemporary attitudes to the writing of satire. Maitland deplores the trenchant specificity of polemic of the "sempill" school, in "Of the Malyce of Poyetis":

And thocht that thai bakbyttaris and blasphemaris
Now at this tyme hes mony thair mantenaris,
The day will cum that thai sall forthink it
That thai haue putt sic lesingis in to writ.
To steill ane manis fame is gritter sin
Nor ony geir that is this world within.

Since Sir Richard was the father of the Secretary who was attacked so strongly as "ane cruikit Ethnik, and and crewall Tod," it is hardly surprising that he should have written in this vein, although possibly he did so for more altruistic reasons. It is ironical to find Sempill himself expressing a similar sentiment, in a flying attack upon one of Moray's detractors; in a reformed state, he claims,

All detours are bot discommendit
That speike dispite in speciall.
(*"Ane Answer maid to the Sklanderaris," ll. 49-50*)

There can be little doubt about the fearlessness of Scots polemical poetry in the years after 1560, nor about the confidence of its writers in the value of verse as a sword to be used for both attack and "just defence." A poem of 1570 addressed to Lord Fleming, Governor of Dumbarton Castle, castigates him for firing upon Sir William Drury, and concludes:

The actioun is not honest thow defends,
Gif thow be angrie with ocht that I reheirs,
The narrest gait thow can gang sek amends
Is, mend thy maners, and I sall mend the veirs.

In "The Legend of the Bischop of St. Androis Lyfe. . ." (a poem which is more scurrilous satire than anything by Dunbar), Sempill has the audacity to weave his signature into a letter supposedly sent from King James to Elizabeth:

My sacred bischop I have send
As Semple sayis, ane subtile tod,
To bring me hame the word of God (*ll. 550-52*)

In another poem ("My Lord Methwenis Tragedie"), Sempill does seem to voice doubt when he asks:

Quhat dois it proffeit Poetrie prophane?
 Sen trew Preicheours speikis it to 3ow plane,
 3it neuer mercy in your mynd remordis (ll. 208-10)

But this, like the doubts about poetry and preaching which are expressed by Henryson's Aesop in "The Lion and the Mouse," serves to draw attention to the belief in the persuasive powers of poetry. In this context I will mention again the conclusion of the poem I referred to at the beginning of this paper, where the hawthorn is associated with truth-telling in poetry. There are very few works in Cranstoun's edition, even those which must have been written in some haste, which do not reflect a concern for rhetorical craft. In this respect it is worth recalling a comment made in the Diary of James Melville, that when he was in Montrose in 1570:

there was also There a post that frequented Edinbruche, and brought ham
 Psalme buikes and ballates namlie of Robert Semples making, wherin I tuik
 pleasour and lernit sum thing *bathe of the esteat of the cuntry and of the
 missours and collors of Scottes ryme.*¹⁶

Charteris, in his Preface to the 1568 edition of Lyndsay's poems, praises him for his fearlessness, dismissing four possible arguments for the poet's preservation from harm: he calls upon God "that he will rais and steir up mony Dauid Lyndesayis" to be "ane prik and spur to the verteous and godlie," (I, 397) and uses the language of the covenant to strengthen their resolve:

It is rather the prouydence, the Iugement, the power and the immensibill fauour
 and mercy of God towartis his sanctis and elect . . . to declair his michtie
 prouydence and power, quhairby he wil not suffer ane hair of the heidis of his
 chosin to perische . . . (I, 401)

A sternly-worded Act of 1567 had threatened "the Makaris and Vpsettaris of Plackardis and Billis" with death or imprisonment,¹⁷ and John Davidson the poet and friend of Knox and the King's Printer Lepreuk were both punished during Morton's regency. In a poem by Sempill addressed to the King in 1581, in which he pleads for the life of the erstwhile Regent, there are the revealing lines,

I speik na further in feir thay suld gar hang vs:
 Preichouris and poiettis are put to silence baith.
 ("Ane Complaint vpon Fortoun," ll. 119-20)

¹⁶*Satirical Poems*, I, xxxii.

¹⁷*Satirical Poems*, I, lvii-lxviii.

One would give much to know just how far Sempill and others shared the faith in the protection of the Divine Lord articulated by Charteris, and even more, some circumstantial detail of the encouragement and protection offered to these poets by "mantenaris" among the temporal lords and the Kirk.

La Trobe University