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THE CULTURAL CONTEXTS OF THE ABERDEEN CANDLEMAS PLAY

Roderick J. Lyall

Among the numerous lost plays of medieval Scotland, the Aberdeen Candlemas play is one of the most intriguing. Since we do not have a text, our knowledge of the play is entirely dependent upon two lists of its characters, produced in 1442 and 1505, to establish the division of roles between the burgh's various craft guilds. These lists share enough features to provide some sense of the play's overall shape, although the differences between them are sufficient to give rise to speculation about its possible evolution between those two dates. Medieval Scottish burghs, like their counterparts in England and on the Continent, certainly organized regular performances of religious drama, although there is no evidence that they developed major cycles of plays performed on a single occasion in mid-summer; in Aberdeen, however, there were at least two regular events, at Candlemas (February 2nd) and Corpus Christi (at a variable date in June).¹ Whereas the English cycles are generally based firmly on the biblical episodes they dramatize, albeit with considerable development of character, the lists of personages in Aberdeen plays range much more widely across time and space, indicating a very different kind of performance.

I am grateful to those who assisted during the original preparation of this paper, and in particular to Professors Nicola Royan and Alan Macquarrie and to Dr Jackson Armstrong.

¹ The fundamental source for information about these and other medieval Scottish plays remains Anna Jean Mill, *Medieval Plays in Scotland* (Edinburgh: B. Blom, 1927). The two divisions of roles are printed at 116 and 119–120 respectively. Online transcriptions are now available at Edda Frankot, Anna Havinga, Claire Hawes, William Hepburn, Wim Peters, Jackson Armstrong, Phil Astley, Andrew Mackillop, Andrew Simpson, Adam Wyner, eds, *Aberdeen Registers Online: 1398–1511* (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 2019), at ARO-5-0661-04 and ARO-8-0543-02: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/aro>, [accessed 3 March 2022].

This is immediately apparent from the assignment of roles in the 1442 list:

Litsters [dyers]:	The Emperor and two doctors
Smiths & Hammermen: [carpenters]	The Three Kings of Cologne
Tailors:	Our Lady, St. Bride, St. Helen, Joseph
Skinners:	Two bishops, four angels
Websters and Walcars: [weavers and fullers]	Symeon and his disciples
Cordiners:	Messenger, Moses
Fleshers:	Two or four "wodmen"
Brethir of the gild:	Knights in harness.

Had the play been concerned merely with the Presentation in the Temple, the only characters required would have been Mary, Joseph, Symeon and his disciples. By 1505, certainly, the list is much shorter, omitting the two doctors, Joseph, four angels, Symeon's disciples, Moses and the "wodmen," while the knights are now specified to be three and assigned to the masons; the cast, in other words, is reduced from at least 25 to 14, while retaining the Emperor, the Three Kings, St. Bride and St. Helen. Repeated Council minutes through the fifteenth century suggest that compliance with the ordinances was less than optimal, and this may explain the cutbacks in the demands upon the gilds. Tempting as it is, I do not propose to get into the question of what Moses was doing in the 1442 cast list and what is implied by his disappearance by 1505, because we have quite enough to occupy us with the characters who are common to the two lists.² What is clear, however, is that the Three Kings, St. Bride and St. Helen were regarded as integral to the play as it was presented in Aberdeen.

There has continued to be some doubt about the dramatic nature of the Candlemas play and its Corpus Christi counterpart. We know that there were processions, but scholars have been understandably skeptical about whether these were preceded or followed by theatrical performances in any way comparable with the biblical dramas we know to have developed in England and across the Continent. Anna Jean Mill remained cautiously agnostic on the subject in her ground-breaking study, observing that she found it "difficult to determine the exact signification of the word 'play' in this connection." Noting that an outdoor performance in early February in Aberdeen seemed unlikely, she drew attention to the practice of the Beverley Guild of St Mary at Candlemas, which involved a procession to

² It is, however, worth noting that at York and elsewhere the nativity sequence was immediately preceded by the play of the Flight from Egypt, mirroring in a characteristically typological move the Flight into Egypt which was to follow.

the church and a mimed Presentation at the high altar. “Whether a simple drama or a *mystère mimé* would be enacted at the high altar,” she added with regard to Aberdeen, “must, of course, remain uncertain.”³ Although she does not say so, Mill was presumably thinking of St. Nicholas’ Kirk, the largest and most important church of the medieval burgh and one closely associated with its craft guilds; in view of the latter point it is a more likely candidate than the Dominican or Carmelite friaries in the burgh, while the Franciscan house had not been established by the earliest date we have for the Candlemas performance. Sarah Carpenter has recently come down more firmly against the idea of a play in the modern sense, arguing that the range of characters “sounds more like a spectacular procession, presenting a range of biblical characters associated with the feast, but interspersed with other religious and popular figures in a musical cavalcade.”⁴

There are, of course, numerous possible forms of dramatic presentation which the burgh might have employed, from the “spectacular procession” or “musical cavalcade” envisaged by Carpenter, through staged declamatory speeches of the kind we see in medieval and early modern royal entries, to short plays based on biblical episodes, with varying degrees of interaction and character development, such as those we find in the major English cycles.⁵ Any attempt to determine, or at least to envisage, the nature of the Aberdeen Candlemas play—and indeed of the “Haliblude” or Corpus Christi Play, for which we also have a cast list—must take account of the fact that both combine characters one might expect in a play deriving from the biblical source with others from different periods. The presence in the former of the “three kings of Cologne,” St. Helen and St. Brigid (this latter pair saints from the fourth and fifth centuries respectively), alongside characters who would be directly involved in an enactment of the Purification based on Luke 2:22–39, might perhaps incline us to the view that the Aberdeen presentation was indeed a procession or cavalcade rather than a staged performance, were it not for the fact that another piece of evidence points firmly in the latter direction: a hitherto unknown reference in the Aberdeen Dean of

³ Mill, *Medieval Plays*, 66–67.

⁴ Sarah Carpenter, “‘Pageantis & sportis & plesand pasytymes’: Scottish drama until 1650,” in Ian Brown, ed, *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Drama* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 6–21 (8).

⁵ For an excellent survey of Scottish entries of the period, see Lucinda H. H. Dean, “Enter the Alien: Foreign Consorts and their Royal Entries into Scottish Cities, c. 1449–1590,” in J. R. Mulryne, Maria Ines Aliverti, and Anna Maria Testaverde, eds, *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe: The Iconography of Power* (London: Routledge, 2016, 267–295..

Guild's accounts for 1470–71, now preserved in the Beinecke Library at Yale University, refers to a payment of 16d to “ye men yt maid scafold to ye candilmes play.”⁶ This appears to show conclusively that a stage, presumably temporary, was erected for the performance of the play; *where* is not stated, although we can perhaps agree with Mill that even the hardy souls of Aberdeen are more likely to have constructed it indoors rather than out at that time of the year. The same accounts also record a payment of one mark for “ye wrytyn off ye play”; which play is not specified and the dating of the entries within the account is difficult, and, although it would be helpful if this could be linked with the Candlemas play (or that performed at Corpus Christi), it is perhaps more likely that the entry refers to the mysterious *Ludus de Bellyale*, which we know to have been performed in the summer of 1471. That at least the Corpus Christi play had a written text, however, can be inferred from the payment in 1449 of 5s. to the notary public Walter Balcancole “pro scriptura ludi in festo corporis Christi.”⁷ And since the 1470–71 Dean of Guild's accounts indicate the use of a stage for the Candlemas play it does not seem far-fetched to conclude that both involved a genuine dramatic performance of some kind. But of what kind?

Let us first consider the Three Kings, consistently identified as “of Cologne,” not the Magi, as they are generally called in the English cycles. As Eila Williamson has recently shown, the Three Kings of Cologne enjoyed a considerable cult in Scotland, as across the whole of Europe, in the later Middle Ages, although she notes the relative lateness of much of the Scottish evidence.⁸ The popularity of the cult was undoubtedly furthered by the *Historia Trium Regum* of the fourteenth-century German Carmelite John of Hildesheim, a Latin text of which there are more than a hundred extant manuscripts and which was translated into several vernacular languages, including English.⁹ It is even possible that there was

⁶ Beinecke Library, Gordon of Gordonstoun papers, 2/41, f. 2r. I alluded to this document, only mentioning the reference to the writing of a play text, in “The Lost Literature of Medieval Scotland,” in J. Derrick McClure and Michael R. G. Spiller, eds, *Bryght Lanternis: Essays on the Language and Literature of Medieval and Renaissance Scotland* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989), 33–47. The complete document has now been edited by Jackson W. Armstrong, “The Financial Accounts of Provost Andrew Alanson of Aberdeen for the year 1470–71, held in the Beinecke Library, Yale,” *Scottish Historical Review* [forthcoming].

⁷ Mill, 117; *Aberdeen Registers Online*, ARO-5-0751-08 (accessed 3 March 2022).

⁸ Eila Williamson, “The Cult of the Three Kings of Cologne in Scotland,” in Steve Boardman, J. Davies and Eila Williamson, eds, *Saints' Cults in the Celtic World* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009), 160–179 (179).

⁹ Among the copious literature on this work, see Sylvia Harris, “The *Historia Trium Regum* and the Mediæval Legend of the Magi in Germany,” *Medium Ævum*,

a fifteenth-century Scottish version: H. N. MacCracken suggested as long ago as 1912, on the basis of some of the rhymes, that the anonymous rhyme-royal version preserved in Robert Thornton's anthology (British Library MS Add. 31042) might come "from the other side of the Tweed," and as far as I am aware this conjecture has never been properly tested.¹⁰ Whether or not there is any substance in this suggestion (and the realization that Thornton's native dialect was northern Yorkshire probably makes it less likely), this version points to awareness of the *Historia Trium Regum* in northern Britain in the first half of the fifteenth century. This in turn supports, I would suggest, the hypothesis that John of Hildesheim's account of the kings underpinned their treatment in the Aberdeen play, although it is of course possible that the association with Cologne was simply due to the importance of the Rhenish city on the trade routes of Scottish merchants and, by the 1440s, as a place of study for Scottish students, as well as lying on the way to the Council of Basel, in which Scottish clerics played such an important part.¹¹ The existence of these links, of course, is not an alternative to the possible influence of the

28 (1959): 23–30. For the English versions, see Frank Schaer, "The Three Kings of Cologne" (PhD diss., University of Adelaide, 1992), and Frank Schaer, ed., *The Three Kings of Cologne edited from London, Lambeth Palace MS. 491* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 2000).

¹⁰ H. N. MacCracken, "Lydgatiana," part III, *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen*, 129 (1912): 51–68. The text is on ff. 111r–119v of the British Library MS. Thornton was, we now know, from North Yorkshire rather than, as MacCracken believed, Lincoln, which must surely influence any assessment of the dialect of his transcription of *The Three Kings*. Since John Thompson's pioneering study, *Robert Thornton and the London Thornton Manuscript* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987), there has been a radical shift in scholarly opinion towards the view that the arrangement of the two manuscripts is much more deliberate and thematically structured than previously assumed. See Danny Gorny, *Reading Robert Thornton's Library: Romance and Nationalism in Lincoln, Cathedral Library MS 91 and London, British Library MS Additional 31042* (PhD dissertation, University of Ottawa, 2013), where *TKC* is discussed at 163–66; and Michael Johnston, "Constantinian Christianity in the London Manuscript: The Codicological and Linguistic Evidence of Thornton's Intentions," in Susanna Fein and Michael Johnston, eds, *Robert Thornton and his Books: Essays on the Lincoln and London Thornton Manuscripts* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014), 177–204.

¹¹ See, for example, Annie I. Dunlop, *The Apostolic Camera and Scottish Benefices 1418–1488* (St. Andrews: Oxford University Press, 1934); R. J. Lyall, "Scottish Students and Masters at the Universities of Cologne and Louvain in the Fifteenth Century," *Innes Review*, 36 (1985): 55–73; David Ditchburn, *Scotland and Europe: The Medieval Kingdom and its Contacts with Christendom, 1214–1560* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2001).

Historia; on the contrary, they make awareness in Scotland of John of Hildesheim's work more likely.

The *Historia Trium Regum* runs to 45 chapters, including not only an extensively elaborated version of the biblical account of the visitation of the Magi and their interaction with Herod (Matt. 2:1–12), but also the prophecy of Balaam (Num. 24:17), associated since early Patristic writings with the star of the Magi;¹² an account of the “three nations of Ind” which belongs to the mysteries of the East tradition; and the story—highly germane in the context of the Aberdeen Candlemas play—of the acquisition by St. Helen of the relics of the Three Kings and their translation, first to Constantinople, thence to Milan, and finally to Cologne. First recounted in Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, St. Helen's pilgrimage to the Holy Land and her acquisition of the relics of the Kings is a key element in the subsequent legend, and fairly obviously explains her presence in the Candlemas play. It was John of Hildesheim who definitively linked the elaborated account of the Magi with St. Helen and the relics' subsequent journey from Constantinople to Milan and Cologne—and the conjunction in Aberdeen surely points towards some version of his work.

Helen, according to this account, having already acquired the relics of Melchior and Balthasar, traded the body of St. Thomas with the Nestorians of India for the bones of Jasper, and, in the words of the English verse translation, “to-gedre agayne thus come these kynges three.” Nor was this all: while in the Holy Land she also collected

Parte of þe pelare wiche Criste was skowrgide atte,
The crown, the Nales, his Cote with-owtten seme (745-746).

And she made other acquisitions:

Owre Ladyes serke, the clothes, and the hay
The wiche that Criste was first ylapped In,
In Bedleme scho fande þaym where þay laye;
For euery place that any man couthe myn
Where as oure lorde hade vesette¹³ for our syn
In passione, miracles, or bodily presence,
Saynt Eleyn sought *with* full deuoute reuerence.

With-In the staulle in Bedleem scho fande
The crache, the haye, the clothes as þay were:

¹² This link goes back at least as far as Irenaeus (*Contra Heresiae*, 9:2), and is also canvassed by Origen and others.

¹³ David Parkinson has cogently pointed out that “vesette” is used in the specific sense of “made a visitation,” with connotations of a divine appearance for the purpose of comfort or punishment (cf. *MED*, sb. *visiten*, 3a (a) and 3b).

Oure lady serke, the Cribbe where Ioseph bande
 His Oxe, his asse; wiche thynges alle in fere
 That Mary, Goddes modir dere,
 Hade lefte by-hynde hir, for-getyn in the staulle;
 The case was siche, scho hade no thoghte of alle (748–61).

Remarkable as all this is, it was the relics of the Three Kings that were central to John of Hildesheim's account of Helen's exercise in religious souvenir-hunting, and that explain her presence, along with the kings themselves, in the Aberdeen play.

In one sense it is easier to explain the presence of St. Brigid in the Candlemas celebrations, since her feast day fell on the first day of February, the day before the feast of the Purification. There were symbolic associations as well: from the earliest times Brigid was associated with fire, and by the end of the twelfth century Gerald of Wales was reporting on the existence of a perpetual fire at her convent of Kildare, maintained by nineteen nuns, while the purifying power of flame was by the eleventh century embodied in the ritual blessing of candles during the Mass at the feast of the Purification, leading to the day's alternative, popular name of Candlemas. Behind this may also lie the Christianization of the pagan Celtic feast of *Imbolc*, which fell on February 1, and also of that of a Celtic goddess named Brigid, who shared with the saint a concern for fertility, especially in agricultural and pastoral matters, as well as some association with fire.¹⁴ From a fairly early date, too, there was a tendency to associate St. Brigid with the Virgin Mary, to the degree that Brigid was widely referred to as "the Mary of the Gael."¹⁵ There was even a later tradition, attested on Valentia Island in County Kerry and in at least one other location in Ireland, that Brigid was present at the Purification itself, bearing a coronet of candles as she accompanied the Virgin into the temple.¹⁶

Although she was undoubtedly an Irish saint, she is justly described by Alan Macquarrie as "very elusive," and there were strong links between St. Brigid and Scotland.¹⁷ Neil Kissane lists 22 Scottish placenames of the Kilbride/Kirkbride/Panbride type, some 13 other parish churches and 20 chapels which were dedicated to Brigid, and a dozen altars or chaplaincies

¹⁴ On St. Brigid, see Noel Kissane, *Saint Brigid of Kildare: Life, Legend and Cult* (Dublin: Open Air, 2017); on the relationship between pagan goddess and Christian saint, see 81–93.

¹⁵ Kissane, 118–20.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Andrews, "A Legend of St. Brigid," *Man* 22 (1922): 187.

¹⁷ Alan Macquarrie, ed., *Legends of Scottish Saints: Readings, hymns and prayers for the commemorations of Scottish saints in the Aberdeen Breviary* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012).

in other parish churches which bore her name. One of these, we may note, was in St. Nicholas' Church in Aberdeen, established by Lawrence de Crag and John Scherar in 1359, and dedicated to St. Duthac of Tain and St. Brigid.¹⁸ This conjunction is highly suggestive, since the early Irish lives of Brigid agree that her father's name was Dubthach, and that she was, in the words of the *Aberdeen Breviary*, "born of good and very wise Scottish stock" [*de bona ac prudentissima prosapia Scotica orta . . . genita*]. There may, no doubt, have been some confusion about the meaning of *Scotica*, since in the seventh to ninth centuries, when the early lives of Brigid were composed, the term referred to Ireland rather than Scotland, and this may have been compounded by the coincidence of the two Duthacs, one a fifth-century Irish nobleman (who may or may not have existed), the other a somewhat mysterious Scottish ecclesiastic, who lived sometime between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.¹⁹

An indication of the significance of these associations for at least some Aberdonians can be found in the silver chalice presented to the altar of St. Duthac by Master Duncan Scherar, rector of Clatt, at some time in the early sixteenth century. It was decorated with the images of SS. Moluag, Photinus, Kentigern and Brigid, while the paten was gilded with an image of the Virgin.²⁰ All four saints seem likely to have borne some special significance for Scherar: the parish church of Clatt was dedicated to St. Moluag of Lismore; he endowed an annual mass to be celebrated at the feast of St. Photinus (December 23); and he singled out both in his foundation of an altar of St. Andrew in the same church in 1501.²¹ Kentigern (or Mungo) was, of course, associated with Glasgow rather than with the Northeast, and it may be, as the editors of the St. Nicholas register suggest, that his inclusion in Duncan Scherar's chalice was a nod towards Bishop William Elphinstone, who was a Glasgow graduate. St. Brigid, on the other hand, clearly links his gift to the altar for which it was fashioned, with its unique double dedication to Duthac and Brigid. The Scherars were patrons of St. Duthac's altar; John had been a co-founder, and on

¹⁸ Joseph Cooper, ed., *Cartularium Ecclesiae Sancti Nicholai Aberdonensis* (Aberdeen: New Spalding Club, 1892), I.17; II.15.

¹⁹ Tom Turpie, "Our Friend in the North: The Origins, Evolution and Appeal of the Cult of St Duthac of Tain in the Later Middle Ages," *Scottish Historical Review*, 93 (2014): 1–28.

²⁰ Cooper, *Cartularium ... Aberdonensis*, I.71; II.64. In the same donation Scherar gave to the altar a copy of the sermons of Guilelmus Peraldus on the dominical epistles, a martyrologium and a psalter.

²¹ *Ibid.*, I.42, 64–69.

September 13, 1466, the burgh council had conferred the patronage on Duncan and his father William.²²

Nor was this apparent conflation of two Duthacs the only possible basis for an association of St. Brigid with Scotland. As early as the tenth century, the Pictish Chronicle claimed that King Nechtan, who had been exiled in Ireland after being ejected from his throne, dedicated a tower at Abernethy to God and St. Brigid, who had prayed for his restoration, while an alternative account, preferred by the *Aberdeen Breviary*, suggests that Brigid, invited to Abernethy by King Graverdus, established a basilica there. This is the version preferred by Wyntoun and Bower. Wyntoun reports that

Garnak-Makdownache next hym syne
 Was king and founddit Abyrnethyne
 In Straythern in þat tyde,
 In til [þe] honour of Sancte Bride.
 Þe first tyme may be notyt here
 Conuertit qwhen þe Peychtis weyr,... (IV, 5099–5104)²³

Bower goes further, citing “*quadam cronica ecclesie de Abirnethi*” for the claim that Brigid was brought to Scotland by St. Patrick and that Garnard son of Domnach, king of Picts, offered her the lands and teinds of Abernethy.²⁴ Neither story is likely to be true, but there is no doubt that the fifteenth-century collegiate church of Abernethy was dedicated to St. Brigid, or that its sixteenth-century seal bore an image of the saint, accompanied by her normal attribute, a cow.²⁵ That there were two separate Brigids, one of Kildare and the other of Abernethy, was a possibility canvassed by the litany of Dunkeld as early as the fifteenth or early sixteenth century, distinguishing between *S. Brigida Magna* and *S. Brigida Apurnethog*, but the presence of the cow on the seal seems to suggest pretty clearly that for the clergy of Abernethy at least their foundress was the saint of the Irish hagiographers.

What did a fifteenth-century Aberdeen audience think they were seeing—and possibly hearing—when they witnessed a representation of St. Brigid as part of a play at Candlemas? That she was in some way

²² *Ibid.*, II.330. I am not aware of any conclusive evidence of the relationship between John Scherar and William and Duncan, but the Scherars were a long-established burgh family in Aberdeen.

²³ Wyntoun, *Orygynale Cronicle*, ed. F. J. Amours, 6 vols., Scottish Text Society, original series, vols. 50, 53, 54, 56, 63 (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1903–14), Bk IV, lines 74–5.

²⁴ Bower, *Scotichonicon*, ed. D. E. R. Watt and others, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press; Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1987–97), II.302–03; Bk IV, ch. 12.

²⁵ Kissane, 204–5.

associated with the Purification, by virtue of symbolism and the calendar seems obvious, but did they also see her in some sense as locally significant as well? If the presence of the Three Kings points towards a connection with the Continent and Aberdeen's trading and educational links with the Rhineland, the inclusion of St. Brigid seems to hint, at least in part, at an awareness of a remote Celtic past, whether that should be located in Kildare or Abernethy, or both. Though the basis for the selection may be calendrical and liturgical, the cultural context places Aberdeen neatly between two worlds, facing outwards towards the Continent, as well as westwards towards Scotland's Celtic inheritance, or indeed, on, if not crossing, a border or liminal space.

Can we, then, start to develop a hypothesis, however tentative, about what might have taken place on that "scaffald"? The Three Kings must have been involved in some representation of the Adoration of the Magi, while the presence of Symeon, with or without his disciples, continues the sequence up to Mary's visit to the Temple. If we think for a moment about the much more elaborate and extended English cycles, the play of the Magi is typically followed by a Massacre of the Innocents and a Purification play, followed in turn by the play of the Doctors, that is, Jesus's discussion in the Temple as reported in Luke 2:45–49. The absence of Herod from both Aberdeen lists seems to indicate that there was no treatment of the interview between the Kings and Herod, as in the York cycle, where it precedes the Adoration, and at Wakefield, where it comes before the Purification. The presence of knights on both lists, though, fits well with some treatment of the Massacre of the Innocents, albeit one which did not involve dialogue with Herod, as in the English examples. All in all, the range of characters included—and omitted—seems to argue against a fully developed biblical cycle on the English model. We can be fairly sure, from the inclusion of Helen and Brigid, that whatever form the presentation took, it was not a straightforward retelling of the biblical narrative; that it was in some sense what we might call *trans-temporal*. It may have begun, as Luke's account of the nativity begins, with the Emperor Augustus proclaiming his universal tax, reflected in the reference in the *Historia Trium Regum* to "Octavian that was emperor of Rome and helde the empire of all the warlde," and it presumably culminated, at least in the version envisaged in 1505, in the Purification itself.

Fragmentary as it is, the evidence surely points towards a performance on that "scaffald," wherever it was—and the Aberdeen climate at the beginning of February might well lead us to conclude that St. Nicholas's Kirk, the spiritual home of the guilds who performed it, was the most likely location. This performance brought together apparently disparate elements in a dramatic enactment of the Presentation which situated this biblical event in a context that was simultaneously wider and more local,

celebrating the burgh's own complex Celtic and Continental associations. Combining the Candlemas feast with the shadowy but potent local traditions of Brigid and Duthac and with the rich associations of the Three Kings of Cologne, the Aberdeen play would, on this reading, have placed its audience within a ritual space which transcended both time and place.

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