

1-1-1991

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Recommended Citation

Bawcutt, Priscilla (1991) "A First-Line Index of Early Scottish Verse," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 26: Iss. 1.
Available at: <http://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol26/iss1/21>

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Priscilla Bawcutt

A First-Line Index of Early Scottish Verse

The project I wish to talk about had its beginnings in the enterprise and the hard work of three scholars, to whom I would like to pay a brief tribute: Rossell Hope Robbins was largely responsible for the great *Index of Middle English Verse*, which contains the first if partial attempt to index early Scottish verse; William Ringler, together with Denton Fox, revolutionized our understanding of the make-up and contents of the Bannatyne Manuscript, and published, posthumously, an important bibliography of early printed English verse;¹ and Denton Fox himself was the first to conceive the idea of a separate Scottish Index, and devoted several years to this cherished project until his recent untimely death. Although he had indexed some 400 items, the work was by no means complete, and I must stress that it is very much "in progress."

It may be helpful to expand my summary title into a slightly more descriptive one: "An annotated first-line index of verse written, published and transcribed in Scotland from the beginnings to c. 1603." To give some further idea of its scope I should say that it will include English material in Scottish dress, but not Latin or Gaelic verse. The annotation will include in-

¹See *The Index of Middle English Verse* [henceforth *IMEV*], ed. C. Brown and R. H. Robbins (New York, 1943), and *Supplement*, ed. R. H. Robbins and J. L. Cutler (Lexington, Ky., 1965); the Scholar facsimile of *The Bannatyne Manuscript*, introd. D. Fox and W. A. Ringler (London, 1980); and *Bibliography and Index of English Verse Printed 1476-1558* (London, 1988).

formation of various kinds—the manuscripts or prints where a poem is found, its authorship and date (when possible), length and metrical shape, genre, and best editions, if any. The layout is modelled, with important modifications, on that of the *IMEV*. There is no time to describe the Index in great detail; what I shall do is, first, point out both the value and some incidental pleasures of the project; and second, mention some of the problems involved in making it.

There is no doubt as to the need for such a work. The early literature of Scotland is a rich and varied terrain, but is not very well supplied with maps and gazetteers. Recent bibliographies, with titles such as "Middle Scots Writers" or "Middle Scots Poets," are confined solely to the four "great names"—James I, Henryson, Dunbar and Douglas. Yet there exists much other interesting Scottish verse in many genres—often anonymous, sometimes fragmentary, sometimes neglected or virtually unknown, because still in manuscript, or—like the elegy on the dauphine Margaret or the Testament of Duncan Laideus—available only in out-of-the-way publications.² Over the last decades much new material has been discovered, and some of this is in print: John Cartwright's welcome edition of Hay's *Buik of King Alexander*, for instance, and the shorter pieces that have appeared in a variety of journals. Yet it is still extremely difficult for anyone interested in the subject to track down these scattered items, or to know the full extent of what survives.

John Pinkerton, in his pioneering *Ancient Scottish Poems*, congratulated himself that he was a man of taste, not an antiquary—"as of all characters he should the least chuse that of a hoarder of ancient dirt."³ This Index will inevitably contain not so much "ancient dirt" as writing of a minor kind, "fugitive verses," the waifs and strays of literature. But I think it will sometimes enrich our understanding of more famous poets, and throw light on a range of topics. It will perhaps help deflect attention from the Scottish court as the chief (if not the only) focus for poetry-making and literary patronage. It seems to me that literary culture in sixteenth century Scotland was less monolithic and court-dominated than we are led to believe. The picture seems much more diversified and indeed more interesting: burgesses and merchants, provincial lairds, priests, clerics and public notaries, were inter-

²For the elegy, see *Liber Pluscardensis*, ed. F. J. H. Skene (Edinburgh, 1877-80), I, 382-8, and Bawcutt, "A Medieval Scottish Elegy and its French Original," *Scottish Literary Journal*, 15, no. 1 (1988), 5-13; for the testament, see *The Black Book of Taymouth*, ed. C. Innes (Edinburgh, 1855).

³See *The Maitland Folio Manuscript*, ed. W. A. Craigie, STS, 2nd Series, 7, 20 (1919-27), II, 22.

ested in verse and played important roles—as patrons, book-collectors, compilers of manuscripts, and sometimes indeed as poets.

I fully recognize the distinctiveness of the Scottish literary tradition. But one of the things this Index will show is how closely inter-twined were the cultures of England and the Scottish Lowlands, long before the Union of the Crowns: not only Chaucer and Lydgate but many obscure English writers were clearly known and read in Scotland. This is increasingly emerging from study of the Bannatyne Manuscript. From the 18th century onwards George Bannatyne has been revered as a great Scottish patriot—Sir Walter Scott thus spoke of his "plan of saving the literature of a whole nation."⁴ But I think this is a romantic misconception; Bannatyne was rather an intelligent and voracious reader, with highly eclectic tastes. Much of the verse in his collection is English in origin, although this is still only realized by those who take the trouble to read the Introduction to the Scholar Facsimile: and much of this material came not just from ancient manuscripts—which, in his famous phrase, were "awld, mankit and mutillait"—but from very recent printed books, such as Thynne's edition of Chaucer, and the 1567 edition of a dull but popular work, Baldwin and Paulfreyman's *Treatise of Moral Philosophy*.

I am interested in literary continuities, and inter-relationships. It can be instructive, in a variety of ways, to follow a poem as it travels across political frontiers or through the centuries. Where did the "bawdy song" originate that caused such a storm of outrage, when it was printed in the 1567 edition of *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis*? "Welcome, fortune, welcome again," was not composed by Robert Wedderburn, vicar of Dundee, but is a truncated version of a charming and innocuous love poem, found in two Tudor manuscripts—surely a kind of sixteenth century "top of the pops."⁵ A century later a far more bawdy piece was added to the Bannatyne Manuscript:

Once slumbring as I lay within my bed
No creature with me but my madinheid. . .

Here too it is enlightening to compare the unpublished English version of the same poem, copied into his notes by a Cambridge undergraduate, since it supplies not only better readings but three missing lines. Another poem in Bannatyne, an anti-feminist lying piece, "I 3eid the gait was neurir gane," is

⁴See *The Bannatyne Manuscript*, ed. W. Tod Ritchie, STS, 2nd Series, 22, 23, 26; 3rd Series, 5 (1928-34), I, cxxix.

⁵See *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, ed. A. F. Mitchell, STS, 39 (1897), lxxv and 222; E. B. Reed, "The Sixteenth Century Lyrics in Add. MS 18, 752," *Anglia*, 33 (1910), 360; and *IMEV*, 3880.6.

commonly regarded as unique. In fact it closely resembles, both verbally and metrically, a thirteenth-century English poem.⁶ Yet it is not the English origin but the antiquity of this piece that particularly impresses me. Perhaps it was transmitted orally, since it belongs to the same type as verses I recall from childhood—"One fine day in the middle of the night." It must also be stressed that the traffic between England and Scotland was not just one-way. The curiously popular proverb-poem, "Mony man makis ryme and luikis to na ressoun" exists in at least four Scottish manuscripts, in the latest of which it is labelled "King James V his Pasquil"; it also occurs in English manuscripts, yet the rhymes suggest this is a Scottish composition.⁷

One spin-off from work on this Index is to find increasing evidence for Lydgate's long-lasting popularity, from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century. In 1472, John Paston II mentioned that the exiled earl of Arran had borrowed his sister's book "of the Sege of Thebes." Whether this was Lydgate's is not certain; but we do know that over a century later Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy possessed a copy of Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* (on the fly-leaves of this English manuscript are several Scots poems).⁸ Extracts from Lydgate's religious poems occur in several Scottish manuscripts, and part of his *Cristes Passion* is copied on the fly-leaf of a Scottish book of hours.⁹ But whether Lydgate received much credit for this remains doubtful—many items are anonymous or attributed to "Chaucer," and his *Complaint of the Black Knight* is regularly known as "The Maying of Chaucer." Paradoxically, the one piece in Bannatyne attributed to "Lydgait

⁶For the former piece, see Bannatyne, f. 356^v, and Bodleian MS Eng. poet, f 25, f. 12^v; there is another version of this poem in a commonplace book, [c. 1650], now in the Huntington Library (MS HM 116, p. 30). For the second, see Bannatyne, f. 155^v, and S. M. Horrall, "A Poem of Impossibilities from Westminster Abbey MS 34/3," *Notes and Queries*, 230 (1985), 453-5.

⁷For its Scottish occurrences, see the Bannatyne Facsimile, note to item 196; also, *Extracts from the Commonplace Book of Andrew Melville 1621-40*, ed. W. Walker (Aberdeen, 1899), pp. 21-5; for English versions, see *First-Line Index of English Poetry 1500-1800 in Manuscripts of the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, ed. M. Crum (Oxford, 1969), M 160.

⁸Cf. *Paston Letters*, selected and ed. N. Davis (Oxford, 1958), p. 92; on Duncan Campbell, see W. A. Gillies, *In Famed Breadalbane* (Perth, 1938), pp. 135-42. This manuscript is now Boston Public Library, MS f. med. 94.

⁹Part of Lydgate's *Testament* is in MS Arundel 285, see *Devotional Pieces in Verse and Prose*, ed. J. A. W. Bennett, STS, 3rd Series, 23 (1955), 270-74; part of his *Life of Our Lady* is in Bannatyne, items D18 and 28. The poem in the book of hours, now Magdalene College, Cambridge, Pepysian Library, MS 1576, was erroneously attributed to Dunbar by P. H. Nichols; see *PMLA*, 46 (1931), 220-21, and *IMEV*, 2497.

munk of Berry" is an "Appeal of Christ" that MacCracken refused to accept in the Lydgate canon.¹⁰

No doubt many would regard the index-compiler, like the lexicographer, as "a harmless drudge." I hope that computerization will reduce some of the more mechanical chores. But what seems "drudgery" to one person, to another is a fascinating piece of detective work. There is much subjectivity in all value-judgments. I am not a bird-spotter, but take pleasure in sighting fresh copies of poems once rashly labelled "unique"; I am not a stamp-collector either, but hope, Autolycus-like, to snap up some unconsidered literary trifles. M. R. James dismissed one fifteenth-century manuscript in Aberdeen with "this book is very ugly"; but when I looked at it recently I rejoiced because what he called "English scribbles" include a love fragment, beginning "I patrik lorrens of spitalfeylde" and an extract from John Bellenden's *Proheme of the History*.¹¹

This practice of excerpting from longer works has been comparatively neglected by Scottish scholars. Yet it can tell us a lot—about the dissemination of texts, and their relative popularity. Who was reading what, and when, and where? It sheds a sometimes chilly light on contemporary taste. What did sixteenth-century readers most appreciate in Henryson? Less his humor and humanity, it might seem, than his "gude moralitie," and the dreariest stanza in *The Testament of Cresseid* (561-7), that begins "Lufaris be war"—in effect, of women.¹² It is not surprising to find odd verses from *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis* copied into a variety of manuscripts.¹³ But

¹⁰Bannatyne, p. 27 and f. 41^v; see *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, ed. H. N. MacCracken, EETS, Extra Series, 107 and Original Series, 192 (1911-34), I, xxxii: "certain rhymes are against the probability of Lydgate's authorship." Murray of Tibbermuir (see below, note 15) possessed a defective manuscript of *The Troy Book*, and "ekit" it with passages copied from a print.

¹¹Aberdeen University Library, MS 223, f. 58^v and f. 172^f (IMEV, 1338.5). Cf. M. R. James, *A Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts in the University Library Aberdeen* (Cambridge, 1932), no. 223. For a second copy of the Bellenden stanza, "Amang the ost of Grekis . . .," see A. S. G. Edwards, "Bellenden's *Proheme of the History*: A Note," *Bibliotheca*, 6 (1972), 89-90.

¹²See *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. D. Fox (Oxford, 1981), pp. xcvi-xcvii; and S. Mapstone, "The Testament of Cresseid, lines 561-7: a New Manuscript Witness," *Notes and Queries*, 230 (1985), 307-10.

¹³Thirteen lines of "Allace that same sweit face" (*Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, ed. Mitchell, pp. 63-4) are copied as prose in the Maitland Folio; see Craigie, II, 4. For other stanzas copied into manuscripts, see Mitchell, pp. 281-2, and S. Mapstone, "The Thre

which was Lindsay's most popular work? In 1568 the young James Melvill took great delight in a book that was read aloud to him by his sister; it was *The Monarche*, and the passage that he liked, on Hell and the Last Judgment, was also copied in the protocol book of a Scottish notary, Alexander Ramsay of Banff.¹⁴ To counter this doom and gloom I might mention the twelve lines of dawn description from *The Wallace* (VIII, 1183-94), copied c. 1612 by Sir James Murray of Tibbermuir side by side with poems by Sidney and Dyer.¹⁵

I spoke earlier of pleasures and problems, but they can be hard to disentangle. Often indeed the pleasure consists in finding the solution to a problem—rather like solving crossword puzzles. In a recent obituary of the distinguished Egyptologist, Rosalind Moss, tribute was paid to her "passion for bringing order into disjointed facts." That passion—allied to the desire to dispel error—surely inspires many scholars, but it is the hall-mark of all who undertake bibliographies and indexes.

To give a small illustration: all last year I kept on receiving word from scholarly friends of a great discovery in Selkirk; according to "The Scotsman," it was "the most important collection of medieval documents to be uncovered in Scotland for at least a quarter of a century." The find—the so-called "Walter Mason Collection"—was of particular interest to historians, but apparently included poems, variously described to me as "the Cordial verses" or "a verse rendering of *The Cordial, or Four Last Things of Man.*" I was sent a newspaper cutting that claimed to reproduce them, but turned out to be gibberish, when compared with photos of the originals. What I saw was interesting, but not quite what I expected. There was no long verse composition directly based on *The Cordial*—indeed, I suspect that this erroneous notion derived from a rumor of Sally Mapstone's discovery that there is a Scottish transcript of a Caxton print of *The Cordial* in the Scottish Record Office. There were in fact two separate, very short pieces of verse, one in couplets, the other in rhyme royal. The former is indeed, like *The Cordial*, concerned with the four last things—death, judgment, hell, and heaven—but is no more than a mnemonic.

But it was the latter piece that most interested me. It is a very corrupt version of a stanza from a late medieval Scottish work in the "Advice to Princes" tradition, sometimes known as *De Regimine Principum*:

Prestis of Peblis in the Sixteenth Century," in *A Day Estivall*, ed. A. Gardner-Medwin and J. H. Williams (Aberdeen, 1990), p. 125 and note 9.

¹⁴See *The Autobiography and Diary of Mr James Melvill*, ed. R. Pitcairn (Edinburgh, 1842), pp. 18-19; and Scottish Record Office, MS GD 83/ 1092, pp. 23-5.

¹⁵Cambridge University Library, MS Kk. v. 30.

Quha wauld be riyeh haf e to honor ay
 for riyehes followis honor euir mair
 And honor to vysdome is [the] nerest air
 And vysdome is of sciens and lair
 And sciens cummis only throu goddis grace
 Conqwest throu gnd lyf and halynes.

This particular stanza took on a life of its own, and, as was common, circulated independently. I have come across copies in four other Scottish manuscripts.¹⁶ What was the reason for its appeal? Hardly its poetic merits—apart from the use of *concatenatio*, it is not very polished. Perhaps it was popular because it offered the pleasing prospect of wealth as well as virtue—not "virtue is its own reward," so much as "honesty is the best policy."

But there is a more romantic pleasure associated with this task, that of the explorer. One hopes but does not expect to find some *terra incognita*, some long-lost rival to *The Testament of Cresseid*, perhaps, or a new poetic miscellany, to join those of Bannatyne and Maitland.

The Maxwell Commonplace Book cannot compete with these, either in size or richness; nonetheless, it has proved rewarding to explore this small, unpublished, and neglected manuscript, compiled by John Maxwell between 1584 and 1587.¹⁷ As is usual with commonplace books, it is highly miscellaneous—it contains items in Latin as well as Scots, riddles, lists of gods and goddesses, and much verse—some of the latter is very up-to-the-minute (e.g., a sonnet by Montgomerie), but other pieces, like the so-called "precepts in *-ly*," can be traced back to the fourteenth century.¹⁸ Maxwell was himself a minor poet, and specialized in the form that he called roundels—an instance is

I die for lwife of sweit Susanna,
 But rest or rwife I die for lowe.

¹⁶These are respectively, Bannatyne, f. 76^v; Maxwell, f. 10^v; National Library of Scotland, Acc. 9268, MS addition to Kennedie's *Litil Breif Tracteit*, un-numbered page at end; and Melville *Extracts*, ed. Walker, p. 34; for the original poem, see *Maitland Folio Manuscript*, ed. Craigie, I, 115-25, and II, 72-91.

¹⁷Edinburgh University Library, MS Laing III. 467. For a fuller account, see Bawcutt, "The Commonplace Book of John Maxwell," in *A Day Estivall*, ed. Gardner-Medwin and Williams, pp. 59-68.

¹⁸"Serve thy god meikly," etc.; see Bannatyne, f. 74, Maxwell, f. 12, and *IMEV*, 3087.

I wald remowe and zit I canna,
I die for lowe of sweit Susanna. (f. 20b)

But above all he was a collector, and his taste was primarily for short didactic pieces. The manuscript reveals striking contrasts in his reading: on the one hand are popular rhymes and verses, some of which had been in circulation for centuries; on the other there are modish extracts from Lyly's *Euphues* and George Pettie's *A Petite Pallace of Pettie his Pleasure*. (One short dialogue between two "huiris" turned out to be a rendering of the first eight lines of a play by Terence.) This manuscript, like the later Melville Commonplace Book, has rich cultural interest, and calls out for further study.

There is satisfaction in extending the literary corpus, even if only on a small scale. The Reformation in Scotland was so destructive to medieval religious poetry and also to love lyrics, that to find more examples of these kinds is particularly pleasing. To give a few instances—two poems on the Virgin are copied into a fifteenth-century manuscript of Boethius in Scottish ownership: one is a further copy of "Rose Mary most of virtue virginal" (once erroneously attributed to Dunbar); the other is a hitherto unknown piece on the five griefs of the Virgin.¹⁹ Copied on a flyleaf of the Aberdeen Sasine Register is a love lyric, with the highly local refrain, "Adoue deir hart of Aberdene";²⁰ another, also from Aberdeen, is found in a commentary on Justinian that belonged to William Elphinstone:

Allac that euer scho bewte bar
That now is went me fra.
Scho has mad my hert ful sar,
Allac quhy did sche sa.²¹

Another fragment interestingly tallies with a hitherto unidentified song, mentioned in *The Complaynt of Scotland*: this is some alliterative lines written in a manuscript of Douglas's *Eneados*:

¹⁹On these see I. C. Cunningham, "Two Poems on the Virgin (NLS MS 18.5.14)," *Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Transactions*, 5, part 5 (1988), 32-40.

²⁰For a transcript, see H. Shire and A. Fenton, "The Sweepings of Parnassus," *Aberdeen University Review*, 36 (1955), 43-4.

²¹Cf. N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries* (Oxford, 1969—), II, 196.

My hart is lenit one the land in luyne with my lady dere
 My lady is one the see saland with sorofull hart and seghis so sore.²²

Less pleasing but all too characteristic of this period is a steadily increasing body of anti-feminist items. There is nothing to compare with Dunbar's *Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* or Rolland's *Seven Sages*. Nonetheless, it should be noted that almost all the non-Gaelic items in the Book of the Dean of Lismore are attacks on women. They include two pieces on Dalila, from Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, and a peculiarly nasty poem, here attributed to "chawceir," that begins "The beistlie lust, the furius appetite"; it exists in other copies, and was erroneously attributed to Dunbar by nineteenth-century editors. This manuscript contains a satirical squib that begins

Quhat alyt the, man, to ved a vyf?
 Cowd thou nocht find, in all thi lyf,
 A vidy or a raip of pyth [pith],
 A heltyr for to hang the vitht [with] . . .

This is, in fact, a fairly accurate translation of lines 29-32 of Juvenal's notorious Sixth Satire.²³ There are other pieces on the iniquity of women in the Aberdeen Sasine Register and also in the Maxwell Manuscript.

The great majority of these pieces tend to be moral and improving, and to modern taste rather dull. Yet even these may have unexpected interest, like a five-line *memento mori*, said to be scribbled in the Acts of the Lords of Council, followed by the name "Robertus Colvile" and the date 1508. Robert Colvill was indeed a member of James IV's Council, and died with him at Flodden.²⁴

Not all the new material is so solemn, I am glad to report. One item I discovered when visiting an exhibition at Register House, entitled "Government among the Scots." Scribbled on a page of *The Register of Signatures* for 1581-3 was a verse riddle that seemed familiar and in fact had a

²²Cf. *Virgil's Aeneid Translated into Scottish Verse* by Gavin Douglas, ed. D. F. C. Coldwell, STS, 3rd Series, 25, 27, 28, 30 (1957-64), I, 96; my transcript differs slightly from Coldwell's. See *The Complaynt of Scotland*, ed. A. Stewart, STS, 4th Series, 11 (1979), 51: "My hart is leiuit [perhaps read *leini?*] on the land."

²³I am indebted to the detailed account of this manuscript (Adv. 72.1.37), in the NLS's typescript "Catalogue of Gaelic Manuscripts." For a slightly inaccurate transcript, see *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1500*, ed. A. E. Hartung, 5 (1975), 1457.

²⁴"O man behald this warldis brutilnes"; see *Scottish Notes and Queries*, 2nd Series, 7 (1908), 173.

close parallel in Bannatyne. Which of four creatures is most in danger? The first is a louse between two tailors, the last a maiden between two friars.²⁵ Other pieces are small but intriguing, like the six-line flyting attacking an "Inglish rumpill," or tailed Englishman, that begins

I was ane hund and syn ane hair.
Anys I fled, I fle no mair.
Rocht-futtit Scot, quhat says thou?²⁶

Other items are distinctly trivial, like the ownership verses, placed at a book's beginning or end, that Robbins termed "bookplates," but which often sound more like curses—

He that stallis thas buke fro me
Nor he be hangit on ane trei . . .²⁷

As with many trivia, a solitary item has more interest when it is a member of a group. One wonders, for instance, to what extent such inscriptions are formulaic—like the modern "By hook or by crook I'll be first in your book"—whether they have English parallels, and how long they continued in use. Similar questions are prompted by a very popular piece, a mixture of prayer and good-luck charm:

In my defence god me defende
And bring my saull to ane guid ende,
Out of this world quhen that I wende
Sum succour to my saull to sende.

This example is from Maxwell, but I am increasingly familiar with its numerous and varied manifestations on the flyleaves and margins of early Scottish books.²⁸

What kind of problems does one encounter? I will mention four. The first is actually locating texts. There is usually no difficulty about finding

²⁵For a transcript, see M. H. B. Sanderson, *Mary Stewart's People* (1987), p. 89; and cf. Bannatyne, f. 144^v.

²⁶Printed and discussed by Bawcutt, "A Miniature Anglo-Scottish Flyting," *Notes and Queries*, 233 (1988), 441-4.

²⁷In Duncan Campbell's copy of *The Buik of Alexander* (BL, MS Addit. 40732, f. 1^r); for a similar inscription, cf. *IMEV*, 1165.

²⁸Cf. Bawcutt, "John Maxwell," pp. 64-5.

very famous works, such as the Bannatyne Manuscript, although the Asloan Manuscript is not where James Kinsley locates it. But some manuscripts and prints—like the fabled island of Atlantis—have a way of surfacing briefly and then disappearing. Their owner or their press-mark changes, or they get "mis-laid." One could add a new ingredient to the *Ubi sunt* topos—Where is the "Wemyss" manuscript of Wyntoun's *Chronicle*? (Still with the Wemyss family, one hopes, although, according to the *IMEV*, its location is "not established.") Where is the Boyndlie copy of Bellenden's *Livy*?²⁹ Where is the manuscript of Lindsay's *Satire* that once belonged to Drummond of Hawthornden?³⁰ Where too is the printed copy of Aristotle's *Physiology* that once belonged to the Dundee notary, John Wedderburn, and contained several fascinating poems? One of these is a stichic dialogue that begins:

Qubat ane art thow, sa terribill to vew?
Evin deid that kend in erd is well anew.
Quhy sa deformit, with hollow eis in heid?
To schaw men how and quhareof thai ar maid.
Thir clattering banis, quhat do thai signife?
Mirrores to men, to schaw that thai man de.³¹

Let us hope that eventually some will re-surface, as did the Melville Commonplace Book, the Tullibardine manuscript of Montgomerie and Polwart's *Flyting*, and the part-book of Thomas Wood's Psalter in Georgetown University.³²

A particularly sad story concerns Dunbar. A century ago one of his editors, Aeneas Mackay, made a disregarded reference to "another" poem by him, "copied on a fly-leaf of a MS of the *Regiam Majestatem*." I recently tracked down this manuscript, which is now in Edinburgh University Library

²⁹Since I wrote these words I have been informed that the "Boyndlie" *Livy* is in Aberdeen University Library, MS 2740 Add. 1.

³⁰See R. H. Macdonald, *The Library of Drummond of Hawthornden* (Edinburgh, 1971), no. 1371.

³¹See further, W. Menzies, "Robert Wedderburn, Notary and Poet 1546-1611," *Scottish Notes and Queries*, 3rd series, 8 (1930), 41-5.

³²The Melville Commonplace Book is now Aberdeen University Library, MS 28; the "Tullibardine" *Flyting* is Huntington Library, MS HM 105; and see J. C. Hirsch, "An Unnoticed Thomas Wood MS of the St Andrews Psalter," *Notes and Queries*, 216 (1971), 209-10, and K. Elliott, in *Innes Review*, 39 (1988), 151-5. For another MS, briefly lost, see A. Hanham, "A Medieval Scots Merchant's Handbook," *Scottish Historical Review*, 50 (1971), 107 ff.

and bears Mackay's bookplate. Feeling triumphant, I asked to see it, but when I did, my hopes were rapidly dashed. I found not the poem but the stubs of two missing leaves. I also found a packet of correspondence, part of which is in the hand of David Laing, the great antiquary, and says—"Mr M was kind enough to let me have a leaf at the end, on which are verses attributed to Dunbar."³³ It is just possible that this survives—there are still many unclassified fragments among the huge collection of manuscripts that Laing bequeathed to Edinburgh University.

Even when located, of course, a poem is not always easy to decipher. The great Neil Ker could not read the first verse of the love poem in the Elphinstone manuscript that I mentioned earlier—there is a dubious theory that "some of the words are Netherlandish." Ink fades, and the edges of leaves get worn and crumble away—thus a transcript of "Adoue deir hart of Aberdene" made 35 years ago by Helena Shire prints words (on the outer margin) that are certainly not visible now.

One hopes, of course, to find wholly new material. But where? Poems, particularly short ones, lurk in the most unexpected places—on the blank pages, margins, or fly-leaves of Bibles, parliamentary records, legal tomes, government archives, and—interestingly—the protocol books of notaries. Literary scholars are often unaware of their presence, and historians, with the shining exception of John Durkan, tend to be either indifferent or dismissive. Yet tribute should be paid to the archivist, Marion Stewart, who had a genius for finding new poems:³⁴ among her discoveries was the romance, *Florimond of Albany*, which once belonged, along with *The Buik of Alexander* and *The Siege of Thebes*, to that interesting Highlander, Duncan Campbell, who styled himself "The blakest laird in all the land." If any major new finds occur, it seems likely that they will be either in protocol books or among the family papers of some great Scottish family.

Identification is a second problem. Faced with a new text, one interrogates it—is it Scots or English, can it be dated, what is the style or genre? Can its author be identified? To do this one needs knowledge and, hopefully, a good memory; but it is valuable to have well-read friends and a learned husband! Yet the task is not always easy. Other first-line indexes

³³For a fuller account, see Bawcutt, "The Earliest Texts of Dunbar," in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. F. Riddy (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1991), pp. 183-98.

³⁴See her articles, "A Recently-discovered Manuscript: ane Taill of Sir Colling ye Knyt," *Scottish Studies*, 16 (1972), 23-39, and "King Orphius," *Scottish Studies*, 17 (1973), 1-15; also J. D. McClure, "The *Florimond* Fragment," *Scottish Literary Journal*, Supplement, 10 (1979), 1-10.

are not much help, if the piece is acephalous or fragmentary, or a short chunk taken from some massive work like *The Troy Book*. One pitfall is the altered first line. Scottish copyists seemed to like a quatrain that begins

Gif thou wald luvē and luvit be . . .

This seemed obscurely familiar, and turned out to be the first stanza of an anonymous poem that begins

*Gif 3e wald luvē and luvit be.*³⁵

The Aberdeen Sasine Register contains a poem that begins

And al the wode in to the warlde at growis

This is substantially the same as the piece in Bannatyne that begins

Thocht al the wod under the hewin that growis.

A slight change of pronoun or conjunction may thus hamper identification. (There are many other poems belonging to this "impossibility" topos, in Latin and English as well as Scots.)³⁶

Another piece, discussed more fully elsewhere, illustrates this point.³⁷ Two sixteenth-century copies of an epigram on the Incarnation were brought to my attention as possibly being by Dunbar:

Beleue is ane wonder quhilk ressonē nocht can
 Quhow maid wes ane mothir and god wes ane man
 Leif thou thy ressonē, beleue in the wondre
 Beleue is abone, and ressonē is vndre.

This seemed familiar, yet I could not at first track it down, even though I knew there were similar pieces in English. One reason for this was that the English versions usually begin with a word right at the opposite end of the alphabet:

³⁵For the full poem, see Bannatyne, f. 230^r; for the first quatrain, see NLS, Adv. 18.1.2, f. 177^v, and Melville *Extracts*, ed. Walker, p. 34.

³⁶Printed (with omission of line 5) by Shire and Fenton, "Sweepings of Parnassus," p. 53; see also Bannatyne, f. 258^v, and, for the Latin original, H. Walther, *Proverbia sententiaeque latininitatis medii aevi* (Göttingen, 1963-9), no. 29305.

³⁷See Bawcutt, "Dunbar and an Epigram," *Scottish Literary Journal*, 13 (1986), 16-9.

Witt hath wondir that resoun ne telle kan.

There is another problem that might be labelled, "where to draw the line." Should there be aesthetic limits, or should one include everything metrical, even if it is doggerel or might better be classed as a rhyming proverb? What too should be the chronological bounds of this Index? There is no problem about where to start—in effect, with Barbour and the Saints' Legends, in the fourteenth century. But there clearly has to be some latitude about the cut-off date. Some seventeenth-century manuscripts, such as song-books and commonplace books, contain important—and occasionally unique—copies of what we know to be very much earlier works. The Reidpeth Manuscript, dated 1623, contains eight poems by Dunbar found nowhere else; and a seventeenth-century Patrick Scott copied verses on the "Complexions" that are related to the medieval *Secreta Secretorum* tradition.³⁸

Last but not least is the question of presentation. Obviously one aims at accuracy and consistency, although—as anyone knows who has worked a long time on a large project—these are not easily maintained. There are many small decisions to make—what to do with fragments, for instance. Brown-Robbins has a separate second Index of unidentified "Acephalous Poems," but I think this is confusing, and that all pieces should go within the same alphabetical scheme. (This practice has been adopted in the Robbins-Cutler Supplement.) The verse-extracts also pose problems. Does one give the much-copied stanza from *De Regimine Principum* a wholly separate entry, or does one incorporate it in the entry for the main work? It raises, in a sense, the question of what constitutes a poem. I think one should treat such extracts as separate items—since for contemporaries they assumed independent life—but must obviously combine this with full cross-references. (Yet not all indexers take this line.)³⁹

I would like this Index to be user-friendly, to be not only informative but also convenient; and this is where fresh problems arise, since the more one attempts to say, especially in a small space, the more off-putting the end-product is likely to be. Indexes vary enormously in this and other respects.

³⁸BL, MS Harley 1734, ff. 35-9; on this see H. Hargreaves, "Patric Scot's Medical Book," in *So Meny People Longages and Tonges*, ed. M. Benskin and M. L. Samuels (Edinburgh, 1981), pp. 309-21. For other instances, cf. J. M. Templeton, "Seventeenth-Century Versions of *Christis Kirk on the Grene* and *The Wyf of Awchtirmuchty*," *SSL*, 4 (1966-7), 127-43.

³⁹For a helpful discussion of such questions, see *Middle English Prose: Essays on Bibliographical Problems*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards and D. Pearsall (New York, 1981).

The Michelin Red Guide is a miracle of condensed information; it also employs visual symbols, like rosettes and rocking-chairs, not normal in literary guides. Yet even punctuation can be symbolic; in *The Short Title Catalogue*, as you may recall, "the Atlantic Ocean is represented by a semi-colon." *IMEV* is visually lucid, but does not give quite as much information as I personally would like. Denton Fox envisaged fuller annotation, possibly too much; but this sample—as you can see—is a first draft, and requires revision. Ringler's Index is as compressed as Michelin, and really needs an accompanying key. I would like therefore to subject this conference to a little consumer research, and end by asking: what information would you, ideally, hope to find in an Index of Scottish Verse? And what sort of lay-out and presentation do you find most helpful?

University of Liverpool

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As it befell and happinnit into deid

'The Freiris of Berwick' sometimes ascribed to William Dunbar -
591 lines in couplets.

1. Pepys 2553; 2. Advocates 1. 1. 6, f. 348^b.

Aberdeen, 1662; 1. Pinkerton, *Anc. Scot. Poems* 1786, 1. 65-85;
Sibbald, Edinb. 1802, II. 372-90; Laing, *Poems of Dunbar*, II.
3-23; 2. Small, *STS* IV. 285-304; Ritchie, *STS* n. s. xxvi. 261-77.

AS-IT-B.SA Friars of Berwick 21 May 1984

As it befell and happinnit in to deid

<1> Bann., ff. 348b-354b.

<2> Maitland Folio, pp. 113-29.

<3> The Merrie Historie, of the Thrie Friars of Berwicke
(Aberdeen, 1622). Aldis 585, STC (new) 7349.5.

'the frieris of berwik' (<1>), a fabliau, in five-stress couplets. While there are considerable differences between the three versions, they are all about the same length (564-8 lines); no one of them is descended from any other. The only known copy of <3> is in the Huntington Library (photostats in the National Library of Scotland).

Mackenzie (1932), followed by IMEV (Supplement), assumes that the first two lines are an introductory couplet, and that the third line (in <1> the fourth line) is the true first line. While this is plausible, the first couplet is not set apart in any witness, and I have let it stand.

Pinkerton attributed the work to Dunbar, but on no evidence; the attribution has not been generally accepted. It was presumably written before 1540, as it refers to the monasteries in Berwick, which were suppressed no later than 1539. Ed. Small et al. (1884-9), II. 285-304, etc. Manual (4) x. 112; IMEV 384, 442.5.

Format for First-Line Index

BR 658 Controuersies, plees and discordes,¹

[John Lydgate, named as author in three MSS.]² *Thus endeth the horse the ghoos and the sheep.*³ [Composed after 1436.]⁴ 539: 77 RR [omits envoy, vv. 540–659.]⁵ 17018–19, 1477?–78, a2–b6v. 17020–22, c.1495–1500, a2–b5 (vv. 1–462 only).⁶ Nar., debate.⁷

1. Poem number. BR (Brown and Robbins) if printed before 1501, TP (early Tudor print) if printed after 1500. First line literatim with abbreviations silently expanded and commas substituted for virgules which are here used to indicate the end of a line. If the BR first line is different from the printed version it is given in square brackets.

2. Author if ascertainable.

3. Title exactly as it appears.

4. Date of composition (usually from the *Middle English Dictionary*) if different from the date of the print.

5. Total number of lines: and verse forms. MT = Monk's Tale stanza (ababbcbc5), RR = Rhyme Royal (ababbcc5), poult. = poulter's measure (a₁₂a₁₄), tail rhyme = aa4b3cc4b3. Other forms are designated by the number of lines to the stanza and the rhyme scheme. If the verse is accentual the number, or approximate number, of stresses per line is indicated by a number on the line (see Rhyme Royal above); if the verse is syllabic the number of syllables per line is indicated by a subscript number (see poulter's measure above). Burdens are listed in parentheses by first lines, refrains by last word.

6. *Short Title Catalogue* numbers of editions containing the poem (if actual number of editions cannot be seen from the sequence of STC numbers, the number is indicated in parentheses). Inclusive dates of editions. Signatures or folios on which the poem appears in the first edition (book and chapter in parentheses).

7. Genre and subject classifications.