

In the Borderlands of Periodization with “The blythnes that hes bein”: The medieval / early modern boundary in Scottish history

Mairi Cowan

Volume 23, numéro 2, 2012

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1015792ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1015792ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Canadian Historical Association / La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0847-4478 (imprimé)

1712-6274 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Cowan, M. (2012). In the Borderlands of Periodization with “The blythnes that hes bein”: The medieval / early modern boundary in Scottish history. *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 23(2), 142–175. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1015792ar>

Résumé de l'article

La séparation traditionnelle entre le Moyen Âge et les Temps modernes dans l'historiographie écossaise a nui à notre compréhension de certains développements qui se sont produits en Écosse aux quinzième et seizième siècles. Cet article propose de revisiter cette périodisation. Il suggère d'étudier les quinzième et seizième siècles écossais dans le cadre de l'époque moderne (plutôt que médiévale) ainsi que dans le contexte de l'histoire atlantique, un champ d'étude très dynamique, plutôt que dans le seul cadre européen. En opérant un tel changement dans la périodisation, plusieurs caractéristiques deviennent plus apparentes, incluant une transformation dans la culture religieuse en lien avec la Réforme catholique, une augmentation de la discipline sociale qui a aidé à façonner la Réforme protestante ainsi qu'une participation précoce des Écossais à la traite des esclaves dans le monde atlantique.

In the Borderlands of Periodization with “The blythnes that hes bein”: The medieval / early modern boundary in Scottish history*

MAIRI COWAN

Abstract

The conventional placement of the boundary between “medieval” and “early modern” periods in Scottish history has obscured our understanding of certain developments in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Scotland. This paper proposes a reconsideration of periodization so that the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries be examined against the backdrop of early modern (rather than medieval) historical scholarship, and not only in the context of Europe but also in the more expansive field of Atlantic history. With such a shift in periodical alignment, several features become more apparent including a change to religious culture in connection with the Catholic Reformation, an increase in social discipline that helped shape the Protestant Reformation, and early participation in the Atlantic slave trade.

Résumé

La séparation traditionnelle entre le Moyen Âge et les Temps modernes dans l'historiographie écossaise a nui à notre compréhension de certains développements qui se sont produits en Écosse aux quinzième et seizième siècles. Cet article propose de revisiter cette périodisation. Il suggère d'étudier les

* A version of this paper was presented at a panel on “Historians and the Archives — Building, Bending, Breaking: Borders of History, Religion and Discipline in Medieval Europe” at Congress 2012 of the Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University. I would like to thank my co-panelists, Donna Trembinksi and Jessie Sherwood, for their encouragement and good cheer; our session’s chair, Michel Ducharme, for his patience and enthusiasm; and our perceptive audience members for their questions and suggestions. I would also like to thank Laura Walkling, whose research into Africans at the court of James IV for one of her seminars and an independent reading course at the University of Toronto Mississauga has provided me with new insight into these people’s lives and their significance.

quinzième et seizième siècles écossais dans le cadre de l'époque moderne (plutôt que médiévale) ainsi que dans le contexte de l'histoire atlantique, un champ d'étude très dynamique, plutôt que dans le seul cadre européen. En opérant un tel changement dans la périodisation, plusieurs caractéristiques deviennent plus apparentes, incluant une transformation dans la culture religieuse en lien avec la Réforme catholique, une augmentation de la discipline sociale qui a aidé à façonner la Réforme protestante ainsi qu'une participation précoce des Écossais à la traite des esclaves dans le monde atlantique.

Quhair is the blythnes that hes bein
 Bayth in burgh and landwart sein,
 Amang lordis and ladyis schein,
 Daunsing, singing, game and play?¹

This question was posed in the late sixteenth century by Scottish poet Richard Maitland of Lethington. Born around 1496, Maitland grew up in Scotland and attended St. Andrews University before studying law at Paris and then serving as courtier to James V, King of Scots.² During his long life, Maitland had many occasions to observe intellectual and cultural life at the highest social levels. Both in towns and in the countryside, among common people and the aristocracy, he had witnessed dancing, singing, games, and play. When considering the world around him in his later years, however, and in pondering an earlier time of blithness, he lamented that “all mirrines is worne away.” Maitland was looking backwards through time to a society whose members (according to his poem) had celebrated festivities such as Yule with much good cheer; at some time before his death in 1586, by contrast, he and his compatriots were left with no word of Yule in church, street, or school, and in place of festive masqueraders they had only churchmen dressed like men of war. The change was not, according to the tone of the poem, for the better.

In his nostalgic verse, Maitland was observing and bemoaning the passing from one era to another. Historians mark such passages formally through periodization, a conventional and convenient way to divide one swath of time from another. Periodization has a

definite utility in both research and teaching: it provides commonly-understood delineations of scope, it allows for practical start and end points for courses and textbooks, and it organizes fields of expertise into neat chronological units.³ For all its usefulness, however, periodization also brings with it definite limitations, especially when historians try to assess continuity and change, causation, and historical significance. Such limitations, if ignored or underappreciated, can mislead historians into presuming too much continuity within any one period or too much change between two adjacent periods, too simple an understanding of cause and consequence, and too dismissive an attitude toward certain experiences that are really of significance far beyond the borders of the region under direct consideration. This paper proposes that the conventional placement of the “medieval” / “early modern” boundary for Scotland in particular has encumbered our understanding of Scottish history by encouraging a presumption of too much continuity in religious culture before the Protestant Reformation, an oversimplified assessment of the causal relationship between religious reform and social discipline, and a misguided downplaying of the significance of Africans at the royal court of James IV. As a corrective to these limitations, an adjustment to the standard periodization of Scottish history should be considered so that the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are examined against the backdrop of early modern (rather than medieval) historical scholarship, and not only in the context of Europe, but also in the more expansive field of Atlantic history. When such an adjustment is made, Richard Maitland’s observation about the passage of time can be appreciated more fully as an indication of how his small nation on the fringe of the Europe — itself a landmass on the fringe of Eurasia — relates to the wider historical world at the inauguration of the modern era.

The end of the Scottish Middle Ages

A brief outline of the current state of periodization in studies of medieval and early modern Scotland will provide those who are not specialists in the region with a historiographical context for what has become a very late, perhaps a surprisingly late, end to the Middle

Ages. In Scottish history, the boundary between the “medieval” and the “early modern” eras often sits solidly in the mid-sixteenth century, specifically at the Protestant Reformation of 1560. A good illustration of how the Protestant Reformation functions as a periodical boundary between the medieval and the early modern can be found in the *Oxford Companion to Scottish History*. Its entry on “church institutions” is divided into chronological sections including a medieval one, focusing on the period from the twelfth century to the early sixteenth, and the section following, “post-Reformation,” covering from 1559 through much of the seventeenth century.⁴ Similarly, its entry on “religious life” has a medieval section focusing on the twelfth to sixteenth centuries and a subsequent section, entitled simply using the dates “1560–1650,” presenting the Reformation period and its Church as being in stark contrast to what had gone before.⁵ It is, of course, perfectly reasonable to use the Protestant Reformation as an important periodical boundary in a survey of Scottish religious history, but these entries also imply a larger periodical picture that deserves closer scrutiny: their structure clearly suggests that the medieval period in Scottish religion lasted right to 1560.⁶ To be sure, not all historians of Scotland take 1560 as the end of the Middle Ages. Several important, recent studies of Scottish history — particularly political history — end the medieval era sooner.⁷ Nevertheless, the end date of 1560 for the Middle Ages is very frequently deployed in histories of Scotland, most conspicuously in those that concentrate on religion,⁸ but also in works on archaeology,⁹ folklore,¹⁰ the history of medicine,¹¹ and even general surveys such as R.A. Houston and W.W.J. Knox’s *The New Penguin History of Scotland*, Christopher Harvey’s *Scotland: A Short History*, and *A Companion to Britain in the Latter Middle Ages*.¹²

The Protestant Reformation of 1560 often serves as the watershed between the medieval and the early modern, a conspicuously late date even on the contested ground of pre-modern Western European historiography.¹³ Not only does this watershed mean a very late end date for the medieval period, but it also means a rather late starting date for the early modern. That the latter period does not begin until some time after the Reformation is revealed by a quick glance at the chronological scope of works whose titles employ

the phrase “early modern.”¹⁴ A few exceptions aside,¹⁵ most books and articles on Scottish history in general and almost all books and articles on Scottish religion in particular that speak of the early modern period focus on developments after the Protestant Reformation of 1560. This post-Reformation scope for early modernity does certainly have merit in the Scottish context, even for studies that focus on matters other than those purely religious. Julian Goodare explains the sense of a post-Reformation early modern period for political history in the introduction to *State and Society in Early Modern Scotland*, which examines the period 1560–1625, by saying that “the Reformation of 1560 makes a natural starting-point; if the sovereign state was created at any one moment, it was when papal authority was abrogated.”¹⁶

The year 1560 may well serve as a good chronological starting-point for many historical studies of modern Scotland, but historians looking at the period before, even if not very long before, should weigh carefully another implication of taking the year 1560 as the advent of the early modern period. The usage of “pre-Reformation” as coterminous with “medieval” does have the advantage of the Protestant Reformation being, at least on the surface, a precise demarcation: the Scottish Protestant Reformation has an official start date, so everyone is in agreement over when a period labeled “pre-Reformation” ends. (The question of exactly when pre-Reformation begins is another issue. Technically, all periods before 1559–1560 would qualify, although histories of medieval Scotland have tended to begin, or at least posit an important break, around the start of the twelfth century as a divider between “Celtic” and “Anglo-Norman” or between “early” and “feudal.”¹⁷) Furthermore, with its terminus or demarcation based on a religious event, the term pre-Reformation should be more suitable to a study of religion than, say, regnal dates of monarchs or dates of international treaties. However, the label pre-Reformation also brings with it serious potential disadvantages to studies of Scottish religion, not the least of which is that it casts the shadow of the Protestant Reformation darkly over the preceding period. It characterizes the time before 1560 implicitly in Protestant terms, thus anticipating a religious culture anachronistic to a time when the vast majority of Scots were Catholic. With its insistence of

a Reformation just over the horizon, the label implies that the pre-Reformation period should be viewed as nothing more than a prelude to the Protestant period, and perhaps even insinuates that the very fact of there having been a Reformation is itself evidence of there having been a need for the Reformation.¹⁸ Although some historians have argued for a decline in religion in pre-Reformation Scotland, either a falling off in the level of enthusiasm or in the quality of religion,¹⁹ such arguments have largely faded over the past few decades, likely under the influence of authors, such as Eamon Duffy, who have rehabilitated the general assessment of late medieval religion.²⁰ Other historians, perhaps unconvinced that the Protestant Reformation, in and of itself, constitutes valid evidence for pre-Reformation dissatisfaction with Catholicism, have presented interesting evidence for the survival of Catholic practices for many years after 1560, thus demonstrating that the official Reformation did not beget an immediately internalized and widespread Protestantism on the part of lay Scots. In general, Catholic practice lasted longest in regions remote from the control of central government where public authority was largely in private hands, and in institutions, such as craft guilds, where social and religious identities were difficult or impossible to separate.²¹ Even outside of these conservative areas, Protestant culture was in some ways slow to take hold. Its leaders faced a particularly difficult struggle in their attempts to reform earlier festive cultures,²² and Protestantism itself changed over the course of the post-Reformation period, becoming increasingly more rigid as time went on during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²³ In their investigations of Catholic survivals and Protestant developments post-1560, historians are challenging older notions of continuity and change in their understanding of Scottish religious culture after the Protestant Reformation.

The same consideration of dynamism can only be said to be happening much more slowly for the study of religious culture before 1560, perhaps because of another influence of the pre-Reformation label: it suggests and even seems to encourage a kind of chronological flattening and homogenization to religious culture in the time before 1560. Some studies have presented features of Scottish religion in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries as vibrant and

worthy of consideration in their own right,²⁴ but the main narrative of the history of Scottish religion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries remains largely stuck in the box of pre-Reformation where it is examined from a backwards-looking perspective on the other side of 1560 as a period with little development, rather than as a dynamic historical time. If they refuse to regard the centuries immediately prior to 1560 simply as an amorphous pre-Reformation and medieval period and instead look for dynamism, historians succeed in distinguishing some notable developments during the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The most obvious religious developments are probably those that arose as forms of dissension from the Catholic Church, such as the Lollards in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.²⁵ Better known are the evangelical movements from the Continent in the early sixteenth century. Lutheran texts were circulating in Scottish towns from the 1520s, and Calvinist ideas were being adopted a generation or so later. Although it is very hard to gauge how many people in Scotland became interested in or committed to these early waves of evangelicalism, they likely would have formed only a small minority.²⁶ Other transformations in the religious culture of Scotland beyond Lollardy and evangelical dissent have been highlighted in several publications, including Janet Foggie's monograph on the Scottish Dominicans²⁷ and a recent collection of essays on the cult of saints.²⁸

One particularly fruitful avenue is proving to be the extension of chronological scope to straddle both sides of the year 1560 in a single study. Some studies treat the entire sixteenth century as its own unit,²⁹ while others extend their reach further to either side of the Protestant Reformation. The New Edinburgh History of Scotland Series, for example, includes the volume *Scotland Re-Formed 1488–1587* by Jane E.A. Dawson.³⁰ Still others take the medieval and the early modern periods together as a chronological unit,³¹ and several of these place the divide between the two periods, inasmuch as they make much of this divide, closer to 1500 than 1560. The five-book series *Scotland: The Making and Unmaking of the Nation c. 1100–1707*, which presents a wide range of original essays and reprinted articles, uses the year 1500 as the rough and somewhat porous dividing line between its medieval and early mod-

ern sections.³² Alastair F. Mann also places the medieval / early modern divide at the beginning of the sixteenth century in his monograph on the Scottish book trade,³³ while Michael Brown and Steve Boardman end the medieval period at *circa* 1500 in “Survival and Revival: Late Medieval Scotland”.³⁴ Such studies, organized in such a way as to downplay the significance of 1560, tend to find more vibrancy and development in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It is worthwhile noting that most of the studies making a significant break at around 1500 focus on areas other than religion. When Scottish religious culture is examined with the same possible periodization in mind, that is, if the early sixteenth century (and possibly even the fifteenth) is reperiodized so that it is no longer medieval or pre-Reformation but rather early modern, certain features become apparent on the religious landscape that have hitherto gone unnoticed or under-appreciated. In addition to Lollard and evangelical movements mentioned earlier, historians have also noted some reforming movements arising within the Catholic Church, in particular the proceedings of sixteenth-century Archbishop of St. Andrews John Hamilton and his humanist followers. The most thorough discussion of Catholic reform in the religious and political institutions of Scotland is in Alec Ryrie’s *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation*, which presents the years from 1500 to 1560 not simply as one nebulous pre-Reformation period, but rather as a series of several distinct Reformation stages, including an “Imperial Reformation” of 1544–1550 when England, at least partly motivated by a desire to liberate Scotland from France and Catholicism, ravaged much of Scotland in the so-called “rough wooing”; a “Catholic Reformation” of 1549–1559, when the Scottish Church set for itself an ambitious but ultimately unsuccessful program of reform; an “Underground Reformation” of 1543–1559 when Protestants grew more radicalized; the makings of a rebellion in 1557–1559 that was directed against both the Catholic establishment and against what was perceived as French oppression; and finally a revolution in 1559–1560.³⁵

Examinations of Catholic reform in Scotland have tended to focus on elite personnel in church and state, but signs of this same reforming movement can also be found at other levels of Scottish

society. They may not appear conspicuous to someone looking for typically medieval features, but they emerge quite clearly when the researcher has in mind scholarship on religion in early modern Europe. One Scottish example of an early modern kind of reform is the shift from a visual to an aural emphasis in public worship.³⁶ Scholars looking at other parts of Europe have observed an important change from public worship centred on something seen (mostly the Mass, and more specifically the moment of the elevation of the Host) to something that is heard (mostly the sermon).³⁷ Although this shift is often associated with the Protestant Reformation and its emphasis on the Bible as the Word of God, early modern Catholic reformers were also giving prominence to what is heard, as demonstrated by the emphasis they placed on good preaching and the desire expressed by certain members of the Council of Trent that music in the Mass be appropriately sacred in its character and intelligible in its text.³⁸ This same shift in emphasis from sight to sound can be found in Scotland. Sight had been central to worship for laypeople in Scottish parishes during much of the Middle Ages, when ceremonies and ceremonial spaces were lush with visual richness and centred around the elevation of the Host at Mass.³⁹ The importance of sound was not entirely ignored. Statutes from the thirteenth century commanded that the words of the Mass “be pronounced with a full and distinct voice,” and that “all the hours and all the offices be spoken audibly and distinctly, so that the words be not cut short or slurred over by too great haste.”⁴⁰ But statutes from the sixteenth century show that these concerns over textual comprehension were growing more marked in the intervening years. The Scottish Provincial Council of 1549 directed parish priests to “feed the people ... with wholesome words,” and it directed the rectors of parishes to ensure that the “word of God be expounded to their flocks purely, sincerely, and in a Catholic sense,” that the Church’s ceremonies be explained, and that false opinions be prohibited and denounced.⁴¹ The Scottish Provincial Council of 1552 was even more explicit not only about what should be read, but also about how the material was to be delivered. It ordered that on all Sundays and holidays curates were to read from the new *Catechism* in sequence and in entirety, “beginning at the very preface or introduction and continuing to the

very end of the book, without break or omission of any passage.” Individual clerics were clearly not to be meddling with the text by deciding what to leave out; moreover, they were to endeavour to create the optimal acoustic environment for those listening by reading from the *Catechism* only “after silence has been imposed upon all.” This council additionally provided much detail in directing exactly how the reading of the *Catechism* was to be accomplished, saying that it should be done “in a loud and audible voice, distinctly, clearly, articulately, and with attention to the stops; and the recitation shall be given from the book itself completely and without stammering, without addition, change, suppression or omission, just as the words stand in the text.” Individual clerics were clearly not to be taking any kind of dramatic licence whatsoever. In its explanation for the importance of such a careful and deliberate recitation, the council provided an interestingly didactic reason, saying that it is “so that the people can profitably hear what has been read and recited in the manner described, and may derive edification therefrom, and drink in the knowledge of their salvation.” If something so important as knowledge of salvation was to be obtained through the sense of hearing, it should come as no surprise that the council would emphasize the means of improving oral delivery. The priests were not to attempt their reading without due preparation: they were to practise daily and strive so that “what is read may be made to sink into the minds of their hearers by the emphasis of living speech.”⁴² Thus, by the mid-sixteenth century, Scottish church councils were clearly emphasizing the importance of hearing the spoken word.

A similar emphasis on the sense of hearing can be found in the 1552 *Catechism’s* discussion of transubstantiation, the doctrine of Christ’s sacramental presence in the Eucharist. According to this doctrine, all elements of the bread and wine at Mass are changed into the body and blood of Christ at the moment of the priest’s consecration. This doctrine was given dogmatic status at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, and it was rejected by all the major Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century. The Scottish *Catechism* of 1552 maintains the Catholic doctrine, but warns against the untrustworthiness of human senses. It says that when encountering the Eucharist, most senses detect bread and wine even though there is no

substance of bread and wine in this sacrament but only the substance of the body and blood of Christ under the form of bread and wine. For this reason, the *Catechism* explains, worshippers should not put much trust in these misleading senses. “And thairfor, we suld nocht geve credit to our sycht, to our smelling, to our taisting and twiching,” it says, before recommending that we only pay attention to “quhat we heir.”⁴³ According to the *Catechism*, among all the bodily senses the only reliable transmitter of truth in the most important religious ritual is the sense of hearing, the sense that had by the mid-sixteenth century displaced sight as the main sense by which laypeople were to apprehend their central sacrament. Hearing was taking precedence over sight among those regulating public worship in the churches of Scotland just as it was elsewhere in Western Europe.

Other connections to reforming trends on the Continent could also be found in Scotland, adding further to the evidence that there were indeed significant changes to the lived religion of Scottish people happening in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. No less a reforming figure than Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam was hired as tutor in rhetoric and Greek for Alexander Stewart, natural son of King James IV and Archbishop designate of St Andrews.⁴⁴ The relationship between teacher and student was obviously warm and collegial, for after the untimely death of young Alexander at the Battle of Flodden in 1513, Erasmus wrote movingly in his *Adagia* of the handsome and dignified youth, quiet in temperament but quick in study, devout in his religion and — high praise from Erasmus — without any trace of superstition. “No one, in a word, was ever more worthy to be a king’s son and the son of that king,” wrote the saddened humanist tutor.⁴⁵ Erasmus’ thoughts were much on the minds of other Scots, too, as shown by how many of them owned copies of his writings. Although Scotland did not have its own printing press until 1505, Scottish readers did purchase materials that had been printed in England or on the Continent.⁴⁶ At least some of the literate laity were intellectual participants in Catholic reforming trends on the Continent and they were likely devotional participants as well, as suggested by the popularity among Scots of the *Quiñones Breviary*, the papal-commissioned reform of traditional Catholic

prayers to suit private use.⁴⁷ In terms both of private reading and public worship, the religious lives of Scots were changing in the early sixteenth century and such changes to religious priorities are much easier to see when early sixteenth-century Scotland is compared not (or not only) against medieval features found elsewhere in Europe, but against early modern ones.

Reformation and social discipline

“Social disciplining,” the attempt by authorities to regulate people’s private lives, is often associated with early modern Europe.⁴⁸ For Scotland in particular, the Protestant Reformation is usually taken to be the catalyst for social discipline. The Protestant Reformers in Scotland, inspired by the successes of their reforming counterparts in Geneva, created the kirk session courts that vigorously and enthusiastically punished a range of misbehaviours from pre-marital sexual activity, to gambling, to the singing of Christmas carols.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the sixteenth-century Scottish Reformers were not in the least shy about advertising their goal of a godly society. The *Book of Discipline* that was presented to the Scottish Parliament in 1560 assessed the state of religion in Scotland before the Protestant Reformation as having been “utterly corrupted,” and John Knox in the *History of the Reformation in Scotland* wrote of how God had established among the Scots his true religion and of how Scotland was the purest of all earthly realms in terms of its religious doctrine.⁵⁰

Modern historians of Scotland, especially (and not surprisingly) when considering religion, have often followed the sixteenth-century reformers’ lead and invested the Protestant Reformation with much significance at multiple levels. Especially closely bound are religious culture and social control: social discipline moved Scotland from a festive, unruly medieval society to a strict, uncompromising early modern one. Or so a dominant narrative would convey, in spite of a growing weight of scholarship for Europe more broadly downplaying the Reformation, if narrowly construed and isolated to an intellectual movement, as primarily or solely responsible for social change in early modern Europe.⁵¹ Historians have already pointed out older religious practices and social patterns persisting for years, even gen-

erations, beyond the official date of the Protestant Reformation in Scotland, thus challenging the notion that the Protestant Reformation had an immediate and profound impact on popular religious customs or social control.⁵² In reviewing periodization, it is also worth considering the possibility that the Catholic reform developments discussed earlier were part of a still larger current of change in society, that these reforms, coming as they did before the Protestant Reformation, were not a result of Protestantization so much as they were a contributing factor in shaping confessional change. The religious movements of the Reformations in Europe intensified measures of social discipline by both church and state, and formal education was often used to bring about the desired results.⁵³ In Scotland, clear indications can be found for provision of education at various levels, and especially in the cities.⁵⁴ Collusion between church and state in bringing sterner social order and greater confessional homogeneity could be found in Scotland, and notably before the Protestant Reformation took hold.

One aspect taken as characteristic of social reform in early modern Europe is the anxiety about preserving sacred spaces from profane contamination.⁵⁵ This anxiety could be found in Scotland when church and state officials in the early sixteenth century made attempts to sanitize public festivals and rid them of seemingly irreverent elements. An especially interesting series of attempts relates to figures of misrule.⁵⁶ People charged with the misruling offices of “unreason” and “bonaccord” were found in various Scottish towns, and the most abundant evidence for them is the “Abbots of Bonaccord” in Aberdeen who were elected — almost as if in anticipation of Maitland’s “mirriness” and “blythnes” — to “do plesour and blythnes to the toune.”⁵⁷ Although these figures’ exact duties are not listed in the records, their activities seem to have included in different years the supervision of religious plays, the creation of dances, the decoration of the town, and even the responsibility of being Masters of Artillery.⁵⁸ The figures of misrule troubled the authorities almost as soon as they first appear in the records,⁵⁹ but the Abbots of Bonaccord, and later also their companions the Priors of Bonaccord, nonetheless continued in their roles for some time. New figures of misrule made their appearance in Aberdeen in May 1508,

when all able persons within the town were ordered to be ready with their clothing of green and yellow and their bows and arrows, “to pass with Robyne Huyd and Litile Johnne.”⁶⁰ These new figures were meant to be direct replacements for, or new versions of, the Abbot and Prior of Bonaccord, as the council made explicit in November of that same year by ordering that all persons able to ride were to decorate and honour the town with Robin Hood and Little John, “quhilk was callit, in yers bipast, Abbat and Prior of Bonacord.”⁶¹ The change in persona for figures of misrule was not restricted to the local situation in Aberdeen, for Robin Hood started to work alongside or to replace earlier Abbots of misrule in many other Scottish towns at about this same time.⁶² In a possibly related trend, religious themes retreated from royal entries into Scottish towns while secular and classical themes came to the fore over the course of the sixteenth century.⁶³

It may at first be difficult to see how the exchange of one set of misrule figures for another can be interpreted as an attempt to preserve an appropriate tone of sacredness. After all, the earlier figures of misrule — the Abbots and Priors — allude to religious authorities, while their replacements are outlaw heroes and, on the surface, this change may look as if it reflects a civic identity simply becoming less religious as the sixteenth century progressed. But there is another possible explanation. The replacement of Abbot and Prior of Bonaccord with Robin Hood and Little John as figures of misrule could represent not so much a secularization of popular culture as a shifting sense of religious appropriateness. While the titles of “Abbot” and “Prior” are making reference to religious personnel, these figures of misrule were certainly not pious; on the contrary, they were a mockery of monasticism and of the church hierarchy. Robin Hood, by contrast, is presented in Scottish literature from the time as pious and willing to take on corrupt authority.⁶⁴ By exchanging their earlier figures of misrule for the more secular (but pious) Robin Hood and Little John, the people of Scottish burghs could have been expressing *more* respect for the church and the sacredness of religious space, not less; they stopped mocking figures of explicit religious authority, and instead celebrated pious lay people of legend.

Not only did the specific figures of misrule change, but so too did the status of the general category of misrule. The people chosen

to play the parts of a lord of misrule in the fifteenth century were respectable members of burgh society occupying a high social status — burgesses and bailies — and they were endorsed and financed by civic authorities. By the 1530s, however, prominent individuals were showing reluctance to take on the roles and civic authorities were likewise showing reluctance to support the tradition. Some attempts were made to restore the appeal of the office. The lords of Bonaccord in Aberdeen petitioned in April of 1539 to have in their time the older customs, and in an effort to add more authority to their position they further asked that they be able to seize the property of those who did not assist them, “or ellis mony of thame will nocht obey.”⁶⁵ In spite of such attempts, the festivities of misrule were fading if poems lamenting their decline are to be believed.⁶⁶ By the 1550s, the burgh council of Aberdeen was trying to restrict the carnivalesque more generally by limiting the banquets of the lords of Bonaccord that were, they said, neither “profitabill nor godlie” and, in 1555, an Act of Parliament stated that no person be chosen Robin Hood or Little John, Abbot of Unreason or Queen of May.⁶⁷ By the mid-sixteenth century, therefore, townspeople had purged their figures of misrule of any allusion to religious authority, and then civic and royal officials grew intolerant of the festivities themselves.

Festive misrule was neither the only nor the most serious aspect of society to become a target of sharpening intolerance. During the fifteenth and into the sixteenth centuries, people in Scotland were hardening their stance more generally towards those whom they saw as threatening to the social order. The mildest reaction to this perceived threat was the enactment of sumptuary legislation. Sumptuary laws from the mid-fifteenth century onwards expressed concern that the realm was “greatly impoverished through sumptuous clothing,” and especially “within burghs and the commoners,” so that the lords thought it profitable to restrict choice in clothing according to social status. Men of the towns who made their living through merchandise (unless civic office-holders) and their wives were not to wear clothes of silk or scarlet. Their wives and daughters, moreover, were to wear “short caps with little hoods, such as are used in Flanders, England and other countries” on their heads, and their gowns were not to contain marten or white weasel furs or have trains of “unsit-

ting” length, except on holidays. Labourers and their wives were more restricted still. They were forbidden to wear any colour other than grey or white on their work days, and on holidays only light blue, green, or red.⁶⁸

The largest group to suffer from such hardening attitudes was the poor, and especially the poor judged to be undeserving of charitable assistance. Although attitudes toward the poor had been changing since the Black Death (and even slightly before), the sixteenth century was a turning point in views of poverty among European élites, who went from seeing poverty as a holy state shared with Christ to a block against economic usefulness and godliness.⁶⁹ Catholic states and Protestant states all faced similar challenges and perceived threats — famine and disease, dangerous strangers — but they assembled different institutional structures for dealing with poor relief.⁷⁰ In Scotland, a rising population combined with a downturn in the economy to create an especially harsh environment for the landless and the marginal. The Scottish Parliament tried to force beggars to find work as early as 1425, at around the same time as individual towns began to pass laws regulating the poor — licensing beggars, providing tokens to those they permitted to beg, expelling unlicensed beggars from the town.⁷¹ By the early sixteenth century, parish clerks were locking church doors in the evening after searching the building for beggars,⁷² and town councils were ordering guilds to allow no beggars or “vile personis” or even the poor into church during specific services or on specific days (such as Sundays).⁷³ During times of plague, measures were harsher still: various town councils ordered all strangers to leave the town, with the consequence of branding by a hot iron on the cheek for those who did not obey within 24 hours, hanging or drowning for those still did not obey a day later; as an extra measure of coercion, they also ordered the same punishments for anyone found harbouring unlicensed beggars.⁷⁴

The poor were not the only targets of violent, repressive measures. Prostitutes too faced general hostility from the civic élites and progressively more severe punishments. The Aberdeen city council in 1497 made an official attempt to rid their town of “infirmities coming out of France and strange places,” that is, syphilis. They ordered that

all prostitutes stop their trade and also that all their places of work and places of residence be laid low. If the prostitutes did not comply, they were to be branded on the cheek with a key of hot iron and banished from the town.⁷⁵ For both the poor and the prostitutes in Scottish towns, the fifteenth and, especially, sixteenth centuries were times of decreasing dignity and increasing threat of serious bodily harm.

It is true that “Reformed Church Discipline,” the phrase used by Michael Graham to describe the system in which church courts attempted to modify the behaviour of individuals, was a part of and a consequence of the Protestant Reformation. As Graham rightly points out, “never before had the taverns, living rooms and (where they existed) bedrooms of Europe been subjected to such close surveillance.”⁷⁶ Nonetheless, the basic chronology of the development of social discipline in Scotland should also raise new, basic questions about causation and the Protestant Reformation. Not enough consideration has yet been given to the question of what role changes to religious practice and social norms played as influences on the readiness of people to accept Protestantism generally, and a version of Calvinism in particular. Changes to religious practice and social norms echoing those described by Maitland as the movement from festive to somber are apt to be overlooked if Scotland of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries is considered only in the context of medieval Europe, but these changes are very much in line with what scholars have perceived as an important development in early modern Europe: the shift from carnival to lent, as Peter Burke interprets it in *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*,⁷⁷ or the shift from carnival and the lower body to manners and the upper body as Edward Muir interprets it in *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*.⁷⁸ Taken all together, the Scottish examples present a persuasive candidate for a society with a socio-religious culture of “Early Modern Catholicism.” This phrase, proposed by John O’Malley, has sufficient scope to encompass both the developments in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Scotland that can be characterized as élites being intolerant and repressive toward non-élite laypeople, and those that can be characterized as a negotiation between a religiously-engaged lay population and reform-minded clerics.⁷⁹

Several aspects of Scottish society in the late fifteenth and early

sixteenth centuries become easier to understand by adjusting the medieval / early modern boundary in the dominant system of periodization: Catholic reform is clearer to see if the early sixteenth century is not taken simply as medieval or as pre-Reformation, but rather as early modern, and new possibilities for the causes and pre-conditions for the Protestant Reformation emerge if aspects of social control that actually began before the Protestant Reformation are set in the context of other scholarship on early modern Europe. When the perspective is widened further and Scotland *circa* 1500 is examined not just as part of Western Europe but as part of a much wider Atlantic world, still more significant aspects emerge.

Africans and early modern Atlantic world

The court of James IV (r. 1488–1513) is often described in histories of Scotland as being at the apex of Scotland's late medieval or Renaissance courtly culture and patronage of the arts, even the glittering centre of a golden age.⁸⁰ Such descriptions have merit in their evocation of cultural vibrancy, for James' court certainly did nurture artistic figures from Scotland and abroad, including lutenists, harpers, and fiddlers; painters and poets; fools and jugglers; ambassadors and would-be alchemists. At the same time as it was participating in Renaissance artistic display, the court of James IV was also at the edge of one of the most significant, and one of the most appalling, aspects of early modern history not just in Europe but in the world entire: the forcible migration and enslavement of millions of people from Africa.

Several people variously described as "Moor" or "black" appear in the *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland* starting in March of 1501, when someone called "the Moryen" was given 15 s. 4 d. at the king's command, and continuing to the end of James' reign in 1513.⁸¹ Among them were Peter the Moor, who travelled with the king around Scotland and on the king's business to France;⁸² a taubroner (drummer), who often played with other musicians at court and especially with a group of Italian minstrels;⁸³ and a pair of "lasses."⁸⁴ The treasurers' accounts also record a group of women whose exact identities are unclear but who seem to have

included one “blak lady,” who participated in two tournaments with the king (who was himself in disguise as the “wild knight”) and who may or may not have been one of the “lasses”;⁸⁵ a second black lady;⁸⁶ and the named figures of Ellen or Helen More and Margaret Moire, who may or may not have been among the unnamed lasses and/or ladies.⁸⁷

Not much is yet understood about the contributions made by these people to Scottish court culture. *City, Marriage, Tournament* by Louise Olga Fradenburg devotes two chapters to James’ tournaments of the Wild Knight and the Black Lady, but it examines these events in the contexts of the ideals of chivalry in a political space and considers its participants as literary types to be analyzed through postmodernist lenses more than as flesh and blood humans.⁸⁸ The only published study focusing on the African people at the Scottish royal court is the article, “Black Africans at the Court of James IV” by Mary E. Robbins.⁸⁹ Noting that the Africans were given positions of responsibility and authority as trusted servants and paid wages in line with what other servants at court earned, Robbins provides a rather optimistic assessment of their real status at court. She says that there was an “egalitarian aspect of the Scottish attitude toward the Africans,” a statement seemingly at odds with her estimation that the Africans were “presumably slaves purchased if not stolen from the Portuguese.” They led an “essentially Scottish existence,” Robbins finds, and were “productive members of a flourishing and energetic court environment.” In short, the Africans at James’ court “were treated in the same way that others were treated in terms of clothing, fees, pensions, and so forth.” They “reflect[ed] the quirky complexity of the King,” and also showed “a degree of sophistication at the Scottish court equal to any in Europe.”⁹⁰ Historians of blacks in Britain have noted the presence of Africans at James’ court, though they present them as a side note to the larger narrative of the English Tudor court.⁹¹ Historians of the early African Diaspora in Europe more broadly, a field that has been growing of late, have hardly touched on Scotland at all,⁹² but their work has created a good opportunity for historians to look toward early modernist scholarship outside of Scotland for assistance to build on what little has been written by historians of Scotland.⁹³ In order to take this schol-

arship into account, the court of James IV needs to be considered as part of the early modern Atlantic world. The court of James IV is usually described as late medieval or Renaissance, but it also falls into the early modern period when considered from a much broader perspective. The growing field of world history, still largely informed by the tripartite ancient-medieval-modern system designed for Europe, contains an important boundary in its periodization somewhere in or about the late fifteenth century.⁹⁴ World history textbooks have, since the 1990s, often maintained a division *circa* 1500. A division at about 1500 probably makes even more sense for world history than it does for European history, since it coincides roughly with several of the most significant movements of people in human history: the beginning of sustained contact across the Atlantic and subsequent migrations (voluntary and forced) of Europeans and Africans to the Americas, as well as hitherto unmatched dislocations of indigenous peoples within the Americas.

When the presence of Africans at the court of James IV is considered within the wider context, not just of Western Europe,⁹⁵ but also the early modern Atlantic World, a darker side to court culture is revealed. Courts in Renaissance Europe were developing a “fashion for human accessories,” in the phrase of Paul H.D. Kaplan, and the procurement of a few African slaves was seen a way to follow this fashion.⁹⁶ Black musicians were especially sought, drummers in particular, due to a European stereotype of Africans’ natural talent for music.⁹⁷ The Moor taubronar’s presence at the Scottish court is consistent with that trend. Peter the Moor and the lasses likely served as personal attendants to the king and noble ladies, again in similar circumstances to what was happening at other European courts.⁹⁸ A comparison of the roles played by the Moors at the Scottish court with those at other, more studied European courts strongly suggests that they were slaves. Even when recognizing that slavery in sixteenth-century European royal courts had some characteristics very different from the better-known slavery on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American plantations, nevertheless, the conditions under which the enslaved were expected to live were likely not nearly so agreeable as Robbins’ article suggests. She says that since James had wanted to see the drummer’s child, the drummer therefore

shared a “familiarity” with the king.⁹⁹ But if the close quarters of Scottish castles sometimes bred familiarity, the Africans were meant by the king to be seen as unusual. They were brought to court along with other “exotics” from abroad and dressed in luxurious clothing not as a marker of the high status of the wearers but rather of the high status of the king. In this context, the entry from the treasurer’s accounts about the drummer’s child that Robbins uses as evidence for familiarity looks much more uncomfortably like evidence of objectification: the sum of 28 s. was paid at the king’s command “to the nuris that broucht the Moris barne to see.”¹⁰⁰ No other child is brought to the king for him to satisfy his curiosity in this way. Though some medical attention is provided to the Moors, such as that given “to the More taubronar to the mendis of the hurtin of him” in June 1506 and for a “leich” (a doctor) to attend to him over the following months,¹⁰¹ this care could be evidence for a monarch looking after his possession as much as for a sympathetic and paternalistic king looking after the welfare of his trusted familiar. Some ambiguity must be permitted. A sign of basic human care may be found in the payments that were made to the wife and child of the Moor taubroner after the cessation of medical treatments, which were presumably unsuccessful.¹⁰² The possibility that the courtiers recognized the contributions made by the Moors at court life may be supported by the fact that the Moors at court were paid for their services, often quite handsomely and sometimes in excess of what most others in comparable occupations earned. Peter the Moor had his travel expenses paid when he visited France or was traveling in Scotland.¹⁰³ He was also paid monthly starting in 1501¹⁰⁴ and received a pension from 1504.¹⁰⁵ In August 1504, Peter the Moor was paid the substantial sum of £3 “for to pas his way for evir,” the treasurers’ accounts enigmatically recount, perhaps indicating that Peter left the Scottish court a free man to pursue his interests elsewhere.¹⁰⁶ The taubroner was paid each year at Yule and Easter, with wages at and above the standard rate for court musicians.¹⁰⁷ By May 1505, he was also receiving a quarterly pension of £4 7 s. 6 d., the same amount as another taubroner named Guilliam and the four Italian minstrels.¹⁰⁸ The status of the Moors at James’ court would seem hopelessly ambiguous, even indecipherable, when set either

against the background of European medieval court culture or later American slavery; it only makes sense in context of the early modern Atlantic world.

Historians have started to investigate Scotland's place in early modern Atlantic history,¹⁰⁹ and they have also begun to investigate Scotland's role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹¹⁰ Their findings have had only a little impact on popular perceptions of Scottish history, perhaps because of a modern Scottish identity that prefers to leave the horrors of trans-Atlantic slavery out of its historical narrative (and firmly within that of its "auld enemy", England), and so looks only to the period after the Union of the Scottish and English Parliaments in 1707 as the time when Scotland was implicated in the process of enslavement. As Jackie Kay explained recently in *The Guardian*:

Being African and Scottish, I'd taken comfort in the notion that Scotland was not nearly as implicated in the horrors of the slave trade as England. Scotland's self image is one of a hard-done-to wee nation, yet bonny and blithe Scotland is a canny nation when it comes to remembering and forgetting. The plantation owner is never wearing a kilt.¹¹¹

Even among academic historians, much work still needs to be done on early Scottish involvement in the slave trade. Perhaps one reason for the paucity of research in this area (in addition to the Scottish self-image as articulated by Kay and the relative shortage of available sources) is the placement of the medieval / early modern boundary in the standard periodization of Scottish history. Because Atlantic slavery is a phenomenon of the early modern world, not the medieval one, therefore it seems out of place or peripheral to an examination of James IV's court if that court is characterized as medieval or Renaissance.

Yet when an early modern and Atlantic historical context is provided for the court of James IV, when the court of James IV is compared with analyses of other parts of the early modern world, the Moors at the Scottish court assume a new significance. Starting in the fifteenth century, Portuguese voyages south and along the

African coast led to increasing numbers of Africans, both élite and enslaved, in Europe. Especially when the supply of Slavic slaves became harder to obtain due to Ottoman conquests in the eastern Mediterranean during the fifteenth century, North African and Sub-Saharan slaves bought in North Africa became more common in Europe, and by the second half of the fifteenth century Portuguese ships were bringing people directly from Africa south of the Sahara to be slaves in Europe.¹¹² While the origin of the Africans in James' court is somewhat unclear, one entry in the accounts points to an arrival from Iberia: the record of a payment for the "fraught" (transportation over water) of a Portuguese horse, a civet-cat, a "jennet" (small Spanish horse), and "the Moris."¹¹³ Thus they may have arrived in Scotland from Portugal or Spain. That the Moors were black is strongly suggested both by the interchangeability of descriptions for several of them — "Elen More" is also called "Blak Elene," while "Margaret Moire" is also called "blak Margaret"¹¹⁴ — and also from the several entries in the treasurers' accounts that speak of the "More freris," the Moor friars, who were presumably friars of the Dominican order, known also as the "blackfriars" because of the black colour of their habits.¹¹⁵

A better understanding of these individuals in the royal court, and likely of the royal court as a whole, could be accomplished through looking more closely at how Scotland fits into the wider world at the dawn of the modern age, *circa* 1500. Such a perspective would not be entirely unknown to the early modern Scots themselves. At a time when Europeans were developing a series of origin myths for their various peoples, the Scots chose a story of descent from Scota, daughter of an Egyptian pharaoh — and therefore an African.¹¹⁶ Andrew of Wyntoun's *Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland* and John of Fordun's *Chronicle* from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries use the myth, as do Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon* in the mid-fifteenth century and Hector Boece's *Historia Gentis Scotorum* in the early sixteenth.¹¹⁷ Africans were clearly not absent from the early modern Scottish collective imagination and sense of identity.

Richard Maitland's poem is evocative — and quite possibly accurate as well — in its description of change in Scottish society at some point its not-too-distant past. Historians who attribute the

cause of this change exclusively or mostly to the Protestant Reformation, however, are too limited in their interpretation, and some adjustments to periodization would encourage a more complete understanding of what was happening in fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Scotland. In the first instance, a pre-Reformation Reformation — a Catholic Reformation — brought changes to religious culture prior to the official Protestant Reformation of 1560. This development is most readily apparent when the observer sets aside 1560 as the conventional boundary between medieval and early modern. In the second instance, an increasing sense of threat and a concern for social discipline shifted society towards intolerance. This development is easiest to see when the observer looks at Scottish society in the light of early modernist scholarship on other regions of Europe. Together, these two adjustments ought to suggest a new causation associated with that great watershed in Scottish history, the Protestant Reformation: the Protestant Reformation did not in and of itself bring about a sterner, more coercive society so much as it benefited from trends towards sternness and coercion already underway in what was becoming an early modern Catholic society. Thus, if Maitland was correct in his assessment of merriness being worn away, then historians should seek causes for the change in the general European movement into early modern Catholicism. Furthermore, merriness did not wear away for all at an equal rate. Events in the wider world around the year 1500 were of great significance both outside and within Scotland's borders. The "Moors" at the royal court were not merely an interesting literary construction or a quirky decorative element for a convivial if somewhat eccentric monarch. They were human beings caught up at the start of what would become one of the greatest horrors of human history: the transatlantic slave trade. It is highly doubtful that Maitland had these people in mind when he was bemoaning the passing of an age and the end of the "blythnes that hes bein," but historians should certainly not forget them.

MAIRI COWAN is on faculty at the Department of Historical Studies, University of Toronto Mississauga, where she specializes in

late medieval and early modern history.

MAIRI COWAN est professeure au département d'études historiques à la University of Toronto Mississauga. Elle se spécialise en histoire médiévale et moderne.

Endnotes:

- 1 Richard Maitland of Lethington, "Quhair is the blythnes that hes bein," [www.arts.gla.ac.uk/STELLA/Anthol/maitland.html#Quhair is the blythnes that hes](http://www.arts.gla.ac.uk/STELLA/Anthol/maitland.html#Quhair_is_the_blythnes_that_hes). Also called "Satire on the Age," ll. 1–6.
- 2 Michael R.G. Spiller, "Maitland, Sir Richard, of Lethington (1496–1586)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- 3 William A. Green, "Periodization in European and World History," *Journal of World History* 3, no. 1 (April 1992): 53.
- 4 Thomas Clancy, Janet Foggie, Alan R. MacDonald, Louise Yeoman, Douglas M. Murray, Donald Meek, "Church Institutions," *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History*, ed. Michael Lynch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- 5 Gilbert Markus, Janet Foggie, Michael Lynch, Douglas M. Murray, Colin Kidd, David W. Bebbington, Richard Finlay, Donald Meek, "Religious Life," *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History*.
- 6 By contrast, many other entries in *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History* (including "Economy," "Health, Famine, and Disease," "Nobility," "Rural Settlement," "Rural Society," and "Urban Society") have the medieval section ending at 1500.
- 7 Alan Macquarrie's *Medieval Scotland: Kingship and Nation* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004), goes to the mid-fifteenth century, while Cynthia Neville's *Land, Law and People in Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), looks at the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries.
- 8 Ian B. Cowan's *The Medieval Church in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1995), covers a period right up to 1560. The chapter "Late-Medieval Scotland: Economy and Society in Transition," in Ian D. Whyte's survey *Scotland Before the Industrial Revolution: An Economic and Social History c. 1050–c. 1750* (London: Longman, 1995), deals mostly with the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries until it reaches its section on "The Late Medieval Church," at which point it is the sixteenth century that receives the most attention. Similarly, A.D.M. Barrell's *Medieval Scotland* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), concen-

- trates on both political and ecclesiastical history, but ends its consideration of political history with the death of James V in 1542 and its consideration of religious history and “the medieval church” in 1560. The majority of essays in the collection *The Middle Ages in the Highlands*, edited by Loraine Maclean (Inverness: Inverness Field Club, 1981), focus on a period during or before the late fifteenth century, but the essay on the medieval church extends until 1560.
- 9 Peter Yeoman, *Medieval Scotland: An Archaeological Perspective* (London: B.T. Batsford / Historic Scotland, 1995).
 - 10 Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief: A History* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2001), 13, 106–9, 113, 116–17. Henderson and Cowan propose continuity across the Reformation by saying that people in 1750 still inhabited a world “that economically, socially and culturally, was still essentially medieval,” and they also say that the Reformation itself did not have singular importance in bringing about changes to popular culture. However, the authors do still manage to invest the Protestant Reformation with a good deal of importance by positing that a significant change came about due to a growing gap between the élite in Scottish society and everybody else, and that this gap started in about 1560.
 - 11 According to the table of contents in Helen M. Dingwall, *A History of Scottish Medicine: Themes and Influences* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), “medieval Scotland” ends at 1500, at which point “early modern Scotland” begins. The main text of the book belies this dating, however, with the many sixteenth-century examples in its chapter on “medieval Scotland” combined with the post-Reformation focus of its early modern discussion, meaning that the year 1560 is still serving as the real end of the Middle Ages.
 - 12 R.A. Houston and W.W.J. Knox, eds., *The New Penguin History of Scotland: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (London: Allen Lane / Penguin Press, in association with the National Museums of Scotland, 2001); Christopher Harvey, *Scotland: A short history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). The introduction to S.H. Rigby, ed., *A Companion to Britain in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), states that the period under consideration is *circa* 1100–1500, but the essays on Scotland nonetheless conclude the “Later Middle Ages” with the year 1560.
 - 13 For a selection of perspectives on the medieval / early modern division among historians of Europe, see the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 37, no. 3 (October, 2007). See also Timothy Reuter, “Medieval: Another Tyrannous Construct?” *The Medieval History Journal* 1, no. 1 (April 1998): 25–45.
 - 14 Leah Leneman and Rosalind Mitchison, “Scottish Illegitimacy Ratios in the

- Early Modern Period,” *Economic History Review* second series, no. 40 (1987): 41–63, covers the later seventeenth through later eighteenth centuries; Margo Todd’s “Profane Pastimes and the Reformed Community: The Persistence of Popular Festivities in Early Modern Scotland,” *Journal of British Studies* 39 (2000): 123–56, and her book *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), each begin at 1560 and go to the mid-seventeenth century; Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland: James VI’s Demonology and the North Berwick Witches* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), looks at trials in 1590 and 1591; Deborah A. Symonds, *Weep Not for Me: Women, Ballads, and Infanticide in Early Modern Scotland* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1997), covers the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The early modern period also begins after the Protestant Reformation in Keith M. Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland, 1573–1625: Violence, Justice and Politics in an Early Modern Society* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1986); R.A. Houston, “Legal Protection of the Mentally Incapable in Early Modern Scotland,” *The Journal of Legal History* 24, no. 2 (August, 2003): 165–86; Janay Nugent and Megan Clark, “A Loaded Plate: Food Symbolism and the Early Modern Scottish Household,” *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 30, no. 1 (May 2010): 43–63; A.J.S. Gibson and T.C. Smout, “Regional Prices and Market Regions: The Evolution of the Early Modern Scottish Grain Market,” *The Economic History Review* 48, no. 2 (May 1995): 258–82.
- 15 For example, J.H. Burns, *The True Law of Kingship: Concepts of Monarchy in Early-Modern Scotland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), investigates ideas about kingship current in Scotland between the later fifteenth century and the first quarter of the seventeenth.
 - 16 Julian Goodare, *State and Society in Early Modern Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
 - 17 Matthew H. Hammond, “Ethnicity and the Writing of Medieval Scottish History,” *Scottish Historical Review* 85, no. 1 (2006): 1–27.
 - 18 Jenny Wormald, *Court, Kirk, and Community: Scotland, 1470–1625* (London: E. Arnold, 1981), 76.
 - 19 For example, David McRoberts, “Some Sixteenth-Century Scottish Breviaries and their Place in the History of the Scottish Liturgy,” *Innes Review* 3 (1952): 44; Gordon Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 1–52.
 - 20 Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992, 2005).
 - 21 Allen White, “The Regent Morton’s Visitation: the Reformation of Aberdeen, 1574,” in *The Renaissance in Scotland*, 246–63.
 - 22 Todd, 4.

- 23 Wormald, 138.
- 24 For example, Audrey-Beth Fitch, *The Search for Salvation: Lay faith in Scotland, 1480–1560* (Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press, 2009).
- 25 Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Margaret Sanderson, “The Lollard Trail: Some clues to the spread of pre-Protestant religious dissent in Scotland, and its legacy,” *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 33 (2003): 1–33.
- 26 European Protestantism is covered in most studies of the Scottish Reformation. For example, see Gordon Donaldson, *The Scottish Reformation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1960); Margaret H.B. Sanderson, *Ayrshire and the Reformation* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1997); Clare Kellar, *Scotland, England, and the Reformation 1534–61* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); David F. Wright, “The Scottish Reformation: Theology and theologians” in *The Cambridge Companion to Reformation Theology*, eds. David Bagchi and David C. Steinmetz (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 174–93. For Protestantism in Scotland before 1560 as a focus, see James Kirk, “The Religion of Early Scottish Protestants” in *Humanism and Reform: The Church in Europe, England, and Scotland, 1400–1643, Essays in Honour of James K. Cameron*, ed. James Kirk (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 361–411.
- 27 Janet P. Foggie, *Renaissance Religion in Urban Scotland: The Dominican Order, 1450–1560* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).
- 28 Steve Boardman and Eila Williamson, eds. *The Cult of Saints and the Virgin Mary in Medieval Scotland* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010).
- 29 Julian Goodare and Alasdair A. MacDonald, *Sixteenth-century Scotland: Essays in Honour of Michael Lynch* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Margaret H.B. Sanderson, *A Kindly Place?: Living in Sixteenth-Century Scotland* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2002); Martin Rorke, “Women Overseas Traders in Sixteenth-Century Scotland,” *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 25, no. 2 (November 2005): 81–96; Mark Godfrey, “Arbitration and Dispute Resolution in Sixteenth Century Scotland,” *The Legal History Review* 70, no. 1 (January 2002): 109–35.
- 30 Jane E.A. Dawson, *Scotland Re-Formed 1488–1587* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).
- 31 John McGavin, *Theatricality and Narrative in Medieval and Early Modern Scotland* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Elizabeth Ewan and Janay Nugent, eds., *Finding the Family in Medieval and Early Modern Scotland* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Rab Houston, “Custom in Context: Medieval and Early Modern Scotland and England,” *Past and Present* 211, no. 1 (May 2011): 35–76; L. Houwen, ed., *Literature and Religion*

- in Late Medieval and Early Modern Scotland: Essays in Honour of Alasdair A. MacDonald* (Leuven: Peeters, 2012).
- 32 Bob Harris and Alan R. MacDonald, eds., *Scotland: The Making and Unmaking of the Nation, c. 1100–1707* (Dundee: Dundee University Press and the Open University in Scotland, 2006).
 - 33 Alastair J. Mann, *The Scottish Book Trade 1500–1720: Print Commerce and Print Control in Early Modern Scotland* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2000).
 - 34 Jenny Wormald, ed., *Scotland: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
 - 35 Alex Ryrie, *The Origins of the Scottish Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).
 - 36 Mairi Cowan, *Death, Life, and Religious Change in Scottish Towns c. 1350–1560* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 189–92.
 - 37 John Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 97–104; Robert M. Kingdon, “The Genevan Revolution in Public Worship,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin* 20 (1999): 264–80; Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 2005), 157–8.
 - 38 Craig A. Monson, “The Council of Trent Revisited,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55, no. 1 (2002): 1–37.
 - 39 R.W. Scribner, *Religion and Culture in Germany (1400–1800)* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Suzannah Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
 - 40 *Statutes of the Scottish Church 1225–1559*, introduction and notes by David Patrick (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1907), 34.
 - 41 *Ibid.*, 101, 108, 124–5.
 - 42 *Ibid.*, 143–7.
 - 43 *The Catechism of John Hamilton Archbishop of St Andrews*, ed., Thomas Graves Law (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884), 206.
 - 44 T.G. Chalmers, “Stewart, Alexander” (c. 1493–1513) in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
 - 45 Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Adages II i 1 to II vi 100*, trans. R.A.B. Mynors (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 241–3.
 - 46 Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Vol. III 1400–1557* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 221–2.
 - 47 Stephen Mark Holmes, “Catalogue of Liturgical Books and Fragments in Scotland Before 1560,” *Innes Review* 62, no. 2 (2011): 127–212; Hellinga and Trapp, 222; Katherine Elliot van Liere, “Catholic Reform of the Divine Office in the Sixteenth Century: The Breviary of Cardinal Francisco de Quiñones” in *Worship in Medieval and Early Modern*

- Europe: Change and Continuity in Religious Practice*, eds. Karin Maag and John D. Witvliet (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 162–99.
- 48 R. Po-Chia Hsia, “Social Discipline,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- 49 *St Andrews Kirk Session Register, Parts I and II*, ed. David Hay Fleming (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1889–1890); Michael F. Graham, *The Uses of Reform: “Godly Discipline” and Popular Behaviour in Scotland and Beyond, 1560–1610* (Leiden: Brill, 1996).
- 50 John Knox, *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, ed. William Croft Dickinson (London: Nelson, 1949), 3–4, 280.
- 51 Alexandra Walsham, “The Reformation and ‘The Disenchantment of the World’ Reassessed,” *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 2 (2008): 497–528.
- 52 Todd.
- 53 Ute Lotz-Heumann, “Imposing Church and Social Discipline,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Reform and Expansion 1500–1660*, ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 244–60.
- 54 John Durkan, “Education in the Century of the Reformation” in *Essays on the Scottish Reformation 1513–1625*, ed. David McRoberts (Glasgow: Burns, 1962), 145–8; Shona Vance, “Schooling the People,” in *Aberdeen Before 1800*, 309–26.
- 55 Will Coster and Andrew Spicer, eds., *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- 56 Mairi Cowan, 193–202.
- 57 *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen 1398–1570*, ed. John Stuart (Aberdeen: The Spalding Club, 1844), 140.
- 58 Anna Jean Mill, *Medieval Plays in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1927), 27.
- 59 *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen 1398–1570*, 438.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid., 439–40.
- 62 Mill, 24–5; Murray G.H. Pittock, “Contrasting Cultures: Town and Country” in *Aberdeen Before 1800: A New History*, eds. Patricia E. Dennison, David Ditchburn, and Michael Lynch (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2002), 351.
- 63 Douglas Gray, “The Royal Entry in Sixteenth-Century Scotland,” in *The Rose and the Thistle: Essays on the Culture of Late Medieval and Renaissance Scotland*, eds. Sally Mapstone and Juliette Wood (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998), 31.
- 64 Andrew of Wyntoun, *Orygynale Cronykile of Scotland*, ed. David Lang

- (Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas, 1872–1879); Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon in Latin and English*, eds. D.E.R. Watt et al. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1991).
- 65 *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen 1398–1570*, 160.
- 66 The poem *Of May*, written by Alexander Scott in the 1550s, speaks of a time when men went with Robin Hood and Little John, but that such games were almost gone. Wyntoun; Bower; Stephen Knight, *Robin Hood: A Complete Study of the English Outlaw* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 4–6; Keely Fisher, “The Crying of ane Playe: Robin Hood and Maying in Sixteenth-Century Scotland,” *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England: An Annual Gathering of Research, Criticism and Reviews* 12 (1999): 19–58.
- 67 *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen 1398–1570*, 279–80; *Acts of the Parliament of Scotland*, ii, 500.
- 68 *Acts of the Parliament of Scotland*, ii 49, c. 11, 13.
- 69 Rosalind Mitchison, *The Old Poor Law in Scotland: The Experience of Poverty, 1574–1845* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000); Brian Pullan, “Catholics, Protestants, and the Poor in Early Modern Europe,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35, no. 3 (Winter 2005): 441–56.
- 70 Pullan, 441–56.
- 71 Elizabeth Ewan, “Townlife and Trade” in *Scotland: The Making and Unmaking of the Nation*, 133.
- 72 *Ayr Burgh Accounts 1534–1624*, ed. George S. Pryde (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1937), 15, 75, 91, 107.
- 73 J. Cameron Lees, *St Giles’, Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1889), 80–1; Elizabeth P.D. Torrie, *Medieval Dundee: A Town and its People* (Dundee: Abertay Historical Society, 1990), 93.
- 74 *Extracts from the Records of the Royal Burgh of Stirling 1519–1666* (Glasgow: Printed for the Glasgow Stirlinshire and Sons of the Rock Society, 1887), 40; *Extracts from the Council Register of the Burgh of Aberdeen*, 165, 240–1.
- 75 E. Patricia Dennison, Gordon DesBrisay, and H. Lesley Diack, “Health in the Two Towns” in *Aberdeen Before 1800: A New History*, eds. E. Patricia Dennison, David Ditchburn, and Michael Lynch (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2002), 75–6.
- 76 Michael Graham, *The Uses of Reform: ‘Godly Discipline’ and popular behavior in Scotland and Beyond, 1560–1610* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 2.
- 77 Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd ed. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).
- 78 Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

- 79 John O'Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2000); Alexandra Walsham, "Translating Trent? English Catholicism and the Counter Reformation," *Historical Research* 78, no. 201 (August 2005): 288–310.
- 80 Norman Macdougall, *James IV* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1989); T.G. Chalmers, "James IV (1473–1513)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Katie Stevenson, *Chivalry and Knighthood in Scotland 1424–1513* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006).
- 81 *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, Vols. II–IV, ed. James Balfour Paul (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1900–1902) (hereafter *TA*). The earliest mention, from 1501, is found in *TA* II, 99.
- 82 *Ibid.*, II, 97, 318, 415, 416, 417, 420, 422, 432, 434, 435, 442, 444, 449, 450.
- 83 *Ibid.*, 329, 427, 430, 439, 444, 451, 457, 458, 459, 461, 462, 464, 466, 472, 476, 477; *ibid.*, III, 108–109, 115, 118, 121, 122, 124, 126, 132, 163, 182, 190, 197, 206, 330, 326, 335, 377, 388.
- 84 *Ibid.*, II, 465, 469; *TA IV*, 51, 59, 61, 62, 82, 100, 116.
- 85 *Ibid.*, III, 258, 259, 260, 261, 392, 393, 395; *ibid.*, IV 64, 119, 129.
- 86 *Ibid.*, IV, 401.
- 87 *Ibid.*, 232, 324, 339, 436, 404, 434.
- 88 Louise Olga Fradenburg, *City, Marriage, Tournament: Arts of Rule in Late Medieval Scotland* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).
- 89 Mary E. Robbins, "Black Africans at the Court of James IV," *Review of Scottish Culture* 12 (1999): 34–45.
- 90 *Ibid.*, 34, 36, 43.
- 91 Edward Scobie, *Black Britannia* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1972); Paul Edwards and James Walvin, "Africans in Britain, 1500–1800" in *The African Diaspora: Interpretive Essays*, eds. Martin L. Kilson and Robert I. Rotberg (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 172–9; Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984); Folarin Shyllon, "Blacks in Britain: A Historical and Analytical Overview" in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, 2nd edition, ed. Joseph E. Harris (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1993), 223–48; David Killingray, ed., *Africans in Britain* (Ilford: Frank Cass, 1994); Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, "Before Othello: Elizabethan Representations of Sub-Saharan Africans," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (January 1997): 19–44.
- 92 T.F. Earle and K.J.P. Lowe, eds., *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), makes one reference to the taubroner, 38–9; David Northrup, *Africa's Discovery of*

- Europe 1450–1850*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), mentions Scotland only in the context of the nineteenth century.
- 93 Laura Walkling, “Scotland and the ‘Fashion for Human Accessories’: Black African Slaves in the Court of James IV,” unpublished undergraduate research essay, University of Toronto Mississauga, 2011.
- 94 On the growth of World History, at least in the United States, see Glenn Ricketts, Peter W. Wood, Stephen H. Balch, and Ashley Thorne, “The Vanishing West 1964–2010: The Disappearance of Western Civilization from the American Undergraduate Curriculum,” a report by the National Association of Scholars (May 2011).
- 95 This has been covered well by scholars who have demonstrated that later medieval and early modern Scotland was well integrated into the rest of Europe, and that in spite of the supposed isolation and relative poverty of their country, Scots were in touch with the mainstream of European events. Concerning religion, for example see A. I. Dunlop, “Remissions and Indulgences in Fifteenth Century Scotland,” *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* XV (1966): 66; A.A. MacDonald, “Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Scotland” in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, eds. A.A. Macdonald, H.N.B. Ridderbos, and R.M. Schlusemann (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), 109; David Ditchburn, *Scotland and Europe: The Medieval Kingdom and its Contacts with Christendom, 1214–1560* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2001).
- 96 Paul H.D. Kaplan, “Isabella d’Este and Black African Women” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, 135; Annemarie Jordan, “Images of Empire: Slaves in the Lisbon Household and Court of Catherine of Austria” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, 156.
- 97 Kate Lowe, “The Stereotyping of Black Africans in Renaissance Europe” in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, 35.
- 98 Jordan; Kaplan.
- 99 Robbins, 40–3.
- 100 *TA*, III, 182.
- 101 *Ibid.*, 197, 206.
- 102 *Ibid.*, 197, 206, 330, 377, 388.
- 103 *Ibid.*, II, 106, 420, 435, 442.
- 104 *Ibid.*, 97 *passim*.
- 105 *Ibid.*, 415 *passim*.
- 106 *Ibid.*, 450.
- 107 *Ibid.*, 427, 472; *ibid.*, III, 132.
- 108 *Ibid.*, III 118, 121, 122, 124, 126.
- 109 Alexander Murdoch, *Scotland and America, c. 1600–1800* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); James Livesay, *Civil Society and Empire: Ireland and Scotland in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (New

- Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009); Douglas J. Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic World, 1750–1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).
- 110 Hamilton. To help remedy the unfamiliarity of “the majority of the Scottish public” with the “detailed history of the transatlantic slave trade,” the Scottish government produced and presented on its website *Scotland and the Slave Trade: 2007 Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act*, produced by the Scottish government and available online at www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/03/23121622/0.
- 111 Jackie Kay, “Missing Faces,” www.guardian.co.uk/books/2007/mar/24/featuresreviews.guardianreview25.
- 112 David Northrup, *Africa’s Discovery of Europe 1450–1850*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1–7.
- 113 *TA*, III, 148.
- 114 *Ibid.*, IV, 339, 436, 404, 434.
- 115 *Ibid.*, 62, 112, 139.
- 116 William Matthews, “The Egyptians in Scotland: The political history of a myth,” *Viator* 1 (1971): 289–306; Edward J. Cowan, “Myth and Identity in Early Modern Scotland,” *Scottish Historical Review* 63, no. 176 (October 1984): 111–35; Dauvit Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999).
- 117 Wyntoun, I, 56, 93, 97; John of Fordun, *Chronicle of the Scottish Nation* (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872), I, 7, 10, 15, 18, 24; Bower, I 27, 31, 33, 37, 45, 47, 55, 67; II 273; III 173; VI 143, 183; Hector Boece and John Bellenden, *The History and Chronicles of Scotland* (Edinburgh: W. and C. Tait, 1821), I xx.