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PhD thesis

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WILLIAM LIVINGSTON / UILLEAM MACDHUNLEIBHE

(1808-70)

A SURVEY OF HIS POETRY AND PROSE

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Celtic Department, Faculty of Arts, University of Glasgow, in the month of September 1991.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a survey of the work in poetry and prose of William Livingston or Uilleam Mac Dhunléibhe, the Islay bard (1808-70). The version of his English surname without final 'e' has been preferred because it is used in the definitive, 1882 edition of his poems and throughout the text (but not in the title) of the section on his own clan in the *Vindication*.

The first chapter, 'Biography and Background', gathers the available information on the poet's life, and attempts to set him in the context of the cultural, social and economic situation of Islay during the century preceding his birth. The second chapter, 'The Intellectual Background', investigates Livingston's reading and his knowledge and use of historical and antiquarian texts. His familiarity with the traditional version of the origins of the Scottish monarchy, elaborated by patriotic historians before the Union, is especially interesting. Chapter Three, 'Polemicist and Historian', looks in detail at a work Livingston edited for publication, MacNicol's remarks on Dr Johnson's account of his journey through Gaelic Scotland, before turning to the poet's longest prose work, the *Vindication of the Celtic Character*. His shorter pamphlets and the incomplete *History of Scotland* are also examined.

The fourth and fifth chapters explore Livingston's attitude to James Macpherson and to the Gaelic version of his *Ossian*, and attempt to decide to what extent and in what way he was influenced by the earlier poet. Explicit references to Macpherson in the poetry and prose are surveyed before the triangular relationship between Livingston the poet, Macpherson's work, and ballad material of various degrees of genuineness is discussed.

The next two chapters offer close readings of the two major battle poems, 'Na Lochalannaich an Ile' and 'Blàr Shunadail', while Chapters Eight and Nine look at the shorter battle poems, ranging from Mons Graupius, in the first century of the Christian era, to the battle at Gruinard Bay on Islay, which took place just before the Union of the Crowns, and the battles of Alma and Balaclava in the Crimean War. Chapter Ten is devoted to Livingston's poetry of the Clearances. Its two main focuses are 'Cuimhneachan Bhraid-Alba' and 'Fios thun a' Bhàird', and the thesis ends with a close reading of this, perhaps his most famous poem.

Appendix I lists Livingston's published works in poetry and prose. Appendix II supplies four extra stanzas not hitherto published which have survived in manuscript form, two for 'Eirinn a' gul' and two for 'Gleann Da Ruadhail a' Bharraich'. Appendix III contains an edited text and translation of 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca' with commentary. It is preceded by the text of the poem as published in Livingston's own lifetime, in the 1858 *Duain Ghaelic*, and is intended to be read in conjunction with the detailed treatment of this poem in Chapter Eight.

The Harvard system is used for quotations. Sources are listed in the General Bibliography at the end of the thesis. Quotations from Livingston's own works are followed by a letter and a page number, as follows:

- A - *Duain Ghaelic* (Glasgow 1858)
- C - *Duain agus Orain* (Glasgow 1882)
- CC - *Caledonian Critic* (Glasgow 1852)
- H - *History of Scotland* (Glasgow 1856)
- L - *Lecture* (Glasgow 1860)
- PC - *Primitive Christianity in Scotland* (Glasgow 1859)
- V - *Vindication of the Celtic Character* (Greenock 1850)

Quotations from the 1882 *Duain agus Orain* are given in modern spelling, according to the Gaelic Orthographic Conventions. Editorial interference has been kept to a minimum but punctuation in all such quotations is my own. Placenames in Islay and Strathearn are normally quoted from the 1:50000 Ordnance Survey maps.

I wish to thank the staffs of the National Library of Scotland and the Scottish Room of the Central Library in Edinburgh, of the Mitchell Library and the University Library in Glasgow, of the Islay Estates Office and the Museum of Islay Life in Islay, as well as the librarian of Mountstuart House, Rothesay, Bute, for their assistance. My thanks also go to Donald Meek for entrusting me with his precious copy of the *Vindication*, to Mark Wringe for telling me about the manuscript of 'Eirinn a' gul' in the National Library, to John MacInnes for valuable and enjoyable discussion of the background to Livingston's work, and above all to my supervisor, Professor Derick Thomson of Glasgow University, for his unfailing support and advice throughout my work on the thesis. It has been completed just in time to coincide with his retirement. May it add, in its very small way, to the satisfactions of a life's work well done.

It is planned that this thesis should lead to a new edition of Livingston's poems, to be published by the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society. Material from the thesis will appear in ^{the} introduction to this edition in a very much reduced form.

Edinburgh, August 1991

CONTENTS

Chapter One: Biography and Background.....	6
Chapter Two: The Intellectual Context.....	45
Chapter Three: Polemicist and Historian.....	78
Chapter Four: Livingston and Ossian (1).....	122
Chapter Five: Livingston and Ossian (2).....	149
Chapter Six: Imaginary Battles (1).....	175
Chapter Seven: Imaginary Battles (2).....	202
Chapter Eight: Historical Battles (1).....	222
Chapter Nine: Historical Battles (2).....	248
Chapter Ten: Poetry of the Clearances.....	281
 Appendix One.....	 317
Appendix Two.....	321
Appendix Three.....	323
 General Bibliography.....	 355

Chapter One: BIOGRAPHY AND BACKGROUND

Our main source for Livingston's life continues to be the 'Memoir' which Robert Blair prefixed to his 1882 edition of the poems (C ix-xvii). It provides the framework for the account which follows. It is, however, possible to flesh this account out by incorporating references scattered through Livingston's prose works to different phases in his life, by looking at passages in the poems where he discusses his relationship to the muse or, something in the manner of Burns' epistles, lets us glimpse him at work, and by fitting in a limited amount of documentary evidence.

Livingston was born to James Livingston and Christina MacFadyen on the farm of Gartmain in Islay, probably on the 7th or 8th of September 1808. The Session records, according to Blair, carry a baptism date of September the 15th. The poet traced his Christian name to Gille-Ma, brother of that King Achaius who is said to have signed a treaty with France in 792 marking the beginning of the Auld Alliance. The current form is the result of English intervention:

our opponents, laying hold of this ancient name,
converted it into the modern barbarous imitation,
"William". The French word substituted for this ancient
significant name, is not so far wrong. The French write
"Gulliaume," [sic] which is certainly but a poor
imitation of the original. (V 24)

Blair makes much of the situation of Gartmain, and indeed the farmhouse occupies a strategic position near the centre of the island. It stands on rising ground slightly east of the main road between Bridgend and Bowmore, looking down onto the

innermost part of Loch Indaal, marked off by Rubha Bàn to the north and Bowmore pier to the south, with a fine view of the Rinns across the water. Behind, the ground rises gradually to Beinn Bhàn, the highest of the Islay hills. Livingston's attachment to the site is evident in the way he deliberately heads the letters which compose his *Vindication* 'Gartmain, Islay', although he was at the time a resident of Greenock (V 27). Beyond the farm of Gartloist to the north-east is Sliabh a' Chatha, a low hill whose name may have offered, along with the setting in general and local legend, the inspiration for the most complex of Livingston's battle poems, 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile'. His account of a Danish invasion set around the farm of his birth in the *Vindication* (examined in depth in Chapter Six) lovingly details the lie of the land, listing and motivating toponyms. That he already viewed it through the eye of memory is clear from the reference to 'the present beautiful farm of Gartloisg, much of which, within the memory of your humble servant, was thickly covered with wood' (V 148).

As we will see when considering his stay in Comrie, Perthshire, Livingston demonstrated throughout his life a lively interest in local topography and the lore of placenames, involving him in exhaustive and frequently exhausting rambles through the different parts of Scotland in which he resided. His account of the deeds of Alasdair MacColla's father, Coll Ciotach MacDonald, and of his time in hiding in the Hebrides, flows quite naturally into a description of some peculiarities of the Islay coastline:

The iron coast of Islay afforded him shelter for a long time. Many of those creeks which covered him from the vigilance of his pursuers are on the south coast of the island. It were vain for hosts of strangers to attempt their discovery; they are generally in the heart of rocks, surrounded by the boiling tide, and are without exception of that nature that a stranger might pass them within an oars [sic] length without observing them. Their entrances are generally so very narrow that

only a small fishing boat can be pushed through, and not a few of them consists of various windings ere you reach the internal basin. So that many of them are perfect natural curiosities. There are several of them round the island everywhere; nor is it less remarkable that none of them which he selected, are without two entrances, in case that he might be discovered, that he could fly out on the other side, and are all since his time called Acarsaidean Cholla, or Coll's Harbours. (V 228)

The poet was not, of course, born in Gartmain farmhouse itself, but on a cottage on the Islay estate (then still in the hands of the Shawfield Campbells), where his father James was a joiner. Nigel MacNeill's lines on the poet's forebears, though speculative and perhaps rather dismissive, are not without interest:

There are not many of his kith and kin in that island now [1892], nor is there any evidence that his humble progenitors were anything else than some of those nomadic individuals or familiars, of a Celto-Germanic character, unconnected particularly with any of the well-known clans, but who in the political economy of the Highlands were ranged under the name of "Siol Dhòmhnuill", or some other, and in latter days became more unreasonably Celtic in their race antipathies than the purer Celts themselves. (1929: 457)

Blair speaks of James Livingston as 'a clever, shrewd, well-educated man' who was concerned to give each of his large family sufficient education. Whether or not William attended the parish school of Bowmore is uncertain. Blair, who, though born in Dunoon, was brought up on the farm of Loanbaan on the other side of Bowmore, and attended the school in the 1840s (Fasti: 1, 109), calls it 'one of the best classical schools in the west'. He is more inclined to think that William got the rudiments of an education in one of the 'side-adventure schools' then 'very common in Islay'. He would appear to have his account of the poet's childhood from the man's own lips. Livingston described himself as 'a wild, restless boy', and overall the least educated member of the family.

His first serious occupation was as a cowherd, and is the occasion of the earliest poem of his to have survived, 'Bran' (C 3-5), in praise of his dog. A footnote in the 1858 *Duain aellic* tells us that Livingston composed the song at the age of 15, while herding for Iain Brown on Lossit farm, between Lochiaran and Portnahaven in the Rinns of Islay. (Interestingly, the library at Mountstuart House, Bute, has a second edition of *Dhàn le Iain Mac-a-Bhriuthainn, Tuathanach a bh'ann an Ile* (dated 1856). It has an attractive lightness and humour, in part deriving from the conceit that underpins it, namely that a dog can understand and appreciate praise of this kind. The situation and the tone are not dissimilar to certain works of Burns, although 'Bran' is pitched somewhere between the humorous sentiment of 'Poor Mailie's Elegy' and the sincerely humanising attitude of 'The Auld Farmer's New-year-morning Salutation to his Auld Mare, Maggie'. Livingston's poem, while obviously based on a real life situation, embodies some of the most attractive literary commonplaces of pastoral poetry, reaching back to the *dylls* of Theocritus and beyond:

Bithidh mi 'n sin a' seinn an fheadain
 's tusa beiceis mun cuairt,
 's tu ag amharc an toir mi cead duit
 a sgrogadh speirean an daimh ruaidh.

Bran doesn't bark at strangers, chase sheep or even eat them like Iain's collie - 'Dh'ith e shàith dhiubh iomadh uair'). He has none of the faults of human servants: he does not ask for snuff or tobacco, he is neither a drinker nor a thief. More importantly, he can protect young William from the eerie supernatural creatures that must have tormented the imagination of a boy left on his own for long periods:

Thèid mi don lodan am fhalcadh
 's bithidh a' Ghlaisrig air a bhruaich,
 's nuair a ghlaodhas mi "cùl chas" riut
 cha bhi an t-ath shealladh dhi shuas.

The poem has an intimate, almost family tone, with its reference to Iain's dog and to the farmer's son, Duncan. He is not fortunate enough to have a dog like Bran, so that when 'an Sac Bàn', 'a' Chaointeach' and all the other predatory phantoms who lurk in Glen Mackay come prowling, they will carry him off, but spare William:

bheir iad Donnachadh don bhrùth leò -
glèidh thus' Uilleam, 's gheibh thu duais.

At the close of the song, he promises the dog a written reference, such as any employer might give a faithful servant, and affirms that Bran would be a fitting companion for a gentleman (though his owner, we know only too well, is merely a teenage cowherd).

Livingston was next apprenticed to a tailor. Blair tells us that his father was 'anxious that all his sons should learn some trade'. In discussing the various branches of Islay Livingstons in the *Vindication*, the poet mentions 'a succession of tailors of them in the parish of Kildaltan [sic] for two centuries back, retaining the name of Donald and John alternately, for the above period at least' (542). They included a certain Iain MacDhòmhnaill Oig, who was with difficulty dissuaded by Mr Campbell of Ardmore Farm, from taking part in the 1745 rebellion. This Livingston was an ardent Jacobite in all but religion, and 'an enthusiastic poet'. There follow some four pages of 'waggish altercations' and slapstick adventures involving the farmer and the poet, which William presumably learned from oral tradition in Islay. (Since Kildalton is some distance from Bowmore, it is interesting that he should have known the history of the pair so intimately). John Livingston the poet and wit emigrated to Ireland. His brother Donald died aged 94 in 1810 and it was with his son Donald ('nephew of the famous John') that William served his apprenticeship. This latter Donald was 76 at the time of writing of the *Vindication*, therefore born some time around 1784

and some twenty four years William's superior. He was of the house of 'Acha-na-crea', also known as 'Sliochd Dhòmhnaill Oig', for which Livingston gives a pedigree going back some 270 years.

The passage is interesting for the insight it gives us into relationships in Islay Gaelic society, where a tailor could be a notable poet, and the manner in which the Islay people themselves spoke of these. Robert Blair, though substantially a fellow Islayman, came of rather better extraction than the poet, and his account of William's apprenticeship and its influence is accordingly more detached and speculative:

In those days, when most of the cloth used was manufactured at home, it was the habit of tailors to go from farm to farm, and clachan to clachan, according as their services were required. The master and his apprentice would take up their abode in the house of their employers, until all who needed new suits in the family were provided for. On these occasions the house in which the tailor wrought was generally the centre of attraction in the hamlet. Thither all the young people, and sometimes old as well, went to spend the evening in a friendly céilidh. Song and repartee, story and legend, guesses and conundrums, helped to make the time pass lightly and merrily. We may safely assume that the apprentice boy's tongue was not the most silent in those gatherings, nor his answers the least witty. Although this was not the best school to teach a young boy discretion and self-control, doubtless a certain rude education was given.

His inborn faculties, and the mobility which his trade imposed upon him, clearly made of William an active and privileged participant in the oral culture of early nineteenth-century Islay. Given the bookishness of the historian and the polemicist, and the fact that he is, of all contemporary poets, perhaps the furthest away, in form and style, from oral tradition, it is easy to forget, or to underestimate, the part it must have played in his cultural formation. Blair establishes a direct connection between this early environment and Livingston's later researches:

The witty answers helped to quicken the faculties, and the many tales of the olden time awakened in the Bard's mind that love of country, and that fondness of its early history which to the last were so characteristic of him.

This posits one kind of cause and effect between earlier education (or lack of it) and subsequent bookishness. Another might not unreasonably be suggested, in that a man like Livingston, lacking formal education, might tend to treat written texts and authorities with exaggerated reverence. The attitude is reminiscent of MacDiarmid, as is his propension for knitting lengthy and undigested quotes together, although the Islayman lacked the later poet's capacity (in itself limited) for synthesis.

'Eirinn a' gul' (C 205-6) offers an evocative picture of the cèilidh culture, in which Islay's closeness to Ireland (visible from the Rhinns on a clear day) was a potent element:

Am madainn neochiontachd na h-òige
fhuair mi sgeòil nan linn a dh'fhalbh
aig cagailtean Ile Chlann Dhòmhnaill
mun d' fhògradh na Gàidheil on sealbh.

A' chòisridh fhurach lem b' èibhinn
aithris sgeulachd Innis Fàil,
uirsgeulan nan aoighean còir
an sèistean ceòlmhor nam bàrd.

According to Blair, Livingston's apprenticeship came to an abrupt end when, returning home after some Hallowe'en merrymaking, he overturned a creel on the kitchen floor and allowed his master's young pig to escape. Eight stanzas of 'An t-Oircean' (C 215-6), the song he composed about the incident, survive, though apparently it was much longer in the form Livingston would recite. One indication of its fragmentary nature may be the fact that, whereas the quatrains of 'Bran' form regular pairs thanks to the end rhyme on even lines, the first and sixth stanzas of 'An t-Oircean' are 'odd men out', while the remainder form three more or less regular pairs.

There are clear links between these two 'juvenilia' in the central role assigned to an animal and in the playful humour which illuminates both. It is more pronounced in 'An t-Oircean', where Livingston again introduces his 'bogles', 'Glaisrig, Sac Bàn is Caointeach'. Rather than the irresponsible apprentice arriving from an evening of revelry, we have a fearful and slightly pathetic lad trying to elude their pursuit:

'S iad ag iarraidh balach an tàillear,
seo mar bha 's mar chaidh e às,
's an ruaig air gu lag an dùnain
's a' chòmhla dùinte 's i fo ghlaiss.

Chuireadh cliabh 's a bheul ri ùrlar:
bha 'n torc beag 's e dùinte steach,
nuair a chuir e le gnosan na grùide
bun-os-ceann a lùchairt shlat.

The mock heroic perspective, implicit in the 'palace of twigs', again recalls Burns. The lightness of touch is surprising in a poet whose mature work is marked, and sometimes marred, by a thoroughgoing seriousness. There is no doubt as to where our sympathies must lie:

Sin thuirt Dòmhnall, 's e glaothaich:
"S iomadh saothair a fhuair mi riut.
Tog ort a-nis, is fàg mo theaghlach!
Chaill mi le t' fhaoineis a' mhuc."

Le sèideadh gaoth an iar is clàdain
's dealanach a' deàrrsadh bras,
bha m' fheòil air chrith air mo chnàmhan
nuair a ghlaoidh an tàillear "Bi mach!"

The poet has of course exaggerated the intemperance of the elements. The penultimate line undercuts the last one, casting an ironic light on the traditional imagery of mourning:

Chaidh gach bruach is gleann is allt
a rannsachadh le siubhal chas,
's mas fìor 's an t-oircean gun fhaotainn,
thòisich caoineadh 's greadadh bhas.

Another branch of Islay Livingstons is mentioned in the *Vindication*. They were descended from William, of the Kilsyth Livingstons, who took refuge in Kintyre after the battle of Sherriffmuir, then settled in Kilarrow. His son Donald had the farm of Cladville in the Rhinns (just south of Lossit), and was 'an enlightened christian [sic], and a zealot for the reigning branch of the Stuarts' (V 537). James, a younger son, may well have served as a model for Livingston. After an escapade in Dublin, he was apprenticed for five years to a joiner, James Fraser, during which time he studied assiduously:

His constant remark was - "That the Gaelic poets of Scotland were so much the superiors of the Romans that he could not conceive how men could have fallen into the mania of debarring the former from the Universities, while the latter were adored, whose composition, at the best, had no merit compared to our national bards. (V 538-9)

He resided for twenty-five years mostly in Livingston's own parish, Kilarrow, frequenting only a few chosen friends. These included Neil Sinclair, who farmed Mulindry (just south-east of Gartmain). Livingston comments that

respect for him [i.e. Sinclair] was among the highest pleasures that the subject of this sketch [i.e. Livingston himself] had during the period of their unfeigned friendship. (V 539)

If James Livingston was a lover of Gaelic poetry, Neil Sinclair was a keen historian: 'the discoveries of human nature through that medium were familiar to Mr Sinclair from a very early stage of his career'. The two were close friends, paying and repaying visits and exchanging books, and exemplified the two interests Livingston was to bring together in his own poetry. They are an example of the kind of local intellectual culture to which he had access and which clearly meant a great deal to him. James Livingston was 'an extensive reader, aided by his powerful memory'. Marrying three times, he remained 'ignorant of the one and true living way' until more than half way through his life. He died in 1824 (when Livingston was sixteen), Sinclair ten years

later. The younger man therefore had ample opportunity to benefit from their society and example. Sinclair's grandson Archibald would eventually publish the 1882 memorial edition of Livingston's poems.

Livingston now left Islay (he would never return there to reside stably again) and spent some time in Dumbarton, the Vale of Leven and Arrochar. Traces of this period occur in the prose works. At the beginning of the 'Brief Sketch' prefixed to the 1858 *Duain Ghaelic* he lists a series of Fingalian placenames throughout Scotland as part of the case he is arguing - that the hero lived in Scotland rather than in Ireland. Among them is 'one of the most noted localities that we know of, illustrative of this subject', a steep, narrow pass at the head of Loch Long named Bruach na Fàire Fhiann, 'the bank of the Fingalian sentinels'. In the same district are Tigh Mhaca Dàna ('the house of bold sons or swains') and, halfway between this hollow and Tarbert on Loch Lomond, Baile Shean Fhinn, 'the town of old Fingal'. Clearly Livingston took advantage of his stay in Dunbartonshire to familiarise himself even with the less accessible historical and legendary sites in the area.

His next move was to Strathearn, and specifically to the town of Comrie. There he met and married his wife Margaret, a native of the village who, according to Blair

entered into all his enthusiasm about Celtic and Scottish matters, and had the most implicit faith in the knowledge and judgment of her husband.

It is interesting that he cites her comment on her husband's incomplete, five-part *History of Scotland* in the vernacular ("Nae doot it has merits if yin had the sense tae tak' it oot o't"). As we are told she wrote to his dictation in Gaelic and English, she may well have been a native speaker of Perthshire Gaelic with a natural command of Scots to boot.

Livingston's stay in Comrie can be dated with relative certainty from the passage in the *History* where he notes having seen the snow on the Grampians north of the town year in, year out from 1833 to 1841 (H 155). Earlier in the same work, when discussing the moor of Ardoch as a possible site for the battle of Mons Graupius, he speaks of having spent 'eight years in that country' so that he 'had ample opportunity of visiting that memorable spot as often as I pleased' (H 21). His writings show a familiarity with the area around Comrie that almost rivals his knowledge of Islay. Details of local events and personages are added in such a way that one has the impression of a man eagerly concerned in all that went on. A journeyman tailor had more opportunities than most to keep abreast of gossip and developments, and could take time on his travels to examine personally such historic sites as were on offer.

The 'Preliminary Remarks' to the *History* mention a number of stone circles in the immediate vicinity of Comrie. That at Kenalla was

till of late, an extensive circle of several obelisks, some of which are now prostrate, as if lamenting the honourable family of McNab, near whose baronial mansion they stood. (H 5)

The mansion in question is probably Kinnell House, the oldest part of which dates from the seventeenth century. The remaining portions of the estate of the MacNabs of Bovain (including the island of Inchbuie, the old burying-ground of the clan) were sold to the fourth Earl of Breadalbane in 1828 (Gillies 1938: 111-2). The event would therefore be a recent memory at the time of Livingston's stay in Comrie. The reverence with which the family is mentioned suggests a connection with Duncan MacNab, a Breadalbane native who gave Livingston his friendship and support when both lived in Glasgow, and who is honoured alongside his wife in 'Cuimhneachan Bhraid-Alba', the poet's tribute to the area. Duncan had proved a sturdy friend in time of need:

Bha mi ro an gainntir dèrainn
's m' fhuil air ghoil le teasach lònidh.
Ràinig tu uiridh mo leònaidh
is sheas thu d' stath neart gam chòmhnadh,
a Mhic an Aba. (C 126)

Shared affection for this part of Perthshire may have helped to bring the friends so close. The *History* offers further evidence that Livingston had a continued attachment to these places and kept in touch with what was happening, perhaps returning from time to time. We read there that four large stones at the west end of Comrie village were removed 'about twelve years ago' (H 5) to make room for the foundation of the Free Church. The *History* is dated 1856, suggesting that the stones were removed in 1844, by which time Livingston had been in Greenock for some three years.

During his time in Comrie, Livingston undertook large scale walking expeditions, in part to pursue his antiquarian interests and in part as a witness of the changes taking place in the surrounding countryside. Almost exactly halfway through the *Vindication*, when dealing with Montrose's campaigns in Aberdeenshire, Livingston admits to lacking a first hand acquaintance with the area, and proudly affirms that 'I have hitherto described every spot from personal knowledge excepting this' (V 263). Later in the same book, he claims to have had 'both the pleasure and the pain of travelling on foot from Campbelton [sic] to Dundee, or, in other words, through Scotland from west to east' (V 364). As part of his research into possible sites for the battle of Mons Graupius, he visited Stormont, near the Angus boundaries of Perthshire:

These relics of the Scottish camp are now called the Buzzard Dykes, and are in the parish of Kinloch, already mentioned. It was in 1839 that I saw them, at the expense of blistered feet and an exhausted carcass - having travelled all the way from Comrie in Western Strathearn to see them. I had no means of measuring the ground, which is no defect here - that being often done by learned gentlemen whose estimate can be relied on... the ruthless hand of time has considerably diminished the height of those ramparts. All that I can say is,

that, having spent two hours in surveying them, I think I may venture to assert that their average height is still ten feet. (H 187)

The passage gives an effective and convincing picture of what such a walking tour involved for Livingston and the kind of investigation he carried out, suspended somewhere between scientific accuracy and passionate imaginative recreation.

A rather different journey was undertaken 'to satisfy my curiosity, or call it folly, if you like' through the mountainous areas of Breadalbane, starting at Killin. Some seven years had passed since the decease of the old Marquis had heralded large scale evictions, and now 'there was nothing to be seen but despair painted on every face' whereas, not long before, there had been 'many families in sight of Loch Tay who might be an honour to any country on earth' (V 364). The fourth Earl of Breadalbane, who was born in 1762 and had acquired the MacNab lands mentioned above, was created Marquess in 1831 on the coronation of William IV. There is a fine portrait of him by Raeburn in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh. His son John inherited the title on his father's death. The 'wholesale evictions', attributed by some to his factor James F. Wyllie, 'roused a great deal of resentment in the country' (Gillies 1938: 211). Livingston presumably felt the urge to gain first hand knowledge of clearances taking place so near at hand. His journey can be dated around 1841, or just before he left the area. The minister had actually protested at the landlord's manner of proceeding in Glen Lednock (immediately north of Comrie) where

he seized even the small piece of ground dedicated by the former proprietors for the support of the teacher stationed there, as the children belonging to the district could not attend the parish school, which was situated some miles distant, but even that had not the slightest influence on the implacable desolator. (V 361)

Relations with the gentry were not entirely hostile. Livingston had access 'for several years' to the armoury at Ardvoirlich House (V 237), belonging to the Stewart family and 'romantically situated near to the banks of Loch Earn, with the mighty Benvorlich towering in all its height and grandeur behind' (Shearer 1883: 92). The model for Scott's Darnlinvarach in his *Legend of Montrose*, this house was famed among the local population for a large gem, apparently of rock crystal, which they regarded as a talisman with healing properties (Ordnance Survey 1894: I, 69). Could this explain in part Livingston's boasting of the privilege afforded him?

He undoubtedly was aware of, and perhaps enjoyed the society of, local intellectuals:

the obscure village of Comrie, Perthshire, can boast of two classical scholars of this name [MacFarlan] - men of profound learning literally buried alive; nor is it any exaggeration to say that Messrs Peter and John MacFarlan have few equals; the latter especially might fill the Hebrew chair or that of many other branches in any University of the United Kingdom. (V 452)

There were other, less distinguished acquaintances, such as 'the beadle of Comrie', who would smell the air 'to find what kind of weather it is ere he venture past the threshold' (V107).

Blair's explanation of Livingston's removal from Comrie to Greenock is rather odd:

When a shock of earthquake was felt... William could no longer stay there, and he took up his household goods and came to Greenock.

Comrie is on the Highland Fault Line and, though one may be a little inclined to humour at the poet's timidity, seismic activity appears to have had considerable effect in the area at this time:

rather long noises, unaccompanied with any shock, were heard by the inhabitants of Glenlednock during autumn 1789. These noises were at first supposed to be peals of thunder; but afterwards, as they were heard sometimes when the sky was quite clear, the people

imagined they were occasioned by firing cannon at Dunira... they were at a loss how to account for it, till 5th November 1789, when about six o'clock in the evening they were alarmed by a loud rumbling noise, accompanied with several shocks of an earthquake. This shock, which is generally supposed to be more violent than any which have since occurred, was felt over a tract of country of more than ten miles in extent. Since that period, the shocks have been very frequent, and sometimes violent, but hitherto have done no harm. (Shearer 1883: 14)

The *Vindication* offers some help in the dating of Livingston's next two moves. He is indignant about the publication in the *Glasgow Herald* of a letter purporting to be from the Duke of Wellington, coupled with his own name and 'the additional title of a poor Argyleshire tailor' (V 397). The implication was that Livingston had sought the Duke's patronage for the work he was engaged in writing. To set the record right, the poet describes himself as 'a native of Islay, and a journeyman tailor for upwards of twenty years'. He has produced the *Vindication* in Kerr's Land, Hamilton Street, Greenock, a town where 'I was for eight years bygone'.

The last phrase is a little ambivalent. Internal evidence suggests that the *Vindication* was produced over some period of time (though there is no evidence for its having appeared in parts). On the same page, the letter to the Duke in which Livingston attempts to exculpate himself is dated July 30th 1851 from 303 Argyle Street. The first and only number of *Livingstone's Caledonian Critic*, dated February 1852, carries the same address on its last page (CC 16). It would therefore seem likely that the move to Greenock took place some time in 1842, and that to Glasgow some time in 1850, or possibly early 1851.

The lines quoted above, where the poet speaks of the MacFarlan scholars in Comrie, savour of the autodidact resolutely championing friends whom he sees as condemned to an unjust

obscurity not unlike his own. Blair discusses Livingston's laboriously acquired erudition immediately after his departure from Islay. While such a placing may be perfectly reasonable, limited access to libraries or a wide range of materials may well have postponed his discovery of the extant literature on Scottish history and antiquities to the time of his Greenock and Glasgow sojourns. Gratitude to the many gentlemen 'into whose Libraries I had admission for the last two or three years' (V 253) points to an intense period of research between 1847 and 1850. One possible hypothesis is that towards the end of his time in Greenock, and as he himself was turning 40, Livingston's antiquarian interests, hitherto more a matter of hiking from site to site and of first-hand observation, broadened to include research into such sources as were available to him. This would have fuelled the intense period of historical and polemical writing, with its magpie-like conflation of pre-existing texts, that culminated in the appearance of the *History* in 1856. It is possible that the move to Glasgow, where Livingston was to spend the rest of his days, was motivated by this delayed discovery of a political and cultural vocation. This phase eventually culminated in a return to poetry, which from the mid 1850s occupied the dominant place in Livingston's literary activities. I shall return to the question of Livingston's protracted neglect of the muse below.

The only two public libraries specifically mentioned in the prose works are the Stirling Library in Glasgow (H 31) and the Mechanics' Library in Greenock, where a labourer had altered Allison's *History of Europe*, inspired by the highest patriotic motives:

The man thought he would find some justice done to his country in it, but in that he was grossly mistaken... The honest labourer, with true patriotism, took his pen and scored out the obnoxious title English, where it should not be, and interlined British army, &c.; and, in like manner, where Sheriff Allison audaciously wrote British to represent those who never turned their back to a foe, the "honest man" wrote Scottish Highlanders. (V 177)

It is evident from Blair's account that Livingston's sentiments were very near to those of the defacer:

He overlooked all the benefits that have accrued to both nations from the Union, and saw only in it evil and that unmitigated. It was a very sore point with him, as it is with most patriotic Scots, that in making mention of the public service, Scotland, as well as Ireland, is ignored. Nothing excited the Bard more than to read of "The Queen of England," "The English Army," "The English Navy," &c.

MacNeill has an anecdote concerning the poet's time in Greenock. His pages on Livingston in *The Literature of the Highlanders* draw heavily on Blair. What additional material he gives does, however, seems deserving of credence, given MacNeill's personal acquaintance with the poet. He could have learned of incidents he did not witness from Livingston himself or from the circle of Islay émigré friends to which both belonged. When the Rev. Principal Candlish of Edinburgh

was preaching in Greenock, Livingston assumed a threatening attitude as if he would dirk the preacher, who had the temerity to touch up the Highlanders - about the Sustentation Fund, I suppose. (MacNeill 1929: 192-3)

Born in Edinburgh, Candlish was the son of an intimate of Burns. He joined the Free Church and was the first minister of St George's church there, which he opened in May 1843. After the death of Chalmers, he was the most influential of the leading figures in the Free Church (Fasti: I, 106). On the one hand, we learn that Livingston attended both Church of Scotland and Free Church services. On the other, we have a lively picture of someone ready to defend his community even in inappropriate, not to say histrionic ways, in the face of antagonists of great eminence.

Two further anecdotes from Blair demonstrate that Livingston's outward conformism regarding Presbyterianism concealed some rather unorthodox attitudes. He advised a young friend whom one

of the Gaelic ministers in Glasgow had offended, not to leave the Church, reasoning as follows:

"Don't leave a Church where Gaelic is preached. Attend the Gaelic service, and read the Gaelic Poets, and I assure you you will be safe enough."

On another occasion he surprised the bystanders by coming to the bedside of a man he particularly detested in order to be reconciled before the latter died. It transpired that his motivation was not Christian charity, but

a superstitious fear on the part of the son of song, that there might be a possibility of unwelcome visits from the unseen world.

The anecdotes illustrate how religious observance could be for Livingston a form of cultural nationalism, and how elements of an older belief system underpinned an external adherence to the dictates of Reformed Christianity.

Livingston taught himself Latin so as to tackle the ancient chronicles, and picked up enough Greek and Hebrew to be able to read the scriptures with the aid of a dictionary, then turning to Welsh and French. It may well be that the 'French history of the Druids' which Blair came across Livingston and his wife translating together in their 'little garret' in Tradeston, Glasgow, was a history of the Celts by Pelloutier published in Paris in 1770, and cited at the opening of the 1860 *Lecture*. 'Oran do Dhòmhnaill Mac Dhiarmaid, Gille Og Ileadh' (C 171-174), from Livingston's first collection, the 1858 *Duain Ghaelic*, offers an engaging glimpse of the kind of collaboration that existed between husband and wife. The poem is not to be interpreted simplistically. It is not the detached account of an observer, but a presentation of self on Livingston's part, an example of how he saw himself and of how he wished us to see him.

A young Islayman had written asking the poet for a genealogy of his clan, which was in fact printed in 1858 as a supplement to the verses. It is a neat example of how the antiquarian and the

historian, the patriot and the poet interacted. Livingston was unwell at the time:

Tha mi 'n seo am chreòlain chrùbach,
uair air leaba 's uair air ùrlar,
nuair chuala mi fear sgairteil lùthmhor
a' teachd le cabhag dlùth...

The brisk, energetic visitor is the postman, and he marvels at the quantity of mail that passes through his hands for this address:

"An ann an seo tha Mac Dhunlèibhe?
Chan eil latha tha mi 'g èirigh
gun litir o fhear no o thè dha -
's iongantach leam fhèin na tha diubh.

Tha cuid diubh à Manainn 's à Eirinn.
cuid à Sasainn 's a Dùn Eidinn..."

The letters arrive 'le gearradh arm gach fir 's a sheula', perhaps a proud reference to the status of some of Livingston's correspondents. He does not recognise the writing, but reads the letter out aloud without waiting to be asked. He is delighted to read the signature when he gets to it. His wife Margaret encourages him to prepare the genealogy in spite of his state of health:

"Seo a dhuine, tog do mhisneach,
's cruaidh an cuibhreach nach gabh bristeadh,
's cùis olc nach fhacas nas miosa -
cha deanadas neo-ghlic a chràidh thu."

The poet could not have been older than fifty at this time. Is there a touch of irony in that last line - self-irony, since Livingston is putting words into his wife's mouth - a suggestion that he is not given to strenuous activity and may be something of a hypochondriac? She offers to act as both librarian and unpaid secretary:

Tòisich gabh an dàil an Fhrangaich
's mar leughas tu eadar-theangaich.
Cha chosd an duais-sgrìobhaidh planc dhuit,
fòghnaidh dhomhsa rann mar chàch bhuaite.

Gabhaidh mise Wyntoun fòghlaimt',
chì sinn an dèan iad còrdadh,
's thèid Mac Dhiarmad a thòrachd
gu bun na cracibh, 's is leòir a h-àilleachd.

The French authority mentioned may well be Pelloutier. Livingston translates as he reads, while his wife holds Andrew Wyntoun's chronicle and they compare the two accounts. Although they are strictly speaking engaged in genealogical research, her suggesting a verse as payment introduces a certain ambiguity, as if the song we are hearing were the fruit of their common labours, and her place in it an acknowledgement of her part in the work.

There is undoubtedly a danger of reading too much into this poem. But it is a delightful piece which shows us a very different Livingston from the ponderous patriot of the battle poems: intimate, obliging and almost playful. He never entirely lost the humour evident in the two juvenile songs. The four remaining stanzas are remarkable for the meticulous, delighted description of the physical minutiae of writing as practised in the poet's home. If we are to give due weight to his artistry, the significance of these stanzas should not be underestimated. Whether they are putting down a genealogy or inditing this poem, he shows a fascination with the process of writing that must surely depend on his own emergence from a culture still primarily oral. Indeed, the note to 'Tigh Chailein' (C 168) is clear proof that Livingston was given to extempore composition. Perhaps the fact that composition and writing could exist for him as separate moments added to the fascination of the latter in the poet's eyes.

The quill Margaret Livingston will use is stored away in a little box, like a jewel:

Dh'fhosgail i bòsdan glaiste
's am bheil seòrsachan an tasgaidh:
fhuair i it' a' gheòidh ghlais ann
's chaidh i air thapadh mar b'àbhaist.

She sharpens it with a knife which is kept in a sheath going back through five generations of her Perthshire family. The knife is feminised and spoken of in terms of endearment:

Thug i 'n t-seirceag sgaiteach, liobhaidh
à truaill bhig nan òrachd riomhach
a bha còig linnntean aig a sinnsear
an gleann tiorail fad on t-sàile.

Her husband watches with fascination the precision of her operations. The quill is a 'guibein', a little beak, and indeed, it is soon going to speak:

Gheàrr i gu sgeineil seòlta
an it' o bàrr mu leth òirlich
le sgoltadh cho caol ri ròineig,
guibein glan bu bhòidhch' a thàirr'neadh.

The letters are aligned side by side almost like individuals teased into an order not spontaneous to them. One can sense the speaker beaming with delight as the genealogy - or the poem - assumes visible form before his eyes:

Na cruthanan màiseach, neònach
ri taobh a chèil' an deagh òrdugh,
nan sreathan snasmhor, dìreach, dòigheil,
m' èibhneas sònraicht' an làmh ud.

Although the fact that Margaret Livingston writes for the poet is motivated by his state of health, it serves an exquisitely literary purpose in the 'Oran do Dhòmhnall Mac Dhiarmaid'. Writing is dissociated from the poet and he becomes its spectator, with an effect of defamiliarisation that allows an even clearer focus on it.

The move to Glasgow followed rapidly on Livingston's first appearance in print. A prospectus for the *Vindication* was issued by William Campbell of Mansionhouse Lane in Greenock in 1850, to be followed soon after by the book itself. The title page, and Livingston's introductory letter, bear the date 1850. Internal evidence suggests that it was not completed before the following year. The work falls into nine letters, and that containing the

above mentioned missive to the Duke of Wellington (dated July 30th, 1851) and the Duke's reply (dated August 1st) bears the heading 'Gartmain, Islay, 30th June 1850'. The inconsistency demonstrates Livingston's eagerness to maintain the fiction of relatively quick, and carefully organised drafting of the text.

A single number of *Livingstone's Caledonian Critic* appeared in 1852. This year also saw the republication of Donald MacNicol of Lismore's *Remarks on Dr Samuel Johnson's Journey to the Hebrides* with Livingston as editor.

His second major prose work, the incomplete *History of Scotland*, was issued in five parts by William Gilchrist in 1856. Blair writes that the project failed due to lack of subscribers, and that the manuscript could not be traced. MacNeill, who sees Livingston writing in English as 'like a lion in chains', claims that publisher and author fell out 'on account of the strong anti-English feeling displayed by the writer' (MacNeill 1924: 469).

The first of Livingston's poems to appear in print would appear to be the 'Oran do Art MacLachainn', issued as a broadsheet in February 1855. William Gilchrist produced the prize song cast as a monologue by Queen Victoria ('Duan Geall, no Comhradh Uaigneach') as a broadsheet in June 1859, and 'Fios thun a' Bhàird' came out in the same format in 1863. A broadsheet dated September 1867 includes the prize song 'Leacan Uaighean nam Bàrd', 'Soraidh Dhonnchaidh do Chomhal' dedicated to Duncan Whyte, and a song to the Glasgow Celtic Society.

These are overshadowed in importance by the two books of poems which appeared during Livingston's lifetime, both from the presses of William Gilchrist. The 1858 *Duain Ghaelic* is accompanied by an essay on the authenticity of Ossian's poems, and therefore rather neatly characterises the transition from antiquarian and polemicist to original poet Livingston was making at the time. It contains seventeen compositions, including four

battle poems (Dàil Rìgh, Allt a' Bhannaich, Monadh Bhraca and Tom Ealachaidh), the 1857 prize song, the medley 'Cuimhneachan Bhraid-Alba' and a range of lyrical and occasional pieces, running in all to some 1900 lines.

William Gilchrist also published the 1865 *Duain agus Orain*. Only one poem, the prize song of 1857, is reprinted from the earlier collection. The remainder of the twenty-one poems included are original. 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' takes pride of place at the beginning, and the total of lines runs to 2,614, about one third longer than the 1858 book.

Two further prose pieces appeared, both brief: *Primitive Christianity in Scotland* in 1859, and the *Lecture* on the early history of Scotland in 1860. This means that, in terms of publishing, Livingston made the transition from prose to poetry between 1858 and 1860, after which the latter became his sole preoccupation.

In addition, there is evidence of three works prepared in manuscript which did not achieve publication. Donald Maclean writes that

In December 1854 Livingston prepared for the press Bishop Carswell's advice to his son in 1560. It is still in MS. in Irish script. (Maclean 1915: 165)

The manuscript is now in the library of Mountstuart House, Bute. Having mentioned in his *Lecture* the exertions of the Rev Dr Patrick Graham of Aberfoyle in ensuring the return of several manuscripts, originally collected by James Macpherson, from London to the Highland Society in Edinburgh, Livingston adds that

Fullarto & Co. have done good service to the public so far, when they, in 1849, laid before the world a catalogue of no fewer than forty of these documents... I intend shortly to publish lithographic specimens of them, in a small volume now ready for the press. (L 20)

And at the end of the *Vindication* he promises that his readers will find

a full detail of the abominations of the aristocracy...
in the *History of the Scottish Clearances*, now
preparing for the press. (V 568)

One can only speculate: the context could imply that this was a
work of his own. There is no indication that such a work was
published in whole or in part or even of its being completed in
manuscript.

Blair commented

that most of the pieces we have, were the product of
his mature years, and that it is questionable whether
he composed anything except the few verses to his dog,
until comparatively late in life.

While according to MacNeill the manuscripts by Livingston which
he possessed

show the extraordinary pains he took with his work -
his endeavours after a purer English style, even when
well-advanced in years - and the long time he was a
wooer of the muses before he arrived at the intensity
of poetical composition which distinguished his later
poetry... he was probably a married man before the
dormant powers of his poetic nature awakened. (MacNeill
1929: 460-1)

The fact of this protracted hiatus in Livingston's creative work
is corroborated in the poems themselves. The 'Rann do Eoghan
MacCuirrich' (C 199-200) praise the Old Irish scholar for having
made available ancient texts, not just to an Irish public, but to
Scottish readers as well:

'S eòil doibh seanachas na h-Eireann
anns na linnibh cian a thrèig sinn
's ni iad gu deònach a leughadh
nuair thig i o mheòir a' chlàirich.

'S eòil doibh eachdraidh nan àrman.
Oilliollollam 's Connal Ceàrnach,
Conn buadhach is Lochlann làidir,
Brian Boroimhe 's na tha dhiubh.

The opening stanza attributes specifically to Eugene O'Curry the
merit of having reawakened Livingston's poetic inspiration:

A dhuin' uasail fhòghlaimt', mhùirnich,
 ged bha mo cheòlradh san smùraich
 còrr is fichead bliadhna, dhùisg i
 nuair chual' i ainm an fhir chliùitich.

The poem first appeared in the 1865 *Duain agus Orain*. It may not have been written immediately after the long silence, yet the indication is that a text published by O'Curry before 1858 had acted as an important inspiration. The Celtic Society of Dublin brought out O'Curry's edition of *Cath Mhuighe Léana*, along with *Tochmarc Moméra* in 1855. While there is little evidence that Livingston imitated the complex structure of the former text, its title and general preoccupations clearly influenced him. The references to Milidh and Ailill Oluim would seem to confirm this hypothesis, as they feature in the extensive genealogies which O'Curry appended to his edition.

It is noteworthy that a historian and antiquarian, one involved in exhuming, as it were, the lost cultural heritage, should have reconciled him with the Muse. Livingston dramatised this reconciliation at some length in the 'Còmhraidh eadar am Bàrd 's a' Cheòlraidh' (C 46-8) which constitutes an extended prologue to 'Blàir Dhàil Rìgh'. The poem comes immediately after 'Cath Monadh Bhraca' in the 1858 volume. He blames her for leading him on the kind of exhausting hike that had taken him from Comrie to Stormont in western Perthshire:

Cha chluinneadh tu mu chreach no tòrachd,
 sean daingneach, carragh no blàr-còmhraig,
 seanachaidh, bàrd no fear-òran
 nach slaodadh tu mi air mhuineal,
 a dheòin no dh'aindheoin, thun an t-siubhail.
 "Faic an t-àit' ud! Faic an duin' ud!
 'S na gabh suim do ghràin an turais,
 do ghruaim an t-sainnt no sgraing gun fhuran."

His muse would appear to be something of an antiquarian herself. Rather surprisingly, she replies with a description of the natural beauties of Scotland couched in pure and elegant Gaelic. The high style is of course appropriate to her role and function. (Note the recurrence of the archaic dative plural). She has given him

sealladh air glinn àigh 's air beanntan,
 air coirean fraoich 's air racinibh alltach,
 's lochain nach traoigh air gach meall diubh,
 muim' altram nan gèadh 's nan lach,
 far am faigh am fiadh a dheoch
 's a lòn gu fial air leirg a-mach,
 de mhiltibh lus ri grèin gu moch
 air aonach farsaing nan eas caoir-geal,
 a' steall-ruith tro chlaisibh craobhach,
 a' mire-leum nan ceudaibh caochan
 nach do thruailleadh riamh 's nach caochail...

He may well criticise her for hauling him from one end of the country to the other, but in the end the fault is his. If he had accepted her offer of marriage in his youth, he could have enjoyed all the benefits of her patronage and protection:

Nàire dhuits' a chuir uait mi,
 gus an do liath thu toirt fuath dhomh!
 Nam biodh tu dìleas nad òige
 nuair a thairg mi 'n tùs do phòsadh,
 sheasainn do chùis anns gach dòlas
 's bhearrainn feusagan luchd-fòirneart.

He answers that if old monuments are all she wishes to talk about, he would prefer to have nothing to do with her. Then he urges her to inspire him to verse-making again:

A dhrollach leisg, tog ded dhroch mhein!
 Na cas fiacail 's na druid rosg rium.
 'S fad o chualas mun bheul thosdach,
 gur seirbh' a mhùig na teang' a bhrosgail.
 'S iomadh bliadhn' o nach d' fhuair mi
 òran, iorram, rann no duan bhuaite.
 Eirich gu grad 's bitheadh buaidh leat,
 labhair a-mach mar bu dual duit.

The two agree to make peace and shake hands on the bargain. It is interesting that the muse promises to be loyal to him until he dies:

Gheibh thu do thoil, ach bi gleusda.
 Suidh a-nall 's ni sinn rèite,
 glacaidh sinn làmhnan a chèile
 's gu là bhàis cha toir mi beum dhuit.

Earlier Livingston had used the metaphor of a marriage deferred until middle age to describe his relationship to the muse. He probably looked on marriage as a lifelong contract, so there is a

clear implication that his return to poetry is definitive and irreversible.

The 1861 census found William and Margaret Livingston in Govan Parish, at 68 Dale Street in Tradeston. Both were 53, and there were no children. Their home had only one room with a window. Indeed, it may have consisted of a single room, for the census lists twenty-nine homes at that address, containing 153 people, of whom twenty-two were children attending school.

Certain details of the Glasgow years can be gleaned from the poems. A poem on the battles of Alma and Balaclava in the Crimea won first prize in a competition organised by the Glasgow Celtic Society in 1857. In 1859 'Còmhraidh Uaigneach' was submitted for a competition held by the same society in conjunction with games on August 2nd and 3rd, while 'Leacan-Uaighean am Bàrd' won the society's prize for best poem in November 1867.

Livingston wrote a moving elegy on the premature death of Neil Strachan. Ordained to St Columba's Gaelic parish in Paisley in 1857, he moved in February 1859 to St Columba's in Glasgow, and died little more than a year afterwards. Robert Blair had the charge in Glasgow from 1869 to 1882, so that it seems likely that Livingston was a regular member of the congregation of this parish, and a familiar figure there during his Glasgow years.

That the Islay connection was not allowed to lapse is clear from 'Oran Bean a' Bhàird', where Margaret Livingston hazards sea travel for the first time in her life in order to be the guest of Blair's parents at Loanbaan farm. A gift of cloth from Blair's mother offered the pretext for writing 'Fios thun a' Bhàird', and Livingston commemorated Blair's father in a dignified imaginary dialogue entitled 'Rann Marbh-Thaisg Dhonnchaidh Mhic Bhlair', written on his death in May 1867. Letters like the one requesting a genealogy discussed above, or another from a young friend which provided the material for 'Eoghan Bhuail Thu', were another way of maintaining links with the island. That Livingston himself

returned there is clear from the lines to his publisher William Gilchrist, which are purported to have been composed while sailing from Kintyre to Islay in September 1857.

Religious prejudice did not limit Livingston's circle of Glasgow friends. The 'Oran do Artt Mac Lachainn' (C 164-6) praises an Argyll gentleman and a Roman Catholic whose son, Blair tells us, rose to a high position in the Catholic clergy. A verse towards the close, on a gathering held in commemoration of Duncan Bàn MacIntyre, hints at what may have been important social events of Livingston's Glasgow years:

Nuair chaidh sliochd nam Fiann an òrdugh
a ghleidheadh cuimhne bàrd Bheinn Dòrain
b'e tùs is deireadh an còmhraidh
's cliù dar còmhdhail Artt Mac Lachainn.

MacLachan's nephew Neil is celebrated in a song composed for the New Year gathering of 'Comann nam Fineachan Gàidhealach ann an Glaschu' in 1859. Art is teased affectionately, along with other friends, in 'Mocheirigh Fhinn', and a 'Luinneag do Art MacLachluinn' [sic] by Iain Camshron is preserved in the library at Mountstuart House. The greeting to 'Comann nam Fiann' written for New Year 1858, and the verses dated September 1867 to the Glasgow Celtic Society suggest that Livingston may have acted intermittently as a kind of bard to the assembled Glasgow gentlemen.

'Pàraig nan Dealbh' (C 212-3) is a curious poem, a kind of commercial in verse for a certain Patrick Kennedy from Argyllshire, who had set up in business as a photographer in Jamaica Street:

An teachdaireachd seo thun nan Gàidheal
anns gach àit' air tìr 's air fairge -
innleachd ùr a ghleidheas cuimhne
na thèid bhuainn thar tuinn air thearbadh.
'S ma thilleas no nach till iad thairis,
's èibhinn an sealladh moch is anmoch,
dealbh na dh'fhalbh a bhith ga fhaicinn
's dealbh na dh'fhan a bhith 'n taisgt' an earbsa...

It seems characteristic of Livingston at once to link the availability of photographs to the reality of the clearances and the definitive separations they caused. A much more important figure during his time in Glasgow was Duncan White or Whyte (Blair gives both spellings), president of the Glasgow Celtic Society and treasurer of the Cowal Society, who purchased the plot where the poet and his wife are buried in Janefield Cemetery, Glasgow, and 'frequently ministered to their necessities during their lifetime'. The Cowal Society was instrumental in the gift of a new national costume to Livingston which prompted him to write 'Gleann-Da-Ruadhail a' Bharraich' (Sinclair 1876-9: 524).

Blair does not conceal the harsher sides of Livingston's character. He had 'a distrustful suspicious nature' and 'could hardly brook a co-worker, not to say a rival in any field whatever', so that 'he was perpetually at war with his brother Celts, who made any attempt at cultivating Gaelic literature'. Both he and MacNeill mention the poet's piercing eyes and the flowing beard which he loved to stroke while engaged in conversation. According to MacNeill, Livingston planned to issue a collected edition of his poems which would equal the work of Rob Donn Mackay, Duncan Bàn MacIntyre and Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair. When he died suddenly in July 1870, just a few months after his wife, only some half dozen poems had been transcribed (MacNeill 1929: 461-2).

The Glasgow Islay Association sponsored the 1882 memorial edition of his works. Prime mover behind this was Colin Hay of Ardbeg in Kildalton parish, Islay, who prevailed on Robert Blair to prepare the poems for the press. Blair thanks Nigel MacNeill for allowing him to consult several manuscripts of Livingston's. The notes to the volume suggest that these included an earlier and substantially different version of 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile', and a prose sketch for a longer version of 'Driod-Fhortain Imhir

a' Racain'. These manuscripts were back in MacNeill's hands when he wrote *The Literature of the Highlanders*. MacNeill (1853-1910) became a minister in the Congregational Church and had charges in London and at Westcliffe-on-Sea (MacNeill 1929: 13). His papers have not been traced.

Blair claimed to have included 'all that Livingston wrote or composed of Gaelic poetry', and his claim is substantially true. Such additional material as has come to light is included in an appendix to this thesis. Blair rather curiously omitted 'Gleann Da Ruadhail a' Bharraich', which appears as eight stanzas with a refrain in Archibald Sinclair's *An t-Oranaiche*, from his edition. A manuscript in the National Library of Scotland has two stanzas of 'Eirinn a' Gul' not given by Blair. The Museum of Islay Life in Port Charlotte has a manuscript of 'Soraigh Dhonnchaidh do Chòmhal', possibly in the poet's own hand, which lacks one stanza but adds a long note about the forester Iain Mac Ghille Bhàin. The title has 'Fàilte' in place of 'Soraigh'. Another manuscript in the same place has two stanzas for the Glendaruel song absent from the version in *An t-Oranaiche*.

So much for the poet's life. The remainder of this chapter looks briefly at Islay, his native island, at the time of his birth, and at the phenomenon of an 'Islay Renaissance' in the course of the nineteenth century, exemplified in the work of a clutch of notable Islaymen, active predominantly in exile, who were roughly contemporary with Livingston made, like him, a significant contribution to Gaelic culture.

James Macdonald, a North Uist man born in 1777 who abandoned his ambitions for the ministry and travelled widely as companion to the Clanranald heir, undertook a commission from Sir John Sinclair to complete a survey of agriculture in the Hebrides and spent the months from May to September 1808 in Islay to this end

(Storrie 1981: 96). His *General View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides* therefore offers an account of the state of the island by a reliable witness in the very year of Livingston's birth (Macdonald 1811: 612-638).

The population of Islay was close on 11,500 and had nearly doubled within the previous sixty years, while the value of stock had more than quadrupled in the same time. Macdonald calculated the rental of the whole estate as nearing £16,000 a year, and had the highest praise to offer for the improvements introduced by the Shawfield Campbells during the three decades preceding his visit. Ninety miles of carriageable roads had been built, green crops, sown grasses and wheat introduced and a flour mill and the only brewery in the Western Isles had been built. Exports from the island included potatoes, barley and linen yarn, some 250 to 300 horses and about 2,500 head of black cattle each year. While there were no sheep farms, hogs were reared in great numbers. One fifth of the ground under cultivation was devoted to potatoes. A quarter or more of the crop was given to young stock and milk cows, leaving a sizeable surplus for exportation. Macdonald comments that

in no part of Britain indeed, and no part of the Continent, Holland itself not excepted, have we met with such excellent management of potato ground as in Islay by the common tenantry.

Fairs were held at Port Askaig in May for the sale of bullocks and heifers, and at Bridgend in October for the sale of brood cows. There were horse fairs at Bowmore in August and November, the latter mainly attended by Irish dealers, and the Portnahaven fishermen regularly sold a portion of their catch in Ireland.

Macdonald speaks with considerable enthusiasm of the landowner, whom he describes as 'a father to his people', and 'an example and inducement to other great Hebridean proprietors'. His only lament is the lack of government support offered to improving landowners of Walter Frederick Campbell's calibre:

Mr Campbell is the Hebridian [sic] who has done the greatest good to this district in our times, or perhaps since they were first peopled; and it is singular that no co-operation has been extended by government, or any public body to his measures.

He singles out for particular praise the payment of 'melioration' to the outgoing tenant for improvements made to the property, and the practise of granting nineteen year leases to tenants. Campbell had founded the villages of Portnahaven and Bowmore, and in May 1808 the schoolmaster estimated the population of the latter at 670, of whom 124 were attending the school.

John Murdoch offers an equally glowing account of the island (Murdoch 1986: 45-57), though he speaks of the landowner with rather more detachment as 'a popular character', one 'in the prime of his early manhood... really a handsome man, possessing good features, great vigour and a love of what are called manly sports'. Murdoch lived at Claggan farm, just north-east of Gartmain beyond Gartloist and Gartachossan, so within easy distance of Livingston. He was ten years younger than the poet, who would have been nineteen when Murdoch's family made the move from Perthshire, so that there are grounds for considering the Islay described by Murdoch to be substantially that in which the poet grew up.

Murdoch divides 'the splendid population of the island' into three classes. First there was 'a stock of gentry of which any chief might have been proud', then a group of families 'a little above the common folk' and lastly, 'a stock of people which can hardly be equalled anywhere', who

were all on one social level and lived in a rough sort of way - many of them having the cattle going in the same door as themselves, the fire on the floor and the hens roosting overhead. But some of them had money in the banks before there was a branch in the island; and numbers were creditors of the laird when he came to grief.

This is how he describes the farms and hills that could be seen from Claggan:

All these places and objects possessed a beauty at that time which no longer exists. Hillside and hollow, and even hilltop, were alive with groups of people moving north or south. The ridges in the landscape were everywhere occupied with houses. Whichever way we looked from Claggan, we saw houses so situated - although, since then, numbers of them have fallen and the materials are in the stone fences of the larger farms.

Murdoch's view is elegiacally coloured by his awareness of what was to come. Campbell's innovations brought great benefits to the island, yet with the 1830s and 1840s the economy of the outside world began to affect Islay more and more. The potato blight arrived in the 1840s and rent arrears totalled more than the year's rental for the whole island. The estate was sequestrated, and administered by James Brown, an Edinburgh accountant, from January 1848 until August 1853, when a Mr Morrison of Basildon Park acquired it at public sale for £440,000. Islay had passed out of the hands of the Shawfield Campbells, whose purchase of it from the Cawdor Campbells in 1726 had marked a new phase in the history of the island (Storrie 1981: 55). The laird and his family went into exile in France, where he died at Avranches in Normandy in 1855.

If Storrie's assessment of the situation is accepted (1981: 107ff.), then it would appear that Livingston was born at a pivotal point in the economic history of the island. By the time Walter Frederick became laird in 1816, the improvement of the living standard of Islay's inhabitants, and of the owner's rentals, by introducing new and enlightened forms of cultivation, was more or less achieved. Macdonald's praise is an earnest of this. The new prosperity had, however, created a different situation with different problems. An increase in population meant that large numbers of families would have to be able to make a living from other than agricultural sources. It was essential that the island community as a whole should become less dependent on agriculture, and this meant that the role of the

laird in guiding and manipulating the island economy was correspondingly reduced. Walter Frederick Campbell was forced to sell Islay as a result of factors beyond his control, such as the potato blight of the 1830s and 1840s, in the context of the large scale dynamics of a national and international economy.

It is tempting to see what could almost be called the Islay Renaissance as one effect of the Shawfield Campbell's enlightened management of their estate. In his preface to the second edition of MacNeill's *Literature of the Highlanders*, John MacMaster Campbell remarks that

During the period of his [MacNeill's] early years the Island of Islay was, of all districts of the Highlands, the most distinguished in relation to the cultivation of Gaelic scholarship and the courtship of the Gaelic muse. (MacNeill 1929: 12)

MacNeill was born in 1853: this would locate an 'Islay Renaissance' in the fifth, sixth and seventh decades of the last century. Paradoxically, it took place when the prosperity and the social order which may have given rise to it had already become things of the past.

Livingston was one of a group of men who made a major contribution to Gaelic lexicography and poetry and to the collecting and publishing of the Gaelic oral heritage. Neil MacAlpine was born in Kilchoman parish in 1786. Unable to realise his ambition of becoming a minister, he accepted the post of schoolmaster at Kilmeny, also acting as registrar and administering the Poor Law for the district. In 1835 he both petitioned, unsuccessfully, for an increase in salary and was reprimanded for neglect of his duties. When the potato crop failed in 1846, he appealed to the authorities for help, and as a result a shipload of food arrived in Loch Indaal. Walter Frederick Campbell, however, was incensed when he heard of MacAlpine's initiative, which he saw as implying insufficient care on his own part for the welfare of his Islay tenants.

MacAlpine was dismissed from his post and lived on poor relief for the rest of his life. He died in December 1867, and is buried in Kilchoman churchyard. His 'humble abode' was in ruins in 1900 (MacNeill 1900: 71). His *Pronouncing English Dictionary* is a landmark of Gaelic lexicography as well as a storehouse of traditional Islay idioms and expressions .

Hector MacLean was apparently a poet first and foremost, although he is known today for his activities as translator and collector. He was a well known authority on Gaelic idiom, consulted among others by Professor Blackie of Edinburgh. Born in 1818, he was a pupil of MacAlpine's at Kilmeny, and attended the University of Edinburgh for several sessions as John Francis Campbell's tutor. On his father's death he became a schoolteacher. He worked at the Ballygrant school and lived with his mother and sister at a little roadside inn between Bridgend and Port Askaig. He was Campbell's chief assistant in the preparation of the *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, and completed his translation of the Dewar manuscripts for Lord Lorne in 1881. For John Murdoch, he was wasted as a schoolmaster, and should have been a university professor instead. A member of the Anthropological Institute, he contributed a paper on the ancient peoples of Scotland and Ireland to their journal in 1890. His *Ultonian Hero Ballads* appeared in 1892. He died in 1893 and is buried in the churchyard at Kilmeny. Local lore had it that he was schooled in the black arts. An anecdote I myself heard related in Islay in 1986 tells how, on returning to his class and finding that some boys had misbehaved, he made the room gradually fill with water, until the terrified culprits confessed their guilt (Booth 1979: Delargy 1960).

Though not born on the island, John Murdoch, land reformer and champion of the Gaelic and Irish speaking peasantry, prime mover in the formation of the Gaelic Society of Inverness and the launching of the newspaper *The Highlander* (which he left the excise service to found in 1873) may be considered an Islayman by

adoption. When he returned to the island in 1845, the old order which had formed the background of his boyhood was fast disintegrating. In his own words:

The late proprietor, during the existence of corn laws, kelp trade and consequent high prices, raised the rents as high as the people could well engage to pay. Pressed, in the course of time, by his own difficulties, he left the whole property to his creditors who, notwithstanding the repeal of the corn laws and the fall in the price of agricultural produce, continue to exact the same old and high rents - until, as you may naturally conclude, the whole of the people nearly have been thrown into arrears. (1986: 19)

In a pamphlet published in 1850, Murdoch put forward his own extremely interesting proposal as to how the crisis in the management of the island could be resolved (Murdoch 1850). 20,000 of the island's 140,000 acres were to be reserved for the bankrupt laird, while the remainder would be sold as 3,000 holdings, each consisting of some 12 acres of arable land along with 28 acres of rough pasture, at the price of £5.00 per acre. In this way the entire debt with which the Islay estate was burdened could be cleared.

Both Murdoch and Livingston straddle two phases in Islay history: the agricultural improvements of the eighteenth century which may be claimed to have given birth to the 'Islay Renaissance', and the breakdown of the old society, which the exponents of that renaissance witnessed with helpless dismay. Murdoch's response was practical, if inspired by an idealism for which the economics of Victorian Scotland found little place. Livingston's lies in the plangent harmonies of 'Fios thun a' Bhàird' and of the dialogue introduction to 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile', where a bitter attack on Ramsay of Kildalton follows a final appeal to the Campbells:

Càit' am bheil sibh, Fhine Mhic Caillein?
An do lagaich sibh gun teanga, gun làmh?
Nach tig sibh a sheasamh na làraich?
Nach tig sibh gu bunaiteach, cinnteach,
làidir, stòlda, soitheamh, glic (smior bhur dòigh)

a chòmhrag mì-rùn Mhic Reith [Ramsay]
a leag sibh 's a chas air ur sgòrnan?

Characteristically, Livingston uses the imagery of a defeated and humiliated warrior to present a conflict of interests of a very different nature. His archaic rhetoric carries with it a grim burden of self-invalidation.

Archibald Sinclair, son of that Neil Sinclair of Mulindry farm whose friendship was so precious to the young Livingston, has already been mentioned. Murdoch describes him as 'perhaps the most valued friend I had in the world'. Livingston may have been among those drawn to the 'attractive centre' of Sinclair's printing business in central Glasgow:

Archibald Sinclair was a man of the very finest qualities. He was possessed of the highest sense of right and of honour. He was not merely just, he was generous; devoid of every grain of selfishness. Then he was possessed of much vigour and was large of mind. And the gifts which he inherited from God he put to the best of all worship - the service of his fellows. While an ardent Highlander all his days, he entered zealously into questions of religious thought and life; of temperance; of the land; and of slavery. And such were the genial, social elements in his character that he was an attractive centre for many years at 62 Argyle Street, Glasgow, towards which many spirits gravitated. (Murdoch 1986: 43)

He left Islay and worked as a farm servant out of Glasgow in order to pay the debts incurred by his father on his brother John's behalf, then got a job working a hand-driven printing machine, in the meantime learning the rudiments of typesetting. As journeyman to William Gilchrist, a Kintyre man and Livingston's publisher, he brought out the *Sketches of Islay* containing Murdoch's scheme for the rejuvenation of the island economy. Eventually he set up his own shop in Glasgow with a Skye man, John Gillies, and became the principal Gaelic printer in that city (Murdoch 1986: 52-3). He died in 1870, and it was his son Archibald who brought out *An t-Oranaiche*, a major collection of songs and poems completed three years before the same publisher issued Livingston's 1882 *Duain agus Orain*.

Ardlarach farm, close to Rubha an t-Sàile at the south end of Loch Indaal, roughly the same distance south-west as Gartmain farm is north-east of Bowmore, was the birthplace of Peter Thomas Pattison, a minor poet and translator. Blair prints his English version of the savage lines of the Norse invaders from 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' in a footnote to the poem in his edition. In his *New Guide to Islay* J.G. MacNeill speaks of Ardlarach farm as 'a home of culture and refinement... the residence of Mrs Peter Pattison and her talented family' (1900: 58). Pattison's *Selections from the Gaelic Bards, metrically translated with biographical prefaces and explanatory notes. Also, original poems* was published at Glasgow in 1866.

That this notable flowering of talent was in some way a product of the policies of the Shawfield Campbells must remain a hypothesis, if an attractive one. There can be little doubt about Walter Frederick's responsibility for the most famous Islayman of his day, John Francis, Iain Og Ile. His father laid great importance on John's having access to the language and culture of those among whom he lived:

As soon as I was out of the hands of nursemaids I was handed over to the care of a piper. His name was the same as mine, John Campbell, and from him I learned a good many useful arts. I learned to be hardy and healthy and I learned Gaelic. I learned to swim and take care of myself, and to talk to everyone who chose to talk to me. My kilted nurse and I were always walking about in foul weather or fair, and every man, woman and child in the place had something to say to us... I worked with the carpenters; I played shinty with all the boys about the farm; and so I got to know a good deal about the ways of Highlanders by growing up a Highlander myself. (National Library of Scotland 1985: 10)

That this education made possible Campbell's work as collector of folk material (and as the man who did more than any of his contemporaries to clarify the issues in the Ossianic controversy) was clear to John Murdoch:

I found John Francis a young, soft, gentle, growing boy in the charge of *Am Piobair Mor*. This was John Campbell, a Lorne man of quiet, steady character, well informed and a good piper. He wore the Highland dress and spoke good Gaelic; and, from what we read in *The West Highland Tales*, he must have had some Highland lore in his head. Such was the early tutor which the then laird of Islay placed over his son. One result was that the son spoke the language of his country from his youth and took part in all of the hardy exercises of the people. And without making a long story of what followed, this part of John Francis Campbell's education formed his great inheritance when he came to man's estate. (Murdoch 1986: 46)

A letter from John Francis Campbell to William Livingston seeking the poet's help in his researches is extant, although there is no evidence that Livingston in fact offered any assistance (National Library of Scotland 1985: 26). But even if the two men did not collaborate in their respective enterprises, it seems appropriate to view their work as constituting twin peaks in the achievement of their generation. Campbell, by origin and by class an outsider, was drawn to the core elements of Gaelic culture, to what was most traditional and common to the people as a whole. Livingston, on the other hand, came from the lowest stratum of Gaelic society. If in one sense (according to MacNeill's view quoted above) this made him an outsider too, his deep allegiance to his language and culture allowed him to innovate, producing a verse with few precedents and of limited popular appeal. And thus the life and work of these two men can be seen as constituting a symmetry which has its own logic and beauty.

In terms of the Gaelic tradition, Livingston is an extremely innovative and even anomalous poet. He separated verse and song nearly one hundred years before such a division became normative in 'high' poetry in the language. He attempted, in his battle poems, a genre with few precedents and whose purpose and motivation have continued to puzzle scholars. His deployment of free verse, sometimes nervous, exciting and peculiarly modern, at other times flaccid, awkward and even careless, is the manifestation at a technical level of a more general innovative project for which the tradition (and perhaps he himself) was not sufficiently prepared.

This project can only be understood if the entire trajectory of Livingston's career is taken into consideration. The earliest pieces we have are light-hearted, topical verses in traditional metre. These are followed by a protracted period of silence, which we can view as occupied firstly by Livingston's trekking across Scotland in search of sites and remains of historical and patriotic interest, then by his acquisition of a bookish, scholarly culture, eventually bearing fruit in the historical and polemical writings of the early 1850s. He himself attributed to his historical and antiquarian studies the merit of awakening, or reawakening, his poetic genius. If his poetry is viewed as, at any rate initially, a development or an offshoot of his vocation for prose, much that had appeared quirky and inexplicable will fall into place.

Most important of all is the realisation that his poetry cannot be fully understood within a Gaelic language context. Livingston's intellectual culture was acquired overwhelmingly through the medium of English. He is in the profoundest sense a bicultural poet. Symptomatic of this position is the way, in his

work, a specifically Gaelic nationalism interpenetrates, and is gradually superseded by, a Scottish nationalism whose impulses are none the less profound for being rooted in a history we now view as legendary. The synthesis Livingston worked towards had to contend with many contradictory aspects, which might well have defeated someone with greater educational advantages, and a more fluent intellectual style, than the Islay poet ever possessed. One of these was a loyalty to the forms of Presbyterian church organisation, and a need to validate these by rediscovering them in the early centuries of Christianity in Scotland. Another was a loyalty to the royal family and specifically to Queen Victoria, perhaps inescapable at a time when Scotland came closest to eclipsing itself as North Britain, within an imperial enterprise which was powered by, and in turn powered, industrialisation on a massive scale.

This and the next chapter concentrate on Livingston's prose and on his work as historian and polemicist. But before examining the texts themselves it is necessary to create some kind of a context. Livingston's prose makes taxing reading today, not just because he never succeeded in smoothing out the awkwardnesses and prolixities of his English style. He refers throughout to authors and to a tradition with which the contemporary reader is unfamiliar. What one most regrets, in dealing with these writings, is the lack of a comprehensive treatment of Scottish historiography, of how and by whom and on what bases the history of this nation came to be written. This chapter cannot aspire to fill that gap. Its aims are rather more humble.

Livingston's prose writings make extensive use of quotation: his pages are crowded with references to other authorities, and often lengthy footnotes citing other texts. His writing is polemical in the real sense, the next stage in a dialogue or confrontation of different voices which reaches back at least as far as the sixteenth century. The bishops, antiquarians and

poverty stricken scholars who are his interlocutors are all but forgotten today. Livingston's work cannot be understood unless we succeed in some way in bringing them back to life. Indeed, one of the greatest benefits of the study of Livingston's prose is to put us back in touch with a tradition of national history and polemic which merits greater attention in a period of national revival like the present.

So this chapter is an attempt to reconstruct an intellectual library for Livingston. He cannot have possessed all, or even many of the books he quotes from. Nevertheless, their authors clearly thronged in his mind as he wrote, their interrelations forming a pattern, a fabric into which the thread of his own discourse was woven. The context explains why the idea of historical objectivity is so alien to Livingston, and justifies in part the asperities of his style. Many of his interlocutors had held office in church or state. Their work, when not commissioned by a political authority, was subject to that authority's peculiar mixture of benevolence and irritation, of patronage and surveillance. And the pattern of their dialogue formed a kind of commentary on the military and economic relationships between the national communities of the British Isles, a commentary whose importance will depend on the weight one chooses to give to ideology and belief systems in the development of human history as a whole.

Where possible, Livingston's attitude to the figure being discussed will be illustrated by quotation from his own works, and the specific edition he used, when this can be gathered by direct reference or by deduction, will be cited. The aim is, as it were, to see just which books Livingston had in his hands. The treatment that follows is selective. There are few of the old histories of either Scotland or England to which he does not refer at some point, and this chapter aims at an organic structure which will at least in part mirror the organic processes of Livingston's own investigative mind.

Two questions, which can be expressed in relatively simple terms, exercised Livingston throughout his historical investigations. What was the date of the founding of the Scottish monarchy? When was Christianity introduced into Scotland?

It is perhaps misleading to suggest he saw these as questions, for his convictions in both cases were very strong. The royal line of Scotland had begun with Fergus I 'who was crowned at Dunstaffnage in Argyleshire, in the year of the world 3674' (V 19), that is, 330 B.C. The conversion of Scotland to Christianity had taken place in A.D. 203, when King Donald I, his queen and his nobles received baptism (PC 6). Livingston reaffirms in the 1860 *Lecture* that

Christianity was nationally received here A.D. 203; and consequently spread its intrinsic blessings over the country sixty or seventy years before the time of Ossian... (L 15-6)

Livingston's two questions can in fact be reframed so that they focus, not on a fact which accurate research could in some way prove to be true or false, but on an attribution of power which in the last analysis was the result of bargaining between the different forces involved.

The antiquity of the Scottish royal line had profound implications when the rights of different claimants to the throne had to be assessed. At the time of the Wars of Independence, resistance to English aspirations took two forms: active resistance using arms, and diplomatic intervention with the Pope, who was supplied with considerable tracts of pseudo-history in support of the Scottish claim.

Competing narratives of the origins of the Scottish church underpinned the struggle for supremacy between English and Scottish sees before the Reformation, and continued to figure in polemics between supporters of the old and the reformed religions long after. To the modern reader the issue may seem to be merely a choice between equally fictitious accounts. To the champions of those accounts, the choice would be expressed in alternative

forms of political and ecclesiastical organisation which had considerable influence on their day to day lives (Donaldson 1988: 5-8, Mason 1987, Matthews 1970, Stones 1965: 96-117).

Livingston's responses to the two questions posed are based on what was effectively an origin myth for the Scottish nation. Its first appearance cannot be traced to a specific date. No doubt it was intended to counter the legend given by Geoffrey of Monmouth according to which the English kings were descended from a certain Brutus, a refugee from the siege of Troy. That it was a crucial element in how Scots conceived their national identity is evident from the pride of place given to it in the Declaration of Arbroath:

Most Holy Father and Lord, we know and from the chronicles and books of the ancients we find that among other famous nations our own, the Scots, has been graced with widespread renown. They journeyed from Greater Scythia by way of the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Pillars of Hercules, and dwelt for a long course of time in Spain among the most savage tribes, but nowhere could they be subdued by any race, however barbarous. Thence they came, twelve hundred years after the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea, to their home in the west where they still live today. The Britons they first drove out, the Picts they utterly destroyed, and, even though very often assailed by the Norwegians, the Danes and the English, they took possession of that home with many victories and untold efforts; and, as the historians of old time bear witness, they have held it free of all bondage ever since. In their kingdom there have reigned one hundred and thirteen kings of their own royal stock, the line unbroken by a single foreigner. (Fergusson ? 1970 : 7)

Livingston quotes the declaration in full (in a translation dating from 1727) early on in his *Vindication*. The quotation occurs in the course of his own rendering of the myth. The Scots had originally come from Spain. A king of theirs, Brechus, was crowned in Ireland in 734 B.C. and his descendant Rothsay landed in Bute 133 years later, giving his name to the first island he encountered (V 13-14). Hard pressed by the Picts and Britons, the

Scots appealed for help from Ireland. Ferquhard, king of the Scots there, sent his son to Scotland with a great army and the Stone of Destiny. Upon his arrival a parliament of the people agreed that he should be king (V16).

Hector Boece offers the fullest and most authoritative version of the myth (Bellenden 1821: I, 1ff.) The Scots were of mixed Greek and Egyptian descent. Gathelus, son of the king of Athens, having made 'mony herschippis in Macedone and Achaia', left for Egypt 'with ane cumpany of siclik young men, fugitivis, as he wes', and found there the very Pharaoh whose army was later drowned in the Red Sea while pursuing the people of Israel. Having helped the Pharaoh defeat his enemies the Moors, Gathelus, 'becaus he was ane lusty persone, strang of body, with greit spreit', obtained his daughter Scota in marriage. When the plagues struck the Egyptians, Gathelus 'took ferme purpose to leif Egypt', departing 3,643 years from the beginning of the world. He landed first in Portugal 'that is to say, the port of Gathele', and was eventually given Galicia as his own realm by the inhabitants of the peninsula. He built Compostella, named his people Scots 'for affectioun that he had to his wife callit Scota', and ruled in Brigantia on a 'chiar [sic] of marbill' which 'had sic weird, that it maid every land, quhair it wes found, native to Scottis', the future Stone of Destiny. His son Hiber was the first Scot to reign in Ireland, named Hibernia in his honour. An expedition sent from Spain to aid the colonists brought two sons of Metellius, Ptolomeus and Hibert, who quarrelled so violently that another king, Symon Brek, was chosen to rule in their place. He arrived 4,504 years after the creation, 2,208 after Noah's flood, sixty years after the foundation of Rome and 472 after the empire of Brutus in Albion. Rothesay was his great-great-great grandson, and landed in Scotland 4,917 years after the creation. This is how Boece describes the coronation of Fergus I:

thay chesit Fergus, baith for his nobill blude, and
othir his excellent virtuous, to be thair king; attour

he was sa provin in manheid and justice, that na capitane of the tribis micht be comparit to him. Fergus, chosin king in this manner, wes crownit in the fatale chier of merbil, quhilk he brocht with him, be respons of Goddis, to stabill his realme in Albion.

Boece is careful to interweave his story with that of the people of Israel, and to relate it to major events in other origin myths.

Material of this kind is not historical in the accepted sense of the word today. That this should be so in no way detracts from its importance. It owes its origin to political controversy, and was intended to provide ideological backing for diplomatic and military action. Therefore it is hardly surprising that Boece's account should have become the focus of Anglo-Scottish polemics at moments of major tension between the two nations, particularly in the reign of Mary Stuart and in the years leading to the Union of the Parliaments. Mason characterises it as

a historical mythology which for several centuries played a crucial role in the development of Scottish national consciousness... the long and illustrious line of kings was repeatedly invoked, not primarily to legitimise Stewart kingship, but to demonstrate the antiquity and autonomy of the Scottish kingdom... In particular, as the enduring symbol of the kingdom's original and continued independence, the ancient line of kings supplied a vital counterweight to an English historiographical tradition which insisted that Scotland was and always had been a dependency of the crown of England. (1987: 60)

Boece's opponents were unwilling to trace the Scottish monarchy further back than the coronation of Fergus son of Erc in 503 A.D.. Indeed, the weakest link in Boece's chain was the list of kings between the two Ferguses. The debate broadened to embrace ethnography and linguistic history as different writers tried to determine the origin of the different national groups involved in this period of Scottish history: Scots, Picts and Britons.

We have seen Margaret Livingston consulting 'Wyntoun fòghlaimt'' so that Dòmhnall MacDhiarmaid might get the genealogy

he so much desired. Andrew of Wyntoun (1350?-1420?) was a canon regular of St Andrews, and prior of St Serf's Inch in Loch Leven, where he probably wrote his chronicles, which were undertaken at the request of his patron, Sir John of Wemyss on the east coast of Fife. Beginning with the creation of the world and Adam, they reach as far as the accession of James I in 1406. The first book goes from Adam to Abraham, and includes a description of the different countries of the world. Indeed, many of the texts consulted by Livingston combined history and topography in this way.

Wyntoun's is the first vernacular history of Scotland, written in a language he himself denominated 'Ynglis Sawe'. But in it he made use of the earlier Latin history of John of Fordun. The preface to the *Book of Cupar* tells how, Edward I having burnt or carried off with him to England the national records of Scottish history, this venerable priest journeyed through Scotland, England and Ireland with his manuscript in his breast

per civitates et oppida, per universitates et collegia,
per ecclesias et coenobia, inter historicos conversans
et inter chronographos perendinans... (Skene 1871-2:
49-50)

The *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* as left by Fordun breaks off at Book VI Chapter 23 with the death in 1153 of David I. His notes for the period to 1385 passed to Walter Bower, abbot of the monastery of Inchcolm, who provided a continuation up to the death of James I in 1436 bringing the total number of books to sixteen. The work as a whole received the title of *Scotochronicon*. The text as far as Book V Chapter XI was published by Thomas Gale in 1691 in his *Historiae Britannicae Saxonicae Anglo-Danicae Scriptores*.

Neither Fordun nor Wyntoun gives a coherent account of the earliest period of the Scottish monarchy. This was left to Hector Boece (1465?-1536), frequently known by his Latin name of Boethius. His family originated in Panbride in Angus, and he studied at the university of Paris, where he was rector of the

college of Montaigu from 1492 to 1498, His colleagues in Paris included Erasmus of Rotterdam, who thirty-two years later would compliment him in a letter on the progress of the liberal arts in Scotland, and the theologian and logician John Major, who, like Boece, brought the new learning back to Scotland, and had John Knox and George Buchanan as his pupils. William Elphinstone, bishop of Aberdeen since 1483-4, involved Boece in his project of founding a university in that city, eventually brought to fruition in 1495. Boece was first principal of the university, and at the same time engaged in assiduous research for the history which was published in Latin at Paris in 1527, covering the period from the earliest times to the accession of James III.

His admirers compared Boece's flowing narrative style to that of Livy, and his work, which proved immensely popular, was translated into Scots at the request of James V. The translator, John Bellenden (floruit 1533-1587 - the name also appears as Ballenden and Ballentyne, and Livingston even has Ballindene), archdeacon of Moray, was also commissioned by the king to produce a version of Livy at the same time as, or not long after his work on Boece. Supposedly a native of Haddington or Berwick, he matriculated at St Andrews in 1508, and graduated D.D. from the Sorbonne, returning from Paris with Boece's book. His subsequent fate is uncertain. Loyalty to the Catholic faith prompted him to abandon Scotland after the Reformation, and he may have died in Rome as early as 1550.

When Raphael Holinshed arrived in London early in the reign of Elizabeth I, he found work as a translator in the printing office of Reginald Wolfe, who spent twenty-five years collecting materials for a universal history and cosmography. Upon his death in 1573 his successors decided to limit the scope of the project to England, Scotland and Ireland. The chronicle appeared in 1577 in two folio volumes under Holinshed's name. He had in fact received considerable assistance in their preparation. Richard Stanyhurst (1547-1618), perpetrator of a hexameter translation of

Virgil widely regarded as a literary monstrosity, contributed a 'Description of Ireland' as well as part of the 'History of Ireland' dealing with Henry VIII's reign. William Harrison (1534-1593) provided a 'Description of England' and an English translation of Bellenden's Boece. Francis Thynne (1545?-1608), son of William, the editor of Chaucer, was employed by John Hooker together with Abraham Fleming and John Stow on a new edition of Holinshed's work which appeared in 1586-7. Thynne supplied a continuation of the Scottish section covering the years from 1571 to 1586.

And so Boece's version of the origin of the Scots and of their monarchy entered the mainstream of English historiography. Within Scotland, its central role was confirmed when George Buchanan adopted it in what was for some two centuries the authoritative history of Scotland. His *Historia Rerum Scotarum* first saw the light in 1582 and went through nineteen editions, the last dated 1762. Like those of Wyntoun and Fordun, Buchanan's history gives a largely legendary account of the early period, then comes closer and closer to our contemporary concept of history writing as it approaches the author's own time. It improves from Malcolm Canmore on, and his treatment of the period from James V to the death of Lennox, while violently partisan, is still valuable. His adoption of Boece is neither wholesale nor indiscriminate:

The writers of Scottish history have given to their countrymen, what appeared to them a more creditable origin, but not less fabulous than the nobility of the Britons, for they have adopted ancestors, not indeed from Trojan refugees, but from the Grecian heroes who overturned Troy. (Buchanan 1827-9: I, 76)

He dismisses these 'fabulous accounts' as no better founded than the English Brutus legends he has just finished demolishing. Where he remains faithful to Boece is in the line of kings following on from the accession of Fergus I in 330 B.C.

Livingston mentions Wyntoun in the 'Oran do Dhomhnall Mac Dhiarmaid'. If he possessed a copy of the chronicle, he was very lucky. It was not published until 1795, in an edition of 275 copies by David Macpherson in London. This edition omits the legendary matter of Books I to V and begins with Book VI and the reign of Kenneth MacAlpine. Only in 1872 was the earlier portion printed, as part of a three volume edition by David Laing completed in 1879 which Livingston could not, of course, have consulted. He knew the edition of the *Scotochronicon* (Fordun's work with Bower's continuation) published by Thomas Hearne in 1722 from a manuscript by then in the possession of Trinity College, Cambridge (H 271).

Bellenden's translation of Boece was published at Edinburgh in 1821 from the manuscript in the Advocates' Library. For Holinshed, Livingston knew the single-volume edition of the sections regarding Scotland published at Arbroath in 1805. For Buchanan, it is probable that he used the edition in six volumes published in Glasgow and Edinburgh in 1827-9. James Aikman had translated the Latin and provided notes and a continuation as far as the 1707 Union of Parliaments.

Livingston's prejudices strongly conditioned his approach to the materials he found before him. In particular, he responded with deep mistrust to printed texts where these failed to bear out his own patriotic convictions. Fordun's history is 'a work so much dreaded that there was not hitherto a translation of it' and an edition of 1747 had 'two whole chapters of the original omitted, and various interpolations added to tarnish the veracity of the author and the Scottish nation' (H 270). The edition referred to, by Walter Goodall, includes the entire *Scotichronicon*. Both volumes have 1759 on their title page, but it is known that subscribers received the first in 1747. Livingston's date is therefore the more accurate.

He claims it to be common knowledge that Hearne's edition of the *Scotochronicon* is corrupt. The inconsistencies in Fordun's account of the early kings (one of whom would appear to have reigned for two hundred years) are the result of a deliberate plant:

His transcribers, or, rather, designed enemies admitted that unseemly blunder into the printed copies of his chronicle, in order to start a plea against the reputation of one of the best of men. (H 42)

Macpherson's London version of Andrew of Wyntoun is 'strangled' (H 274). Livingston insists that a genuine copy is to be found in the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, 'but what is the public the better of that?' At times he detects signs of a concerted attempt to undermine the work of the pre-Union historians and replace it with a version of Scotland's history concocted by the country's enemies, a scheme

to obliterate the works of such good men as Fordun, Boethius, Buchanan, and many more to be here enumerated, who left their monuments to commemorate the free institutions and martial feats of our ancestors in the kingdom of Scotland. (H 245)

The perpetrators of this scheme are

masters of endless resources to publish and republish their past and present inventions, having millions of your money annually at their disposal to pay dominies and priests to teach your children your disgrace... (H 245)

Behind the excessive language lies Livingston's clear intuition that agreed versions of history, especially those enshrined in educational institutions, are a crucial area of struggle between national communities. Those who control publishing resources and decide upon the ethics of scholarship can be said to control history itself.

His distrust of editorial practices is matched by a willingness to uphold such hypotheses as may reflect glory on Scotland and its history. Boece was to incur the enmity of English, Welsh and Irish historians because he accepted the Scots

myth as historic, and therefore attributed an antiquity to the Scottish royal line which could only incense competitors. Grave doubts would furthermore be cast on the sources he quoted, and which he was accused of having invented: a Spanish monk named Veremundus, archdeacon of St Andrews; a certain John Campbell, whose manuscript had been preserved in Iona; and bishop Turgot of St Andrews, who is known to have written a life of St Margaret, but not the materials ascribed to him by Boece. Livingston's defence is spirited:

Never was man better supplied than Boethius with authentic records before he engaged in his praiseworthy undertaking; and, indeed, duly estimating the material to which he had access, he had done less than might be expected, although he said enough to commemorate till the end of time the institutions and martial achievements of the vigorous and free nation of whom he was one. (H 275)

Livingston is ready to accept that Fergus I wrote a history of the Picts and Scots (H 65), or that Fordun was able to consult a lost chronicle by John Barbour (H 270), and at times his hypotheses seem unnecessary or inaccurate, as when Andrew of Wyntoun merely transcribes an existing chronicle at Loch Leven Priory (H 261, 275).

Boece and Holinshed are crucial sources for him. Much of the latter part of his *History of Scotland* consists of paraphrase or quotation from these texts, the former 'in the graphic language of his translator, the learned John Ballenden' (H 157). Although he gives page references, Livingston's quotations are often inaccurate. Some idea of his difficulties in dealing with textual variants in this historical tradition can be gleaned from a footnote in the *Vindication*:

The Rev. Raphael Hollinshead, an English minister of the Sixteenth Century, from some humour transcribed John Ballendean's Translation of the History of Scotland, originally written in Latin by Hector Boethius. Ballendean was Arch-Deacon of Murray, and a man of no ordinary endowments. Hollinshead took the humour of rendering the work according to the dialect spoken in his time; but his attempt has little

connexion with the genuine History of Scotland, written by Boethius, nor yet with Ballendean's Translation. The rotten edition of Hollinshead's performance, printed at Arbroath in 1805 is, I believe, the last of that English Miscellany now extant. (V 347)

'Rotten' though he thought it, Livingston was prepared to rely heavily on this text in his own historical endeavours. It is just possible that the variants in his transcription of Bellenden are the result of collation with Fordun's Latin. But it seems unlikely that Livingston would deliberately intervene in a text using Scots vernacular of the sixteenth century. His account of Scottish history writers at the end of the *History* is explicitly based on Thynne's continuation of Holinshed (H 262 ff.), referred to again in *Primitive Christianity* (11).

There is no mistaking Livingston's enthusiasm for the work of Buchanan,

the celebrated George, of European notoriety. In his history of Scotland, he truthfully lashed the English, the guilty of the house of *Stuart*, and the factious Scottish nobles, some of which, from age to age, were gallows deserving vagabonds. The English hated him while living, and would now blot his memory from the earth... There was not one in Scotland, Knox excepted, equal to Buchanan at the time or since. (V 432, 435)

It was Buchanan who had taken up Boece's defence against the first of a series of attacks, which came from a Welshman rather than an Englishman, Humphrey Llwyd of Denbigh (1527-1568). His *Commentarioli Descriptionis Britannicae Fragmentum* was published at Cologne in 1572, and appeared the following year in London as *The Breviary of Britain* in an English translation by Thomas Twyne. Buchanan devotes the last nine chapters of his second book to a polemic with Llwyd, since

he most scurrilously attacks Hector Boethius, a man distinguished, not only by a knowledge of the liberal arts, beyond the age in which he lived, but endowed with uncommon liberality and courtesy; yet he attacks

him for no fault, of which he himself is not far more guilty. (1827-29: I, 129)

Lhuyd had accused Boece of being 'a malicious falsifier without al shame or honestie' (Mason 1987: 73) and had cast doubts on the presence of Picts and Scots in Scotland at the time of Caesar, Tacitus and Suetonius, on the grounds that not one of these authors mentions them by name. He would not accept the existence of a Scottish kingdom or of a line of some forty kings before 503 A.D.. Lhuyd had, however, laid himself open to attack by identifying the Cimbri with the Cumri or Welsh, thereby attributing to his own ancestors a range of heroic actions such as the capturing of Rome and the laying waste of Macedonia.

Next to enter the dispute was William Camden (1551-1623), whose *Britannia, sive Florentissimorum Regnorum Angliae, Scotiae, Hiberniae, et Insularum adjacentium ex intima antiquitate Chorographica Descriptio* appeared in 1586. Richard Gough published an English translation (the second of this work) in four volumes at London in 1806. The *Britannia* was the fruit of some ten years' preparation, which included study of Welsh and Anglo-Saxon and journeys devoted to the examination and annotation of material remains. The second and third volumes give an account of England, the fourth of Scotland and Ireland, district by district, while the first has an account of the first inhabitants of Britain, of their manners, of the Romans in Britain, of the Armorican, Welsh and Cornish Britons, and of the Picts, Scots, Anglo-Saxons, Danes and Normans. Camden's chapter on the Scots (1806: I, cxliii-cxlix) distinguishes the Highlanders, true descendants of the Scots of earlier times, from the 'more civilised' inhabitants of the eastern parts, who 'are of the same German origin with us English'. He disagrees with Buchanan:

The origin and extraction of the Scottish nation is so enveloped in the same obscurity with that of other nations, that the clear-sighted Buchanan either did not see it, or affected to conceal it, having in this instance disappointed the general expectation.

Camden is certain that the Scots came from Ireland, and derives Scotici from Scitici. The Scots were therefore originally Scythians, and both Irish and Scots originally inhabited Germany. They could have migrated from there to Gallaecia in Spain, from which they were in turn driven by Constantine the Great. The range of authorities cited even in this brief passage is impressive. Many of them will recur in Livingston's writings. They include Isidore of Seville, Claudian and Gildas; Silius Italicus, Bede and Giraldus Cambrensis; Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Ammianus Marcellinus, Orosius and O'Flaherty. The mixture of history, ethnography and linguistics, in which a putative etymology may justify crucial deductions as to the migrations and racial origins of peoples, is also characteristic of Livingston's approach to this controversy.

Camden corresponded with James Ussher (1581-1656), nephew to the Richard Stanyhurst who had assisted Holinshed, and archbishop of Armagh. Ussher was educated at the free Latin school in Schoolhouse Lane, Dublin conducted by two Scottish Presbyterians, and entered Trinity College as one of its earliest students at the age of thirteen. Trinity was to become almost at once a Protestant stronghold and a refuge for English Puritan scholars unable to find preferment at home. Ussher's first work, published in 1613, was the continuation of a previous attempt to show that Anglican doctrine was the doctrine of the first six centuries of the Christian church. In other words, Ussher's historical researches had a powerful ideological basis, and were undertaken with vindication of the present as a crucial objective. Livingston's approach to the past is similarly coloured by a strong ideological commitment in the present to both Scotland and its national religion. Ussher's *The Religion of the Ancient Irish and Britons*, of which a second, enlarged edition appeared in 1631, was intended to show 'Irish Romanists' that the papal religion was not the old religion, but that the ancient Irish held and taught doctrines of 'Predestination,

Grace, Free Will, Faith, Works, Justification, and Sanctification'. Opposing doctrines had been introduced into the church by heretics such as Pelagius and Celestius (Cam 1895: 248). In 1623 James I granted Ussher indefinite leave of absence in England so that he might finish a planned book on the origins of the British church. The *Britannicarum Ecclesiarum Antiquitates*, his major work, was published in Dublin in 1639 with a dedication to Charles I, and has a final chapter 'full of authorities on the early history of Christianity in Ireland' (Cam 1895: 311-12).

Religious partisanship and national polemics overlap clearly in the work of William Lloyd (1627-1717), bishop of St Asaph from 1680, who eventually succeeded Stillingfleet at the Worcester see in 1700. His quarrel with the traditional version of ancient Scottish history was motivated by a loyalty to episcopacy. An early dating of the arrival of Christianity in Scotland seemed to play into the hands of the advocates of Presbyterianism, as it implied the existence for some two centuries of a church organisation in which bishops had no part. His *Historical Account of Church Government, as it was in Great Britain and Ireland, when they first received the Christian Religion* (London 1684) begins as follows:

Among all the arguments that have been used of late times against episcopal government, there is none that hath made more noise in the world, or that hath given more colour to the cause of our adversaries, than that which they have drawn from the example of the ancient Scottish Church. And indeed it would be of very great force, if they could prove what they say, that in the second century, or beginning of the third, there was a church formed without bishops, and that it continued so for some hundreds of years. (Stillingfleet 1842: II, vi)

He maintains that no Scots settled in Britain before A.D. 300. Their home was in Ireland, then known as Scotland for this reason. When Scots and Scotland were mentioned by classical

writers, this could not be taken as evidence of the existence of a Scottish monarchy outside Ireland at that time.

Scottish writers had not been silent in the face of these attacks. Sir Thomas Craig of Riccartoun's *Scotland's Sovereignty Asserted*, dating from 1602 is a lengthy championing of Scottish independence against the claims of Holinshed and his collaborators. An English translation of the Latin manuscript was published in London in 1695, and is referred to by Livingston in his *History* (H 31). It was the bishop of St Asaph, however, who prompted the most influential Scottish response, from the King's Advocate in Scotland, Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh (1636-1691). Mackenzie has many claims to be remembered; as author of *Aretina*, one of the earliest works of prose fiction in Scotland; as the 'bloody Mackenzie' who pursued the covenanters with particular severity after their defeat at Bothwell Bridge; and as the founder of the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, predecessor of the National Library of Scotland. Before leaving the city definitively (he died in Westminster), one of his last acts was to deliver a Latin oration at the opening of the library.

The Earl of Perth had sent him a copy of William Lloyd's book, and his reply appeared the following year as *A Defence of the Antiquity of the Royal Line of Scotland, with a true Account, when the Scots were Govern'd by Kings in the Isle of Britain* (London 1685). Lloyd had 'cut off forty-four kings (all preceding Coranus, who began his reign anno 501)' and had accused 'our many and grave historians' of being forgers. Mackenzie concedes that Presbyterians, Blondel especially, had claimed that there were originally no bishops in the Scottish church, but argues that 'there is no necessity lying upon such as own Episcopacy, to wrong the antiquity of our kings, and nation' (1685: iv, v). His scorn for his opponents and for their methods is evident:

all that is objected against our positive and applauded histories, being the vain and silly scruples of an obscure authour Luddus, who being confuted by Buchanan,

made no more noise in the world, till Cambden rais'd some conjectures, with submission to us, after which Bishop Usher, picqu'd by Dempster's severity to his uncle Stanihurst, gathered together an undigested, and formless lump of all writers, good and bad, from which he says, that discretion being us'd, a history might be formed. And from these the Bishop of St Asaph, impatient of Buchanan's severity to Luddus, under the pretext of respect to Episcopacy, has drawn a new model, without bringing new materials, and has translated even the fabulous non sense of these ignorant authours, into polite English... (1685: 10-11)

Mackenzie's positions are familiar. The Scots were indeed Christians before 503. If Christianity got from Jerusalem to Britain in less than one hundred years, how could it have taken three hundred more to reach Scotland? Donald in A.D. 203 was our first Christian king, and Palladius in A.D. 431 our first bishop.

At the close of the *Defence*, Mackenzie accounts for the emergence of the Scottish kingdom under five points (1685: 189ff.), creating a matrix for patriotism which is very much that to be found in Livingston's writings, more than a century and a half later. The necessity of constantly struggling with the Romans, Britons, Picts and English 'rais'd our wit and courage above the pitch of a northern and confin'd nation'; once Scots had succeeded in repelling the Roman invasion, any 'gallant Britons' who 'scorn'd to submit to the slavery and drudgery of a conquest', being 'passionate lovers of liberty', naturally 'fled unto us from the Romans, Saxons, Danes and Normans'; The Scots are fortunate in possessing 'a heroick and wise... race of kings, whose blood being refin'd by a long royal descent, hath been thereby purify'd from all meanness'; the alliance with France at the time of Charlemagne (referred to by Livingston on more than one occasion) means that the Scots 'got excellent breeding' and gained valuable experience in the French wars; and lastly, Scotland 'having neither bogs nor fogs, our ground being rocky and gravelly, and our air fann'd by winds', its people are spared 'the dulness and phlegm of the northern climates', and

uncontaminated by 'that superfluous plenty, and bewitching pleasure... the delicacy and effeminateness of southern nations'.

Edward Stillingfleet, bishop of Worcester (1635-1699) came to his colleague's defence with a show of reluctance:

But is it not possible for learned and ingenuous men to enquire into and debate the several antiquities of their nations, without making a national quarrel about them? (Stillingfleet 1710: III, ii)

The aim of Stillingfleet's *Origines Britannicae* (first published at London in 1685) was

to attempt something towards the rescuing this part of Church history, wherein we are so much concerned, from those fabulous antiquities which had so much debased the value and eclipsed the glory of it. (1710: III, i)

He not only questions Boece's credibility: the Scottish historian is politically unsound.

Hector makes the supreme accountable power in all cases of male-administration to be lodged in the heads of the people, and the ministerial in the monarch (1710: III, v)

and Stillingfleet is surprised that Mackenzie has not 'overthrown such pernicious principles to monarchy'. Does sovereignty reside in the people, or in the monarch? Questions of this nature are still important today in comparing Scottish and English traditions and concepts of government. Once more, speculation about the past is motivated by the need to resolve the distribution of political power in the present. Indeed, one could argue that the past is reinvented so as to offer a basis and justification for present structures. This is the rationale for much of Livingston's speculations about the early history of Scotland, although he often finds himself justifying the structures of a clan society whose demise he is witnessing in person.

Stillingfleet dismisses the theory of conversion under Donald I, and uses the ambivalence of the term 'Scotia' to argue that

Palladius was sent, not to Scotland, but to the Scots in Ireland. Fordun gives neither dates nor details for the monarchs before Fergus II, and Boece

finding the succession of their kings very short and meagre, having no flesh to fill it... sets himself to make up what he found defective, and to put it together under the names of Veremundus and Cornelius Hibernicus, or others (1710: III, xl)

Mackenzie lost no time in replying. His *The Antiquity of the Royal line of Scotland, further cleared and defended, against the exceptions lately offered by Dr Stillingfleet* was published in 1686.

Livingston described Mackenzie's *Defence* as 'that brilliant monument of Celtic literature' (V 25), and quotes Mackenzie on Veremundus for more than a page just before his *History* breaks off. The *Defence* would in itself have sufficed to fill him in on the nature of the controversy and its participants. There was also an account in Pantin's 1842 Oxford edition of Stillingfleet's *Works*, the second volume of which reprints Bishop Lloyd's *Historical Account*.

Much of Livingston's prose is clearly directed against the cohort of English and Welsh scholars running from the earlier Lhuyd to Stillingfleet:

But though you would read the works of these men in succession, they will end with you just where they began. Their whole design was and is to deceive. You will find them setting out at a brave rate, but when the magnificence of the Celtic character begins to dazzle around them, they are not able to conceal the grovelling propensities of the inner man. Utterly confounded, their next shift is confusion; then follows a scene of falsehoods; next you have a world of "probabilities" "perhapses," "it would appear," "it would seem," &c.; they will then quote one another, merely trusting not to what they state, but to their *status* in society, for the credit of what they write. (V 11)

Usher is 'the Englishman born in Dublin, and all his fathers before him Irishmen' (V 11). In the *Brief Sketch* Livingston

regrets that the Irish are backing the lies of 'Lhudd', first propagated in 1572, according to whom the kingdom of the Scots in Albin owed its origins to an Irish colony in A.D. 503. He accuses his opponents of 'malicious sophistry', since

no European writer before Usher and Cambden doubted what our annalists recorded, and handed down, as already partly noticed. Those venerable pillars of honour and integrity were none of the pensioned hirelings of England before the Union. (V 49)

Ussher in particular

must be marked down as nothing else but a deliberate villain, and, like the rest of the Normans, false, malicious, and envious... a limb of Antichrist as Archbishop of Armagh (H 243)

Such words show little respect for the cloth. It is perhaps unsurprising that Livingston should have had few qualms about defying Candlish in a Greenock pulpit! He dismisses the 'notion of the fabulous kingdom of Strath-Clyde' as 'a fable invented by Usher, Cambden, Pinkerton and others' (V 12), no more worthy of consideration than their contention 'that the Dalriads from Ireland founded the Scottish monarchy about the close of the fourth century' (V 49).

The polemic between the patriotic historians of England and Scotland became especially heated in the years preceding the Union of the Parliaments, as one would expect. Livingston is dissenting in the above passage from the respect for Ussher evinced by Patrick Abercromby (1656-1716?), a Roman Catholic from an Aberdeenshire family who graduated from St Andrew's University in 1685 and served briefly as the king's physician before the dynastic upheavals of 1689. His *Martial Atchievements of the Scots Nation, being an account of the lives, characters, and memorable actions of such Scotsmen as have signaliz'd themselves by the sword at home and abroad* appeared in Edinburgh in two splendid folios in 1711 and 1717, the first from the presses of Robert Fairbairn, soon to be printer to the Old Pretender.

Abercromby's book combines myth and padding with a considerable amount of historical and biographical research. His position on the Dalriada controversy is familiar:

Scotland boasts of an uninterrupted series of 112 sovereigns, that, till this time, have sway'd its scepter, since Fergus I. who began to reign 330 years before the Christian aera commenc'd: Than which, there's nothing so glorious, nothing equal or secondary in its kind. By this account, Scotland has remain'd a monarchy, and monarchs of the same unspotted blood and royal line have govern'd it, upwards of 2000 years: whereas, according to their own historians France has lasted hitherto but 1309; Spain 1306; England 918; Poland 719; Denmark 920; Swedland 900; the empire of the Romans in Germany 831; and that of the Turks but 420. (1711: 2-3)

Livingston quotes the passage inaccurately in his *History* (H 243), and it is possible that he gleaned from Abercromby the idea that the battlefield was the testing place for national valour, which can be seen as the inspiration of all the battle poems from 'Cath Monadh Bhraca' to 'Blàr Shunadail'. He speaks of Abercromby as a 'true-blue Scot'. His book is an 'imperishable monument' (V 83).

An English lawyer named William Atwood, at one time chief justice of New York, published in 1704 a pamphlet upholding *The Superiority and direct Dominion of the Imperial Crown and Kingdom of England over the Crown and Kingdom of Scotland* which revives Edward I's claims to the crown of Scotland. The reply by James Anderson (1662-1728), *An Historical Essay, shewing that the Crown and Kingdom of Scotland, is imperial and independent* (Edinburgh 1705) is mentioned by Livingston along with Craig's *Scotland's Sovereignty Asserted* as being in the Stirling Library in Glasgow, where he presumably consulted them (H 31). It contains an appendix offering the definitive criticism of the forged charters on which English claims were based. The Scottish parliament granted Anderson a reward, and ordered that Atwood's book be burnt by Edinburgh's public hangman.

Anderson subsequently embarked on a major collection of facsimiles of Scottish charters and muniments, a project in which he persisted, amidst considerable material difficulties and principally in London, until his death. It appeared in 1739 as *Selectus Diplomatum & Numismatum Scotiae Thesaurus* from the presses of Thomas Ruddiman in Edinburgh. Livingston has the highest praise for Anderson's work:

When this kingdom was under the chastising hand of the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, in the Thirteenth Century, the Southron monks prowled about, like devils, forging Charters and other numberless false documents in favour of Edward. Such as may entertain any doubts on this head can consult *Anderson's Collection of Ancient Charters*, where you may see likewise a collection of English villany and savage credulity on the part of that people of which the men of 1850 have little conception. That able author stript the Southrons in a manner hitherto unmatched; he ferreted them out of their holes, laid open their falsehoods, their forged charters, perfidious claims, breaches of treaties; and lastly, turned their inventions on their own heads by the most withering ridicule - all quoted from their own fabulists. (V 527)

Both of George Mackenzie's books were translated into Latin and published at Amsterdam in 1687 as *Defensio antiquae Regum Scotorum Prosapiae*. They were the fruit, according to Pantin (Stillingfleet 1842: II, vi), of a threefold collaboration between Mackenzie, Sir James Dalrymple, and Sir Robert Sibbald (1641-1722).

Sibbald was born in Edinburgh but came of Fife stock. He was physician and geographer of Scotland to Charles II, and was instrumental in founding Edinburgh's botanical garden, and the Royal College of Physicians in that city. He wrote a reply to Lloyd some thirty four chapters long, of which Mackenzie's work is substantially a summary (Stillingfleet 1842: II, xii). The manuscript was deposited in the Advocates' Library. Sibbald's *Scotia Illustrata* (Edinburgh 1684) deals with the natural history of Scotland, and suffers from the unreliability of many of his

correspondents. He is better known today for his *History, Ancient and Modern, of the Sheriffdoms of Fife and Kinross... and of the Firths of Forth and Tay* (Edinburgh 1710). The first part deals precisely with that part of Scottish history which most concerned Livingston, up to the invasions of the Danes. Chapter III gives a 'Description of the Country, as it was in the time of the Romans'; Chapter VII concerns the Roman invaders; Chapter V is on the language of the Picts, and Chapter VI deals with their manners, policy and religious rites. Sibbald uses broad Scots words and placenames to show

that the old language of this shire was the Gothic, used by the Picts, the ancient possessors of it... the Picts were a Gothic nation, and their language was a dialect of the Gothic, distinct from the Saxon (Sibbald 1803: 36)

He held that the 'Scythian tongue was the mother of the Gothick, Saxon and Danish', and spoke of the language of Orkney and Shetland as 'a dialect of the Gothick, which they call Norse' (1803: 31).

Livingston, not entirely without justification, saw Sibbald's book as 'one of the worst connected specimens of romance extant' (H 261). That he did not lavish praise on the work of Thomas Innes (1662-1744), who was perhaps the first to examine this whole area with detached, impartial scholarship, may be due to Innes' scepticism about Boece's list of kings. Livingston merely speaks of Innes as a source for his own account of the Islay MacDonalds (V 54). Born in Aboyne parish, Aberdeenshire, Innes went to Paris in 1677, was ordained a priest in 1691 and graduated M.A. in 1694. From 1698 to 1701 he served with the Scottish mission at Inveravon in Banffshire before returning to Paris, where he became prefect of studies at the Scots college. In the winter of 1724 he was in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, pursuing the researches which led to his *Essay and History*. He was appointed vice-principal of the Scots College in Paris in 1727.

The Critical Essay on the Ancient Inhabitants of the Northern Parts of Britain and Scotland (London 1729) deals with the Pictish language in Book I, Chapter III, Article 4. According to Innes, both the Caledonians and the southern Britons

had in common their origin from the nearest coasts of the Gauls... the language of the Caledonians must have been originally the same as that of the Britains of the south. (1729: I, 73)

British was therefore a dialect of the Celtic language. Innes' positions are extremely close to those of modern scholarship, and this is also the case as regards Boece who, writes Innes, forged the names of the first forty kings upon names of the old genealogy in order to come up with a new list. His history, according to Innes, is stuffed with fables, and he used Fordun's work without naming him (1729: I, 219), while his sources Veremundus and John Campbell were 'but late inventions about Boece's own time' (1729: I, 225).

Innes accuses George Buchanan of having used Boece's genealogy while knowing it to be false, his purpose being 'to impose on posterity Boece's history reformed' in order to 'support the principle of government of his dialogue, *De Jure Regni*, or the subjects power to depose and punish their kings.' (1729: I, 382, 386). In Book II Chapter III Innes traces the development of the series of legendary kings, showing how

the high antiquities of the Scots grew up by length of time, in the several hands through which they passed, into the plan of history, in which they were afterwards delivered by modern writers of both nations. (1729: II, 695)

Innes' critical scepticism would have held little appeal for Livingston.

Sibbald's attribution of the Picts to Germanic stock had introduced a new note into the polemic. It was taken up by John Pinkerton (1758-1826). Born in Edinburgh, he studied at the grammar school in Lanark and was apprenticed to a writer to the signet for five years. In 1781 he left for London, where in 1783

he published *Select Scottish Ballads* many of which he confessed, in the preface to his 1786 *Ancient Scottish Poems*, to be forgeries of his own. The 1786 volume, which draws on the Maitland Ms. now in Cambridge, was in its turn accused by Nichols and Chambers of being a forgery. These incidents are characteristic of the confusion surrounding the whole issue of 'remains' at the time.

Throughout his *Enquiry into the History of Scotland, preceding the reign of Malcolm III of the year 1056* (London 1789), Pinkerton contrasts the Celtic character unfavourably with the Germanic, offering of the former a portrayal that in some interesting respects anticipates Matthew Arnold's later and more celebrated treatment. It marks an important stage in the representation of the Celts to (and often by) those who had no direct access to their language or culture:

The Celtic poetry, as that of a weak and despirited people might be expected to be, is almost wholly melancholic in a supreme degree. All the mock Ossian is full of deaths, misery, and madness. The Gothic poetry is the exact reverse of this, being replete with that warm alacrity of mind, chearful courage, and quick wisdom which attend superior talents. (1789: I, 389)

The Celts, from all ancient accounts, and from present knowledge, were, and are, a savage race, incapable of labour, or even rude arts. They were indigenes of Europe, as are the Finns. (1789: I, 407)

His attack extended to the Gaelic language and its written remains:

Not a fragment of the Gaelic has been found in Scotland older than the fourteenth age; and it is perfectly known that the present Gaelic of the highlands of Scotland is quite full of Norwegian words. Hence this speech must be much more corrupt than any other Celtic dialect. (1789: I, 137)

Pinkerton's work can be seen as setting the agenda (along with Dr Johnson's *Journey*, which will be examined in detail in the next chapter) for polemics in support of Gaelic up to and beyond the time of Livingston. This agenda includes what is seen as the

innate racial character of the people, the stage at which they became literate, the extent and antiquity of their written literature, and the purity of their language in the general context of the Celtic languages. The Ossianic controversy was perhaps the most heated sector of the entire debate. Pinkerton initially treats the supposed works of the ancient poet with scorn:

Of the pretended works of Ossian, the son of this Fin [sic], it is almost beneath the purpose of this work to speak. That so silly a delusion should impose even on some literati, both of England and Scotland, is only a proof how little historical antiquities are studied in Britain: for in any other country only laughter could have followed... National prejudice is also a species of madness, and consumes all reasoning and common sense; so that people, rather acute on other points, will on this betray a credulity beneath childhood, and an obduracy beneath the pitch of confirmed frenzy... (1789: II, 77)

His final assessment of the case is, however, more measured, and his guess at the probable date of emergence of the Gaelic originals not unperceptive:

that they are totally the fabrications of the translator, would be a rash conclusion; and tho [sic] I was led to think so once, in my abhorrence of being made a dupe, yet, upon full consideration of this point, I am convinced that one half, or perhaps more, of these poems is really traditional... And it appears to me, that some poet, or poets, of superlative genius, flourished in the Highlands of Scotland, in the Fourteenth or Fifteenth century; to whom we are indebted for the traditional parts. (1789: II, 78-79)

In Part IV, Chapter II, he places the arrival of the first Scots in North Britain at A.D. 258, although

Some English and Irish antiquaries, as Usher, Bishop Lloyd, Stillingfleet, O' Flaherty, &c. have, in their great zeal against the antiquity of the Scots in North Britain, past this colony in oblivion (1789: II, 60)

Pinkerton holds that Palladius was sent to the Scots of Ireland, and attributes the conversion of the Scots in Scotland to Ninian, 'a Cumraig Briton' in A.D. 412. Patrick converted the 'old

British Scots of Argyle, then exiled to Ireland' in A.D. 460, while in A.D. 565 Columba converted the northern Picts. He sums up the situation as follows:

Beda's Scots in Britain were but the inhabitants of Argyle, a petty district, and were converted to Christianity during their exile in Ireland, from 446 till 503. Their conversion was beneath notice. That of the inhabitants of North Britain, the Picts, after 1016 called Scots, is sufficiently illustrated by Bede, as its importance required.

But our ignorant dreamers, in a paroxysm of self-love for the Scottish name, and confounding Beda's Scots in Britain with quite a different people, the later and present Scots, contend that Palladius was sent to the Scots in Britain, as Patrick was to the Irish. I question if the very existence of the Scots in Britain, that great people in Argyle, was in the least known to the Pope who sent Palladius. (1789:II, 260)

Given his animosity towards the Celts, Pinkerton could hardly have acted as a model for Livingston. This role was filled by

that bright ornament, the Rev. John Lane Buchanan, A.M., the triumphant antagonist of Pinkerton - he ably confuted that malicious calumniator, and left a monument for this distinguished name in his *Defence*, justly so called (V 437)

Born in Menteith, Perthshire, Buchanan was educated at the grammar school of Callander and Glasgow University. He was assistant minister at Comrie (where Livingston may well have heard accounts of him) and later served as a missionary for the Church of Scotland in the Western Isles. His *Defence of the Scots Highlanders, in general; and some learned characters in particular: with a new and satisfactory account of the Picts, Scots, Fingal, Ossian and his poems: as also, of the Macs, Clans, Bodotria* (London 1794) opens with a clear statement of purpose:

After reading an enquiry into the History of Scotland, written by Mr John Pinkerton, and considering the asperity of that author, with the injurious, unsupported, and illiberal reflections thrown out against the Highlanders in general, and Learned

Characters in particular; I was prompted to make a few remarks on his acrimony against them, and to state facts in their true light, as far as consists with my own knowledge, and these supported by the authority of gentlemen of veracity and candour, in favour of the injured country and people so outrageously insulted. (1794: 7)

The polemic has shifted from a defence of the Scottish nation as a whole to championing the Gaelic speaking sector of that nation. In his opening 'Advertisement' Buchanan laments that previous scholars have been hampered by their ignorance of Gaelic. He proceeds by summarising, in quotation marks, Pinkerton's various positions, and refuting them one by one. Both the coordinates of his discussion and the authorities to which he refers are close to Livingston's. Pinkerton had seen 'Celtic etymology' as 'the peculiar madness of this superficial age' (1789: I, 138). Buchanan defends it against this charge, makes ample use of toponyms in his book, and draws the qualities of the Gaelic language into the polemic:

Harsh objects are denoted by harsh sounds, in which consonants greatly predominate; whilst soft and tender objects and passions are expressed by words which bear some analogy to them in sound. The Gaelic language consists, for the greatest part, of vowels; hence, in the hands of a skilful poet, the sound varies perpetually with the subject of discourse, and assumes the tone of whatever passion he is at the time inspired with. (1794: 46)

There is lengthy discussion of a crucial phrase from Tacitus, 'amplas civitates trans Bodotriam sitas' and of Agricola's campaigns, both of which figure largely in Livingston's 1860 *Lecture*. Buchanan deals with the origin and identity of the Picts or 'Peichs', 'a formidable people' who 'were never totally destroyed' (1794: 129), with material remnants such as cromlechs, standing stones, and stone circles (with which Livingston begins his *History*), and defends the historicity of Fionn using placenames in a passage Livingston quarried for the *Brief Sketch*. He engages with Boswell's account of the Highlanders, and cites the heroism of Scottish soldiers fighting under Wolfe in Quebec

as an example of the nobility of the Celtic character, anticipating a peculiar mingling of imperialist and pro-Gaelic rhetoric which will resound in several writers of the Victorian period (Livingston included).

The major pro-Gaelic polemic of Livingston's time was of course *The Scottish Gael* by James Logan of Aberdeen (1794?-1872), who was praised by Lamartine and patronised by Prince Albert. This 'matchless work' (V 7) is quoted at length in the first letter of the *Vindication* and praised in these terms later in the same book:

That gentleman delineates the Scottish character with a precision worthy of a great and honest man. He proves that learning and civilization always followed the Celtic race everywhere; but he treats in particular of Scottish affairs, and shows, in vivid colours, the superiority of this kingdom... (V 103)

The Scottish Gael is 'a work replete with truth and honour, of deep research and majestic style, altogether worthy of our country.' (V 518)

Turning to those who were more or less Livingston's contemporaries, he acknowledged that Patrick Fraser Tytler's *History of Scotland*, published at Edinburgh in nine volumes from 1828 to 1850, was 'a brilliant work', while classifying its adaptation for schools by Alexander Reid as an 'iniquitous manual of slavery' (V 102). The account of William Wallace in Tytler's *Lives of Scottish Worthies* (London 1831-33) led him to claim

that all the Scottish historians since the Union are hirelings of England - that their grovelling employers of that country would give any reward rather than hear their own true character - that Tytler, with all his faults, recorded many truths humiliating enough for the Southrons, but for which Scotland is none indebted to him, because he would tarnish the brightest of her ornaments, like the rest of her paid betrayers. (V 476)

William Skene's *The Highlanders of Scotland* (London 1837), for Livingston a 'bubble' of 'weak and ill-arranged fables' (V 507),

prompts a similar outburst. Skene is a typical example of those 'English hirelings' who

very dexterously calculate on the ignorance of their readers, inasmuch as they are quite sure that detection from the masses cannot annoy them, seeing that the genuine Scottish chronicles are entirely suppressed. Seldom, indeed, do we find a more consummate specimen of daring insolence and imposition than the one now before us. (V 520)

The poet did not live to heap similar invective on Skene's *magnum opus*, *Celtic Scotland*.

This has been a selective, and in no way an exhaustive review of the authorities referred to in Livingston's prose. It gives some idea of his considerable erudition in matters of Scottish history and antiquities. Where England is concerned, he makes use of Harrison and of the *History of England* by Paul de Rapin (1661-1725), done into English by Nicholas Tindal (1687-1774). He knew the *General History of Ireland* by Geoffrey Keating (1570?-1644?) in the translation by Dermot O' Connor published in London in 1723, and read the work of James MacGeoghegan (1702-1763) in Patrick O' Kelly's translation from the original French. The *History of the Druids* by the Deist John Toland (1670-1722) was known to him in Huddleston's edition (Montrose 1814), as was Connellan and McDermott's edition of the *Annals of the Four Masters* (Dublin 1846).

Many of the authors mentioned in this chapter, along with the issues which kept their intellects and pens so busy, have faded into oblivion, so that an effort of imagination is required if the context of Livingston's own historical writings is to be brought to life. The only valid approach to them, however, is through his predecessors and the polemics in which they engaged, which mapped out the terms and topics he himself was to deal with. The earlier part of the next chapter will focus on a particularly crucial exchange in this area, that between Dr

Samuel Johnson and the Reverend Donald MacNicol of Lismore. Its particular importance for Livingston is clearly indicated by his preparing a re-edition of MacNicol's *Remarks* for the press in 1852. That Johnson was still an adversary to be reckoned with can be seen from this satirical exchange in the earlier part of the *History*:

Englishman. - Don't you believe hin the hoth-henticity
hov thei Hossian-hanic Pohems?

Scot. - Yes. Who dare doubt it?

Englishman. - I do!

Scot. - State your reasons.

Englishman. - Howur Johnson did.

Scot. - Why do you believe him?

Englishman. - Hwyl! Wasn't he hadmired by all Heengland?

(H 69)

Chapter Three: POLEMICIST AND HISTORIAN

A modern reader of Samuel Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, first published in 1774, will probably be too fascinated by the contrast between the measured and ponderous prose style and the informal, almost involuntary and diaristic nature of the account, to notice the insults it offers to the national pride of the Scots. As a traveller, Johnson is a determined amateur, desultory and even capricious in his choice of what to see, setting the inveterate hesitation and sluggishness of the depressive, which seems to characterise him, against Mr Boswell's youthful zest. One even suspects him of most enjoying those periods when the journey is temporarily abandoned, such as their days as guests of Lady Macleod on Skye (quotations throughout this chapter are from the Glasgow 1817 joint edition of Johnson's *Journey* and MacNicol's *Remarks*):

At Dunvegan I had tasted lotus, and was in danger of forgetting that I was ever to depart, till Mr. Boswell sagely reproached me with my sluggishness and softness. I had no very forcible defence to make; and we agreed to pursue our journey. (106)

Iona must clearly have marked a high point of the journey, yet Johnson makes it clear that the decision to go there was not his:

Mr. Boswell's curiosity strongly impelled him to survey Iona, or Icolmkill, which was to the early ages the great school of theology, and is supposed to have been the place of sepulture for the ancient kings. I, though less eager, did not oppose him. (214-5)

In his account of the monuments he visited, Johnson avoids any claim to be scientific, and seems eager to defer to earlier and more attentive authors, as when he describes the convent churches on Iona:

I brought away rude measures of the buildings, such as I cannot much trust myself, inaccurately taken, and

obscurely noted. Mr. Pennant's delineations, which are doubtless exact, have made my unskilful description less necessary. (231)

Johnson clearly did not wish his account to be placed alongside those of Martin Martin or Thomas Pennant. Indeed, he makes no secret of the fact that the idea of writing it occurred to him in the course of a journey originally undertaken with no such pretext in mind.

One would think that these considerations could have led readers to show more indulgence to the tetchy and ungracious manner in which Johnson often speaks of Scotland. Instead, there was evidently sufficient tension between the two cultures, at any rate among educated people, for his remarks to strike a raw nerve in many Scots.

There is an unthinking assumption of superiority in Johnson's attitude which emerges no further out from Edinburgh than the Firth of Forth. He comments that the island of Inchkeith

is nothing more than a rock covered with a thin layer of earth, not wholly bare of grass, and very fertile of thistles... [What a] different appearance... it would have made, if it had been placed at the same distance from London, with the same facility of approach; with what emulation of price a few rocky acres would have been purchased, and with what expensive industry they would have been cultivated and adorned. (2-3)

He is also disturbed by the bareness of the landscape in Scotland, and claims not to have seen any tree of more than seventy years of age from the Tweed to St Andrews.

It is, however, with the Highlands that Johnson is principally concerned, and his insinuations regarding them undoubtedly provoked the greatest offence of anything in his account. Of the Hebrides he writes that 'nobody born in any other parts of the world will choose this country for his residence' (147), and finds a major cause of depopulation in the fact that

a common Highlander has no strong adherence to his native soil; for of animal enjoyments, or of physical

good, he leaves nothing that he may not find again
wheresoever he may be thrown. (153)

The implication that nothing more than a utilitarian bond links the Highlander to his homeland, a bond easily loosened for practical or economic considerations, shows a startling incomprehension of traditional culture there, where attachment to place plays a crucial part.

(It is disturbing to detect a similar incomprehension in a contemporary English observer of Scottish ways, Professor T.C. Smout of St Andrews University. He cannot understand why, at the midpoint of the nineteenth century, when Great Britain as a whole was rapidly becoming wealthier, conditions in the Highlands should have deteriorated so dramatically. He suggests that

At least part of the answer is that the Highlanders contributed to their own problems by their passion for the land they occupied, preferring a life of deepening poverty in an increasingly overcrowded environment to the risk of seeking their fortunes permanently abroad, or in the Lowlands. (Smout 1986: 13)

Professor Smout cannot conceive what possible reason a Highlander should have for preferring to stay in the land of his birth, living within its culture and speaking the only language he knew, rather than abandoning all for the prospect of greater economic rewards in an alien environment.)

More obviously offensive is Johnson's consistent refusal to accord anything other than a primitive status to Highland culture. His comparative indifference to the ruins he visited shows him to have been immune to the antiquarian fervour that came to be symbolised in Sir Walter Scott's Jonathan Oldbuck. Iona is claimed to be the burial place of Scottish kings 'without any very credible attestation', since 'by whom the subterraneous vaults are peopled is now utterly unknown' (234).

Johnson places written records far above material remains, and even sees the two as mutually exclusive in their testimony to the past of a people: 'Edifices, either standing or ruined, are

the chief records of an illiterate nation' (109). For Livingston surviving ruins were crucial indicators of the degree of advancement of the civilisation which produced them.

After a lengthy examination of the available evidence concerning the phenomenon of second sight, Johnson comments that his enquiries had elicited only 'what memorials were to be expected from an illiterate people, whose whole time is a series of distress' (170). In a sense, his position is tautological: since he has no knowledge of Gaelic, and finds himself in a society where English is an alien mode of communication, it is clear that no written memorials accessible to him are likely to exist. Nevertheless, with his typical penchant for generalisation, he sets up an opposition between written and oral cultures, with Highland culture consigned to the latter category:

Books are faithful repositories, which may be a while neglected or forgotten; but when they are opened again, will again impart their instruction: memory, once interrupted, is not to be recalled. Written learning is a fixed luminary, which, after the cloud that had hidden it has past away, is again bright in its proper station. Tradition is but a meteor, which, if once it falls, cannot be rekindled. (171)

Again it is clear that Johnson, on an instinctive level, has a profound antipathy for another crucial feature of Highland culture, the importance it accords to notions and material orally transmitted from generation to generation.

Livingston's account of Highland culture is no more scientific and scarcely less subjective, yet it is interesting that he imagines an interplay between oral and written modes. Concerning Ossianic material, he claims in the *Vindication* that

manuscript copies of the poems, and other valuable historical and geneological [sic] writings, were preserved in abundance throughout the Highlands... the common people in the Highlands had their poetry, and other productions of that kind, recited by the few who had access to the preserved manuscripts, so that the one learned the other in that way... the learned few had recourse to the written works, while the many wholly depended on oral teaching in everything. (V 493)

Indeed, Dr John Macpherson of Sleat, in his testimony to the Highland Society of Edinburgh, claimed to have seen

a Gaelic manuscript in the hands of an old bard, who travelled about through the Highlands and Isles about thirty years ago, out of which he read, in my hearing, and before thousands yet alive, the exploits of Cuchullin, Fingal, Oscar, Ossian, Gaul and Dermid. (Mackenzie 1805: 10)

Professor Derick Thomson sees here a reference to Domhnall Mac Mhuirich, the last practising poet of the dynasty.

Johnson is unable to conceive of a culture in which oral and written transmission interact with, and supplement one another. He insists that

whenever the practice of recitation was disused, the works, whether poetical or historical, perished with the authors; for in those times nothing had been written in the Erse language. (172)

From this it is a mere step to the assertion that no written genealogies exist for the Highland chiefs. Johnson points out that 'fictitious pedigrees' might easily be inserted in a genealogy recited orally. Had he only known that written genealogies could be no less fanciful! All attempts to find traces of Highland learning are hopeless (173). The peroration comes soon after:

the Erse language... is the rude speech of a barbarous people, who had few thoughts to express, and were content, as they conceived grossly, to be grossly understood... the Erse never was a written language... there is not in the world an Erse manuscript a hundred years old... the sounds of the Highlanders were never expressed by letters, till some little books of piety were translated, and a metrical version of the psalms was made by the synod of Argyle. (177)

It is worth remembering that works such as Lachlan Maclean of Coll's *Adhamh agus Eubh* (1837), as well as Livingston's own assertion that only Gaelic shares with Hebrew the possibility of being written with the seventeen letters divinely revealed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai (H 79-80), must be read against the background of Johnson's calumnies.

The polemic is specifically directed against the Scots. Johnson, whose very use of the term 'Erse' to describe Scottish Gaelic is an indication of hostility, concedes that Welsh and Irish are 'cultivated tongues'. But he insists that the absence of a written tradition fatally limited the intellectual and artistic quality of the productions of the Gaelic bards:

how high their compositions may reasonably be rated, an inquirer may best judge by considering what stores of imagery, what principles of ratiocination, what comprehension of knowledge, and what delicacy of elocution he has known any man attain who cannot read. The state of the bards was yet more hopeless. He that cannot read may now converse with those that can; but the bard was a barbarian among barbarians, who, knowing nothing himself, lived with others that knew no more. (178-9)

It is interesting and perhaps sad that his opponents did not concentrate on disputing the absolute superiority Johnson attributed to literate cultures. In fact, the attempt to prove the abundance and venerable age of Gaelic and Scottish written remains constituted a crucial element in the ongoing polemic.

Johnson's views on Macpherson's poems are well-known and are at the core of the polemic his account gave rise to. He believed that 'they never existed in any other form than that which we have seen' (181), and scoffs at having been told that 'part of the poem was received by [Macpherson] in the Saxon character' (183), convinced that Gaelic had not been written down in any alphabet, the 'Saxon' included. This assertion spurred Livingston to attempt to discredit the very existence of a Saxon written tradition and to reclaim, as far as was possible, those very characters for the Celts.

If his scornful rejection of the authenticity of Macpherson's translations is crucial to Johnson's attack on Gaelic culture, it also shows a remarkable perspicacity. He goes on to say that

I have yet supposed no imposture but in the publisher; yet I am far from certainty, that some translations have not been lately made, that may now be obtruded as parts of the original work. (183)

He anticipated the attempt to bolster Macpherson's reputation by constructing and publishing a false Gaelic original of the English prose. And Johnson notes tellingly that the inability of Lowland Scots, in this similar to the English, to evaluate such bogus material, lays them peculiarly open to deception:

Neither ought the English to be much influenced by Scotch authority; for of the past and present state of the whole Erse nation, the Lowlanders are at least as ignorant as ourselves. To be ignorant is painful; but it is dangerous to quiet our uneasiness by the delusive opiate of hasty persuasion. (183)

Johnson also managed to slight the military pride of the Scots. He concedes that the behaviour of the Highland regiments in America 'deserved a very high degree of military praise' (150), but insists that the number of those involved has been highly exaggerated. This view is extended to the Caledonian troops who overcame the Romans:

Those who were conquered by them are their historians, and shame may have excited them to say, that they were overwhelmed with multitudes. To count is a modern practice, the ancient method was to guess; and when numbers are guessed, they are always magnified. (150)

We shall see that Livingston devotes more space to the Battle of Mons Graupius than to any other battle in Scottish history. Accounts of it are to be found in both the *Vindication* and the *History*, and he comes back to it in the 1860 *Lecture*. In addition, Johnson's brief reference to 'Cromwell, when he subdued Scotland' (35), may have encouraged Livingston's sustained discussion of the campaigns conducted here at the time of the Civil War.

The last important point on which his opponents were to attack Johnson was his view of the relationship between the clan chiefs and their people. He writes that in the seventeenth century 'the chiefs of the clans had lost little of their original influence', so that 'the feudal institutions operated

upon life with their full force.' (95) The chiefs enjoyed 'the plenitude of feudal independence', and could make war at will, or take a wife for a trial period only (102). The lack of coinage is typical of a feudal society (175), and Johnson even predicts that those emigrating to the New World may establish new clans there 'if they continue the feudal scheme of polity' (152). The reality of 'feudal times' was that

every lord of a seignory lived in his hold lawless and unaccountable, with all the licentiousness and insolence of uncontested superiority and unprincipled power. (241)

One must admit that Johnson is a little behind the times. *Emile* and *Du contrat social* had both appeared in 1762, yet he is untainted by any sympathy for the savage, the wild or the uneducated. The enthusiasm for medieval ways which was to characterise High Romanticism is beyond his ken.

His assimilation of the clan system to feudal structures had other important implications in terms of the Clearances. It asserted the uncontested right of the landlords to do what they wished with their tenants and with their lands. This is why Livingston, and others with him, felt so strongly compelled to oppose this interpretation of Highland society with another, where the property of the land was vested in the clan itself, and not in the person of the chief.

Stylistically, the Rev Dr Donald MacNicol is no match for Johnson. His *Remarks* are as long as Dr Johnson's *Journey* itself, their piecemeal nature a consequence of being a commentary on another man's work, rather than a series of observations with an internal logic of their own. While his arguments at times decline into pedantry, there is a strain of passion in what he writes that contrasts strongly with the Englishman's desultory indifference. MacNicol is not above sarcasm and personal insinuations. He predicts that his work will 'sleep, on the same

shelf, with that of the learned Dr. Johnson' (260), neatly combining a show of modesty with a slight on his adversary. If the Doctor saw so few trees, this may be a consequence of his well-known short-sightedness (272). Indeed, a near ancestor of his was hung from one (273). He is 'more than commonly attached' to women than one would expect 'for a man of his advanced years' (415). Johnson's treatment in print of his Highland hosts and interlocutors gives rise to MacNicol's most sustained condemnation:

When the Doctor has an object in view, nothing must stand in his way; he goes on with giant strides. Probability, truth and decorum, must yield to his stubborn resolution, and all be sacrificed to his insolence, caprice or disgust. When his prejudices operate, we look in vain for those restraints, either from shame or virtue, which regulate the writings of others. He can be absurd without a blush, and unjust without remorse. (337)

These are strong words, yet measured. Indeed, while admitting that 'it would be easy to delineate the English character in the same unfavourable colours' by 'making use of the Doctor's illiberal pencil' (334), MacNicol refuses to do so. (Livingston's invective knows no such gentlemanly restraint. The fact that, when he wrote, the differing definitions of incest in England and Scotland were in the news, led him to speak of the entire Southron race as the product of miscegenation).

He saw, as has been said, a new edition of MacNicol's *Remarks* through the press, and quoted from them copiously in his own *Vindication*. MacNicol's refutation of Johnson is at the basis of Livingston's polemical prose, which adopts and expands the Lismore minister's arguments, often to the point of caricature.

MacNicol 'can hardly forbear smiling' at the suggestion that Cromwell conquered Scotland, a country which 'never yet has submitted to a foreign yoke' (296), while England was easy prey for the Danes and the Normans. The latter indeed forced the English to learn their conquerors' language and submit to their

laws, and the institution of the nightly curfew 'is an everlasting but mournful monument of Norman despotism and English subjugation' (455).

Against Johnson's assertion of the civilising influence that contact with England has had on the Scots, MacNicol places a connection with France that goes back to the legendary treaty signed at Inverlochy in 790 by King Achaius and Charlemagne (277). The honours bestowed on Scots soldiers in France are legion. If the English, 'like most other nations, are indebted for their own chief improvements to the French' (281), and the Scots were able to drink from this source so much in advance, there can be little doubt which of the two nations is the more civilised.

The prolonged and unsuccessful attempts of the Romans to subdue the Caledonians (the direct progenitors of the present-day population of Scotland) are sufficient proof of our national valour. How could Cromwell accomplish 'in a few weeks' more 'than the most renowned commanders had been able to achieve in as many centuries'? (301) That valour has been transmitted down the centuries without suffering any diminution. Far from being extinguished by the consequences of Culloden, as Dr Johnson implies, it was the object of a panegyric by Mr Pitt in the House of Commons (340), and MacNicol devotes a lengthy passage (373-77) to dispelling Johnson's doubts about the part effectively played by Highland soldiers in British wars.

MacNicol's argument here is symptomatic of the way those who attempted a defence of Highland Scotland, its society and its traditions, found themselves drawn into loyalist positions supporting a power which was bent on that society's destruction or, at best, its transformation. This paradox underpins, for example, Livingston's own prize poems on the Gaels in Crimea, and on Queen Victoria in the solitary splendour of Balmoral. MacNicol does not accept that the campaign which culminated in Culloden

was a conquest. The rebellion was merely 'a partial insurrection of a few discontented chiefs and their followers' (355). His position is unequivocally pro-Hanoverian, and he even attributes the victory there to 'the assistance of the loyal clans' (354), thus redefining the battle as a clash between a loyal Scottish majority and a limited number of Scottish rebels.

Livingston, a more radical, perhaps more honest, and certainly less sophisticated polemicist than MacNicol, will have much greater difficulty in negotiating his own deep ambivalence towards the Jacobite rebellions.

Although he speaks of 'a happy union between the two kingdoms' (293), MacNicol is convinced that the English had most to gain from it (319), and asserts the superiority of the legal system the Scots have long practised and still retain (370). Religion is a further point of difference. Johnson had characterised Presbyterianism as 'an epidemical enthusiasm, compounded of sullen scrupulousness and warlike ferocity' (6). MacNicol's counter move is to accuse Johnson of dangerously Romish tendencies:

He takes such frequent opportunities of extolling the piety of monks, priests and cardinals, that the dullest of his readers may easily discover his attachment to their tenets. (359)

If the Doctor pooh-poohs Scottish fears that Catholicism is being propagated within their midst, this, writes MacNicol, is only his way of offering cover so that the work of insidious conversion may continue (384-5). For both Livingston and MacNicol, Scottish Presbyterianism is evidence of national independence, and of the purity of a continuous tradition which reaches back to the very dawn of Christianity and of the nation; while Anglicanism points to the very opposite qualities in the English, to a history of not only military but also ideological subjection on the part of a people whose inability to resist deleterious exterior influences has produced a corrupt and heterogeneous culture.

MacNicol devotes scarcely any space to Ireland. Livingston, much more concerned with that nation, will have to negotiate the problem of his own aversion to Catholicism, expressed as a hostility to priestly classes in any society whatsoever. He solves the problem in part by insisting that the Norman conquest of Ireland led to a corruption of national mores similar to that in England. The conquered Catholic Irish are not really Celts at all.

This religious aspect of the Scottish-English polemic attributes a particular importance to the early history of Christianity in the British Isles. It must substantiate both the Scottish claim to an autochthonous Christian tradition, unsullied by Romish importations, and the assertion that Scotland could boast a civilised and Christian monarchy when England was still a morass of pagan Saxon barbarity.

The role of Iona in both these claims is crucial. MacNicol dates Columba's arrival there to 565, 135 years after the building of the abbey by Fergus II. Scotland became Christian in 165; only in 627 did King Edwin the Saxon embrace the new religion. He refers to Buchanan's account of how Scottish monks evangelised England, quoting further Tertullian and John Lesley, (Bishop of Ross and author of a history of Scotland in Latin (Rome 1578)), to support his argument (304-7).

Any evidence of English backwardness that can be found will strengthen the case for a superior civilisation in Scotland. Johnson had maintained that Cromwell's soldiers taught the people of Aberdeen to make shoes and to plant kail, thus giving them the benefits of a civilising influence the Romans had been unable to exercise (36). MacNicol is able to retort that shillings were not coined in England until 1505, and that in 1561 Queen Elizabeth had the honour of wearing 'the first pair of knitted silk stockings that ever were in that country' (309). Johnson himself is scarcely a civilised creature, for

no man has ever yet seen Dr. Johnson in the act of feeding, or beheld the inside of his cell in Fleet-street, but would think the feasts of Eskimeaux or the cottages of Hottentots injured by a comparison. (312)

Such not unenjoyable invective is taken much further (some would say rather too far) by Livingston, who also makes a favourite topic of the technological backwardness of the English.

MacNicol accepts Johnson's definition of Highland society as feudal: it had the same 'constitution' as other countries in which 'the feudal system of government prevailed' (370). Yet the chiefs never behaved according to the Doctor's 'tyrannical plan', for they had to treat the subjects on whom their own security rested with humanity and mildness (328). Johnson's tales of an institution of trial marriage are completely unfounded (344-5).

MacNicol further admits to a certain negligence on the part of Highlanders in committing their history to writing. What was written down has suffered destruction, either in the repeated devastations of Iona, at the time of the Reformation, or at the hands of Englishmen such as Edward I and Oliver Cromwell.

If we bear in mind, as we must, that the controversy under examination is not a disinterested, collaborative searching for objective historical truth, but a polemic about the respective merits of two cultures, a clash of ideologies to which there can be no objective answer, it will be clear that Edward I, the 'hammer of the Scots', and the Wars of Independence at the turn of the thirteenth century, are an important touchstone. Edward's attempt to adjudicate the succession to the Scottish throne was accompanied by a gathering together of charters and written records which implied that the competing claims could be settled by reference to an impartial authority, to existing, unbiassed evidence. While a more relativist historical approach today might be unwilling to interpret these events as a conflict between nations, or to accept that the term 'nation' can have the same

meaning in the thirteenth and in the nineteenth centuries, MacNicol and Livingston had no such reservations. Once again, the quantity of the national records, their authenticity and the information they contained were of paramount importance. There is clearly an ideal continuity (even if only retrospective) between the ideological conflict at the time of the Wars of Independence, the polemical exchanges which accompanied the Union of Parliaments and that which bridged the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

This question of the survival of national records, and of what they may be used to prove, brings MacNicol to a crucial aspect of the Doctor's attack. The very object of Johnson's journey seems to have been to 'invalidate the credit of Highland antiquities' (405). MacNicol points out that books can be no less mendacious than oral tradition, (taking the *Journey* as a case in point), and attempts a defence of oral tradition, which is not an affair of 'bards and senachies only', but something transmitted 'by the general voice and consent of a whole nation' (407). MacNicol, then, is prepared to oppose a communal and oral historical tradition to the tradition of documents written by individuals which is all Dr Johnson will accept.

He invariably speaks of Gaelic, rather than Erse (with its unfortunate homophone):

As to the Doctor's Erse, it has a filthy sound, and I must reject it, as never being a word of ours. It is only a barbarous term introduced by strangers, and seems to be a corruption of Irish. The Caledonians always called their native language Gaelic; and they never knew it by any other name. (431-2)

He maintains that the practice of recitation continues, and rejects Johnson's idea that there can be no continuity between an oral and a written culture. What is more, oral transmission has distinct advantages:

there was no great danger of any thing being so far forgotten as to be 'lost for ever'; for if any one

person should forget a particular part, there were always thousands who remembered the whole. (472)

For MacNicol it is clear that the bards 'could both read and write' (467), a simple observation which defeats Johnson's attempt to place oral and written cultures in separate, watertight compartments. He does not agree with Johnson's assertion that the intellectual powers of those who read are of necessity far superior to those of the illiterate. MacNicol's view is, interestingly, much more in touch with the new tide of Romanticism to which Rousseau's work had contributed:

True genius springs from nature; it is her gift alone: it may be improved by reading, but never can be supplied. Every age and country has furnished instances of men, who, by dint of natural talents alone, have acquired a distinction, which others could never attain with their loads of learned lumber. Even the wilds of America have produced orators; and poets have flourished beneath arctic skies. (467-8)

MacNicol, however, has no intention of championing the Gael as noble savage. An important part of his case is to affirm the existence of collections of Gaelic written remains, some of them of considerable antiquity. Like many other gentlemen, in different parts of the Highlands, he possesses a collection of this kind, which includes 'very complete genealogical accounts of six different families' (448) (thus confuting Johnson's claim that no Erse genealogy had ever been written down). Much material has in fact survived the attempts of Edward I and Cromwell, 'those inveterate enemies to the antiquities of Scotland', to destroy or carry off the national historical records (426-7). Dr Johnson may have the pleasure of viewing such manuscripts even without the inconvenience of returning to Scotland, if he should care to call on John Mackenzie of the Highland Society, in Covent Garden, London (460).

Praise of the language itself is inevitably a part of this

refutation. Gaelic is 'as copious as the Greek, and not less suitable to poetry than the modern Italian'. If it has a defect, it is the superabundance in it of those vowels and diphthongs 'suitable to poetry' and which are 'reckoned the greatest beauty in other languages' (453). It was once 'the general language of all Europe', and, in Scotland, the universal language of court and populace (456).

MacNicol devotes some fifteen pages to the Ossianic controversy (486-501), having already declared that Johnson's refusal to acknowledge the authenticity of Ossian's poems is the expression of an innate prejudice against this country. He 'declared them spurious, without waiting for the common formality of a perusal' (266), with the effect merely of transferring the credit for their composition from an ancient to a contemporary Scotsman. MacNicol approves Macpherson's conduct towards his opponents, and defends the authenticity of his epic not merely from internal evidence, but also because

Hundreds still alive have heard portions of them recited, long before Mr. Macpherson was born; so that he cannot possibly be deemed the author of compositions, which existed before he had any existence himself. (490)

Macpherson has had the merit of 'collecting the *disjecta membra poetarum*' and of 'fitting the parts so well together, as to form a complete figure' (491). The quality of the poetry is not inconsistent with the lives the Fingalians led as hunters, as the Indians of America currently deliver speeches at Congress whose richness of metaphor recalls the *Iliad*. The virtues displayed by the Ossianic heroes still animate the Highlanders of today. MacNicol rejoices at the prospect of the imminent publication of the Gaelic originals, as

it would be impossible for any person, let his talents be ever so great, to impose a translation for an original, on any critic in the Gaelic language. (497)

(In fact, it is one of the many paradoxes of the whole intricate Ossianic problem that the Gaelic version was produced partly to reassure those who could *not* read the language, although many who read Gaelic were of course also deceived.)

MacNicol's *Remarks* are in themselves an interesting source of information on the state of Gaelic culture in the mid-eighteenth century. His theoretical defence of a tradition which blends the oral and the written corresponds to the impression he gives the reader of inhabiting in a comfortable fashion, in his own life, a traditional and subtle Gaelic culture and a learned culture of a different nature, expressed through the medium of English. Livingston has no such ease. The delicate balance which alone can make biculturalism fruitful no longer holds for him. MacNicol's words on natural genius might well be applied in his case, yet the prose of Livingston, a tailor by trade and, by the time he began to publish, a *déraciné* in the industrial heartland of Clydeside, rings at times with the shrill querulousness of one conscious of a destiny of exclusion. His intellect inhabits, not the peaceful manse of Lismore, but the Mechanic's Library in Greenock, or Stirling's Library, deep in the metropolis of Glasgow.

In the account of Livingston's prose works which follows, his debt to MacNicol and, through him, to Johnson, will be clear. Those passages in which Livingston refers to the Ossianic controversy are mentioned only briefly. Detailed discussion of them is reserved for the chapters specifically devoted to his attitude to Macpherson's productions, and the nature of his debt towards them.

The *Vindication* takes the form of nine letters, dated between February and August 1850, to a young friend desirous of knowing more about Scotland's past. They are 'the result of three years'

labour by a Working-man' and give 'an accurate account of Scottish History from the earliest period till the year 1850' ('Advertisement': 3).

The book is in fact a medley incorporating copious material from other sources, both directly quoted and in paraphrase, which Livingston clearly found it hard to give a coherent shape to. Letters do not provide an effective means of structuring the argument. The first occupies some five pages, the last nearly one hundred and fifty, so that the fiction of a correspondence is gradually abandoned.

The first letter deals with the origins of the Celts, the second with the traditional history of Scotland up to the treaty between Achaius and Charlemagne, and the third with Comrie placenames, the Dalriadic controversy and the Islay MacDonalds, while the fourth opens with a concerted attack on English history and mores. From this point in the book accounts of battles occupy more and more space. Together with the histories of the Scottish clans, they are the elements around which the remainder of the *Vindication* is structured. The Campbells and Grahams are dealt with in the sixth and seventh letters, the eighth is devoted to the Sutherlands, while the ninth covers the Douglasses, the Camerons, the Buchanans, the Macleans, the MacFarlanes, the MacGregors, the MacPhersons, the MacNaughtans and, finally, the Livingstons. In each case Livingston singles out members of the clan who have distinguished themselves by military prowess or learning. Skene's *The Highlanders of Scotland* may have offered a model for this kind of treatment of individual clans, but the terms in which Livingston interprets the clan system are dictated by the agenda Johnson had set. Livingston is certain that the feudal system

was never known beyond the Grampian range, till within the last forty years... The people were the proprietors of the soil. The chiefs were neither hereditary nor yet absolute lords of the persons and property of the people, as is falsely reported, but within certain

limits, which guaranteed the utmost freedom for his supporters. (V 179)

The clearances, far from being the final manifestation of a system inspired by feudalism, are the consequence of its late introduction

when Glengary [sic] made his graceless attack on the free people of that country, by introducing the feudal abominations of England... (V 179)

Livingston's position on the early history of the Scottish monarchy has already been stated. He considers that

the fable of transforming the ancestors of the family of MacDonald into Scottish kings is indeed weak and groundless - that the Dalriads were the direct ancestors of that family, but not of the royal line of Scotland, any more than they were the fathers of the kings of Judah - that no portion of Caledonia was called Dalriada, till the days of Usher and Cambden (V 67)

The need to separate the MacDonalds from the royal line leads him to give an account of their 'regal state' in Islay, 'equal in power to several states in Germany' (V 53). He derives two Somhairles from a single historical figure: one wrests all the islands north west of Ardnamurchan Point from Godred, Danish King of Man in 760, while another struggles with Malcolm IV and is assassinated at Renfrew in 1156. This backdating of the MacDonald Lordship means that Kenneth McAlpin can both annex the territories of the Picts and marry the daughter of the Lord of the Isles, so unifying the realm of Scotland. Livingston's treatment of the MacDonalds' battle with central authority breaks off at the 1462 treaty of Westminster, as the Lord returns home in triumph with his captives from the Castle of Blair (V 60). His Islay patriotism and a desire to project a single, united Scotland as far into the past as possible may have led him to pass over the victory of the Scottish king, and the 1493 dismantling of the Lordship, in silence.

Livingston was by no means immune to the 'peculiar madness' of 'Celtic etymology' which provoked Pinkerton's scorn. In attempting to distinguish the differing Celtic nations to be found in early Scotland, he offers his own derivations for their names. 'Scots' derives from 'Scuiti',

a term which signifies divisions, and is highly characteristic of the attachment of our race in all ages to their favourite system of clanship. (V 11)

'Picts' comes from 'Piocich', related in turn to Gaelic 'piocadh', without

the slightest allusion to tatooing [sic] or painting, but merely representing the Picts using the implements of husbandry while the roving sons of the mountains lived chiefly in a pastoral state. (V 12)

'Cruthens' or better 'Cruiteinich' comes from 'Croitein Cam', and indicates a person

in a stooping posture, working with the instrument called the pike, spade, hoe &c. (V 12)

In discussing the arrival of Christianity among these peoples, Livingston felt the need both to push Pinkerton's dating of their conversion to Columba's time as far back as possible, and to distance their religious practice from Roman Catholicism. Therefore he asserts that popery was unknown in Scotland for many centuries after Columba's time, Ireland being the last country in Europe to submit 'to the antichristian yoke' (V 270). Although the appellation 'abbot' may smack of Rome to the squeamish, 'in those days [it] signified no more than what is now understood by Professor, or more properly Principal' (V 270). The Viking invasions were a chastisement inflicted by God on the backsliding churches of Western Europe, and when in 1203 the people of Iona pull down a monastery erected there against their wishes one feels 'that Jenny Geddes was present, giving orders to pull down the usurper' (V 271).

Hostility to Rome is an aspect of Livingston's patriotism. The theological conflicts of the early Christian and Reformation eras merge with the military conflict which set Calgacus against Agricola. Resistance to subjugation by Roman armies is a pledge of later resistance to infiltration by Catholic doctrine:

the countries which Rome could not conquer were never wholly subject to the Papacy, and were, and are still the asylum of the witnesses, and are otherwise distinguished from the rest of Europe for the mental and bodily vigour of their inhabitants; and even low as the cause of Christ is at the present day, these countries are not wholly forsaken, though deeply polluted by their abandoned neighbours. (V 396)

Error may triumph over those parts of the earth once subject to Rome, but the countries of northern Europe will continue to shine as lights in the general darkness, in a way not unlike God's chosen people the Jews in Old Testament times:

Is it not therefore remarkable that in neither Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Scotland, nor Ireland, has there even been a massacre of the Jews, nor any murderous crusade against their civil or religious privileges at any time in these countries? It is hence conclusive that in them in particular the seed of the witnesses is preserved, who will finally "consume and hate the Whore, and burn her with fire." Rev. xvii. 16 (V 396)

It was not easy for Livingston to handle this antipathy to Catholicism when dealing with the Irish or the Jacobites. If awareness of a common heritage draws him to Ireland, the loyalty to Rome which is such an essential element in traditional Irish nationalism cannot but repel him. A possible solution is to suggest that the admixture of English blood has effectively de-Celticised the Irish. At the beginning of the seventeenth century 'the original Celtic inhabitants of Munster and other districts were totally extirpated by the English' (V 313), and subsequently

hosts of Southron thieves and robbers who were not fit to live transported themselves into Ireland, and introduced their practices there; those produced others equally abandoned, till at last the country was

inundated with the most depraved brood that ever existed. (V 314)

A detestation of priestly castes is evident here, as elsewhere in Livingston's writings. The English succeeded in gaining a footing in Ireland because the English Pope Adrian IV supported them, and the local clergy persuaded the people not to resist:

The satanic agency of those priests at that time, and for seven centuries bygone, is perhaps the most surprising phenomenon that ever was applied to enslave the human mind (V 426)

Since then 'Southron priestly locusts' have devoured the country, while in turn the Romish clergy foments hatred for the Church of Ireland:

both are leagued against the people. The English Anti-Christians are devouring its substance by the agency of their priests; while the emissaries of Rome are eternally instigating the people to hate them, and filling the earth with the groans of the oppressed... All the patriots who attempted to rescue Ireland... fell victims by the craft of Irish and English priests. (V 426)

Livingston is clearly embarrassed by the Catholicism of the exiled Stuart monarchs, which made it hard for him to uphold their claim while also championing a Scottish church that believed itself to have been national and independent since the earliest Christian times. He refuses to accept that the Old Pretender was Catholic:

I know it is always reported that the Prince was a papist. *It is a downright lie.* He was nothing of the kind; but on the contrary, was so averse to that delusion that he would not suffer either priest or confessor to approach him. His constant declaration was that they ruined his father, consequently he would have nothing to do with them. (V 535)

Livingston is hardly less antipathetic to Episcopalian than to Catholic forms. This partisanship colours his attitude to James Graham, Marquis of Montrose and his campaigns in support of the

Stuarts, so that the sacking of Banff provokes a passionate outburst:

Behold the fruit of the English malice which poisoned the perjured Stuart against his native country! Such was the thirst of the pampered Prelatists for the blood of the true worshippers of God - such was their rage to extirpate the simplicity of that form of worship which is clearly pointed out in the Bible, so directly opposed to the sensual and devilish intentions of liturgies, organs and theatrical running from one corner of the temple to the other, used by the antichristian baggage, now as well as at that time... (V 248)

The poet's loyalty to Victoria makes of him willy-nilly a Hanoverian, an affiliation with which he does not seem entirely comfortable. The pedigree from Fergus I to Victoria (V 180-181) steps neatly from James VI to George I, leaving the intervening years a blank, and Livingston comments of the latter that 'Never was a claim more righteous than his' (V 184). His ambivalence about the respective rights of the Hanoverian and Stuart lines does, however, surface from time to time. He transcribes in full the address of the loyal chiefs to George I, who 'was either the essence of a slave, or was surrounded by a gang of ruffians, that would disgrace a convention of Mamelukes' (V 201). He cannot accept the official line that the document never reached the king, and regrets that 'it was, and is, customary to call those brave men "rebels" who boldly took the field to punish that King and his infamous associates' (V 201).

So much for the 1715 rising. Livingston's 'Sketch of the Rebellion in 1745' exhibits further difficulty in arriving at a coherent position on Jacobitism. George II is a 'hired prisoner', while the poet finds it unacceptable to describe Charles as the Pretender: 'his cousin reigned by law, but still Charles was the nearest heir.' (V 315) The tergiversations in the following passage show a similar state of confusion:

Many will say that it was a mercy that Charles did not gain his object. We answer that... it was a mercy only for some; for others it was the greatest curse

imaginable. You will say, the Pope and the Stuarts, God forbid that they should reign here! *Amen!* But have you forgot at the same time the fearful atrocities of George when he turned against the men who saved his kingdom for him... (V 319)

It may have been well nigh impossible for one in Livingston's position to reconcile loyalty to the British state and throne with a deeply felt Gaelic and Scottish patriotism. This dilemma could explain his decision to situate the majority of his battle poems during the Wars of Independence or earlier, in order to avoid having to unravel a knot of competing allegiances and tease it into poetic form. The disjointed nature of Livingston's military epics may be a consequence of his difficulty in finding any valid ideological synthesis in the present.

The stated aim of the *Vindication*, given in the 'Advertisement' (V 3), is to force 'the enemies of Scotland... to open their coffers and restore the Annals of our country without reserve'. The Red Book of Clanranald, containing the genealogy of the MacDonalds, has been 'pilfered' by James Macpherson; today's Campbells and Macdonalds are 'dastards... the very patrons of cowardice and dishonesty', ready to suppress these annals which represent 'the souls and bodies of their ancestors' (V 47). Livingston's long list of Scottish historical works which have been suppressed begins with those chronicles which Boece claimed to have obtained from Iona for the preparation of his history in 1525. His anger was no doubt in part the result of the difficulties an autodidact like himself had in gaining access to the necessary source material. He was struck by Keating's translator's tale of how he had to give security of one thousands pounds sterling before consulting a manuscript in Trinity College library containing extracts from the psalter of Cashel and the records of Armagh and Tara (V 46). A general mistrust of post-Union historical scholarship made Livingston peculiarly willing to suspect the reliability of current editions of, for example, Buchanan's history,

some garbled copies of which are always current, but there was never a genuine copy of it in English. Buchanan wrote his "History of Scotland" in Latin. It is permitted to appear in English, merely to strengthen the cause of defamation, against this ancient kingdom... The enemies of Scotland have now succeeded to their highest wishes in suppressing every national monument previous to the time of Buchanan. Their design is, therefore, to present that venerable man as the only historian we have, and that his work is at best doubtful... But those deluded beings should be exposed, till they bring to the light of day every one of the above list of works from which Buchanan compiled his history. (V 44)

The distrust extended to Unionist historians and scholars, to writers like Sir Walter Scott and George Chambers. Livingston gives a portrait of the qualifications needed by such figures in a footnote:

First, He must be sworn to conceal any particulars of Scottish history before the Saxon period. Secondly, He must with all the means in his power contribute to publishing contradictory versions of Buchanan's history, so as to bewilder the readers into whose hands it may fall. Thirdly, He must be always on the look out to give timely warning of any Scotchman of ability that may appear, in order to pension him in time, and so prevent the lash of exposure from apprehending the harpies who are taught to act in this manner from the cradle to the grave. Fourthly, He must make the tower [sic] of confirmation - that is, go through the Highlands, and then publish afterwards a picture of falsehoods, such as Chambers' picture of Scotland; after which the agent is considered as civilized a Saxon as can be. (V 103-4)

Invective of this sort is paralleled, and surpassed, by the invective to which Livingston subjects the English, their national characteristics, literary remains and technological backwardness, throughout the *Vindication*. This is at one and the same time a development of MacNicol's rejoinders to Johnson's aspersions, and a tactical attempt to carry the battle into enemy territory, by attacking the English in those very areas where they believed the Scots to be weakest:

every now and again the English are hiring fellows to come down here and defame whatever is brilliant in the national character: by such means they have hitherto, in a great measure, diverted the public by these emissaries; their design is, which has been carried into effect, for a number of years, that, by keeping the wound open, they may effectually divert the Scottish mind from exploring the fearful state of Englishmen; and oh! how terrified are they that their fraud and abominable manner of living should be exposed! ... They hired Johnson, MacCulloch, Scott the Fabulist, and the two Chambers, for the above purpose (V 382)

Johnson had claimed that Gaelic was never written. If Livingston is to be believed, no Anglo-Saxon written remains are extant, and England is dependent for its history on Irish and Scottish annals (V 84). Hengist, invited to England by Vortigern, was a gipsy, not a German (V 127). The Anglo-Saxons were first enslaved by the Danes, then exterminated by the Normans, so that

there is not the slightest trace now in these kingdoms of either the Saxons or of their speech; nor is there anything to prove that it was written, or its every having had as much as an alphabet of its own. (V 88)

The Domesday Book is 'a pitiful imitation of the annals of the Four Masters', its contents 'absolutely copied from the Irish Records, and Fordun's Scoto Chronicon' (V 105).

The English language is 'a compound abomination of seven or eight different dialects' which may therefore be classified, using the very words Johnson had applied to Gaelic, as 'the rude speech of a barbarous people' (V 212). Its spreading to Scotland is a tragedy:

It was not then customary to hear Scotchmen speaking the barbarous foreign tongue called English - it was not customary in those days to applaud it, what is nothing else but the greatest curse that ever Providence permitted to apprehend mankind. (V 213)

Englishmen can feel none of the pride in their nation that animates the Scots or the French:

When an Englishman may look about him in the world he can see, on all hands, nations of the most honourable character, such as Scotland, France, &c. He will next, very naturally, turn his eyes to his own native soil, and will find that that country has been nothing else than a sty for the public since the Roman period. (V 165)

The fascination which the crime and corruption of the great metropolis held for Livingston probably derives from MacNicol's observation that after a feud between clans

there was a much greater probability of a man returning safe... than that an inhabitant of London, after going to bed, shall not have his house robbed, or his throat cut, before next morning. (1817: 368)

The poet repeats what MacNicol had said about Queen Elizabeth's stocking, and laments that pins should have been introduced into her benighted realm as late as 1543. Using contemporary sources such as the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Household Narrative of Current Events* and a 'Prize Essay on Juvenile Depravity', he builds up a chilling picture of vice in London. The 'abominations' discovered when Wortley's Bill of Incest was put before parliament show clearly

that incest and other causes made the English diverse from all the nations of Europe. They are ugly, sluggish, feckless and unnatural in their bodily qualities: big heads, sunk eyes, rascally low foreheads and cocked noses, are the marks by which they are distinguished; and indeed it is impossible that they should be otherwise, where the laws of nature themselves do not restrain high nor low of them from co-habiting with their nearest relatives. (V 279)

More appealing to a modern reader is the grasp Livingston has of the connection between the eviction of the Scottish Highlanders and the victims of British imperialism in Africa. Prince Albert, at an inaugural meeting of the 'Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Places', had spoken of the

blessings which are now carried by this Society to the vast territories of India and Australasia, which last

are again to be peopled by the Anglo-Saxon race. (V 365)

The poet is understandably puzzled to hear that these regions were originally inhabited by Englishmen, and wonders 'Did ever England carry a blessing anywhere', or 'What blessings were bestowed on the East Indians by their butchering invaders', before concluding:

Let them, if they can, point out any spot on the wide globe where their missionaries introduced Christianity without seizing the countries where they came, and, finally, extirpated, or are deluging the soil with the blood of the inhabitants. (V 371)

He saw very clearly the connection between religious, territorial and economic expansionism.

It would be heartening if Livingston's animosity towards the English language and the culture of which it is the vehicle were balanced by hope for the future of the culture and language it threatened to displace. Concerning the fate of Gaelic, however, Livingston reveals a deep and bleak pessimism. He has the highest praise for Lachlan Maclean's *Adhamh agus Eubha*, but notes that

Had his "History of the Celtic" appeared a century ago, ere that root of speech was strangled, it would have undoubtedly contributed much to its preservation; but there is little use of making appeals now; the present generation of vipers are so absolutely wicked that the more the magnificence of our matchless language appears, the more they hate it; and the reason is that the English tongue is but the dregs of that barbarous confusion which prevailed in that country as formerly observed, so that it can never enlighten the victims whose souls and bodies are withering under its baneful influence... the English is and must continue the Babel of darkness, and its votaries the wildest animals of human kind, when an honest estimate is made of its savage consequences. (V 447)

The *Vindication* is a truly polemic work in the way it enters into contention with a chorus of voices. The ground it covers and the positions it assumes are often dictated by the terms of the

polemic which had preceded Livingston. The remainder of this chapter will deal with three of the shorter prose works (reserving the *Brief Sketch* appended to the 1858 *Duain Ghaellic* for the chapters on the Ossianic controversy) and focus on the *History of Scotland* where, in a continuous, if interrupted narrative, Livingston had the opportunity to construct his own vision of Scotland's past and the values which that past, in his eyes, enshrined.

One single issue of *Livingstone's Caledonian Critic* survives, dated February 1852 and priced threepence. An attractive vignette above the title, signed William Urie, shows a group of emigrants (three adults, a child and a dog). In the background lie a hillside dotted with sheep and a roofless house. There are three gentlemen in top hats, one of whom carries a paper, presumably the eviction order.

The *Critic* does, in fact, reserve its strongest language for the people behind the Clearances. It aims to expose the falseness of the press, and in particular of

that heartless savage, the Edinburgh *Scotsman* newspaper, who, during the last season, to the utmost of his power, abused the distressed Scots in the Western Isles, lingering under the effects of several years' famine, deprived of their rights, and - may it reach the throne of the eternal Judge of all - forced, like African slaves, from their native country, without one ray of mercy. (CC 3)

The clarity with which Livingston saw the evictions in the context of an overall colonial dynamic is striking.

His views are couched in the form of a dialogue between Donald and Sandy which anticipates the tendency to distribute the discourse between different speakers so evident in his poetry. An interesting sidelight on language use in the central belt comes from Donald's observation that many Lowlanders who 'never spent a single week in their lifetime north of the Clyde' have, in places

such as Greenock, acquired a command of Gaelic in their day-to-day dealings 'in shops where they served as drapers, &c.' (CC 8), and have come to feel considerable loyalty towards their second language. The Highland landowners must be required to produce the charters on which they base their claims to the land. All those responsible for burning houses and seizing goods must be prosecuted. The landowners are thieves on a grander scale than the housebreakers of London, and should be tried for fire-raising, assault and robbery. If the ancient laws of Scotland were to be enforced

there would be many hanged extortioners in all quarters of Caledonia. There would be a *twà ell long one* in Mull, on the lands of the Duke of Argyle. There would be another in Kintyre belonging to the same man. There would be another in the *Isle of Skye*, yes, at *Portree House* the crows would have a feast on a gibbeted Fife ham there. There would be several on the lands of Sutherland, - on the lands of *Malcolm of Poltalloch*. There would be also many on the lands of Monzie, Lochiel, Fasach, *Fearn*, and other numberless places.
(CC 13)

Here Livingston is pointing a menacing finger at specific landlords, known both to him and presumably to his readership.

Indignation about the Clearances naturally leads him to look into the relationship between landlord and tenants which made them possible. As in the *Vindication*, he maintains that feudalism was unknown to the ancient Scots, the only people in western Europe to keep their 'free institutions' until recently. The basis of the contract between chief and people was 'the right of the people to the soil'. The 'arbitrary power' of the Highland chiefs, made so much of by Johnson, never existed. Rather, the people could expel and replace a chief who failed to observe four basic obligations: he must not dispose of the land, must be educated either in Scotland or in France, must speak Gaelic, and must lead his people in battle (CC 7). The act which abrogated the hereditary power of the Highland chiefs was, for Livingston, a stratagem aimed at severing the ancient bond between chiefs and

people. The latter were duped into thinking it merely a temporary measure against those involved in the 1745 uprising, while in fact it aimed to transfer their property 'into the hands of the few, who never had any before' (CC 9).

Livingston's view of ancient Scotland is animated by a kind of reverse Utopianism, characteristic of one strand of rearguard nationalism which situates the national ideal in the past and equates liberation with restoration. The Critic reproduces from Holinshed twenty-six items of Kenneth MacAlpin's legal code CC 10-2). They must be reinstated, the present legal system replaced by a 'family arbitration' of which no clear explanation is given, the soil 'emancipated', vice banished and (final irony) our matchless sovereign protected.

The poet's reverence for Queen Victoria coexists with a detestation of her predecessor George IV. It was during his

presidency over swearing and fornication, that the restraints of Christianity were abolished in Britain; that the seeds of the present heathenism were largely propagated. It was during his time that the swearing practices of our times were brought to their present maturity (CC 13)

The pamphlet closes with an extended version of the list of learned Caledonians which closes the *Vindication* and will reappear in the *History* (drawn from Holinshed in all three cases), and a brief episode from the life of William Wallace illustrating 'Affection Extraordinary', where the hero supplies his men with water from a spring carried in the helmet of a dead English soldier.

Although it is incomplete, the *History of Scotland* marks a new stage in the exposition of Livingston's ideology and his view of national history. It benefits from having a clear groundplan in its chronological treatment of the reigns of the Scottish monarchs as given in the traditional lists of Boece and Holinshed. Yet Livingston knew that the 'transactions of any

monarch, whether in peace or in war, form but a very small item of the annals of any nation' (H 59) and was determined

not to insult the public with political sketches of the lives of monarches, as if they only were to be regarded, and not the brave and enlightened people over whom they presided (H 71)

He gives his reasons for undertaking the *History* in an eloquent passage which blends resentment towards denationalised official culture, determination that the national records be made accessible to all and an overriding and powerful democratic urge:

I would solicit you, my fellow-drudges of daily toil, to look about you and consider the deeds of that banditti leagued to annihilate all remembrances of the past, in order to reconcile you to your chains. You hear of graduates, bachelors of arts, envoys, commissariats, lords, lairds, factors, tax-gatherers, councillors, committees, associations, diplomatists, consuls, oaths of allegiance, progression, representations, civil and religious liberty; literature, arts and sciences; colleges and universities; parliaments, campaigns, gracious appointments to this and that office - to intoxicate you to forget that your sires were individually free and enlightened. Nor can the efforts of man emancipate you till you banish from this kingdom all the hired deceivers by whom you are seduced to forget the true history of your fathers, the revival of which is the first and chief remedy to make you compare the past with the present - the only medium through which you can see the deceit of your oppressors, whose aim it is to blot out all early knowledge of mankind, and represent God's rational creatures as barbarians till they arrive at the period of revenues, of taxes, and of standing armies ready to slaughter you should you offer to suppress crime by bringing them to justice for their lawless imposition and violence... Feudal tyrants are cruel, remorseless and deceitful; and it is their craft to make old and young believe that ignorance and its attendant miseries had universal sway here, till they become masters of your independence, your means, and your consciences... (H 65-67)

The passage shows that Livingston understood how political power can appropriate cultural and especially historical discourse, twisting historical truth and perspective to its own class and national interests. If in the *Vindication*, and the polemics it

inherited, history was a sparring ground for ecclesiastical, political and cultural conflicts whose actual location was the present, the *History of Scotland* belongs to a rather different kind of writing. Livingston's reverse utopianism makes of history a means of recovery, the search for and exhumation of an endlessly precious artefact, the true, the ideal, the genuine Scotland, mislaid somewhere in the past. The most interesting pages in the *History* are those in which Livingston tries to articulate his vision of what this society was like. A socialist could criticise the Clearances with reference to an ideally just society which had yet to be achieved. Livingston, using a different but no less valid strategy, criticised them in terms of an ideal society which had been realised at some point in the early history of Scotland.

This is of course not the only strand in the *History*. It opens with forty-six pages of 'Preliminary Remarks', many of them constituting a kind of gazetteer of fortresses, temples and altars throughout Scotland. The enthusiasm of Livingston the antiquarian animates these pages, his endless fascination with the physical remains of the past and the moral and didactic lessons which can be drawn from them.

He returns to the vexed topic of the fate of the Scottish national records, arguing that the Scots were moved by the Norman's destruction of the Irish records to stipulate that two copies of their own should be kept 'in every stronghold and seminary in the realm'. There was also 'a permanent custom that every chief had both a bard and a Seanachi [sic] qualified to write, and to recite the history of each family where they were maintained' (H 35). The topic is seen in a competitive light, historians of other countries being discredited because it is 'impossible that any nation in Europe can be admitted as judges of our history' (H 23). France got the alphabet from Scotland in A.D. 792, before which time it had not written history. The history of Spain is

a mass of nonsense, consisting of nothing but wild fables, chiefly invented since the era of their conquest of South America (H 25)

Although the Scots instinctively make common cause with the Irish when the latter are slandered, much Irish history writing is the work of the Norman overlords

for whom it was reserved that they should be the sole inventors and propagators of what they afterwards palmed upon the world as the productions of those whom they designed to victimize (H 27)

and the poet is at pains

to put my young Scottish readers on their guard against the voluminous fabrications founded upon this maliciously-contrived romance of Keating's (H 34)

The morals of the English are treated no less mercilessly than in the *Vindication*. Livingston lists seventy-five criminal convictions occurring in that country in a mere twelve days (H 254-6). If the Irish, too, have an 'inveterate adherence to superstition and filth' (H 254), this is because

all the idolaters, incendiaries, way-layers, and murderers shooting people from lime-kilns, &c., which renders that country the shambles it now is, and was for ages past, are English: their proportion being a thousand to one above the original natives 150 years ago. (H 253)

The English are so racially mixed that by 1066 not one could tell who his grandfather was, and they must fall back on the meagre consolation that 'they are sure they are of Adam's race' (H 243).

Regarding the Clearances, Livingston returns to the point made in the *Critic*, by which

If the dormant laws of this kingdom were brought into operation, every landholder within the bounds of Scotland would forfeit his life in one week... these men have not only blindfolded this nation, so that they know nothing of the past state of society, but they have also deprived the people of the means of subsistence and brought them so low that, instead of having the power to crush tyrants as their fathers had, the tongue of the bell and the whip of the factor are

the only portions they can expect, come of them what will. (H 88-9)

The backbone of the *History*, as we have said, is provided by the traditional accounts of early Scotland. It was noted earlier that Boece's version carefully intertwined the story of Gathelus and Scota with that of Moses and the exiled tribes of Egypt, creating a symbiosis between Israelite and Scottish migrations which reverberates in post-Reformation views of the Calvinist Scots as God's chosen people. Livingston argues that, since Ptolemy's map mentions the castle at Edinburgh

Scotland, and the Scottish nation in all its branches, were known and conspicuous in the land of Egypt in the first century - yes, and much earlier. (H 17)

There is a further connection to the Middle East in the Phoenician construction of 'Baliemaccommara', the largest of seven or eight ancient forts in Southend parish, Kintyre (H 19). An underlying Biblical pattern is obvious in Fergus' division of the Scottish kingdom into twelve sections corresponding to twelve clans, each with a chief at its head, land being assigned to them by lots (H 54ff.) While the identity of Welsh and Gaulish placenames proves that the south Britons were descendants of the Gauls, the Scots of Alba and the Milesians of Erin, too, originally formed one single people, constituting, along with the Cantabrians of Spain and the Piedmont valleys, a distinct branch of the Japhetic family. By Cantabrians Livingston apparently means the Basques. He also calls them the Gomerian Celts, and his brief cameo ascribes to them many of the Scottish virtues - racial purity, tenacity and loyalty to tradition, military valour in repelling invaders:

Within the limits of Biscaya they maintained their distinction, and do so still; and, although they are too weak to form a nationality, they speak the Gomerian Celtic, and have some articles of dress identical with those of the Scots... the Gomerians of Spain can number about two millions, and... there are some works in their language; though it is to be regretted that their

literature is indeed very limited. They are a thoroughly primitive people, and quite different in their features and personal structure from the rest of the Spaniards; nor is their natural valour less conspicuous now than it was at any other period of their interesting history. (H 24)

Though he accepts a common origin for the Scots and the Irish, Livingston underlines two points of particular importance. About a century before the birth of Christ the Scots established a colony in Ulster. This is crucial to the refutation of the Dalriadan theory of the origin of the Scottish monarchy. And the civil strife which troubled Ireland during the three centuries after, and in which the Scottish colonists took part, means that Ireland cannot possibly have sent forces to combat the Roman invaders. The glory of repulsing these belongs to the Scots alone.

At the time of Fergus I, a 'patriarchal system of government' (H 57) was in force, limited monarchy, the best form of all governments according to Livingston. The people recognised a single monarch, but he could not legislate, and had no power over the soil:

the people in common possessed the land; and hence their voluntary obligation of supporting their rulers - not "their superiors;" (H 56)

The state was based on a voluntary pact entered into by people and monarch. Chieftains were elected, there being no form of hereditary succession. Not the aristocrats alone, but each man kept a pedigree. The land was 'the permanent property of the community'. While an individual could dispose of movable effects, buying or selling of land was impossible:

It would not do, in those days, to show people a piece of sheep-skin, with something written upon it, and tell them the ground is mine, the water is mine, the wood, your cattle, and the rocks are mine... It would not do to tell rational beings that the will of men called lords and feudal priests was justice between man and man... (H 58)

Livingston deals with the ancient Scots under seven headings: diet and beverage, dress and manners, weapons and other implements of war, agriculture, musical instruments, mechanical tools, literature and language. He anachronistically ascribes the use of the fiery cross to this time (it was in fact a Norse practice), and insists that the people did not go naked, with a characteristic rejection of any imputation of savagery.

The last section is undoubtedly the most interesting. Language, which marks man off from all other living creatures, is a residue of the original perfection God granted to humanity. The 'gamut of speech' (H 71) is like a stringed instrument. Just as a harp, or a violin, has a precise number of strings, so man can utter seventeen sounds, neither more nor less. That Gaelic should possess precisely seventeen letters corresponding to these ('h' being discounted) is 'a literary achievement never yet equalled' (H 73). Gaelic is a 'natural language', in contrast to 'artificial' languages such as French and German, plagued by uncertainties as to orthography and pronunciation.

Where are we to look for that natural language, which must be according to what is stated, the foundation of all speeches?... You have no need... to go anywhere else to seek it, for it is yet alive in your native land, on the hills and valleys of Caledonia - as pure, as copious, and as energetic as ever; though now, alas, offering you its last embrace... In giving it utterance, all the organs of speech given by the Creator to man are set in motion, each performing its part in regular harmony, which is more than any artificial tongue under heaven can effect. A man cannot speak a dozen words of it without bringing the seventeen keys of the gamut into operation, which any reflecting man can discern. (H 71-2)

Livingston's argument is theological. While man could in theory have developed language in a gradual process according to his perception of the phenomenal world, this possibility must be discounted. Man's first act upon being created was to praise his maker, something he could never have done had a language not been immediately available, complete in all its essential particulars.

The origin of letters is treated in a similar way. The ancient Egyptian priesthood may well have invented hieroglyphs imitating the constellations, but these were used to rob and deceive by the systematic necromancy called "scientific rule" (H 75). Indeed, faced with mounting popular resentment at the abuse of their knowledge, the Egyptian priests staged a rebellion within their ranks so as to channel and defuse this hostility. The letters with which Gaelic is written could not come from such a corrupt source. They were in fact given by God to Moses on the tables of the law and subsequently transmitted by the Phoenicians to the Gomerians of Spain. The Celto-Scottic letters are 'Phoenician in origin, Phoenician in form, and Phoenician in number' (H 80).

It mattered to Livingston that the Druids of Fergus' time should not resemble the exploitative priesthood of pagan Egypt. Their functions were restricted to the teaching of theology, astronomy and botany, and to attendance at the execution of criminals. They could not make or administer laws without the previous consent of the people. The simplicity of their altars, 'dug out of the earth... without being touched by a tool of any kind' (H 7) makes them almost Presbyterians *ante tempore*.

The patriarchal system of worship handed down from Adam to Noah, and carried by our ancestors from the east and practised in its purity from age to age here as they received it, was absolutely different from the orgies and idolatry of Greece and Rome, or any of the other nations known to them; for plain it is that, by the time the Romans came to Britain, the whole earth was immersed in idolatry of the most revolting character. (H 86)

Again there is a determination to link Scotland directly to the Middle East, while the pagan and imperialist civilisations of Greece and Rome are prevented from polluting the pure stream of tradition. In the same vein, Livingston claims that a curious custom by which those suffering from undiagnosed diseases were exposed on couches in public places, so that passers-by might help to identify what was wrong with them, was of oriental origin

since 'our ancestors took their knowledge from that cradle of mankind' (H 99).

His poetry, while avoiding any explicit sign of heterodoxy, bears no markedly Christian characteristics. The rather stark definition of true religion given in the *History* goes some way to explaining Livingston's sympathy for the cult he imagined the Druids to have practised. Religion is 'a sincere belief in the being of a Deity and in the equally-certain truth of future rewards and punishments' (H 101). A religion so defined is a broad church indeed, and reduces the mediation of the clergy almost to nothing. Livingston's deep-seated anticlericalism surfaces from time to time in the *History*.

Christianity was adopted by Lucius, king of the Britons, in 187 and by Donald I of Scotland in 203. According to Livingston, our heathen ancestors, guided only by the light of natural equity, achieved a degree of justice and freedom which is the highest achievement of humanity. The Caledonians who repelled the Roman invasions were not Christians. Nonetheless, their action formed part of a divine plan, asserting a continuity which blurs the distinction between the pagan and the Christian eras:

how could man do what Omnipotence decreed not to be done. It was not because it was the will of man, but because the God of all the Earth reserved this small portion of the world to be an asylum for his witnesses, when their blood was shed by the dragon empire of Rome, from the valley of the Nile to those parts of Caledonia where the Roman arms could not penetrate. There the heralds of the cross found refuge when the Roman world could afford them none. (H 250-1)

Livingston devoted considerable space to the struggles between the Scots and the invaders. When King Caractacus is captured through the treachery of his wife Cartimandua, he is moved to an effusion on patriotic heroes which perhaps also applies to Calgacus and, who knows, to the poet as he saw himself:

an overruling Providence "from age to age endure"
[sic], endowing rare individuals here and there to

check bloody usurpation, ambition, deceit, avarice, extortion, and open profanity, all of which must of necessity produce each other, and when all are combined nothing but the immediate hand of heaven can arrest them, and that invariably by persons who must stand alone wrestling with disappointments, treachery, revileings [sic], and enemies at home and abroad; and scarcely can any of them be found who were not sacrificed by their respective countrymen, though they were conscious that the God of love and truth alone could send such men to their relief. (H 121)

If a typical Livingstonian hero exists, then this is his predicament. The type was further embodied in William Wallace at the time of the Wars of Independence. Such was Livingston's enthusiasm for Wallace that a casual mention of Lanark leads him to anticipate passages of the *History* which were never to be written:

Venerable Lanark, we shall have the pleasure shortly of hearing thy towers and crags echoing to the bugle of the WALLACE wight and of many more of thine own kilted belted bairns, always foremost on the crimson-dyed sward, maintaining SCOTIA'S Honours and Rights. (H 138)

The pamphlet *Primitive Christianity* published in 1859, and the 1860 *Lecture* to the United Highlanders of Glasgow are related in the period they deal with and in their approach to it. The earlier and shorter of the two pieces is a relatively succinct summary of what Livingston had said on this subject in earlier works. It opens with a passage in an appropriately pietistic style he does not elsewhere attempt. God was particularly concerned that there should be a high level of learning and material culture in ancient Scotland, so that this nation might be better prepared to receive the Word. He blurs, as before, the distinction between pagan and Christian Scotland, emphasising the stark simplicity of the forms paganism took in this country:

there was one land far superior to the surrounding countries, and so distinguished from the rest, that it is very questionable if it deserves the name of Pagan, if we are to understand idolatry and its orgies by that name... a small country, whose extent would hardly be

missed out of many of the provinces of the empire, but yet an independent kingdom, in whose bounds not a vestige of an idol can be traced, but abundance of simple altars of rude stones untouched by the hands of the artificer, in so strict accordance with the patriarchal system of worship, that even grave Christians are surprised at it... the providence of God ordered the independence and advanced state of the Scottish nation at that early period, both for being an asylum for the persecuted flock of Christ, and the more ready acceptance of the Gospel, which was never eradicated in this land since its first introduction upwards of 1700 years ago. (PC 4, 6)

Livingston backdates the conversion of the Picts to A.D. 345, and traces the foundation of Iona to Donald I in A.D. 212. John Smith of Campbeltown's 'Dearg MacDruibheil' from *Gaelic Antiquities* offers an account, treated by Livingston as historical, of the defeat of the druids, although 'those subtile priests continued the strenuous opponents of the Gospel, which they considered no better than Polytheism' (PC 8). The Celtic priesthood take on almost the severity of Old Testament leaders of the Jews when confronted with the multiple divinities of the pagan peoples around them. The defeat of the Scots by the combined forces of the Picts and the Romans in A.D. 363 allowed the druids to repossess Iona, and this is why Columba found an archdruid there when he arrived two centuries later.

The remainder of the pamphlet seeks to distance early Christianity in Scotland as much as possible from the doctrines and practices of Rome. The teachings of Anatolius of Laodicea were preferred to those of the Popes. The Culdees

all along opposed and disowned the dictations of Rome, and maintained that they adhered to the Scriptures, and to the teaching of the disciples of the Apostle John, and to the sum of their doctrines, as taught by Anatolius, already mentioned. (PC 11)

Toland is cited to refute Irish attempts to appropriate the Culdees, along with the credit for their missionary activities throughout the Europe of the Dark Ages. Livingston insists that Stanyhurst 'was the inventor of calling the Green Isle Scotland,

in order to have a pretence to make Irishmen of our Culdees' (PC 11).

The *Lecture* addresses the frequent allegation

that the Island of Britain was unknown to the rest of the world till the time of Julius Caesar, the Roman General... and that hence... our progenitors were in a state of savageism (L 3)

The truth is that

a volume of references could be compiled from classic authors to prove that the Celtic race everywhere were noted for their bravery, chastity, and every other virtue, compared with the rest of mankind (L 4)

Once more different strands of the polemical tradition can be seen to interweave: the assimilation of nationalism and Protestantism, praise of inborn racial characteristics, competition as to whose nation will have the most ancient origin and the most precocious social and technological development. Livingston sets out to prove

not only that the antiquity of the Scottish nation is genuine, as our annalists represent it, but that, on the admission of the Roman invaders, our progenitors were far advanced long before the era of Ossian. (L 9)

He claims that a Greek navigator from Marseilles discovered Britain six centuries before Caesar's invasion, and quotes Origen of Alexandria to the effect 'that the Britons, before the Christian era, had the knowledge of, and believed in the one true God' (L 7). Caesar's account shows that our progenitors were 'a rural population - the most exalted state that human nature can attain to in this sphere of existence' (L 8). Discussion of the already mentioned phrase from Tacitus naturally leads Livingston to speak of Mons Graupius, and the heroism of the Caledonians rouses him to considerable flights of rhetoric. The catalogue of our monarchs, that 'envied and hated charter our of nationality' is referred to yet again, and Ossian is assimilated to the religious polemic through his victory over the druids.

Our examination of the earlier phase of Livingston's career as a writer is complete, with one important exception. The latter part of the *Lecture* pertains to the Ossianic controversy and will be dealt with in the next part of our study, along with other passages on this subject from the *Vindication* and the *History*, and the *Brief Sketch* appended to the 1858 *Duain Ghaelic*.

If Livingston's work as a poet can still fascinate us and hold our attention today, his work as polemicist and historian is very much of its time. Indeed, in many ways his stance was anachronistic even half way through the last century, his gaze turned resolutely backwards to Scotland's medieval and early Renaissance historians, and to debates whose cogency Scotland's new, if temporary status as North Britain had very much diminished. Nevertheless, the prose works are useful in showing that Livingston's poetry, so individual and even anomalous in its forms and preoccupations, did not spring from a limbo, but from a passionate and prolonged attempt to master the history of his country and his race. The world of his battle poems, and in particular of those dealing with imaginary conflicts, can seem shadowy and imprecise until one realises that the mind which conceived them had nourished itself on the traditionary histories of Scotland. This strand of what could be called militant history provided the mood, the background and the inspiration for Livingston's militant poetry of struggle between races and nations.

The next two chapters consider Livingston's views on the Ossianic controversy and the relationship between Macpherson's 'translations', the range of Ossianic material in Gaelic from the genuine to the entirely spurious, and his own poetry. This discussion will provide a bridge to the detailed readings of his two longest poems, 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' and 'Blàr Shunadail', which constitute the sixth and seventh chapters of this thesis.

A letter from Hugh Blair to Henry Mackenzie, dated December 20th 1797, and included in the *Report of the Highland Society of Edinburgh on the poems of Ossian* (Mackenzie 1805: 56-62), relates how it all began. Blair was nearly eighty when he wrote the letter, but remembers clearly that it was a chance meeting in Moffat, 'about the year 1759', between the dramatist John Home and James Macpherson of Ruthven in Badenoch, then a tutor in the family of one Mr Graham of Balgowan, which produced the first English prose fragments of ancient Gaelic poetry. There are elements in the account which can still tantalise and puzzle us. It is difficult to see Macpherson as the conscious perpetrator of an enormous and premeditated fraud. When Blair pressed him for further translations, he was 'extremely reluctant and averse to comply with my request'. Macpherson could not possibly have foreseen the implications of the connection he had made, or claimed to have made, for Scottish and European literature. If one comes away with the impression of something of a conspiracy, it is one where the majority of the participants acted in utter, if ingenuous good faith, while the only possible culprit seems to have been dragged in rather against his will.

Indeed, James Macpherson quickly enough lost interest in the project and moved on to other things: translation of Homer, the writing of an *Introduction to the History of Great Britain and Ireland* (1771), and a successful career in politics. The figure of Ossian, and the poetry he attributed to it, would appear to have been merely a phase in Macpherson's existence. Yet it cast, as it were, a double shadow. Its influence on the Romantic literature of Germany, Italy, Russia and other European countries was crucial (Gilardino 1982, Levin 1980, Okun 1967, Tombo 1966, Van Tieghem

1967), so much so that one cannot but be astonished at the effectively sub-literary role still sometimes assigned to Macpherson's work in English and Scottish literary studies. Hook (1987) devotes a mere four pages to him, hardly proportionate to Macpherson's significance in the history of Scottish literature and culture.

The shadow was also cast backwards onto the literature Macpherson claimed to have translated. His characterisation of the ancient Gaels responded so accurately to the tastes of his day, and met with such acclaim, that for a time it precluded more genuine communication to the world at large of the nature of Gaelic literature and the people who produced it.

Seen from a Gaelic perspective, the success of the English poetry of Ossian had a double effect. On the one hand, it stimulated research into what had been written down of the old heroic ballads which were still so popular in Scotland (Meek 1987, 1991) and, more generally, into Gaelic written remains, while encouraging the transcription of much material which had not previously been recorded. On the other, it led to the production of a bogus Gaelic literature, which either attempted to transform genuine material in the direction of Macpherson's travesty of it, or imported Macpherson's mood and aesthetics directly into Gaelic, with minimal reference to traditional models (Thomson 1958).

The contemporary researcher is struck by the quantity of ink poured out in the process of a controversy which a century barely sufficed to exhaust (Black 1926, Dun 1971). The publication of John Francis Campbell's *Leabhar na Féinne* at last made genuine materials available using modern textual criteria, so that its appearance in 1872 marks a watershed in the controversy. If the whole Ossianic question is such a taxing one, it is because it demands a comparative approach, of a kind British literary scholars rarely attempt. Fiona Stafford's recent monograph, to take one example, is marred by the unspoken and unargued assumption that a knowledge of Gaelic is inessential to an overall

assessment of Macpherson's work, and the volume of essays edited by Gaskill *Ossian Revisited* (Edinburgh 1991) represents a welcome broadening of perspectives, with contributions by scholars from Britain and further afield, including specialists in Gaelic, Scottish, English and German literatures.

Livingston was born nearly 50 years after the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* had broken on the literary world. Yet the heroic material, ranging across the whole spectrum from the genuine oral tradition to spurious literary concoction, was a potent force in Gaelic poetry for much of the nineteenth century. In terms of his ambitions, at least, Livingston was the most heroic Gaelic poet of his time. Given his conviction that he must speak for his language community as a whole and, beyond it, for the entire Scottish nation, it was inevitable that he should assume a public position on the controversy attached to Ossian's name. I shall therefore examine his relationship to Ossianic material as expressed explicitly in his poetry and prose, before moving to a more implicit examination of the nature of its influence on his own creative work.

'Leacan-Uaighean nam Bàrd' (C 142-6) was awarded a prize by the Glasgow Celtic Society in September 1867, and appeared in the *North British Daily Mail* on November 26th of that year. The full title was 'Tha na rannan seo mar gum b'ann air leacan uaighean nam bàrd', and it was issued as a broadsheet together with 'Soraidh Dhonnachaidh do Chomhal'. Livingston addresses in turn the seven poets who embody the tradition he sees himself as continuing. Typically, it begins with an address to 'A Ghàidheil òig' and reference to the Highland regiments and their tartan, those men

o bheanntan tuathach na h-Alba
far an d'fhuair Mac Fhinn a Ghàidhlig,
's teaghlach mòr nan duan na dh'fhàg iad.

'Finn's son' is, of course, Ossian, the fountainhead of Gaelic poetry, which has a precise geographical location in the mountains of northern Scotland. There follows a very conservative list of

the repertory (beauties of the landscape, deer and boar hunting, birds singing on the forest branches, milkmaids and herds at the sheiling) and genres (love songs and songs of devotion, pibrochs, sheiling songs, rowing songs and satire) of that poetry.

It is interesting that heroic poetry should be missing from the list. Turning to Ossian 'an tùs na cliarachd', Livingston praises him as a poet of nature and the landscape. When the pace of the verse quickens, and military prowess is mentioned, it is immediately tempered by a reference to Ossian's humanity, the ease with which he was moved:

Oisein an comann nam flath -
Oisein am boil' a' chath -
Oisein uasal gun cheilg -
Oisein am frith na seilg -
Oisein ag iomain na ruaige -
Oisein a' tiomachadh ri truaighe -
Oisein a' diùltadh a bhualadh.

The younger poet views Ossian with a kind of noble despair, because he has already completely exhausted the resources of the language:

Chuir thu Ghàidhlig gu bun a h-anail,
cha d'fhàg thu dìog na creubh gun labhairt

From the evidence of this poem, it would seem that Livingston admired Ossian primarily as a master of language, a lover of nature, and a man of strong and responsive human sentiments.

The next two figures in the list are women poets, 'Crimine na clàrsaich is Deardail thùirseach', conceived of as historical figures in just the same way as Ossian. Crimine was the wife of Dearg. In the words of Armstrong, 'her premature and sudden death was occasioned by a rash experiment which her husband and his comrades made use of to put her conjugal affections to the test' (Dwelly 1973: 1031). In the *History*, in the course of a discussion of traditional Celtic instruments, Livingston notes that the clàrsach or harp is a female instrument:

there are still extant some elegies of the third century adapted to the harmony of the harp, inferior to none in any language, composed by females, and one of

them extempore by Crimine on the supposed death of her husband, at the conclusion of which she fell down and expired. (H 70)

The identification of the harp with women shows that a modern sensibility has superseded genuine tradition, but suits Armstrong's artificial language, with its sentimental presentation of the tale. Livingston celebrates Deirdre (to use the common English version of her name) as the one

a chuir an eagar an dàn brònach
a' caoidh Chlann Uisnich marbh le fòirneart

We shall look at the sources Livingston drew on for Crimine and Deirdre at a later point, in our discussion of his relation to 'Ossianic' texts.

Fourth in his list comes the poet of 'Miann a' Bhàird Aosda', an eighteenth century concoction which Livingston would have known from Mackenzie's *Beauties* (1907: 16-9) and which he evidently had complete faith in. The poet is praised in 'Leacan Uaighean' for his delight in the pastoral life and his rejection of worldly pleasures ('sluigeadh an saoghaltach an còrr dheth!') For Mackenzie 'it is impossible, at this day, to decide with any certainty to what part of the Highlands the AGED BARD belonged, or at what time he flourished', yet the poem is 'a curious and valuable relic of antiquity'.

Livingston follows Mackenzie's order for his next three figures, the author of 'Comhachag na Sròine', Màiri Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh and Iain Lom. The ordering of seven major Gaelic poets presented in 'Leacan-uaighean' had a general validity for Livingston. He returns to it in the first line of 'Rann marbh-thaisg Iain Luim, am Bàrd Abrach' (C 139), 'Iain Luim san òrdugh 's tu 'n seachdamh', and a footnote reminds the reader 'An òrdugh Bàrdan ainmeil na Gàidhealtachd'. The 'seachd 's an trì fichead rann a dh'fhàg thu' mentioned next in 'Leacan-uaighean' correspond to the 67 stanzas of the 'Comhachag' in the *Beauties*. The tone of the poem changes with the Skye poetess. Livingston speaks to her as to an elder colleague:

Thoir do chàch mar is àill do dhileab,
ach tilg do thonnag air an ileach.

She is close enough almost for physical contact. Iain Lom's satirical genius is singled out, not surprisingly for one like Livingston who castigated both the Scottish perpetrators of the evictions and, more generally, the English nation:

sgìurs thu iad on Rìgh sa chathair
gu Brian an ruamhair a bha 'n Athall,
le teanga nach do ghluais ri càirean
a leithid eile on latha dh'fhàs i.

In the poem as a whole Livingston blends legendary and historical figures and, in a proportion difficult to establish clearly, both traditional and spurious texts, in the process of constructing retrospectively his poetic lineage.

'Leacan-Uaighean nam Bàrd' makes a harmonious, consistent impression. And indeed it is perfectly in order for a poet to choose his or her forebears and link them in a subjective genealogy which needs no further validation than the success of the poet's own practice. If we turn to Livingston's prose, however, and apply the criteria of literary scholarship, the confusion and inconsistencies of his position become rapidly apparent.

The evidence of the prose works can be grouped under three main headings: Livingston's attitude to James Macpherson and the much debated authenticity of his English versions; the determination to make historical figures of the legendary bard and his father; and which text or texts Livingston held to be genuinely Ossianic. Since Livingston believed passionately in the historical fact of Ossian's existence, his concept of the genuine Ossianic text must inevitably differ from that of the modern scholar. This, the most complex of the three topics, we shall deal with last in order.

Two sections in the *Vindication* deal with Macpherson (V 286-99, 479-514). They crop up in a manner consistent with the generally haphazard organisation of the book. The larger occurs when Livingston is dealing with Clan Macpherson - he clearly had to settle accounts with their most illustrious representative. The shorter section, rather interestingly, links Macpherson and Chatterton. Chatterton, according to Livingston, did not commit suicide - the English managed to 'dispatch' him. The attempt to discredit Macpherson's work arose from a desire to show that the Scots, as a nation, were no less gullible than the English, and had fallen prey to literary trickery on just as dramatic a scale.

Livingston's account of events is influenced by the vaguely paranoid imagination which characterises many of his assertions in the *Vindication*. Macpherson was an English agent at least from the time a subscription was taken up to allow him to tour Gaelic-speaking Scotland. The English possessed copies of the originals 'stolen by their murderous marauders out of Ireland ages bygone' (V 286), and used Macpherson to secure as much of the Scottish heritage as possible. They were astonished by what he recovered, and by its popular success on a European scale. Macpherson was given to understand that the manuscripts he had collected would be returned to him only if he refunded the expenses of his trip. This allowed them to be withheld while a campaign of slander was mounted against the English versions. If Macpherson could be proved to have lied about his translation, this would also call into question the historicity of the poet Ossian as presented in his work. From the viewpoint of Gaelic literary circles, the latter was clearly a much more disturbing threat. Johnson's journey and his assertions, according to Livingston, were a crucial element in this planned campaign of propaganda and defamation.

Livingston is unwilling to credit Macpherson with the English *Ossian* which 'meritorious as it is, is but a poor imitation of the original' (V 286). Instead, he asserts that Lachlan MacPherson of

Strathmashie was 'the principal party in accomplishing the translation', while James was merely 'the agent of the English to secure the parchments' (V 506). Words hard enough to condemn Macpherson's treachery can scarcely be found. Clanranald, from whom Macpherson had obtained several valuable manuscripts, wished to prosecute him for failing to return them. But Macpherson's English paymasters prevented him being taken to court. Promotion within the London establishment naturally involved deculturation:

It was no trifling course of instructions he underwent in the English school of malicious rage against the Gael ere he was made a Member of Parliament, and ere those who would see him to the devil for bearing the name of Mac Pherson, whatever his talents might have been, would admit him into their legislative assembly. (V 483)

And indeed

no means could prevail on Macpherson to restore those manuscripts during his life, seeing that the British Parliament who encouraged and paid him for collecting and swindling, were no doubt bound to protect him at all hazards. (V 506)

Although Livingston sees Macpherson as a traitor and a thief, the personal attack on him does not call into question the value of the translations which appeared under his name, or their claim to be based on genuine Gaelic material.

Modern opinion ascribes Macpherson's jealous guarding of the manuscripts he had collected to the difficulty he encountered, due in part to his own lack of competence, in forging an original which eventually appeared as the 1807 Gaelic *Ossian*. Logic suggests that the manuscript evidence could have cast a crucial and damning light on what is effectively a retranslation. Livingston says remarkably little about the 1807 text. This may in part be due to his heavy reliance, throughout the Ossianic debate in the *Vindication*, on pre-1807 texts, principally MacNicol's *Remarks* and the 1805 *Report*. He quotes at length from the testimonials contained in the latter, as well as from its

catalogue of manuscripts, and this is symptomatic of his reluctance to take the lead in textual or critical, rather than polemical and nationalist matters.

On the other hand, he gives his full support to John Smith's *Sean Dana*, which he believes to have been based on authentic sources, including a collection made by the Rev. John Woodrow of Kildalton in Islay 'about the year 1750, if not earlier' (V 293). This last piece of information may be a piece of Islay lore contributed by Livingston himself. There is no mention of any such collection in the *Report* or in Campbell. According to the *Fasti* (4, 76) Wodrow (apparently the more accurate spelling) published two books of English verse renderings from Macpherson: *Carthon. the Death of Cuchullin and Dar Thula* in 1769 and *Fingal* in 1771. Wodrow was born in 1735, and was therefore only fifteen in 1750. This makes Livingston's assertion that he put together an Ossianic collection then or earlier hard to believe. In a footnote (1780: 128) Smith acknowledges his debt to the MacDiarmid and Kennedy manuscripts, but again there is no mention of Wodrow. Livingston tells us the latter made his collection 'from various manuscripts' - the tradition that counts is a written one, and oral transmission is merely ancillary to it. A written text gains validation from a previous written text, not from oral recitation. Livingston goes so far as to deny that any of Macpherson's precious hoard had been taken down from dictation (V 288).

Macpherson, we are told, was summoned to Oxford to examine the Irish manuscripts, but could understand nothing of them. Livingston would seem at this stage to give the same value to Irish and Scottish renditions of the Ossianic material. Almost as crucial as the 1805 *Report* to his treatment of the subject are the *Annals of the Four Masters* translated by Owen Connellan, and published in Dublin in 1846 with copious annotations by Connellan himself and by Philip MacDermott. Rather intriguingly, Livingston ends his treatment of Macpherson and Ossian in the *Vindication* by

quoting in English, from the footnotes to the *Annals*, 24 quatrains of 'Cath Cairbre', including the passage on the death of Oscar (Connellan 1846: 267). The translation is pronounced 'very sublime', although 'somewhat different from the literal rendering by severals [sic] of our Celtic countrymen' (V 509) but, on the very next page, has become only 'a faint imitation of the original'. The latter phrase may be one Livingston rather mechanically repeats from his reading in the area.

This use of the *Annals* has several interesting implications. Firstly, the very footnote quoted by Livingston offers a dismissive assessment of Macpherson's practice which modern scholarship substantially corroborates. Finn

is called Fingal in Mac Pherson's Poems of Ossian, but it is to be observed that these are not the real poems of Ossian, but mostly fictions fabricated by Mac Pherson himself, and containing some passages from the ancient poems.

Secondly, the account of Oscar's death in the ballad contradicts Macpherson's version of the same in Book 1 of *Temora*, which had first appeared in Gaelic in 1807. As Smart has pointed out (1905: 72), Oscar is killed, according to tradition, in the context of a final catastrophe for the Fians, while for Macpherson this is 'no more than a temporary check at the outset of a successful campaign.' Livingston's failure to pursue this point is symptomatic of a general unwillingness on his part to give any detailed assessment of the 1807 Gaelic *Ossian*.

Respect for the Irish scholars is tempered by the observation that 'the modern writers of Ireland have a strong mixture of the pilfering leaven in their composition' (V 508). His comment that

The best collection of Ossian's Poems, in Irish manuscript, with translations into English, is in the Library of Sir William Betham, and, if published, would be a valuable contribution towards ancient Irish literature (V 513)

bears little weight, for it is lifted more or less verbatim from the *Annals*, not an original assessment but one borrowed, magpie-like, from another source.

Livingston's view of Macpherson emerges clearly from the *Vindication*. His concept of Ossian as a historical figure is a less pressing matter for the modern scholar, but must have been of at least equal importance for the poet. The attraction of the *Annals* was that, once the identification of Fingal with Finn MacCumhail had been accepted, the king's death could be fixed, on their authority, at A.D. 283. The date of his son's poems could then be relatively easily deduced, for 'The era of Ossian is as well authenticated as that of either Alexander, Caesar, or any other noted character of antiquity' (V 508). 'Mocheirigh Fhinn' (C 192-3) is a gentle satire on those who fervently collected Ossianic relics. Its opening lines fix the date at 1855:

Tha còig ceud deug is deich 's trì fichead,
's dà bhliadhn' eil' air dol seachad
on a chaidil Fionn na airm choiseart
na leaba sheilg air bruachan Dhochairt.

It would be a mistake to see these lines as mocking the hero's historical status. Rather, they give a note of informed superiority to the poet's treatment of the collector and his heavy burden:

is eallach a dhrom' air a mhuin
de gach ioghnadh bha o shean,
sgiath Churaich 's clogad Mhànais,
cuigeal is fearsaid Eamhair-Alainn,
sleagh Dhiarmaid 's crios-muineal Bhran,
crann-arm Fhinn is Mac-an-Luinn,
dearbh fhreumhan fìor chraobh Lòdainn,
breacan Oscair 's bogha Thrèin-mhoir,
's bratach seachd cathan na Fèinne...

If this were to be taken as a debunking of the entire Ossianic material, the contradiction with Livingston's prose comments and 'Leacan-Uaighean' would be overwhelming. More probably, he is

poking fun at the antiquarian enthusiasms of his friend and helper Duncan MacNab in a way that shows he was refreshingly able to laugh at the excesses of Ossianic enthusiasm, even though the literary remains commanded powerful loyalty from him. The poem ends with the generous champion loading his admirer with even more relics, some of them destined for friends MacNab and Livingston shared:

sleagh Mhic a Duibhn' do chailein Ghrianaig,
sgiath Churaich do dh'Artt dileas, fialaidh,
breacan Oscair 's biodag Fhaolain
do Dhòmhnaill nan còrn an ceann-feadhna.

While rejecting spindles and distaffs, Livingston was prepared to accept archaeological evidence for the historicity of the poems. The prologue to the *History*, dealing with various sites of antiquarian interest, identifies the fortress of Beregonium, near Dunstaffnage in Argyll, as Fingal's Selma, 'as the place is constantly named by his son' (H 13), in a way that had been widely accepted at least since the 1807 *Ossian* appeared. Livingston energetically espouses the use of placenames to prove the historicity of Finn and Scotland's claim to have been his home. Fincastle in Duill parish, Perthshire, was the hero's fort or palace, and the ruins of Dundargue in Aberdour parish, Buchan, were the residence of Dargo or Dearg, leader of the Druids against the Fingalians on the banks of Loch Awe. This battle marked the climax of the civil war between Druids and Christians in Scotland some five years before Fingal's death (H 10, 14). The *Brief Sketch* adduces considerable evidence from placenames for the activities of the Ossianic heroes in Scotland, quoting sixty-four in all, nearly half of them from John Lanne Buchanan's 1794 *Defence of the Scots Highlanders*.

The opening of the *Brief Sketch* indicates a significant change of position since the writing of the *Vindication*. Much of the essay aims to refute Irish claims that Fingal and Ossian

lived, and the poems originated, in Ireland rather than Scotland. Dishonesty and ignorance are to be expected from the English, for

the world knows that they cannot help it - being providentially doomed to wallow in their own pitiful mire of ignorance, and hostile to all the world; so that they are shut up under the immovable bars of a barbarous and self-invented jargon, by which they are isolated from the rest of mankind, and disqualified to learn or to improve. (A 127)

The Irish have no such excuses:

you know our language, and all connected with this subject, and our undoubted right to the Caledonian Bard. You know the shires, parishes and districts, where these mountains, rivers, valleys, rocks, and fields, named after Fingal and the Fianntan, are; and yet, in place of acknowledging your fault, you are excited the more to lie and to steal. (A 127-8)

Livingston's polemical spleen is directed against the Irish language:

there is nothing in that barbarous and corrupted jargon called "Irish," full of half-Romanised, Scandinavian and Norman phrases, that could give utterance to the sentiments of Ossian, no more than the lowest cant among London thieves could express the eloquence of Chalmers. (A 145)

Gone is the reverence expressed in the *Vindication* for the work of scholars such as Betham, Connellan and MacDermott. Indeed, the *Brief Sketch* marks a low point in Livingston's polemical writings. He goes so far as to attribute the works of Shakespeare to a certain Archibald Armstrong, who accompanied James VI to London, and composed many of the plays in a garret in that city. Milton's *Paradise Lost* was written, not in the seventeenth, but in the fifteenth century, by Sir Richard Maitland, Lord Lethington. One would be happy to think that passages like this were informed by a devilish, satirical humour. Unfortunately, one's impression is that Livingston was only too serious when he made these preposterous suggestions. He may well be among those John Campbell of Islay refers to when he says that 'I could quote modern books which assert that the works of Milton and Shakspeare

[sic] were composed by Scotchmen, while Ossian's poetry is a genuine work of the third century' (1862: IV, 10).

It is tempting to see an explanation of the change in Livingston's attitude to the Irish scholars in the essay on 'The Poems of Ossian by Macpherson' which appeared in Vol. V of the *Transactions of the Ossianic Society* (1860: 171-204). Campbell gives an appropriate characterisation of the stage the controversy had reached when he writes, regarding this essay, that 'old rusty taunts, which great men hurled at each other in their rage nearly a century ago, are picked up by smaller men, and thrown freely about still, though they have lost their point and fall harmless' (1862: IV, 12). There is much in the essay which could only have incensed Livingston: the espousal of Pinkerton, Shaw and Dr Johnson's views, the assertion that 'Ireland alone was for many ages called *Scotia* or Scotland, its inhabitants *Scoti* or Scots', and the distaste expressed for 'the vulgarisms of the colloquial dialect' of Irish spoken by the Scottish Gaels (Trans. Oss. 1860: 174, 173). Usher and Innes are cited with respect, and the theory of the Dalriadan (that is, northern Irish) provenance of the Scottish Gaelic line of kings is restated.

Returning to the Battle of Gabhra and the pseudo-historical Finn, Livingston's confusion emerges right away when, in the *Vindication*, he takes issue with the *Annals'* editors concerning the Danish auxiliaries. The editors have them fighting with Fingal whereas, according to Livingston, 'Ossian's genuine poem' clearly states that they fought with Cairbre, against Fingal. As yet, the presence of Danish auxiliaries at a third-century battle in Ireland did not trouble Livingston's belief in the historical validity of the material. Eight years later, in the *Brief Sketch*, he put forward a different interpretation:

the Fingalians were Scotsmen, frequently employed in defending the principality in the north of Eirin from the encroachments of the Lagenians, in "Irish" Leighlin, that is Leinster - men foolishly in modern times transformed it into *Lochlanaich*, i.e. Danes, or

Scandinavians; hence the vulgar notion that the Fingalians contended with the North-men; whereas, in truth, the above Eireanaich were their fierce and restless rivals during the whole period of contention historically treated of in the poems of Ossian. (A144)

In his *Introduction*, Macpherson had made a point of ignoring 'the testimony of the poems of Ossian' because 'there might be an appearance of partiality in drawing authorities from the ancient poet of Caledonia' (1771: 97). The phrase occurs in the context of a lengthy rejection of the theory, put forward by Camden, Usher, Stillingfleet and Thomas Innes, that the Scottish Gaels originated from Ireland. The idea espoused by Livingston, that the Fingalians were defending a Scottish colony which had been established in Ulster, and which remained independent from the first to the ninth century, is a counterblast to the Dalriadan theory. It offered a sort of convenient, if unspoken validation for the Protestant colonisation of the province after the Reformation, made the idea that the Scottish kings were descended from Irish colonists of Argyll in the sixth century look foolish, and saved the Scots from sharing with the Irish the glory of having repulsed the Roman invaders. Macpherson refers in the *Introduction* to O'Flaherty, and the Irish claim

that their ancestors, in the days of Agricola, as well as in subsequent periods, were the life and strength of the Caledonian army. (1771: 97)

Points such as this show Macpherson and Livingston engaged in an identical patriotic project. Far from seeking Irish assistance, the Scots had made the green isle

shake from shore to shore, from the first till the middle of the third century, when Fingal was the viceroy of the principality. (A 137)

The existence of the principality is substantiated, Livingston claims, by the persistence of genuine Celtic among the few remaining Ulstermen of Scottish descent and on the island of 'Rachlin' [sic].

Further exploits of the historical Finn, according to Livingston, are the battle on the banks of the Carron with the armies of the 'king of the world', the Roman emperor, which he places after the invasion of Severus, and the defeat of Dargo, son of the Druid of Baal. It is natural that the determination to make Finn and Ossian historical figures should bring Livingston closer to bogus material, and indeed, the basis for the first assertion is Macpherson's 'Comala' (1940: I, 87), for the second the argument and notes to Smith's 'Dargo the son of Druivel' (1780: 277-8). (The ambivalence of the latter name will not escape the more unkind among contemporary scholars, but 'drivel' does not come into it. The traditional MacDruibheil is for Smith clearly 'the son of the Druid of Bel', no doubt 'the Arch-druid of the Caledonian kingdom'.)

So the attempt to give Finn a place in history brings us back to the crucial question of Livingston's use of texts. What was his attitude to the wide range of printed material, in both English and Gaelic, claiming Ossian as its author?

Unfortunately the situation is extremely complex. The textual background is well worth discussing before any definite attempt is made to work out Livingston's position. Macpherson's English text altered from edition to edition (see Jiriczek in 1940: III, 1-28), although the anonymous *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* of June 1760 had claimed to be an 'extremely literal' translation, where 'even the arrangement of the words in the original has been imitated'. They were reprinted almost at once in a version 'drawn from more compleat copies', with changes in wording, and an additional fragment inserted after the twelfth, which brought the total to sixteen. Ten of the fragments passed over into the 1762 *Fingal*, seven with minimal alterations, while the three which were incorporated in the new epic, forming the core of the book, were thoroughly revised. The 1765 *Works* reprinted *Fingal* and the 1763 *Temora* with some four hundred alterations, presumably

carried out before Macpherson left for Florida in early 1764, to return only in 1766. The text was revised yet again for the 1773 *Poems*. Lord Kames had written to Macpherson

mentioning several imperfections in his edition of Ossian, particularly the confusion of names, and incidents thrown together without any order; and therefore recommending to him a new edition, arranging the several poems in order of time, with a general historical preface... I have also suggested to him some amendments of the style; for though the composition on the whole is excellent, yet many passages are capable of a higher polish, without losing in point of strength. (Letter to Mrs Montagu of May 22nd 1771)
(Tyler 1814: II, 121)

Kames was an enthusiastic champion of the poems and their authenticity. His 'Critical Observations on the Poems of Ossian' appeared posthumously in 1797. The 1773 edition gives the poems in a new order, but does not change their content in any significant way. The thousands of verbal alterations Macpherson introduced (aimed at quickening the pace, by such means as deleting conjunctions, breaking up long sentences and replacing the imperfect by the simple past) led, in Jiriczek's view, to an overall weakening of the poetic effect (1940: III, 16-7). They certainly make the task of pinning down a definitive Macphersonic style more arduous. The revision was based on the 1762 and 1763 texts, rather than the *Works*. This 1773 edition was reprinted three times in Macpherson's lifetime.

The background to the Gaelic *Ossian*, published in 1807 by the Highland Society of London with facing Latin translation, is no less complex. In a letter to James McLagan of Amulree, dated January 16th 1761, Macpherson wrote that

I have been lucky enough to lay my hands on a pretty complete poem, and truly epic, concerning Fingal. - The antiquity of it is easily ascertained, and it is not only superior to anything in that language, but reckoned not inferior to the more polite performances of other nations in that way. - I have some thoughts of publishing the original, if it will not clog the work too much. (Mackenzie 1805: 155)

The original of *Fingal* did not, however, appear during Macpherson's lifetime. Instead, he appended the Gaelic of Book VII of *Temora* to his 1763 volume, remarking that 'to print any part of the former collection was unnecessary, as a copy of the originals lay, for many months, in the bookseller's hands, for the inspection of the curious.' (1940: II, 226). No evidence has been found to substantiate this claim. In July 1784, the Highland Society of London informed Macpherson that a circle of admirers was prepared to meet the cost of publishing the Gaelic originals, and Macpherson would appear to have transmitted these, as he collated, or rather concocted them, to John Mackenzie, the secretary of the Society. After Macpherson's death in February 1796, the Rev. Thomas Ross corrected the spelling of the manuscripts, while the Rev. Alexander Stewart carried out a final revision. Macpherson's manuscripts did not disappear at once, but according to Saunders were deposited in the Advocates' Library, from whence they subsequently disappeared (Saunders 1894: 315, note). Livingston's faith in the edition seems to be unequivocal. He remarks in the *Vindication* that 'the Highland Society published these Poems verbatim from the original manuscripts - to which the Gael have access' (V 295), and on the previous page we read that

the Highland Society have in their possession manuscripts of the Poems of Ossian of the Eighth and Ninth Centuries. Copies of these originals are, with other Records, in the Tower of London.

It is not clear who made these copies or when, nor what their exact relationship is to the 1807 text.

The 1807 text does not withstand close examination. Stern (1900) condemns it on linguistic grounds, also pointing out its inconsistency with those fragments of the supposed originals which appeared elsewhere. Andrew Gallie, minister of Kincardine in Ross, and acknowledged as one of Macpherson's assistants in the business of translation, had communicated several stanzas of a supposed original to the Highland Society (Mackenzie 1805: 32),

describing the combat between Swaran and Fingal in Book 4 of the epic. Livingston reproduces them in the *Vindication* (on two successive pages, both numbered 480), yet the passage as given in the 1807 and subsequent Gaelic texts differs significantly. Furthermore, the 'original' given for *Temora* 8, 383-5 in a footnote to the 1763 edition is different from the 1807 version of the same lines. Stern's strictures, however, should not be followed unquestioningly. His statement that the Highland Society 'straightway destroyed' (1900: 264) the manuscript of the 1807 poems contradicts Saunders without offering substantiation.

Modern scholarship considers the Gaelic *Ossian* to be a wholesale fabrication, a slavish and, in linguistic terms, barely competent translation of Macpherson's English, based on the 1773 text (Stern 1900: 269). The 1763 Gaelic *Temora* shows a greater mastery of the language and is generally attributed to a different hand. Thomson (1952: 87) propends for Lachlan Macpherson of Strathmashie, who had assisted Macpherson in the collection and study of traditional material, and suggests that a comparison of dialect forms throughout the 1807 text could bring to light the work of different hands in its preparation. The Gaelic *Ossian* is no more stable a text than its English original. Macpherson's manuscripts were revised before publication; Ewen MacIachlan revised the 1807 text for the 1818 printing, which was distributed gratis throughout the Highlands; and in 1870 Archibald Clerk produced a new edition, with a new English translation and a further revised Gaelic text.

Where it is possible to trace Livingston's references to an original, this is generally not the 1807 or 1818 *Ossian*. He glosses the line 'Oisein a' diùltadh a bhualadh' in 'Leacan-Uaighean' with a reference to the poet's own words in 'Dàn an Deirg', 'Chaomhainn mi féin an laoch leònta'. The line is not traditional, and the reference is apparently to 'Ach chao'inn mi fein an laoch claidhte' from 'Dearg Mac Druibheil' in Dr Smith's

Sean Dàna (1787: 118). Livingston has mistaken the title (Smith's 'Dan Deirg' is narrated by Ullin, not Ossian), and misquoted the line. The implication is that it would be foolish to expect accuracy from him in further direct quotations.

There is no clear indication which version of Crimine's lament Livingston had in mind in 'Leacan-Uaighean'. Macpherson's can confidently be excluded. He quotes the lament in a footnote, but calls Dargo's wife Mingala, and alters the tale so that her husband really dies, rather than pretending to do so. The footnote, with the quoted poem, is reproduced in English in the 1807 *Ossian* (Macpherson 1940: I, 223-4, *Ossian* 1807: I, 277-8). There is a reworking of Crimine's lament in Smith's 'Dàn an Deirg' (1780: 149-50, 1787: 17-20), but Livingston could equally well be referring to the version in the Gillies collection, reprinted by Campbell (1872: 112-3), which has, for Thomson, 'an absolutely genuine ring'. He believes it to be derived from MacLagan's collection (1952: 56-8). It certainly has a stark, taut quality which sets it apart from Smith and Macpherson. Even when Smith comes closest to Gillies, he has a telltale wordiness and slackness, while Macpherson's version of the close is so sanitised as to be almost incoherent:

Last night I heard the song of joy in Lartho's lofty
hall. But silence dwells around my bed. Mingala rests
with Dargo. (Macpherson)

Is rinneadh leabaidh dhuinn an rair,
Air an raon ud chnoc nan sealg;
'S ni 'n deantar leab' air leth a nochd dhuinn,
'S ni 'n sgarar mo chorp o Dhearg. (Smith)

Bha mi ann tigh an rair,
Dia an t-sliabh sin Chnoc na learg,
'S biaidh mi ann an uaigh an nochd
Ma 'n scarar mo chorp re Dearg. (Gillies)

With Deirdre, cited alongside Crimine in 'Leacan-Uaighean', it is possible to be more definite about Livingston's source. In 'Darthula', Macpherson again altered the traditional story. The

heroine no longer commits suicide, but lowers her shield to reveal that a stray arrow has struck her, and dies without uttering a word (1940: I, 170). The new scene is strongly Macphersonic - passive, static, strong in feeling and low on words. There is no Gaelic version of 'Darthula' in the 1807 *Ossian*. Smith has no Deirdre ballad, and the MacCallum collection under 'Laoidh Deirdreann' gives only a brief passage, with the heroine's farewell to Scotland (1816b: 221-2). The Stewart collection, however, includes an 'Aoidheadh Chlainn Uisnich', which Campbell reprints with division 'according to the metre and meaning' by Mr MacLean (1872: 26-9). It is mentioned in the 1807 Gaelic *Ossian* as the original for Macpherson's piece (Campbell 1872: xxvii). Stern believed it to be a conflation of traditional material with modern passages imitated from 'Darthula' (1900: 267, footnote). The name in Stewart is Dearduil (compare Livingston's 'Deardail'), and in stanzas 80-91 she speaks her own moving lament for the dead brothers, a passage with no prototype in Macpherson. It is therefore possible that Livingston had the traditional version in mind at this point.

The same is true for the account of the circumstances leading to Oscar's death given in the *Vindication* (V 509-10). This is not in the 1846 *Annals*, but was available to Livingston in both Gillies and the MacCallum collections. When Livingston quotes Ossian's poem on the death of Oscar in his 1860 *Lecture* (L 18), the wording differs only slightly from that of the printed versions then available to him:

An cuala sibh m'a thurus Fhinn a nuair a ghluais e do
Eirin (Livingston)

An cuala sibhse tursa Fhinn
An uair a ghluais e gu h-Eirinn (MacCallum 1816b: 155)

An cuala sibhse turus Fhinn,
Nuair ghluais e gu h-Eirinn' (Campbell 1872: 192, from
Gillies)

Leigeadh leinn ar feachd 's ar sluagh air an taobh ma'
thuath do Eirin (Livingston)

Leagadh leinn air feachd 's air sluagh
An taobh mu thuath do Erinn (MacCallum)

Leagadh leinn ar feachd 's ar sluagh
An taobh mu thuabh do dh' Eirinn (Campbell from
Gillies).

The opening words of the altercation between Cairbre and Oscar, as given by Livingston, show similar variations from MacCallum and Gillies. Here Livingston gives the form 'tomlad' for 'exchange' (perhaps a misprint), corresponding to 'iomlad' in MacCallum and 'iomlaid', 'malairt' in the two versions given by Campbell from Gillies (1872: 192 stanza 15, 193 line 21). The MacDiarmaid manuscript (transcribed by Campbell 1872: 183) has 'tomalaid' at a slightly different point of the Oscar/Cairbre dialogue, but it is highly unlikely that Livingston could have seen this source:

Tomlad sleagh b'aill leam bhuaith Oscair dhuinn a Albin
(Livingston)

Iomlad sleagh a b' aill leam uait
Oscair dhuinn a h-Alba (MacCallum)

Iomlaid ceinn sleagha b' ail leam uait,
Oscair dhuinn na h-Albhainn (Campbell 1872: 192)

Malairt sleagh a baill leam uait
Oscair dhuinn a' h-Albhuinn (Campbell 1872: 193)

Tomalaid Cinn gun iomalaid Caoin
Beug còrach sud iarruidh orm (MacDiarmaid)

Two interpretations are possible. Livingston may have been quoting inaccurately, from memory, published versions of the ballad (as with 'Dearg Mac Druibheil' in the *Sean Dàna*). Alternatively, if we view him as a representative of a living oral tradition, he was constituting his own versions, as one possible realisation of the text he carried in his memory. In the latter case, it is characteristic that his version of the second line supports the reinterpretation of Almuinn (the Hill of Allen in Ireland) as a form of Alba (Scotland).

At a certain point in the *Brief Sketch* (A 129 ff.), Livingston gives a roll call of Ossian's works, consisting merely of titles and the number of lines in each poem. The list is interesting in itself as a proof of Livingston's syncretist attitude to the material available to him. It combines Macpherson and Smith with the traditional stock. The poems named are 'Cath-Loda', 'Fingal', 'Temora', 'Dargo', 'Conlaoch', 'Carrick-Thura', 'Carthon', 'Oigh nam Mor Shùl', 'Caomh Mhala', 'Tiomna-Ghuill', 'Dàn an Du Thuinn', 'Cromghleann', 'Evir-Aluin', 'the Fingalian's Great Distress', 'Banners of the Fingalians', '"Cuchullin" in his Chariot', 'Duan of the "Heads"', the 'Black Dog', the 'Wandering Maiden' and the 'Death of Oscar'.

For the poems in the 1807 *Ossian*, Livingston gives basically accurate line totals, in rounded figures: for example, 680 for 'Cath-Loda' (682 in 1807, 684 in 1818) and 340 for 'Carthon' (333 in 1807, 343 in 1818). However, his 126 for 'the Fingalian's Great Distress', presumably 'Teanntachd Mhór na Féinne', is hard to explain when set against Gillies (236), MacCallum (180), or even Kennedy's first collection (248). For 'Tiomna Ghuill' Livingston gives a suspiciously neat 400. Neither Gillies nor Stewart printed the ballad, and Livingston's figure is hard to relate to either Kennedy (288, first collection) or John Smith in the *Sean Dana* (558). It would be comforting to trace the figures for ballads from the tradition to a specific text, but perhaps one should not be surprised if this is impossible. It makes sense that, where material he himself must have known from boyhood was concerned, Livingston should have had a more cavalier attitude. This went along with an inability, or perhaps an unwillingness to fix on any particular printed text as authoritative. (Campbell gives a version of 'Tiomnadh Ghuill' taken down from oral recitation by Hector Maclean in 1865 which proves that the ballad was still current in Islay more than fifty years after Livingston's birth). Much of the Macpherson material, on the other hand, would have been alien to Livingston in both style and

content, and he would therefore treat it with greater rigidity, and a greater dependence on the published text.

It is time to sum up this confusing and contradictory evidence. In reaching a conclusion it is important to keep in mind, on the one hand, the floating and unstable nature of the texts available to Livingston, and on the other, the poet's own particular kind of bookishness.

Livingston is not a writer who assimilates a text in such a way as to give a succinct account of it or to incorporate its views into his own standpoint. As a prose writer he transcribed, compiled and accumulated. The *History* begins with something of a personal imprint and a clear urge to synthesise material from a range of sources. As it proceeds, however, Livingston's reliance on Boece, Hollinshed and Buchanan is increasingly evident, until paraphrase gives place to large-scale quotation. This decline from attempted synthesis to mere transcription and compilation may have been a contributory factor in Livingston's failure to continue that particular project.

Similarly, much of the space devoted to the Ossianic controversy in the *Vindication* is given over to lengthy quotations from MacNicol's *Remarks* and the 1805 *Report*, with Logan's *The Scottish Gael* another source referred to, if not directly plundered. The *Brief Sketch* reproduces some 15 pages from the *Vindication*, themselves consisting largely of quotations from the *Report*. It concludes, under the heading 'MacPherson's translation not genuine', with the first 20 lines of the Gaelic version of *Temora* Book VII, accompanied by MacPherson's English and a literal translation. All three are lifted, with acknowledgement, from Dr Patrick Graham's *Essay on the Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian* of 1807.

Livingston's approach to the quoted text is one-dimensional. He does not transcribe the words of other authors in order to examine them, analyse their inconsistencies, or set them against

his own. His adherence to the quoted texts is complete, their voice blends with that of Livingston. Nor would one be justified in assuming that he had read thoroughly all the texts he refers to. He shares references, in particular those to classical authors, with his sources, and there is nothing to show that he consulted the originals himself. This tendency to superficiality also emerges in Livingston's failure to pursue the contradictions he stumbles upon in his own work. His account of the death of Oscar does not square with the opening of *Temora*, and more careful examination, or a greater familiarity with the 1807 Gaelic text, would have warned him that the passage given by Gallie was not reproduced there.

At the same time, it would be foolish to be too harsh on Livingston. His aversion to Macpherson is evident, and it may well be that, while publicly giving full support to the Gaelic 'originals' of Macpherson's English, he instinctively avoided a more intimate acquaintance with them. The command of Gaelic style, the richness and precision of vocabulary displayed in so much of his own verse suggests a mind capable of responding critically to the linguistic blunders of the 1807 *Ossian*. His obvious respect for the work of John Smith of Campbeltown (of whose poems Stern remarks that 'they out-Macpherson Macpherson... the effrontry [sic] of such a forgery at the hands of a clergyman fills one with amazement' (1900: 276)) may have been conditioned by the importance given to Smith and his brother Donald in the 1805 *Report*.

Such lip-service to the Gaelic *Ossian* would be consistent with Livingston's reverence for the printed text, and the primacy he assigned to manuscript tradition over oral transmission. Such an attitude alone can explain his intriguing silence as to the material which he himself must have been familiar with from Islay tradition. Campbell mentions

a picturesque old Scotch lady, who spoke Gaelic with a Gaelic tongue and a clear voice, and who spoke the truth. I think she was born in 1745, but I am not sure.

Her son, who died at the age of 84, told me in 1859, and again in 1860, and again in 1868, that in about 1800, when he could speak little but Gaelic himself, few peasants in Islay could speak anything else. When at school in Bowmore he used to sit for hours listening to an old tailor, named Mac Niven, or Mac Eacheran, who recited 'Fingal', and other poems which are in Mac Pherson's Ossian. (1872: xxxiv)

Livingston was born only a short distance from Bowmore and, while Blair was not sure whether he attended the school there, it is inconceivable that he should have been unaware of the popular Ossianic traditions. Blair clearly believed that the battle poems were inspired by the traditional heroic tales recited in a *céilidh* context. Similar childhood experiences are splendidly evoked in 'Eirinn a' gul', as was pointed out in the opening chapter of this thesis ('Shaoileadh na macain gum b'fhior/ na dh'innseadh dhaibh o bheul nan sean' (C 206)). The remainder of the poem, however, makes it clear that the tales referred to here are not Ossianic, but concern historical figures some of whom were involved in the struggle against English colonisation, such as the three Hughs. If Livingston the poet can convey so magically what it was like to be a boy in this culture, Livingston the polemicist knows that to mention the Fianna in a poem dedicated to Ireland would be to yield a point of crucial importance.

Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the poet must have been familiar from an early age with the traditional Ossianic ballads. His silence as to their more fantastic and supernatural aspects is typical of the self-censorship contact with the cultivated, bogus Macpherson-Smith version of that tradition would provoke. The fabrications were treated as a standard by which the oral material could be judged.

It would be highly unrealistic of us to think that Livingston could have penetrated to the heart of the Ossianic controversy. Luckier men than he, with a formal education and greater leisure, failed to do so. Campbell 'took it for granted' from 1830 to 1859 that Ossian's poems, in their bogus form, were authentic. His

view of the matter in 1872 was based on 'hard reading and close investigation during more than 12 years', and the experience of collecting oral versions was crucial to his final verdict (1872: xxxiv). The difficulty Livingston faced in districating the genuine and the fabricated is exemplified in the MacCallum collection, which he refers to specifically in the *Brief Sketch*, and which appeared as two separate volumes, in Gaelic and English, with the same title page and introductory essay. The National Library of Scotland conserves Campbell's own copy of the Gaelic versions. The collection was evidently widely known. The list of subscribers exceeded twelve thousand, and even in 1872 it could 'easily be got'. Campbell's annotations in his copy are instructive. 'Dan air Crom Ghleann' is 'a cooked version of an old bit with some genuine verses'; 'Eamhar Aluinn' is 'the version in Gillies, with a lot of manifest modern stuff added'; 'Teanntachd mor na Feinne' is 'cooked a little bit but not so much as the rest'; 'Dan a' Choin Duibh' is 'genuine or nearly'; 'Briathran Fhinn ri Oscar' is 'not cooked'. In other words, the MacCallum collection manages to mix the genuine with the fabricated in every possible proportion.

Yet Livingston's difficulty was not limited to the nature of the available texts. A conceptual framework for dealing with the situation was lacking. Indeed, the appearance of *Leabhar na Féinne* in 1872 was an important step in the emergence of that framework. An intellect still rooted in eighteenth century ideas of the text would naturally see the endless variants of the oral tradition as being the effect of dispersion and debasement, rather than legitimate features of a text existing in a different medium. The analogy of Homeric epic led those examining the evidence to conceive of an original single author and authoritative text. They could hardly have foreseen that the evidence before them would eventually shed a fascinatingly new light on the circumstances under which Homer's epics had themselves been composed.

Livingston's attitude was not dissimilar to that of many unlettered Gaels of his time. Contact with Scottish intellectual and historical culture in English, in a slightly outdated form, did not substantially alter it. He had a fierce loyalty to Ossian, conceived of as a historical figure, and considered the authenticity of his poems to be axiomatic. It was, however, impossible to solve the problem of exactly which text, printed or oral, represented these poems. Lip-service to the 1807 text was combined with a curious imperviousness to its style and language. (Campbell comments repeatedly on the failure of the 1818 *Ossian*, though distributed gratis throughout the Highlands, to affect the oral tradition).

The attitude outlined above is rich in contradictions. So far we have looked only at Livingston's explicit pronouncements and references in his prose and poetry. In the next chapter, concentrating on his poetic practice, we will see exactly how he negotiated these traditions and, in his own way, succeeded in transcending them.

The relationship to be examined in this chapter is a three-sided one. It concerns Livingston as a creative artist, rather than as a polemicist or an antiquarian. Visualised as a triangle, it would have lines connecting him to both Macpherson and traditional balladry, while a third line would connect the latter two, embracing the whole range of tamperings with the ballads, right up to the purely Macphersonic fabrications. Macpherson is a mediating, but not a determining influence on Livingston's handling of the Ossianic material. Although the effect of his sensibility can be traced clearly in Livingston's poetry, Livingston rejected many of the elements which went to make up Macpherson's imaginative world. It may be more appropriate to think of Livingston and Macpherson as reacting in related but different ways to the traditional narratives their culture made available to them.

Critical opinion has generally seen Macpherson's influence on Livingston as deleterious, yet in a sense it adds to Livingston's stature as a poet. Only by being less ambitious could he have remained free of it. He stands out among nineteenth-century Gaelic poets because of the seriousness with which he viewed his mission, both as a poet and as a spokesman for Scotland and Gaeldom. A comparable sense of purpose and responsibility is lacking in urban poets such as Niall MacLeòid (1843-1924), in emigré writers like Eòghan MacColla (1808-98), or in the work of John MacLachlan of Rahoy (1804-74), however consummate the craftsmanship deployed in his verse. Livingston was aware of himself as gradually constructing a body of verse against a learned and literary background. This, and the sense one has of a life devoted, almost sacrificed to poetry, sets him apart from Iain Mac a'Ghobhainn (1848-81) and Màiri NicPhearsain (1821-98).

All three seem to have taken to composition as the result of some kind of transformation, unjust imprisonment and political activism in Màiri Mhòr's case, probably the breakdown of his health and return to Lewis for Iain Mac a'Ghobhainn, historical research and contact with the work of an Irish scholar for Livingston. Given his ambition, his sense of a poetic and political mission, Livingston could not have remained silent about what remained the crucial issue in Gaelic culture throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.

Generally, his creative response to Macpherson and the ballads is surer, subtler and more surprising than his prose writings on the subject would lead one to expect. Ossian, in either of his guises, traditional and Macphersonic, cannot offer an adequate explanation of the originality with which Livingston conceived his battle poems. The abandonment of music, the choice of a medium poised, often awkwardly, between verse and narrative prose, the open avowal of fictionality in the Norse poems, are all elements representing an original creative input by Livingston. While awareness of Macpherson was undoubtedly an important factor in their making, these poems retain the enigmatic, unpredictable quality typical of all innovation within a literary tradition. If the Gaelic *Ossian* could explain the battle poems, then Livingston would be merely an epigone, something he emphatically is not.

The measure of his originality can be seen in the way he remoulds the 'Oisein an dèidh na Fèinne' motif in the prologue to 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' (C 1-4) While he may not have gone so far as to hunt out the relevant copy of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Livingston had available to him in the 1805 *Report* a reprint of Hill's version of the 'Urnigh Ossian', or 'Ossian's Prayers' (Mackenzie 1805: 118-29), 36 quatrains, of which there is a much older version in the Book of the Dean of Lismore (Ross 1939: 124-35). Campbell reprints the ballad from MacNicol and Fletcher,

from Kennedy's first collection and from Irvine (1872: 41-7), and a version, which Livingston may well have been familiar with, also appears in the *Transactions of the Ossianic Society* (1859: 2-63).. Hector Maclean had 'heard old Islay men talking over Oisein's wickedness' (Campbell 1872: 40), so the spirit of the poem was part of Islay oral tradition.

Its interest for the modern reader lies in the peculiar skill with which it acts out a transition of some difficulty, negotiated with considerable success by early Irish culture. Elsewhere in Europe, Christianity was adopted in circumstances of considerable hostility to the indigenous culture and language. In Ireland the arrival of the Latin alphabet, and the establishment of monastic institutions, ensured the preservation of that culture in a written form. The opposition between paganism and Christianity was resolved in a synthesis which may have been possible precisely because the arrival of the new religion did not involve political subjugation to Rome. The tensions which must have arisen can be guessed at from the only partially successful attempts in the early literature to integrate pagan divinities and pre-Christian practices with a nominally Christian culture. On a political level, the Convention of Druim Cett symbolised the rather surprising alliance forged between the indigenous and Christian learned classes, with Saint Columba coming out clearly on the side of the poets (Bannerman 19). 'Ossian's Prayer' is a remarkable poem because it acknowledges these tensions openly, with a rich measure of humour and irony.

The fascination these dialogues hold for the contemporary mind is easy to explain. They act out imaginatively, and with a subtle self-consciousness, a culture's awareness of its problematic relationship to ideology. Whether with post-1917 communism in the Soviet Union, or the dictates of the Council of Trent in seventeenth-century Rome, a culture can never identify totally with the ideology to which it nominally subscribes. It will always carry within itself seeds of contradiction or

refutation of the dogma which gives it its prevailing tone. This ability to bind together opposing beliefs, or to give space to the devil's view of the case, is an essential element in the resilience of any culture. Without it, an event such as the abandonment of traditional Marxist ideology under Gorbachev would be hopelessly traumatic, rather than releasing, as it appears to have done, long pent up energies. Whoever the original 'authors' of the Patrick/Ossian dialogues may have been, they used them to act out the dialectic between pagan tradition and Christianity. It may well have been this kind of ideological juggling that gave Irish culture its tremendous richness and energy, in the centuries which preceded the English occupation.

The hero and the saint speak the same language, but belong to different worlds. Ossian offers an eloquent defence of the physical world with its violence, heroism and beauty (quotations of ballad texts retain the 'warts' of the originals):

Smeoraiche bheag Ghlinne-smail,
 'S faothar na barr ris an tom;
 Is sheinneadh-midne leò puirt,
 'S bha sinn fhìn 's air cruit ro-bhinn.

Heaven would be no heaven to him without his fellow warriors. When Patrick tells him Finn is in Hell, Ossian responds as if going there would be no more complicated than going to Lochlann to free a king unjustly taken captive:

PATRIC.
 Tha è 'n ifrinn ann an laimh,
 'M fear le ghna bhi pronna' òir;
 'S thaobh miad a dhi-meas air Dia,
 Chuirte è 'n tigh pian fu' bhron.

OISAIN.
 N' am biodh Clanna-Baoisge a steach,
 'S Clanna Moirne nam fear trein;
 Bheireamaidne Fionn a mach,
 Neo bhiodh an teach again fein. (Campbell 1872: 43)

Had the Fianna indeed been able to take over Hell, there is no doubt they would have run things in a more enjoyable fashion for

all concerned. When Patrick insists on how difficult it is to gain access to the king of heaven's court, Ossian feels a crucial point has been handed to him on a plate. Finn is clearly preferable to God - he would never have excluded a stranger from his feasting.

There are several ballads which have an exchange between the saint and the hero as a prelude to the chief narration. MacNicol's version of 'Teanntachd Mhòr na Fèinne' (Campbell 1872: 96) begins with four stanzas where the saint, feeling more like drinking than singing psalms ('Gun Sàilm bhi air Uigh ach òl' - he evidently had his moments of weakness), asks the hero to tell him about the greatest predicament the Fianna ever found themselves in. The Magnus ballad, from the same source, opens with an appeal to Patrick to leave off his psalms and hearken to lore of the Fianna for a while. The saint's refusal gets a brusque answer from the hero:

Na bi tu Coimheadadh do Shalm
Re Fianachd Erin nan Arm nochd,
A Chlerich, gur làn olc lium
Nach sgarain do Chean red Chorp. (Campbell 1872: 72)

upon which the two settle down for a story. It is striking that the Ossian/Patrick introduction appears in two ballads where the invasion/fight on the beach motif, which both Livingston and Macpherson were to use, has such a central role.

The Patrick/Ossian dialogues were unsuited to Macpherson's ends. Their humour was alien to his sensibility and to his purpose, and the confrontation they embodied had a burlesque element that could only undermine his attempt to historicise Ossian and give his world an epic seriousness. While the dialogues are heterogeneous, mixing and confronting cultural worlds and belief systems, the absence of any references to Christianity in Macpherson's poems was vaunted as a major internal proof of their authenticity. Their apparent pagan

"otherness" was a crucial part of their appeal in the years leading up to the Romantic revival. Patrick's role in the dialogues gave Ossian's world an undeniable Irish colouring which would have been anathema to Macpherson and his supporters. The monastery bells, and the medieval clarity with which the house of Heaven is portrayed, were much too far removed from the stern meteorological phantoms Macpherson's heroes live on as after their deaths.

The element he made most play with was in fact the least common in popular tradition. There are three ballads in the *Book of the Dean* which focus on the pathos of Ossian's situation, the last relict of a defunct race of heroes (Ross 1939: 6, 8, 36). In 'Do-chonnaic mé teaghlach Finn', Ossian woefully underlines the contrast between past and present:

Do-chonnaic mé teaghlach Finn,
is níorbh é an teaghlach tim tréith;
agus do-chonnaic mé sibh
do mhuintir an fhir a ndé.

(Ross translates 'and I have beheld you, I who am of the followers of the man of yesterday'). The opening quatrain of 'Is fada anocht i nOíl Finn' conveys tellingly the wearisome quality of Ossian's life, condemned as he is to an old age that will never end:

Is fada anocht i nOíl Finn,
fada linn an oidhche aréir;
an lá andiu gíodh fada dhamh,
do ba leór fad an laoi andé.

There is a childlike quality to Ossian's lament. He regrets, not so much the individual heroes who were his companions, as the endless activity and fun of his youth: fighting, raiding, learning of athletic feats, gatherings, music, harps, bestowal of wealth. He is more cowed in this poem than in his dialogue with Patrick. He listens 'to the voices of bells' ('ag éisdeacht ré gothaibh clog'), and tries to interest the saint in the fate of his soul:

Faigh, a Phádraig, dhúinn ó Dhia
fios an ionaidh i mbia sinn;
go saorthar m'anam roimh locht:
is fada anocht i nOíl Finn.

Melancholy and self-doubt are even more pronounced in 'Anbhfann anocht neart mo lámh'. Now nothing more than 'im ghiobal truagh seanórach' ('a pitiful worn-out rag of an old man'), Ossian laments his physical decay, seeing in his present servitude a fulfilment of the prophesy Finn made when Ossian briefly rebelled against him ('dhubhart nach beinn fada fá smacht, / is nach déanainn dó giollacht'). If before he could set the authority of Finn against that of the church, in this ballad the two unite in condemning him in a way he sees as justified. Campbell prints these three ballads, but remarks that 'I have not found them orally preserved in Scotland' (1872: 47). 'Caoidh Oisian', from Kennedy's first collection, is taken up with celebration of the members of the band and the life they led. Only the last quatrain of seventeen strikes a note of melancholy abandonment:

O nach maithrean ach mise dhiu fein,
'S nach 'eil mi do reir na sgoil;
'Nois o chuaidhe air mo ghleas
'S truagh mo thuras fein an so. (Campbell 1872: 48)

Macpherson's transformation of the material is instructive. His heroes inhabit an aristocratic world. Theirs is an aristocracy of heightened feeling, of a painful self-awareness which, as we shall see, is far from the world of Livingston's battle poems. Three examples, taken from *Temora*, may suffice. When Fingal comes upon Bran the hound, who has lain faithfully by the corpse of his son Fillan, the king's grief is brief, decorous and wordless, complete with the climatic metaphor that is one of the author's most striking mannerisms:

White-breasted Bran came bounding with joy to the known path of Fingal. He came, and looked towards the cave, where the blue-eyed hunter lay, for he was wont to stride, with morning, to the dewy bed of the roe. - It was then the tears of the king came down, and all his soul was dark. - But as the rising wind rolls away the storm of rain, and leaves the white streams to the sun,

and high hills with their heads of grass: so the returning war brightened the mind of Fingal. (1940: II, 144)

Containment, self-control, and ability to attend to one's duties whatever the emotional strains are an integral part of Macpherson's aristocratic ethos. Fingal's behaviour is exemplary. He feels exactly what he is supposed to feel, but his expression of grief causes no disturbance or embarrassment to bystanders, nor it is allowed to interfere with his functions as king and military leader. Achilles' grief for Patroclus was of a very different order. His treatment of Hector's corpse was a passionate infringement of the code, and indicates how different a world Homer's heroes belonged to.

For the self-awareness, Cathmor's thoughts when confronted with the same spectacle are instructive:

Darkness is blown back on his soul; he remembers the falling away of the people. They come, a stream; are rolled away; another race succeeds. - "But some mark the fields, as they pass, with their own mighty names. The heath, thro' dark-brown years, is theirs; some blue stream winds to their fame. - Of these be the chief of Atha, when he lays him down on earth. Often may the voice of future times meet Cathmor in the air: when he strides from wind to wind, or folds himself in the wings of a storm. (1940: II, 110)

The fading away of each generation provokes a deep anxiety in Cathmor, which he deals with by resolving that he, at least, will live on in fame. The sight of Fillan's corpse naturally brings thoughts of his own death, and of what if anything will survive it. Macpherson's heroes live with an almost obsessive eye on the future, where they will be judged on their heroic decorum and their prowess in battle. Their existence may well be validated by the acclaim of this future audience, but it is a validation they can never be entirely certain of. Within their world, it depends on the cooperation of the bards. In *Temora* Book 2, Cathmor cannot sleep because

Dark, in his soul, he saw the spirit of low-laid
Cairbar. He saw him, without his song, rolled in a
blast of night. (1940: II, 39)

Circling round the army in the dark, he comes upon Ossian, and receives a promise that his brother Cairbar will 'hear the song of bards'. Yet when the two meet, their first thought, like two film stars or superpower leaders about to sit down round a table for talks, is of the historical significance of their own action, of the television cameras just behind their shoulders:

Future warriors shall mark the place: and, shuddering,
think of other years. They shall mark it, like the
haunt of ghosts, pleasant and dreadful to the soul...
This stone shall rise, with all its moss, and speak to
other years. "Here Cathmor and Ossian met! the warriors
met in peace!" (1940: II, 40)

This also means that the making of poetry is thematised in the text. Ossian is aware of himself as a poet with the faculty of conferring fame, and even immortality. At the opening of *Temora* Book 7 he describes how a mist rises from the lake of Lego, in which the spirits of the dead dwell, in the time between their decease and the funeral song. This is how the passage reads in the 1763 Gaelic:

Le so edi' taisin o-shean
An dlu'-ghleus, a measc na gaoith,
'S iad leammach, o osna gu osna,
Air du'-aghaid' oicha nan sian.
An taobh oitaig, gu palin nan seoid,
Taomas iad ceäch nan speur,
Gorm-thalla do thannais nach bèo,
Gu àm eri' fón marbh-rán nan teud. (1940: II, 228)

Nothing could be further from the Ossian of the dialogues with Patrick. Macpherson's heroes constantly glance forwards in nervous anticipation: Ossian's gaze in the ballads turns backwards. If anything, he regrets the kind of immortality that has been conferred on him. It is not the making of poetry that concerns him or that he misses, but the intense physical pleasures of the life the Fianna led, pleasures which have minimal importance for Macpherson's epic. As has been said, a

debt to the traditional figure emerges only in passages like those where Macpherson's bard speaks of how he courted Everallin ('I was not so mournful and blind; I was not so dark and forlorn when Everallin loved me' (1940: I, 48)), or at the close of *Fingal* ('Battles! where I often fought; but now I fight no more. The fame of my former actions is ceased; and I sit forlorn at the tombs of my friends.' (1940: I, 84)) Such self-consciousness (and, let it be said without unkindness, self-pity) was alien to the ballads, a peripheral element in their characterisation of Ossian. It became crucial to the way Macpherson viewed his heroes and to the life he breathed into them.

There is no specific reference to the ballads or to Macpherson in Livingston's prologue. One makes the connection because its structural function is identical to that of the dialogues which begin 'Magnus' or 'Teanntachd Mòr na Fèinne'. The *seanachaidh* has the part of Ossian, old, perhaps infirm, and knowledgeable about the past, while the *òganach*, like Patrick, persuades him, without too much difficulty, to tell his tale. The *seanachaidh*'s role is passive. The telling of history depends on the *òganach*'s intervention. If he had not taken the initiative, the tale would have remained potential and not actual, stored untold in the *seanachaidh*'s memory. He has made a sea journey to visit the *seanachaidh*, who asks:

Ach gu dè an t-adhbhar
mun d'fhàinig thu 'n seo,
no 'n gnothach a thug thu thar fairge?

It is tempting to see the *òganach* as a *déraciné*, a representative of the emigrant community of Islay people in Glasgow, returning briefly to re-establish contact with the traditional culture.

A figure such as that of the *seanachaidh* is not confined to Livingston or the ballads or Macpherson. He has a near relation in the minstrel from the introduction to Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, the 'last of all the Bards... / Who sung of Border

chivalry', now become 'A wandering Harper, scorn'd and poor' who begs 'his bread from door to door', and who is persuaded by the lady of Newark Castle to 'recall an ancient strain/ He never thought to sing again' (Scott 1917: 1-2). His 'strain' constitutes the remainder of the poem. Figures like this, standing for the last glimmer of an age-old tradition, which could perhaps be fanned briefly into flame before dying out for ever, haunted the imagination of the cultivated classes in Scotland at the turn of the eighteenth century. Scott's minstrel no doubt owes a certain debt to Macpherson. But his position is very different from that of Livingston's *seanachaidh*. The minstrel is a homeless wanderer, while the *seanachaidh*, like Ossian, has a specific place of abode where he can be sought out. Moreover, the duchess and the minstrel are mistress and servant. The relationship between the *seanachaidh* and the *òganach* is very different. Although the minstrel and the *seanachaidh* fulfil the same function in producing the text the prologues introduce, Scott is unlikely, in this particular case, to have been a major influence on the Islay poet.

Livingston's most startling innovation is to make the dialogue contemporary, by turning it into a reflection on the ravages of the clearances, and the possible extirpation of the Gaelic language. His two characters are clearly differentiated. The young man is fiery and indignant, with a passionate eloquence. The contrasting resignation and detachment of the *seanachaidh* may be a consequence of old age, but give an additional authority to the tale which follows. The tormented present of the *òganach* will soon become a future where the old man has no place. His days are numbered. The pair do not inhabit the misty world of Macpherson's *Ossian*. They have a precise geographical and historical context. The opening is strongly visual, as the *seanachaidh* describes the banner the youth is carrying:

Chì mi eithear luath 's a siùil sgaoilte;
leòghann a' seasamh sùrdaig;

bradan, 's a shlios mar bhoillsgeadh airgid gun smal,
 fo ghluasad samhladh sruth, a' ruith na chuisle bhras
 seachad air bunait caisteil baidealach,
 's e liath le siontan iomadh linn;
 craobh-fhige fo lòd mheasan;
 làmh-dhearg 's claidheamh Chinn-Ilich,
 fadhairt' le deannal nan òrd o lasair na teallaich.

The impression is as of a fast-moving pageant dazzling the eyes of the reader. This pageant is itself a visual language, a heraldic code with conventional referents and implications. Each quarter of the flag is dealt with in turn. These are the arms of the Islay Macdonalds, and as such they immediately evoke the Lordship of the Isles, a political entity which was as near as the Gaels would ever come in the medieval period to statehood within Scotland. Islay was its heart, and the memory establishes a counterpoint to the picture of abandonment and desolation which the prologue offers. Islay is 'innis nam fineachan sean', 'eilean nam flaithean', 'dùthaich nam mac', 'cathair lagh nan eileanan Gàidh'lach'. Its past glory is a matter of words alone. The island itself is now

... na nochd-làraich fògraidh.
 Fuigheall briste gun cheann-feadhna, gun chòir,
 mar eòin aonaranach a dh'fhàg an ealt,
 gun mhaoin, gun seirc, gun teanachdas
 o na coimhich gun iochd, 's gun ni air fhàgail
 ach freumh na Gàidhlig san talamh.

The contrast illustrates how Livingston's historical and genealogical researches influenced his poetry no less crucially than Macpherson or the balladry.

There is no indication of exactly where the dialogue is taking place. The words 'thar fairge' indicate that the young man has travelled by boat to Islay. He seems to know much more than the *seanachaidh* about the current state of the island - he is bringing 'news to the poet' ('Fios thun a' Bhàrd') - and his description emphasises the fertility which distinguishes it:

Tha achaidhean torach nan gràinnseach farsaing
 fo luachair uaine, 's am fraoch a' buidhinn a shean
 bhuaidh

air uachdar talamh a' phòir

He laments the departure of the Shawfield Campbells in lines already quoted earlier in this thesis:

Càit' am bheil sibh, fhine Mhic Cailein?
An do lagaich sibh gun teanga, gun làimh?
Nach tig sibh a sheasamh na làraich?
Nach tig sibh gu bunaiteach, cinnteach,
làidir, stòlda, soitheamh, glic, smior bhur dòigh,
a chòmhrag mi-rùn Mhic Reith [Ramsay],
a leag sibh 's a chas air ur sgòrnan?

The Islay estate was sequestered early in 1848, and sold at the end of August 1853. A Glasgow merchant named John Ramsay, the MacReith of Livingston's lines, acquired the land of the parishes of Kildalton and Oa between 1855 and 1861, and began clearing tenants the following year, using every available means to persuade whole communities to leave for Canada (Storrie 1981: 135, 145-7).

Storrie points out that agricultural re-organisation under the Shawfield Campbells had never involved the wholesale removal of tenants from the land. The pressure of population was less serious in Islay than elsewhere in the Hebrides, and evictions on a large scale would have been inconsistent with the humane and intelligent attitude of the old proprietors. Ramsay's policies were therefore a significant innovation in the Islay context, even as late as the 1860s. Livingston's anger and dismay at what was involved may have been all the greater because he himself was an exile. His poem was first printed in 1865, but Blair informs us in a note that a manuscript version existed, different from the printed text, and apparently of an earlier date (C 36). The prologue to 'Na Lochlannaich' is therefore a very immediate reaction to the first 'total' Islay clearances.

The young man is looking for a narration in exchange for his news, or as a response to it, but does not spell this out. The *seanachaidh* has to pick up on his unspoken request for information about past glories ('thuig mi na tha thu 'g iarraidh'). Due to his own infirmity, perhaps, or else desiring

some kind of active cooperation, he asks the young man to pass him the 'cruit', and proceeds to draw him into the chain of oral transmission:

Sin gu grad a' chruit a-nuas,
's feuchaidh sinn buaidh na ranntachd
air euchdan Lochlannach is Ileach,
a dh'innseas tu fathast do chàch,
's bithidh òran no dhà againn do chòrr
mun stad an ceòl 's nach bi sinn ann.

In this prologue, Livingston brings together the introductory dialogues from the ballads on the Norse invasions, something of Macpherson's pessimism, his own awareness of Scottish political history, and contemporary details of the clearances in his own island. It is in many ways the most interesting part of 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile', but it raises some problems. The pessimistic close suggests that 'Cath Ghleann Airc' is a swansong, one of the last performances within a culture which will disappear with the physical displacement of its carriers. It echoes the rather agnostic hopelessness with which Livingston's young spokesman had sought to perceive meaning in what he was witnessing:

'S faoin oidhirp an duine,
an uair a thig a' chruitheachd na mòrachd uamhasaich,
a dh'fheòraich nan ceistean diomhair
a lìonas an t-anam le ùmhlachd.

The prologue not only motivates the battle poem which follows, but also casts it in an ironic light. What is the point of these rhapsodical fictions when set against the realities of eviction and cultural genocide? Does the *seanachaidh* really have anything of value to offer in exchange for the young man's despairing news?

There is no evidence that Livingston intended his prologue to undermine the rest of the poem in this way. But it may not be accidental that his creative genius, working at the highest pitch, should propound uncertainties he found it very difficult to set at rest in longer, less cogent structures.

This prologue is a useful point of departure because it exemplifies, in a relatively short space, Livingston's approach to his material. It will dictate the method to be followed henceforth. Rather than detailing Livingston's debt to Macpherson and the ballads, we shall set it in the context of an overall appreciation of the poems under examination. For reasons of space, and because examination and comparison of specific texts is likely to yield the best results, our study will be limited to the two best-known ballads of Viking invasion, 'Magnus' and 'Teanntachd Mhòr na Fèinne', with brief reference to the 'Garbh MacStairn' ballad (which belongs to an older cycle, but was assimilated to the later models), to Macpherson's *Fingal* and to 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' and 'Blàr Shunadail' by Livingston. It makes sense to choose the latter two because they are closely related in theme to Macpherson and the ballads; unlike Livingston's remaining battle poems, they do not refer to an identifiable historical event, but are located in a semi-legendary past, thus offering a scope for anachronisms, intentional or unintentional, and for a broader imaginative sweep than was possible in 'Blàr Dhàil Rìgh' or 'Cath Allt a' Bhannaich'. The shorter, 'historical' battle poems will be dealt with subsequently, on their own.

Our approach to the material will distinguish three levels: structural, motivic and stylistic. The classification does not claim a broader validity beyond this context, and indeed it may prove difficult to state where one level ends and the next begins.

Structural elements are the building bricks which make up the plot of the poem, its story or *fabula*. Their interrelatedness gives the poem its momentum, and any alteration in their sequence would seriously imperil its coherence.

Motives, on the other hand, can be moved more freely from one part of the poem to another. The love triangle, in which two warriors desire the same woman, and her death and that of the man

she prefers ensue, is a favourite motif with Macpherson. The death or survival of the third character is a variable element. The triangle occurs in the first episode of Book 1 of *Fingal*, with Duchomar, Morna and Cathba, in the second episode of Book 2, with Comal, Grumal and Galbina, and again, with minimal variations, in the episode in Book 5 involving Lamderg, Ullin and Gelchoss. The recurrence of this compressed narrative pattern at different points in the epic suggests that its effectiveness is not dependent on its position within *Fingal* as a whole.

Stylistic elements operate on a still smaller scale. They include metaphors, turns of phrase, syntax and prosody. These are aspects of word order and rhythm, of contiguity. Metaphor is another kind of contiguity through the way it brings together words from different semantic series, making them equivalents in this particular context.

An approach of this kind is clearly structuralist in inspiration. Vladimir Iakovlevich Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* appeared in 1928. A study of one hundred magical folk tales from the collection of Afanasyev, it draws an analogy between the study of forms in language, which alone can furnish a basis for discussing the underlying structures of different languages (the insight anticipates Chomsky), and the necessity for a morphology of folktale narratives if one is to arrive at a 'solution of the highly important and as yet unresolved problem of the similarity of tales throughout the world'. Propp writes:

as long as no correct morphological study exists, there can also be no correct historical study. If we are incapable of breaking the tale into its components, we will not be able to make a correct comparison. (1968: 15-6)

Propp's influence can be detected behind subsequent attempts to create a grammar of narratives in 'cultivated literature', such as Todorov's 1969 *Grammaire du Décaméron*. Yet even remaining within the field of 'folk' narrative, his insights could prove

extremely fruitful for the study of a corpus such as Campbell's *Popular Tales of the Western Highlands*. Indeed, the work which still remains to be done on the collation and comparison of different versions of the Ossianic ballads has much to learn from Propp's 'morphological' approach to narrative.

No more than a brief reference to Propp is necessary to our purpose here. He defines 'morphology' as 'a description of the tale according to its component parts and the relationship of these components to each other and to the whole'. Crucial to such a study are the functions, 'stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled'. It is useful to single out the functions because 'the number of functions is extremely small, compared with the great number of dramatis personae' (1968: 20-1). We shall not follow Propp slavishly. These basic notions from his approach, however, will prove extremely useful to our comparison of structures in the ballads, Macpherson and Livingston.

Overall size is a crucial factor in the assessment of structure. The Magnus ballad, in MacNicol's versions, runs to 188 lines (Campbell 1872: 71-5). For 'Teanntachd Mhòr', we shall refer to Fletcher's version (considered the best by Christiansen, 1931: 260-5). It has 160 lines. Leaving aside the 95 lines of the prologue, Livingston's narrative in 'Na Lochlannaich' takes 878 lines. His own rough computation of the Gaelic *Fingal* set it at 3,185 lines. It is clear that the narrative articulation of the ballads required considerable expansion for Livingston's poems, and risked being blown up beyond all recognition in the much larger scale of Macpherson's epic. Bysveen's comments are not quite accurate, and certainly too favourable to Macpherson:

Fingal's main action has only one theme, Erin's and Fingal's war. The relative shortness of *Fingal*, it seems, is due to the nature of the ballads Macpherson used in writing it. These sources... obliged him... to adopt one, single theme. Thus unity of action was secured. (1982: 93)

Our own assessment of the situation is quite different.

As one might expect, the ballads have a simple structure. The components of the narrative are strictly linear, that is, the order of the narration respects the order of the narrated events. There is no attempt to deal with things happening in different locations at the same time and therefore no need to present such scenes sequentially, imposing on them an order of telling which is independent of their order of happening. Since Ossian narrates the ballads, and is himself present at the events, problems of viewpoint or distance are kept to a minimum. The narrative voice in the ballad is not detached from it, but closely, almost physically caught up in the action. This allows the other protagonists to intervene naturally in direct speech. As we shall see, Livingston's more complex approach to narrative viewpoint disturbed the simplicity of this arrangement without proposing an alternative, equally successful solution.

MacNicol calls the Magnus ballad 'Osshain agus an Cleirich'. It can be analysed as follows, with numbers referring to stanzas. (1-6) Introductory dialogue between Ossian and St Patrick. (7-10) The Fianna are hunting. They see ten thousand ships arriving, and gather together. The ships reach the shore. The Fianna arm themselves and set off for the beach. (11-15) Dialogue. Finn asks who will go and find out about the invaders. Conan proposes Finn's son Fergus. (16-20) Exchange between Fergus and Magnus, high king of Norway. Magnus demands Finn's wife and Bran, and is refused. (21-23) Fergus returns with the news, and Finn repeats the refusal. (24-29) The warriors of the Fianna speak in turn of their eagerness to fight. (30-35) They pass the night in feasting and music. They see the Norse banner, and unfurl their own. (36-41) Battle is joined. Finn defeats and binds Magnus. (42-47) Conan wants to cut Magnus' head off, but Finn generously frees him on a promise of peace.

A few points can be made before turning to 'Teanntachd Mhòr'. 'Magnus' uses formulaic repetition in a manner characteristic of oral ballads, as in the description of the banners unfurled by the Fianna (33-36), with repetition of 'Iommad' at the beginning of successive lines, or in Gillies 31 and MacNicol 35, stanzas which both begin 'Rinneadair an uirnigh...'. (It is the formulaic repetition which prompts Campbell to insert the stanza from Gillies at this point). The onward thrust is temporarily halted and for a while the ballad expands, as it were, horizontally. The formula has slots which can be filled with different proper names or lexical items. Its import is basically unchanged. It is, in a sense, the linguistic realisation of a narrative function, which remains the same although it may be ascribed to different agents. Thus stanzas 25 to 29 can be resumed as 'the different heroes state their readiness to fight'. The stanzas are equivalent to one another, with minimal differentiation of individual characters. In stanzas 22-3, Fergus and Finn re-enact Fergus' dialogue with Manus, offering another example of repetition with minimal variation. Utterances can be shifted from one character to another without loss of verisimilitude. The most clearly differentiated figure in the whole ballad is the churlish Conan. No other warrior could appropriately assume his part or use his words. Even Finn and Magnus are in a sense equivalents. This is what gives their single combat its meaning.

Fletcher's version of 'Teanntachd Mhòr' may be analysed as follows. (1-4) Patrick asks Ossian to tell him about the tightest spot the Fianna were ever in, and he readily agrees. (5-10) Caoilte and Ailte take offence at not being invited to a feast by Finn, and leave for Lochlann, where they serve the king for a year. Ailte becomes the queen's lover. (11-14) The king of Lochlann sails to Ireland with nine kings, and they camp outside Finn's fort. A message is sent to Finn demanding a fight on the beach. (15-32) The Fianna send Finn's daughter to offer a rich ransom. She is refused, though the king of Lochlann offers her

his hand. (This episode is not in the Irish versions). (33-40) Ailte and 140 of the Fianna are slain. Finn falls silent, the Fianna are depressed. Goll volunteers to fight, and takes four heroes with him. Very few invaders escape, and not more than a third of the Fianna survive.

As the title indicates, this is a much grimmer ballad than 'Magnus', more compressed and heterogeneous. Stanzas 5-10 resemble a 'roimhsgeul', explaining the background to what is to come. The episode between the king's daughter and the king of Lochlann, with its formulaic, repetitive structure, is the most 'balladic' part of the ballad. Distinguishing features of the 'Teanntachd' are the revenge motive, the Fianna's reluctance to engage the enemy, and Finn's non-participation in the dénouement, as well as the unusual recalling of the framing narrative situation in 38: 'iulla Phadruic nan salm binn'.

Thomson has examined the importance of the 'Garbh MacStairn' ballad for Book 1 of *Fingal*. Macpherson wrote to MacLagan on 16th January 1761, acknowledging receipt of it and remarking that '*Duan a Ghairibh* is less poetical and more obscure than *Teantach mor na Feine*' (Mackenzie 1805: 153). We shall not analyse this ballad in detail, but merely note some of its specific features relating to the figure of the messenger. In 'Magnus' the Fianna sight the invader and send a messenger, while in 'Teanntachd' the enemy send a messenger of their own, but in 'Garbh' the messenger's warning news is initially rejected, and Fletcher's version of 'Garbh' has the messenger act as go-between (Campbell 1872: 4-6, Thomson 1952: 14-9), communicating the invader's terms. The council of war which follows anticipates Livingston in its extended treatment, if not in its content: the heroes consider suing for peace, and agree to invite the invader to a banquet.

Thomson's study traced Macpherson's debt to the ballads, where possible by comparison of specific passages, assessing

Macpherson's competence and reliability as a translator of the traditional material. To give a full account of the structure of *Fingal* would be beyond our scope here. Since, however, our interest is in the creative responses of Macpherson and Livingston to the material at hand, a hypothesis may be put forward as to how the former used the ballads in forging an epic which would in effect be new and original.

The three ballads so far examined can be seen as variations on a single structure, which could be expressed as 'invaders land, there is a battle on the beach, the invaders are defeated'. By characterising each of these functions more and more specifically, and adding some subsidiary functions, such as 'a messenger enquires after/ returns with/ is sent bearing the invaders' terms', it would theoretically be possible to arrive at 'Magnus', 'Teanntachd' and 'Garbh' from this common base. While it would be a mistake to stress the parallel too strongly, one cannot help remembering Propp's discovery, with the Russian material, that 'the sequence of functions is always identical', and that all the functions he distinguished in fact fitted into a single tale. No two were mutually exclusive (1968: 22). Macpherson must have felt very perplexed when he found himself faced with a stock of ballads which, as he believed, were scattered fragments of an original, articulated epic structure, yet looked much more like variants of a single structure.

Length was a major problem. None of the available structures sustained a narrative longer than 200 lines. How was Macpherson to derive from them the architecture of an epic poem? He solved the problem by repetition and duplication. The functions present in the ballads were used several times over in the course of the epic, and integrated with a limited number of functions introduced by Macpherson himself.

One example is 'the arrival of a foreign fleet', used for Swaran in Book 1 of *Fingal* and for Fingal in Book 3. The doubling is clearly reflected in the function 'a scout brings news of the fleet':

the scout of the ocean came Moran the son of Fithil.

Rise, said the youth, Cuchullin, rise; I see the ships of Swaran. Cuchullin, many are the foe: many the heroes of the dark-rolling sea. (Book 1) (1940: I, 2)

the scout of ocean came, Moran the son of Fithil. - The ships, he cried, the ships of the lonely isle! There Fingal comes the first of men, the breaker of shields. (Book 2) (1940: I, 30)

The arrival of Fingal brings about a further doubling. Both he and Cuchullin are 'leaders of resistance to the invader'. From this Macpherson derives the theme of Cuchullin's despondency (Books 3 and 5), because Fingal is filling a role Cuchullin sees as his own, as well as the scene where Cuchullin sends the sword of Cathba to Fingal (Book 4), and a later scene in which Fingal consoles and encourages him (Book 6). The doubling not only makes certain events occur twice, but of its nature engenders further narrative material in the interaction between the two heroes.

At the opening of *Fingal* Moran, having seen the enemy fleet, urges Cuchullin to yield. Later in the same book, Swaran sends the son of Arno to view the approaching Irish forces, and is advised to 'Fly, king of ocean, fly' (1940: I, 12). In each case a fearful scout encourages his leader not to fight. Again in Book 1, Cuchullin proclaims a feast, sending an invitation to Swaran, which is rejected. Fingal repeats the invitation in Book 3, and it is again rejected. In Book 2, after the cowardly withdrawal of Grumal, Connal and Cuchullin face the enemy together, covering the retreat of their comrades. In Book 3, it is Cuchullin and Calmar who stand 'in this narrow way' while Connal and Carril 'carry off the sad sons of Erin' (1940: I, 40). This is a repetition with minimal variation. It is immaterial which of the heroes is assisting Cuchullin. A minor, but telling instance of duplication is in the way the 'bull of contention' motif from the *Tain* (Thomson 1952: 26-8), used in the *Ferda-Cuchullin* episode at the end of Book 2, has already cropped up in the *Cairbar-Grudar*

episode in Book 1: 'Long had they strove for the spotted bull, that lowed on Golbun's echoing heath' (1940: I, 17).

Not all functions derived from the ballads are treated in this way. Swaran's offer of peace in Book 2, in exchange for Cuchullin's wife, his dog and submission, is not duplicated. Nor is the moment in Book 6 when Fingal offers Swaran the choice of fighting, or departing.

Of the functions (or motifs) which Macpherson introduced, 'night puts an end to the fighting' was adopted by Livingston at the close of 'Cath Monadh Bhraca':

mun do sgaoil na speuran doilleir neòil
mun cuairt
a sgar na slòigh, gun aon diubh
dh'fhaotainn buaidh! (C 45)

A strongly Macphersonian motif is the return of the ghost of a known person to give instructions or advice. The ghost of Crugal warns Connal that Cuchullin will be defeated (Book 2), and in Book 4 Ossian and Fingal are visited by the ghosts of Everallin and Agandecca respectively, in quick succession. We shall see that Livingston adopted this motif for 'Na Lochlannaich', modifying it in a small but significant fashion.

The attentive reader will have noticed already that our terminology is wavering between 'function' and 'motif' at this point. There is good reason for uncertainty of this kind. What Macpherson did was to degrade the 'functions', or structural elements derived from the ballads, to the status of motifs. Why should one speak of degradation?

It would be a mistake to attribute a general validity to Propp's observations on a limited corpus of material. Nevertheless, it is interesting to find him noting that 'the sequence of events has its own laws... Freedom within this sequence is restricted by very narrow limits which can be exactly formulated' (1968: 22). Before analysing the ballads, it was suggested that structural elements have a crucial position within

the narrative: they are marked for order. Thus the arrival of the fleet signals the beginning of the narrative, and the actual fighting comes at the end. The latter will not be interrupted or followed by other major functions, but only by a closing function such as the offer of friendship or freedom, once the conflict has been resolved.

When Macpherson duplicated these elements, they no longer belonged to a specific place in the narrative as a whole. They lost their ordered, and therefore ordering quality. Ceasing to constitute signposts in the development of the plot, they could crop up at different points in the poem. In *Fingal*, fighting is sometimes inconclusive, and frequently interrupted, and a second fleet can arrive when the narrative is well under way, so that this function no longer signals a beginning. The difficulty the reader often experiences in following the thread of Macpherson's narrative is a consequence of his fragmentation and duplication of the ballad material. The plot has lost its old cohesion, provoking a sense of disorientation in the reader. Whether or not Macpherson introduced a different kind of cohesion to underpin his new structures is a problem that would require separate, and extended investigation. It is beyond our scope here.

An obvious means of expansion which has already been mentioned was the use of episodes. These are linked to Macpherson's female characters, and to a particular, feminine pathos which is an important constituent of sentiment in his epics as a whole. It is more dangerous to be a woman than a man in the world of *Fingal*. Morna, Brassolis, Degrena, Galbina, Agandecca, the king of Craca's daughter and Gelchossa all meet their deaths in the course of the epic, though only Degrena has a place in the principal narrative. A majority of the male characters, on the contrary, survive. Evirallin returns to Ossian as a ghost, Bragela hopes in vain for Cuchullin's return:

Dost thou raise thy fair face from the rock to find the
sails of Cuchullin? - The sea is rolling far distant,
and its white foam shall deceive thee for my sails.

Retire, for it is night, my love, and the dark wind
sighs in thy hair. Retire to the halls of my feasts,
and think of the times that are past: for I will not
return till the storm of war is ceased. (1940: I, 18)

Malvina, in love with Oscar, is immediately presented in a footnote as the companion of Ossian after his son's death. Indeed, the only woman whose story ends well is Inibaca, sister to the king of Lochlin, given to Fingal's great-grandfather Trenmor in a far-off episode recounted during the feast in Book 7.

Evidently these women did not fulfil a merely structural need in Macpherson's poem, but introduced a note of powerlessness (contradicted only in Morna's manning a sword against Duchomar), of numb suffering and frustration, to which he attached considerable importance, and which had only minimal precedents in the ballad material. Livingston, rather surprisingly, totally excludes women from 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' and 'Blàr Shunadail' (as from almost all his battle poems). They are merely props, on the level of the old men and children:

na h-aosmhoir, mnathan is clann,
an crodh 's gach creutair
air fad Oisinnis 's na Ranna
o Bhealach Dhearg gu Port Mheala
's o Shannaig gu Port Uig
a bhith 'm Beinn Runastaidh an nochd,
's an Oa air an dòigh a chualas
a ghluasad don Bheinn mhòir... (C 24-5)

Dh'iarr m' athair...
... na h-aosmhoir, mnathan a's clann
aiseag gus a' cheàrn a b'fhaisge dh'Albainn (C 76-7)

Evidently the pathos Macpherson had drawn from his female characters did not interest Livingston. He was aiming to impart a very different quality to his narrative.

We shall now turn our attention to Livingston's major battle poems, 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' and 'Blàr Shunadail'. Nigel MacNeill gives a perceptive assessment of 'Na Lochlannaich' as

'the only proper dramatic poem in the language... one of the most ambitious of Livingston's productions, yet... not equal as a whole' (1929: 462-3). We shall examine it in considerable detail, drawing a series of conclusions which a briefer examination of 'Blàr Shunadail' will serve to confirm. Our approach will be comparative, (in so far as Livingston's debt to Macpherson and the ballads will emerge clearly), but will also take note of the large quantity of new material introduced by the poet, who drew, in 'Na Lochlannaich', on Islay tradition and on his intimate knowledge of placenames and archaeological monuments on the island. The useful distinction between different levels of analysis, structural elements, motifs, and stylistic features, will also be borne in mind. At just over two thousand lines, these poems account for slightly less than a third of Livingston's poetic production as a whole. They are his most ambitious and original, if not his most successful projects, and detailed study of them offers valuable insights into the poet's aims and capabilities.

Chapter Six: IMAGINARY BATTLES (1)

Early on in the *Vindication*, Livingston gives an account of a battle between Danish invaders and the native population of Islay which clearly offered the basis for 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' (V 147-50). About the time when the Scots under Malcolm II routed the Danes at Slaines Castle (a battle Livingston assigns to shortly after 1003), 'Godfred Crovan, a Danish lurdie of high distinction, took possession of Islay'. Godfred, or Godred Crovan ('of the white hand') is a historical figure, king of Dublin, Man and the Hebrides. J.G. McNeill, in his *New Guide to Islay* writes that he died on the island in 1095 and was buried at Carabàn ('white cairn') near Machrie golf links at the south end of Laggan Bay (1900: 3). Livingston purveys a legend 'handed down from the Danish mythologists of those days', according to which Crovan discovered a monster some six miles from the shore of Loch Indaal. Having awakened it with his bugle at a place 'yet pointed out on the farm of Skerasi', he made three changes of horse in order to escape its clutches. The monster met its death on a 'long file of spiked barrels' laid in preparation on the shore, over which it was forced to pass in its eagerness to catch him.

This tale is a 'metaphor' for the 'historical facts' Livingston now details, without citing a written source. The Danish fleet entered Loch Indaal, and the invaders landed. The natives ambushed them at Creagan a' Chath, but this counter attack was repulsed at Gartmain (the farm where the poet was born). The Islaymen next gathered at Imire Caomhnard, with a view to escaping eastwards to Jura, and indeed, this is the place where tradition claims that Crovan discovered the monster. (Now Emeraconart, before Kilmeny on the road from Bridgend to Port Askaig. 'Caomhnard' is the Islay form of 'còmhnard'). What actually happened was that the natives were decoyed onto the

beach and surrounded. 'Only three individuals, of the remaining male inhabitants of Islay, escaped the carnage'. Sliabh a' Chath, where the major battle occurred, is a low hill of 53 metres east and slightly north of Gartmain. It is named in 'Na Lochlannaich' as the point where the Islaymen are to assemble (630, C25), and the Mackays march up Creagan a' Chath on the day before the battle (754, C 29). (Given the length of this poem, references to both line number and page in the 1882 *Duain agus Orain* are supplied). In the *Vindication*, Livingston writes that the toponym 'Gleann Airc' commemorates the event: the principal narrative of 'Na Lochlannaich' is headed 'Cath Ghleann Airc'.

While the dragon tale was evidently a part of Islay oral tradition, there is no evidence that its reinterpretation in historical terms was anything other than the fruit of Livingston's imagination and his studies in military history. The detailed accounts of historical battles which fill many pages of the *Vindication*, and which we referred to in our second chapter, are evidence of his enthusiastic interest in military strategy. The account of the battle of Gleann Airc shows an intimate knowledge of the lie of the land around Livingston's place of birth, and suggests how invaders superior in numbers and weaponry, and the natives who opposed them, could have attempted to turn the local topography to their advantage. At the same time, the vision of the poet peopling a small triangle of Islay, between Bowmore, Bridgend and the farm of Mullindry, with imaginary armies engaged in mortal combat, is entirely consonant with Livingston's character as it emerges from his own works and from Blair's biographical essay.

The battle of the *Vindication* and the battle of 'Na Lochlannaich', then, are one and the same, with a notable exception. In 'Na Lochlannaich' it is the natives who win. Livingston the historian accepted the fact of the Norse domination of the Inner and Outer Hebrides, a domination which for him involved the near elimination of the Gaelic population of

the island. But his poetic imagination was free to conjure up a different version of the struggle, a version which, moreover, coincided with the models offered by Macpherson and the traditional balladry, in which the invaders are invariably the losers.

A further input from Islay lore is indicated in Blair's prefatory note to the poem (C1). It is the 'old prophecy... current in Islay, that a battle is to be fought on the very site which the Bard has selected for the strife of his imaginary heroes'. A footnote to line 150 gives its text (C 7):

Cill a' Bholg, Cill a' Bholg,
far an cuirear an cath borb,
's nearachd a bhitheas an toiseach a ruith
's a rath latha catha Chill a' Bholg.

The division into lines is our own. Blair gives the text as a continuous sentence. It is not entirely clear what meaning should be given to 'rath', or whether 'ràth' ('fortress') is meant: a tentative translation could be 'Cill a' Bholg, Cill a' Bholg, where the savage battle will be fought, happy the man who is running at the fore, and meets with luck on the day of the battle of Cill a' Bholg'. J.G. MacNeill identifies Cill a' Bholg as a chapel, probably with a graveyard attached, on the farm of Gartmain (1900: 6). Blair suggests that the prophecy may have dated from after the period in which the poem is set. If this is true, it would refer to a battle yet to occur. Livingston would then have projected it backwards in time so as to present 'Cath Ghleann Airc' as its fulfilment.

Niall Garbh gives an extended version of the prophecy in a soliloquy early on in 'Na Lochlannaich'. Over the seas will come

ealt fhitheach o thìr an t-sneachda
a dh'fhàgas Ile cainteach, creachte,
a bheir an gearran às an amall,
an laogh on chrò 's a' chaor' on mhainnir,
a bheir am pòr à fonn nan gràinnseach
's an treud crodhanach à gleann na h-àirigh (142-7, C7)

Niall attributes this vision to Torgainn Mhic Ruaine, 'sean speuradair Dhùn Charraig'. There is a Dùnan Charraig, situated south east of Loch Tallant and not far from Kildalton Chapel, at the eastern extremity of Islay, but no word of an astrologer or prophet connected with it. If Livingston invented this detail, he took care to link it with a specific location on the island.

Structurally, the main body of 'Na Lochlannaich' (96-973) falls clearly into three sections. The first (96-634, C5-25) covers the sighting of the fleet and the spreading of the news; the second (635-749, C25-9) is concerned with the war council of the Gaelic leaders; the third (750-973, C29-36) recounts the battle. This third section begins with what can be seen as a short interlude (750-779, C29-30) describing the arrival of the Mackays of the Rhinns the day before the battle.

The first section is the most extended and innovatory. A watchman at the fort of Dùn Athad, near the Mull of Oa, sees the Danes arriving from the south-west (111, C5). (From the account in the *Vindication*, and from the notes to the 1882 *Duain agus Orain*, it is clear that both Blair and Livingston saw 'Danes' as the English equivalent for 'Lochlannaich'. We shall follow their practice in dealing with 'Na Lochlannaich' as 'Blàr Shunadail'.) The fleet is described, and (124, C6) their cries reach the ears of Niall Garbh, who is observing Loch Indaal from the ridge above Bowmore. After the soliloquy quoted above, he runs off with drawn sword (172, C8) in the direction of Dun Nosebridge (called Dùn Chlamhain by Livingston). On the way he meets (183, C8) a captain with eight men, and they greet each other silently, with a motion of their swords.

(200, C9) Dòmhnall Aimeidh, leader of the Islay Gaels, and his standard bearer Colla Glèidhteach see Niall approaching, and Colla realises that the opening scene of a premonitory dream he has had is coming true. (225, C9) When Niall reaches the Dun he finds it in a state of siege, and assumes the Danes have already

captured it. (272, C11) Dòmhnall Aìmhreidh opens to him, and Niall repeats the song of slaughter he heard from the Danes (295-346, C12-3). Colla gives a detailed account of his dream (366-440, C15-7), and Dòmhnall orders the fiery cross to be sent round. (453, C18) Niall reveals that this is already being done. The captain he met was Maclean of Torra, and he saw Alasdair Mac a' Chombaich and Muireach na Badaig carrying the cross past Bridgend and Carnain (Livingston uses the Gaelic names, Bail' an Ath and Càrn Aithne) to Runastaidh.

(488, C19) Now MacArthur of Proaig's messenger arrives, Dòmhnall Fiadh from Gleann Leòra, as his chief has seen the Danes arriving from the ridge of Beinn Bhìogair that morning. Dòmhnall Fiadh has passed on his fiery cross to Donnchadh Mòr Laoirinn, now on his way. The heroes are worried he may fall into the defensive ditch which cuts him off from them, but he leaps clean across it and arrives safely. (591, C23) The last messenger to arrive comes on horseback. He is Donnchadh nan Arm, bringing news that Maclean of Torra has sent the fiery cross round Islay, and has set six men to watch the coast for the invaders' landing. (617, C24) Dòmhnall Aìmhreidh orders the evacuation of women, children and old folk to Beinn Runastaidh and Beinn Mhòir. All men capable of wielding a sword are to gather next morning on Sliabh a' Chath, and the nobles will meet at Dùn Chlamhain for a council of war.

Livingston is expanding the ballad material in a rather different manner from Macpherson. The Danish fleet is sighted three times, from three different places: by the watchman on Dun Athad at the south-west tip of Islay, by Niall Garbh at Bowmore, tucked into the curve of Loch Indaal, and by MacArthur on Beinn Bhìogair, just above the east coast facing Jura. There are additional 'sightings' of a slightly different kind when Dòmhnall Aìmhreidh and Colla Glèidhteach see Niall arriving at a run, or when the heroes see Dòmhnall Fiadh coming down into Srath Chill-Fhìonain (now Kilenann), to the south of them. The figure of the

running scout is multiplied: Niall Garbh, running south-west from Bowmore to Dun Nosebridge, meets Maclean of Torra moving in the opposite direction towards Bridgend and Carnain. Dòmhnall Fiadh moves from the east coast in an anti-clockwise circle down to Baile Nèill (north of Lagavulin and north-east of Port Ellen), where he passes the cross on to Donnchadh Mòr Laoirinn. There are further runners we do not meet, such as Muireach na Badaig, last heard of as having reached Rubha a' Mhàil, the extreme north-east tip of Islay.

The effect is of a whole island galvanised into simultaneous, frenzied movement, which Livingston orchestrates through a rich use of place-names, often a considerable distance apart from one another. Many can be identified from the Ordnance Survey maps, others from guides to the island, but it is likely that several survive in this source only. During a visit to Islay in June 1986, the tenant of Gartloist farm, just east of Gartmain (named Sleive on the Ordnance Survey 1:50000), was able to identify only Buaile nam Bàin (which he remembered as 'Buaile na Pè') of the many field names Livingston furnishes for this area. Blair assures the reader that 'all the place names given in the poem are real'. They certainly root the action of 'Na Lochlannaich' in a fashion which is worlds away from the vague topography of Macpherson's poems. Leaving intentional fabrication aside, Macpherson's desire to produce smooth-sounding English equivalents, and his often dubious etymologies, had led to even further confusion when his text was translated into Gaelic. The emergence of Tura, Tara and Temora from what was probably a single Gaelic original is symptomatic of the confusion.

Livingston's placenames do not confuse; they clarify. The fact that his actors often take their names from the place they live in (Muireach na Badaig from the shores of Loch Gruinart, Donnchadh Mòr from the farm of Leorin just north of Port Ellen) almost gives one the impression that these places themselves have mobilised in order to resist the Danes. The island leaps to its

feet in the form of its men. The toponyms can provide passages of very effective poetry such as the following:

Mar fhiadh ro thabhannaich na faoghaid
nach feitheadh ri thaghadh rathaid,
gheàrr e 'n Sliabh Mòr air a thrasda,
is Gròbas Meadhoin far am b' fhaisge
tro chòmhnard na Coille Mhùgaich,
is Buaille nam Bàn cha b' fhad' ùin' ann,
Goirtean Bàn na h-uchdaich chais
a dìreadh cha b' fhada leis,
a-nunn Druim Dubh is Glac a' Choin
is leitir uaine Leac nam Bàn... (188-97, C8)

In epic terms, this is the equivalent of Milton's highly evocative use of Biblical toponyms in *Paradise Lost*. The Gaelic effect is different, not alien or exotic, but of familiarity and precision, of a rootedness which has already been mentioned.

This use of placenames is also a stylistic effect. They are an important element in the language of 'Na Lochlannaich', a telling illustration of how large-scale choices regarding structure affect the poet's diction on the microcosmic level, enabling and motivating specific kinds of writing. If Macpherson's placenames throw a haze of imprecision over his heroes' actions, Livingston's make the setting vivid and actual to the reader. Similarly, where Macpherson's reduplication of functions had led to fuzziness and disorientation, with Livingston it produced, through the infusion of Islay material, a greater clarity.

The clarity is not fully achieved. It is worth pausing to reflect on the extent of Livingston's daring in the 'sighting and spreading the news' section of 'Na Lochlannaich' before admitting the limited nature of his success. He aimed to convey simultaneous action by showing first one, then another figure in movement. Narrative complexity of this kind had not been attempted before in Gaelic verse, and has not been since. There is nothing like it in the Gaelic *Ossian*. In contemporary Gaelic poetry, 'Dàin do Eimhir', 'An Cuilthionn' and 'An Rathad Cian', revolutionary as each may be, are hardly narrative in a

comparative way, and 'Mochtàr is Dùghall', which might have offered a structure as complex as Livingston's, was left in a fragmentary state by its author.

Livingston sought an effect not far from cinematic montage, cutting rapidly from one runner to another. The technique can work very well in visual terms, but is more problematic with verbal art. The film camera is physically immersed in the scene we see. It 'is' wherever the action is taking place, and its viewpoint is identified with the position of the camera within the scene. Words have a more fluid location. Primarily, they are on the page, but can be temporarily identified with the speech of any of the characters involved.

Livingston's difficulty lies in the fact that, in pursuit of this richly orchestrated movement, he has to introduce an 'omniscient narrator'. (The tag has been so misused as to lose much of its meaning, but will nevertheless serve our purposes here.) The Danish fleet is described to us (112-123, C5-6) not as any one character perceived it, but as it 'is', on the authority of a detached speaker who is not involved in the action. (If we wished to, we could identify the narrator with the *seanachaidh* of the prologue, but such an approach is not particularly fruitful here). Within the ballads, the source of the narration was Ossian, who had a physical place and role in the action of the poem. His coverage of events was inevitably and intentionally partial, both in his sympathies and in what he was able to witness or find out about. The use of the omniscient narrator leads to a particular kind of disparity of information levels. Differently from the ignorant, puzzled or unreliable narrator who increasingly takes his place in the twentieth century, the omniscient narrator knows more than the reader about what is happening and more than any single character. In the course of the narrative the principal characters learn more and more about their situation, and overall, the narrative is itself a process of transferring information from the narrator to the reader. At

the end their information levels are equal. The stages of this process are crucial moments in the development of the narrative. What is withheld may be even more important than what is revealed. This effect emerges in 'Na Lochlannaich' when Niall Garbh meets Maclean of Torra and his eight men (182ff., C8). Nothing is said, but presumably Niall sees the fiery cross they are carrying. The reader does not find this out for nearly three hundred lines, till Niall conveys the news to Dòmhnall Aimeidh ('ged nach d'fhuair mi ùin' innseadh', 455ff., C18). Similarly, the reader shares Niall's despair when he finds Dùn Chlamhain in state of siege (249-71, C10-1). It is this despair that gives Niall the strength to leap the moat,

gnìomh nach cuala 's nach faca
fear aosda no mac an treis òige
san linn' ud fo bhrataich Mhic Dhòmhnail.

The narrator knows all the time that it is unjustified, and that the swift response of the Islaymen to danger is responsible for the situation.

The omniscient narrator, then, can keep the reader guessing, and thereby vivify the process of telling his tale. The opposite mode in 'Na Lochlannaich' emerges in passages of near dramatic writing, as when the heroes fear for Donnchadh Mòr Laoirinn. (Livingston, indeed, cast entire poems in dialogue form, such as 'Còmhradh air fàsachadh na Gàidhealtachd', with Uilleam Ceanntìreach and Uilleam Ileach, or the 'Còmhradh mar gum biodh e eadar Baintighearna Ellerslie agus Tomas Learmont', set at the time of the Wars of Independence.) There were precedents in the ballads for intervention in direct speech, but there it is often formulaic, and only very rarely an expression of the personality or the emotions of the speaker. Niall Garbh's reactions to the sighting of the fleet and to the lifted drawbridge are highly emotional and individual, and it is difficult to conceive of them being attributed to any other character in the poem. Livingston's dialogues have touches of realism that remind one of writing for the theatre, and it is perfectly possible that he was

unconsciously drawn in that direction. A phrase like 'Slàinte is buaidh do Mhac Dhòmhnaill' (581, C23) conveys no information to the reader, but is an acting out of the relationship between Donnchadh Mòr and Dòmhnall Aimeidh in a way more appropriate to the stage than to a ballad. Its realism belongs as much to the theatre as the narrative poem.

Such a range of modes is, not surprisingly, rather beyond Livingston's powers of organisation. Difficulties emerge clearly when he is forced to move abruptly from one mode to the other. The dialogue between Niall and Dòmhnall is interrupted awkwardly by the narrator's voice recounting Donnchadh's feat in leaping the defensive ditch (558ff). Had the other two been able to see him coming, one of them could have given a blow by blow commentary from his own viewpoint. But presumably he only comes within sight at the very end. The dramatic approach, where the text is identified with the speech of the characters and with their limited viewpoints, breaks down, and the narrator must step in to patch over the gap. At the close of the war council, it is significant that a line which reads like a stage direction, 'Na maithean le aon guth' (746, C29), is printed by Blair as a quick cut to the voice of the narrator. Stage directions are silent and unheard. The capitalised hero's names which head their speeches are not woven into the fabric of the verse. 'Na maithean le aon ghuth' falls clumsily somewhere in between. The variety and uncertainty of techniques in 'Na Lochlannaich' leads naturally to typographical problems which are symptomatic.

Livingston's difficulty with modes is linked to his use of shifting viewpoints, linked in its turn to his attempt at montage and to the use of direct speech. In a sense he is a victim of the complexities of his innovations, of an ambition which creates artistic demands he cannot fully cope with.

The 'war council' and 'battle' sections are structurally much simpler and involve no major changes of location. The island symbolically comes together in its assembled leaders, but as they are all in the one place, the effect presents no problems:

Chì mi na h-uaislean a' tighinn,
 a' chòig nach tillear gun bhuaidh
 no uaigh air faiche na deuchainn.
 Chì mi Mac Aoidh na Ranna,
 's nàmhaid nan Gall, Gill-Leathain
 Thorra nan allt,
 's Mac Artair Phròraig nan ùigean sàile,
 Mac Dhiarmaid Runastaidh,
 carragh làidir nach d'fhàilnich riamh,
 's Caillein nan sgiath leathann, flath na h-Oa
 a thig le chòmhlaing mar a b' àbhaist. (639-49, C25)

Most of the council is taken up with 'Oraid Mhic Aoidh', in which the eighty-one year old chief of the Rhinns gives a detailed outline of the battle strategy the Gaels must follow. Once more Livingston the military strategist takes over, with a minute realism in the positioning of the forces and the use of precise toponyms from the area around Gartmain. Mackay's speech also allows the poet, to all effects, to run the battle twice over, an opportunity he no doubt enjoyed.

The battle is fought on Wednesday. It begins with a brief repetition of the messenger function, as Dòmhnall Fiadh comes running from the shore to announce that the Danes have landed. The battle itself falls into three sections. The first ends when the Danes redouble their attack, threatening to out-manoeuvre the Macleans and MacArthurs who constitute the left wing of the native forces. Mackay advises Dòmhnall to withdraw from the centre and move to their assistance. The five Islay noblemen lead their forces against the enemy, and the second section closes with an anticipation of the final outcome:

an uair a tharraing na Lochlannaich
 an uile neart gus an rèidhlein
 mar a chualas,
 le aon oidhirp bhàsmhoir far an d'fhàg
 iad am beatha 's am feòil. (866-70, C33)

In the third section, only sixty of Clann Artair are left fighting, together with Donnchadh Mòr Laoirinn, who carries their banner, a sprig of rowan from Allt Thorra. Bollsadh Mòr Mac Mhugrain leads a group of five Danish knights in an attempt to seize it. He and his twelve foster brothers surround Donnchadh,

now christened 'Mac Ghreim Cruaidh o Laorain' (949, C36), but all meet their deaths, as Maclean seizes the enemy's banner and the Danes are routed.

A discussion of the tripartite structure of the battle section in 'Na Lochlannaich' leads naturally to a consideration of material which fleshes out this skeleton, the motifs employed by the poet. By focussing on banners, Livingston is able to move from the general tactics of pitting large forces against one another, impressive but lacking in individual characterisation, to the struggle of small groups for a major prize, thus providing a striking and exciting conclusion for his poem.

Christiansen treats the banners material from the ballads at some length (1931: 122-31, see also Meek 1986), pointing out that, as happens in 'Magnus', the unfurling of standards normally comes before battle begins. So in *Fingal* Book 4:

We reared the sun-beam of battle; the standard of the king. Each hero's soul exulted with joy, as, waving, it flew on the wind. It was studded with gold above, as the blue wide shell of the nightly sky. Each hero had his standard too; and each his gloomy men. (I, 57)

Livingston, in line with his general practice, derives his banners from Islay tradition, and uses them to structure his battle. When the Danes, sixty deep, attack the left wing, 'brataichean/ na dà Fhine' are mentioned (835-6, C32), and Mackay hears 'slugan dìon brataich', presumably slogans urging the defence of the banners. 'Bratach an fhraoich' marks the Macdonalds (847, C32), but it is the MacArthurs' banner, 'bratach leathann dubh... 's dealbh an t-saoghail le òr na meadhon' (875-6, C33), otherwise known as 'Dubh na siorr'achd' (884, C34) towards which Bollsadh directs his strongest men. When the MacArthurs, all but sixty, have fallen, attention is switched to the Maclean banner, 'crann righinn do chaoran Allt Thorra', borne by Donnchadh Mòr Laorain, whom we have already met in his capacity as runner, and who is now christened 'Donnchadh

neartmhor/ Mac Ghreim Cruaidh o Laorain' (948-9, C36). Maclean of Torra cleaves the Danish prince Fracal's body in two and shatters his own sword on the invaders' banner pole, which he then uses to beat Bollisadh's brains out, spattering them in the face of Nuaran, captain of the opposing forces.

Numbers tend to be repeated, and may have a structuring function: the 'còig maithean Ileach' (850, C32) are mirrored by the 'còig ridirean Lochlannach' (929, C35), the 'tri fichead each' of Raonal Chonasairidh (833, C32) are echoed when the Danes attack 'tri fichead air doimhnead' (841, C32), or when only 'tri fichead' of Clann Artair survive (922, C35). (Niall had counted the invading fleet as 'tri fichead seòl is tri eile' (133, C6)). The twelve foster brothers who take the place of Bollisadh's fallen knights (946, C36) have no counterpart, and any reminiscence of Christ and the apostles is surely accidental.

While the Islay banners respect tradition, those attributed to the Danes are probably the fruit of Livingston's imagination. Their coat of arms has a raven on a carcass, a wild cat and a bear with a king between its teeth (112-3, C5). Mackay, who has repulsed the invading 'Geintleach' no fewer than six times (668-73, C26), knows that they will not come ashore to fight unless provoked, and advises the Islaymen to display a raven impaled on a long spike, and to leave dead cats here and there near the shore:

Chan eil ni air thalamh a thogas fearg
nan Geintleach fuileach ud co mòr ri cait mharbh;
tha na cinnich bhorb ud gan cùnntas coisrigte. (714-6,
C28)

(In 1865 Livingston wrote 'caoit', reflecting the Islay pronunciation).

Another important motif is the feats which the Islay heroes perform and from which they gain their status. We have mentioned how both Niall Garbh and Donnchadh Mòr Laoirinn leap defensive

ditches. It is the others' preoccupation that makes Donnchadh's feat so physically present to the reader:

... Leanaidh e 'n ceum dìreach,
's ma thuiteas e sa chlaise dhomhain
chan èirich an t-àrmann ni 's mò.
E 'n smùidreach teas,
gearraidh an t-uisg' anail cho grad
's a bhàthadh srad an claise an Dùin. (558-63, C22)

Livingston's protagonists have a physicality very different from the airy forms of Macpherson's, who are so frequently rendered insubstantial by insistent climatic metaphors. Cuchullin's assembling heroes are 'gloomy and dark... like the gathering of rainy clouds behind the red meteors of heaven' (1940: I, 4). In Book 4, Fingal is 'like a dark and stormy cloud, edged round with the red lightning of heaven, and flying westward from the morning's beam', and then 'like a beam of heaven', Gaul 'rushed on like a whirlwind', and the warriors deal blows 'as thunder rolls from hill to hill in dismal broken peals'. The defeated are 'like broken clouds on the hill' (1940: I, 54-7). When steel pierces these bodies, there is little sense of wounding. Rather, they are dissipated, insubstantial and intangible as the fogs and winds to which they are so often compared. Other similes involve water or rock, in any case undifferentiated material which is unlikely to bleed or feel pain. The clang of Maclean's sword against the Danish banner pole, or the remnants of Bollsadh's brains on Nuaran's disbelieving face, give Livingston's battle a very real violence, however disturbing the brutality evoked may be.

Hyperbole, too, is physically expressed, as in Colla Glèidhteach's alarm when he sees his dream begin to come true:

Chlisg an Glèidhteach 's thug e tuisleadh,
leum fhuil na braise 's dh'at a chuislean,
sgàin an crios-claidheimh 's thuit am breacan,
bhrìst teang' a bhràist' is reub a dheacaid. (208-11,
C9)

The emotion of Macpherson's heroes is restrained and decorous. Glèidhteach, too, is silent, but one feels it could be dangerous

to stand near him when he is experiencing strong emotion. The past which defines him is strongly physical:

an laoch a shineadh crudha gearrain
nuair a thigeadh i ùr on teallaich,
a thug na ceithir dùirn fhuar'
à tarbh mòr Aird na h-Uamha,
a thog clach neart Mhic Mhath Cheann Tùra
's a snàmh Loch nam Breac na airm 's na lùirich...
(216-21, C9)

Livingston again infuses living tradition into his poem. The straightening of a horse shoe is a traditional feat, as is 'dòrn bhuar', breaking the joint of a dead bullock, corrupted through usage to 'dòrn fhuar'. (I am indebted to Dr John MacInnes for information about this aspect of Gaelic tradition). Breaking all four joints may well be an added hyperbole of Livingston's invention. Niall Garbh is famed for having killed the Danish king's son Nuagan when only seventeen, as well as his two foster brothers, Ruais and Dùdal (239-44, C10). He is further defined by the genealogy of his sword, 'còrr-lann Mhic Mhorachain', which reaches back to the Gleann Màrtain druid,

a' cheud fhreumh do Chlann Chalum
air an cualas iomradh fhathast. (170-1, C8)

Gleann Mhàrtuin (as the Ordnance Survey has it) runs from Loch Finlaggan south-west to Emeraconart, but I have found no trace of the druid MacRaoichnean. Here as elsewhere, it is hard to draw the line between tradition and Livingston's embroidery and extension of it.

Many of his protagonists have roots in Islay. Muireach na Badaig was famed for a swimming feat which allowed him to escape after the Battle of Tràigh Ghruineart in 1598. Rubha Bholsa and Mala Bholsa are not far west of Rubha a' Mhàil, and MacNeill mentions an Uamh Bhearnasaig, the big cave of Bolsa, linked by tradition to a tale like that exploited in Sorley Maclean's 'Uamh an Oir'. When Pennant visited it in 1772, it housed three farmers, with their stock and crops (1900: 70). J.G. MacNeill describes the MacArthurs of Pròraig as hereditary pipers to the

Lords of the Isles. A 'well-known county family' of Mackays, who lived at Laggan and had died out when MacNeill wrote, were the 'lineal descendants of Mackay of the Rhinns' (1900: 59).

A further point which distinguishes Livingston's heroes from Macpherson's is the essentially democratic nature of their bond, reflecting both the view of clan society expounded in the prose works, and the powerful physicality of the world evoked in 'Na Lochlannaich'. In epic tradition, and in Macpherson, the messenger is of an inferior status to the warriors he serves (Bysveen 1982: 94-6). This may explain the cravenness of Moran in his first report to Cuchullin. Bysveen quotes von Rad to the effect that the messenger is traditionally a mouthpiece for the sender, who 'completely submerged his own ego and spoke as if he were his master himself speaking to the other'. This certainly matches the situation in the ballads, where direct speech is rarely individualised. Livingston's protagonists are more runners than messengers, important for their speed and physical prowess rather than for verbal accuracy or faithfulness to their master's commands. Indeed, one has the feeling that the initiative has been taken out of Dòmhnall Aìmhreidh's hands. The messengers inform him of what is already being done, of how his orders have been anticipated ('Tha sin dèanta, mo cheann-feadhna' (454, C18)).

Consistent with this is Livingston's rejection of single combat between respective leaders as a climax to the battle. Here he once more goes against both Macpherson and the ballads. Maclean of Torra, Niall and Dòmhnall Fiadh are matched against the 'ridirean' Grasdai, Raosbann and Ruasgal in a way that implies they are of equal status. Dòmhnall Aìmhreidh, theoretically at the head of the Islay forces, does not stand aside to spectate as Fingal so frequently does. But his active part in the fighting is never mentioned by the poet. He appears

merely as the recipient of Mackay's advice on tactics (845-9, C32).

The shared aristocratic ethos which links Fingal, Cuchullin and Swaran, as it does Ossian and Cathmor in *Temora*, separating them from their inferiors in rank so that they have more in common with the commander of the opposing forces than with their own troops) has no place in 'Na Lochlannaich'. There is no parleying with the enemy and no talk of feasts, no aestheticisation of the warrior life. The uncouth sounding names Livingston gives the Danes suit their status as barbarians and Gentiles, although his heroes interestingly lack any Christian traits. Whether this is an instinctive hangover from the ballads, or reflects the much vaunted paganism of Macpherson's world, is a question that remains open. It may in part be due to the secular nature of Livingston's Presbyterianism, defined by an ideal of democratic solidarity rather than adherence to common rituals.

If we look to 'Na Lochlannaich' for a historically convincing reconstruction of eleventh-century Islay, this silence as to religious practices, monastic institutions and even the social role of women will seem a major blemish. But the poem's fictionality is open and avowed, and only wilful misunderstanding could lead one to give too much weight to the anachronisms it contains. The shifting of Muireach na Badaig from the late sixteenth century to lend his services in opposing Viking invaders is the effect of good-humoured local patriotism, without any attempt to obfuscate or deceive. Livingston may not have known that the Vikings had introduced the fiery cross, but he is likely to have heard the local tradition that Dùn Athad was built by the Danes on their way to the battle of Largs in 1263. In the latter case, he may be closer to the truth, as the fortress is thought to be considerably older than the thirteenth century (MacNeill 1900: 44). A further anachronism is the use in the poem of toponyms said to be derived from the events it describes. How did Sliabh a' Chath come to be called Sliabh a' Chath before the

battle had actually taken place? Livingston's attempt to wriggle out of this one is not entirely convincing:

Chunnaic mi... air Sliabh a' Chath
(an t-ainm a fhuair sinn on fhàisneachd
air cnoc eararach Ghart Loisgte) (369-71, C15)

These lines come from Colla Glèidhteach's account of his premonitory dream, in which 'Fhearghas Mòr Mac Eirc/ dà fhicheadamh rìgh na h-Alba' (442-3, C19) warns of the approaching danger, ending with the cry 'A mhic Dhòmhnail!' This further anachronism, where a king, crowned in AD 503 entrusts the keeping of the Hebrides 'on Chìrc Leòdh'saich mu thuath/ gus a' Choileach Arannach mu dheas' (450-1, C18) to a clan we believe to have a much later origin, cannot be laid at Livingston's door. Native genealogists had long maintained that the Macdonalds were located in the Hebrides prior to the Dalriadic immigration, and in a letter of 1615 to the Bishop of the Isles, James Macdonald of Islay claimed that his kindred had been in possession of their lands for ten hundred years (MacNeill 1900: 5).

The structural elements and motifs in 'Na Lochlannaich' on which we have concentrated so far have inevitably gone a considerable way towards characterising its style. Livingston's interrelatedness to Macpherson and the Gaelic *Ossian* operates principally on these levels, much less on the purely stylistic level of diction, figures of speech and prosody. (Interrelatedness is a better term than influence because it embraces the rejection and remodelling which is an important part of Livingston's response to both Macpherson and the ballads). Colla's dream is clearly inspired by Macpherson, yet a brief comparison of passages quickly demonstrates how differently the scene is realised. Here is Crugal, appearing to Conall at the beginning of *Fingal* Book 2:

Chunnaic an gaisgeach 'na shuain
Sruth caoirtheach o chruaich nam beann;

Shuidh Cruthgheal air dearsa gu chùl...
Bha aghaidh mar ghath na gealaich;
Bha 'earradh do nial nan tom;
Dhà shùil mar éibhle sa' bhealach.
'Na bhroilleach bha lot mar tholl. (Ossian 1818: 118)

Cha bu thannasg foilleil
an sealladh àigh,
's an crios a' boillsgeadh
le spangan òir 's le neamhnaidean
air a bhroilleach aibhseach.
Dhearc e orm le caoimhneas,
a cheangail ris mi mar gum bithinn
ann am bannan iarainn.
Bha m' fhuil gam thogail
a dhol ga fhàilteachadh
nuair a tharraing e chlaideamh -
lann air fad is leud
nach eil a leithid idir ann,
's a deàrrsadh mar ghathan nan reultan
an oidhche reòta. (423-37, C17)

The lines from the Gaelic *Ossian* - we quote the 1818 text, more widely available than that of 1807 and quite possibly the one Livingston was most familiar with - use the climatic metaphors we have already discussed, a live coal in a place of shadow, an inconstant moonbeam or a ray of sunlight. In each case, the optical information is unsteady or unreliable. Livingston's ghost has the constancy and brilliance of stars on a clear night. He is real enough to bind Colla to him with iron bonds, so real that the hero instinctively moves forward to greet him. 'Cha bu thannasg foilleil' reads almost like a conscious rejection of Macpherson's precedent. He sings a song of warning to Colla, something it is hard to imagine any of the figures in *Fingal* doing, and his message is not a generic lament on impermanence, or the prediction of defeat, but a spur to action and heroism.

In 'Na Lochlannaich' Livingston makes very sparse use of metaphor and simile. Nowhere does he attempt the epic similes characteristic of Macpherson. There are so few explicit comparisons in the body of the poem (excluding the inset songs and the prologue) that it is instructive to list them:

Mar fhiadh ro thabhannaich na faoghaid
nach feitheadh ri taghadh rathaid (188-9, C8)

's a shùil mar phlathadh nam Fir Chlis (213, C9)

Mar luaths iolair gu dioghladh braid
an t-sealgair, 's e creachadh a nid (265-6, C11)

's a deàrrsadh mar ghathan nan reultan (436, C17)

mar earb am boil teichidh (492, C19)

mar chabrach dian a' chreachainn (571, C22)

Chì mi fear air each mar chobhar an t-sruth (591, C23)

... tha luaths
mar iolar Sgòrr nam Faolan (595-6, C23)

's ceò o lotan mar dheatach,
marcach-sine a' dìreadh
on làraich dheirg (900-2, C34)

[bha] am fiadh catharra buadhach (945, C35)

Not only is a total of ten very low for a poem of these dimensions: the comparisons are brief and undeveloped, and refer in half the cases to animals, in a way that owes more to Gaelic tradition than to Macpherson's example.

But a more crucial factor helps to explain Livingston's imperviousness to the minutiae of Macpherson's style, in both English and Gaelic. It is his prosody. Diction and figures of speech do not exist in the poetic texture independently of metre, but are essentially conditioned by it. Our anachronistically mechanical view of metres tends to make us think of them as ready moulds into which meaning is poured, when in fact the metre makes certain kinds of meaning possible while excluding others, and may itself be the principal vehicle of meaning in the poetic text. The Russian poet Joseph Brodsky has written that 'form is even less separable from content in poetry than body is from soul'. He claims that 'the poet begins to perceive meters as animate - inspired in the archaic sense - entities, as certain sacred vessels', and that 'verse metre is the equivalent of a certain

psychological state, at times not of just one state but of several' (1988: 208-9). Macpherson is the first, and to date perhaps the only major prose poet in the English language. His paragraphs can be reduced to quatrains relatively easily. The following example, from *Fingal* Book 3, is chosen more or less at random:

The maid stood trembling by my side;
he drew the bow: she fell.
Unerring is thy hand, I said,
but feeble was the foe.

We fought, nor weak was the strife of death.
He sunk beneath my sword.
We laid them in two tombs of stones;
the hapless lovers of youth.

Such have I been in my youth, O Oscar;
be thou like the age of Fingal.
Never search for the battle,
nor shun it when it comes. (1940: I, 46)

One can in fact detect a ballad rhythm here, with the tendency to alternate four and three stress lines. There can be no doubt that the text loses in efficacy when read this way. Originally this kind of articulation may have been affected by the ballads Macpherson attempted to translate. Even here, the influence is indirect. The Gaelic ballads do not present this regular alternation of shorter and longer lines. It is more likely that Macpherson instinctively looked to English ballad metres as a possible equivalent. What he actually produced was something quite new.

'Being poetry' or 'being prose' is not a quality intrinsic to a linguistic utterance, but concerns the way we are asked to read it. It is an agreement between poet and audience. While in poetic texts line divisions override and distort syntactic divisions, (a primacy emphasised by the visual presentation of poetry on the page), in Macpherson's prose the positioning of full stops, and the consequent variation in sentence length, is crucial to the overall effect. Moreover, the grouping of sentences in paragraphs

whose length also varies has a different resonance from the regular stanzas of Gaelic or English balladry. The units Macpherson deals in are unequal, not identical. These underlying structures make possible his diction and the distinctive tone of his text.

The point may seem too obvious to be worth making, but what made the task of forging a Gaelic *Ossian* of almost superhuman difficulty was the attempt to squeeze Macpherson's style back into a rigid verse form. The awkwardness of the result is due not just to an insufficiently elastic command of the language, but also to the problem of fitting Macpherson's sentences onto the Procrustean bed of short four-stress lines which, furthermore, aim to rhyme.

Livingston's response to this confused situation was as brilliant as it may have been unconscious. He is the first Gaelic poet to make extensive use of free verse, indeed, the first Gaelic poet to divorce words from music in the greater part of his output. There is nothing in the prose or in the execution of his free verse to suggest that this was a meditated decision, an innovation he saw as having a value of its own. 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' is so original a poem, in its dramatisation and its use of differing viewpoints, alternating with that of the narrator, that it is difficult to conceive of it fitting into an already available prosodic form. Such new wine threatened to corrode any of the old bottles. If the use of free verse was indeed a *faute de mieux* tactic, it would chime in with the rashness, almost the arrogance of Livingston's approach to the poem as a whole, innovating recklessly, assuming artistic responsibilities that even a greater genius could hardly have undertaken and absolved in a single poem.

The success of the medium is variable. In describing the movement of the scouts, evoking the mobilisation of the whole island, or in dramatic speech, certain passages are extremely

effective. Elsewhere, the execution can seem shoddy and hurried, particularly in the short lines just before the close of 'Na Lochlannaich', where the heroes are paired off with one another, and one has a certain impression of tiredness, of a rush to be finished. The treatment is perfunctory, and the verse does little to bring home to the reader the reality of what happens:

Thachair Gill-Leathain Thorra
's Grasdal mòr,
Niall Garbh is Raosbann,
nach d' aom riamh,
Dòmhnall Fiadh is Ruasgal gnù:
triùir ri triùir
a chrùn am blàr...

Thuit Raosbann fo lann Nèill Ghairbh
's chuir Gill-Leathain Thorra
ga uaigh Grasdal,
's bha Ruasgal gun anail... (931-8, 941-4, C35)

The free verse is not consistently successful, but it does give Livingston a fluid narrative medium into which he inserts three set-pieces in strict metre: the song of the invaders, as repeated by Niall (295-346, C12-3), the song of Fearghas Mac Erc (391-420, C16-7) and the 'port caismeachd' of the approaching Mackays (756-75, C29-30). Each of these is sung, not said, within the fictional context of the poem, and a contrast with the circumambient less structured verse is essential to their effect. The contrast is not, as in 'Cuimhneachan Bhraid-Alba', between different kinds of regular metre, so as to create a sort of medley, but between material that is 'verse' (and, therefore, song) in the traditional sense, and material that is not. Livingston is once more highly original here: nothing like this had been attempted in either the English or the Gaelic *Ossian*.

The movement of the free verse is notably slack in passages dealing with large-scale fighting, which are marred by what Sorley Maclean has called their 'rather self-smothering noise' (1985: 140). We see the Islaymen

a' sgathadh le trèine nam fineachan
sreathan tiugh nan cinneach borb
an colg fola, 's iad a' taomadh
an aodann nan laoch Ileach,
's a' lionadh gach bealach, mar a thuiteadh,
gus an robh sreath nam breacan
o cheann gu ceann an dearg thuil
's gach aon am muineal a nàmhaid,
an spàirneachd "Bàs no buaidh!",
facal cruadail suinn na Gàidhlig. (809-18, C31)

These lines are difficult to punctuate. Their breathlessness soon deteriorates into a kind of turgidity one learns to recognise in similar passages from the other battle and historical poems.

In seeking reasons for Livingston's failure in this area, it is instructive to consider what is said as much as the manner of its saying. This militaristic patriotism is bogus because the rhetoric of the Highland regiments has infiltrated Livingston's pseudo-historical construction, as in these lines from 'Blàr Shunadail':

Sheas na Gàidheil gun bhristeadh
mar a chleachd iad, 's nach cualas riamh
an iarrtas strìochdaidh an talamh nam beò:
còir a thug nàdur dhaibh 's gach linn.
Cha toir ùine dhinne i,
a chlann nam fear ud! (C 99)

Gaelic tradition offered a precedent for clan loyalty, or combined hostility to non-Gaelic speakers, but not for a British patriotism as the basis for heroic feats. The contradictions in Livingston's attitude are already evident in the *Vindication*, where he insists on the valour and exemplary morals of Gaelic defenders of the Empire while ridiculing the desire to spread English 'civilisation' around the globe (V 324-6, 364-5). The poet tries to believe, and to convince his readers, that the courage shown by such soliders at the time he wrote in was identical to, almost a proof of the reality of their ancestors' bravery in very different causes. The same note sounds in 'Blàr Shunadail' and in the account of the Highland soldiers at Alma:

leum na h-àrmainn gun ghealtachd,
bheuc an leòghann "Buaidh a dhaindheoin!"

Tharraing sliochd nam Fiann an lannan...
 a' maomadh don àrfhaich nan deann
 fon t-sròl ghreadhnach nach do chiosaich namh,
 is aosmhor cliù 's i ùr mar bha...
 euchdan nan curaidh gun smal
 dan dùthaich tìr nam beann 's nan tuil. (C 116-7)

The rhetoric of the 1858 'Rann Cruinneachadh Comann nam Fiann' is brashly militaristic. The song to 'Comann nam Fineachan Gàidhealach' written the following year brings up the contradiction of a central authority which rewards military service with evictions, yet remains poised in an uneasy British patriotism:

Fineachan tìr gharbh a' chuain,
 broilleach uail an domhain fharsaing,
 a thug rìghrean do Bhreatann gu lèir
 do Eirinn 's na gheill fo smachd dhiubh...

A-measg na bha 's na thig nar dèidh,
 bhur dreach 's bhur ceutaichead chan fhaicear,
 leithid lùth is cruth is ceum
 nan Gàidheal fo an èideadh feachdail. (C 146-7)

The project of bolstering failing Gaelic self-esteem by reflecting on the exploits of Highland soldiers was fatally flawed, and in so far as Livingston's battle poems are a reflection of this, their rhetoric, too, must fail to convince. Looking back from the latter part of the twentieth century, we may well feel that these men had more in common with those they fought against than those they fought for. Livingston seeks in their bravery an almost genetic proof of Gaelic value, while to us it indicates that their culture, particularly their military culture, had been successfully subverted and exploited. It is only to be expected that the weakness of Livingston's ideological position should be betrayed by the unsatisfactoriness of his verse. And the fact that such blemishes stand out, and tend to occur, as we have said, when large-scale forces are involved, throws into relief the quality of achievement to be found in many other passages in the longer poems.

The meeting of the 'Fineachan Gàidhealach' in Glasgow in 1859 can have had little real sense of what combat was like. The Crimean War took place at the far edge of Europe, and would be known to them only through news reports. The savagery of certain moments in 'Na Lochlannaich' is overstrained, as if Livingston's imagination had tried in vain to overcome this lack of direct experience with an excess of blood which proves only to be red ink. The harder he tries, the weaker the effect. The five Islay leaders move

searbh don chomhstri
aig cùl tòrr nan caochan dearg
o lotan domhain airm Chlann Dòmhnail,
an dùiseal na connspaid
fo bratach an fhraoich,
gus an robh an claidheanan tiugh
le fuil is dualan fuilt,
smuais is eanchainnean nan coimheach,
an ceann feadhna òg dà bhliadhn' thar fhichead
spuacte le fuil gu beòil nan osan,
's boltrach smùid anail nan leònta
's nan lochan dearg air fad sreath a' chòmhraig
a' dalladh nam fear feachd... (852-65, C33)

The Danes have scarcely any humane qualities in 'Na Lochlannaich'. They are barbarians *tout court*, who offer and deserve to receive no mercy. One cannot help wondering if what we are reading of is the Highland regiments relentlessly cutting down the native peoples of Africa or India, irredeemably other, savages beyond the reach of Christianity or Western civilisation, closer to animals than they are to human beings (and indeed, the Danes take animals for their gods). The thought might well have appalled Livingston, and perhaps one should be relieved rather than disappointed at his inability to depict slaughter convincingly.

'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' is an imperfect poem. Yet it remains Livingston's most varied, daring and innovative piece of writing. Close examination of it has allowed us to draw a series of conclusions about his battle poems, and about his poetic praxis

in general, which will not undergo major modifications as we proceed to look at other examples. As a consequence, the reading of 'Blàr Shunadail' which constitutes the next chapter is will be rather more compressed.

'Blàr Shùnadail' (C 61-100) is the last in order of writing of Livingston's battle and historical poems. It did not appear in print during his lifetime, but was published in instalments in *An Gàidheal* in 1873 and 1874 before being included in the 1882 *Duain agus Orain*. It is perhaps the most original of all his poems. Whereas a meticulously comparative approach to 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' was useful in isolating the new elements Livingston infused into that poem in order to energise inherited material and methods, it is less appropriate to 'Blàr Shùnadail'. The earlier poem's strengths are evident here, too, but the debt to Macpherson and to the ballads has shrunk almost to insignificance. The later poem has a broad and daring imaginative sweep that suggests Livingston had at last given free rein to his invention. Moreover, its lightheartedness and undeniable sense of humour set it apart from 'Na Lochlannaich', whose pervasive atmosphere of menace was further strengthened by a prologue connecting it firmly with contemporary disasters.

In 'Na Lochlannaich', Livingston had fused elements of popular lore with the Ossianic material to produce an imaginative world that had a strongly rooted sense of place, with heroes whose powerful physicality was conveyed both through their feats of strength and through their multiple movements within that geographical setting. He used shifts in narrative viewpoint to bring his readers closer to the experience of his heroes, and where possible, dramatised their exchanges in order to give what was happening the highest possible degree of immediacy. The individual combats which are so crucial to battles in both Macpherson and the ballads were kept for the poem's close, and the battle itself was presented as an encounter between large

forces, where strategy was essential to a victorious outcome. Parleying, feasting or courteous exchanges between the two sides were excluded, and the preliminary phase of sighting the invader and gathering the defenders expanded to become almost the main business of the poem, with the council of war providing a transition between the two sections.

'Blàr Shùnadail' is only slightly longer than 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' (1136 lines as against 973) but falls into two parts or 'earrannan'. Taken as a whole, it can be roughly divided into four sections. (As in the previous chapter, both line numbers and pages for the 1882 edition are given for quotations).

The first (corresponding to Part I) has a prologue (1-31, C61-2), followed by an account of a Viking council of war (32-141, C62-6) before Rùrach, Viking King of Dublin, who has successfully conquered the Isle of Man, sets out with twelve companions to reconnoitre the peninsula of Kintyre (142-365, C66-73). The second has an interleaved structure which, as we shall see, Livingston had some trouble in handling. Gregor, son of the King of Man, reaches Sunadale in Kintyre and gives an account of the invasion (II, 1-115, C74-8). There follows an episode which shows, mainly through dramatisation in direct speech, how Mac Iain Gheàrr and Ailean nan Sop stay on in Man and succeed, with the help of other heroes, in setting fire to Rùrach's fort before themselves leaving for Kintyre (116-355, C78-86). Gregor's own words briefly round off this inset episode (356-360, C86-7). The third section, leading up to the battle, falls into two parts. In the first (361-450, C87-9) the council meets, the fiery cross is sent round, and the defending forces assemble. The second (451-532, C90-2) is concerned with the feats of the two principal defenders, MacIche of Sunadale and MacMhaoilean of Cnap. The battle occupies the remainder of the poem (533-771, C92-100) and,

as in 'Na Lochlannaich', covers two days. The first day of fighting takes place at sea, the second on land.

The historical context of the poem is sketchy. A Kenneth rules Scotland (I, 224, C68), and Kintyre is 'tìr Mhic Dhòmhnaill' (I, 308, C71), indicating an integration of Islay power within the Scottish monarchy. Indeed the mention of 'banntrach Mhic Dhòmhnaill' and her 'macan' shows that Livingston has a precise situation in mind - the Macdonald chief is dead, and his heir still a minor. In the *Vindication* he dates Saomhairle's [sic] acquisition of 'all the Islands north-west of the point of Ardnamurchan', 'according to the chronicles of Mann', to the eighth century (V 52), and the first Viking raids to 793 (V 283). Saomhairle Mor, 'ancestor of the family of the isles', defeated the Danes bloodily at 'Suainart' [sic] around 852, and 'narrowly escaped with his life' (V 143). This was during the reign of Kenneth II, but the reign of the third Kenneth (973-994 according to Livingston, V 150) also saw a famous battle with the Danes at Luncarty near Perth (V 144ff.). The earlier dating seems more likely, but the events in the poem are in any case obviously fictional, and linked only very loosely to the available historical records. Such vagueness must have been a positive asset to Livingston in leaving a wider scope to his imagination.

The material of 'Na Lochlannaich' is, as it were, embedded in the later poem. In a sense the conquest of Man, which takes place before the poem starts, encapsulates one possible outcome of the struggle for Islay. The poet is addressing Man:

Eilean trì-chasach nan Gàidheal,
tha crìoch orr' annad, 's b'fhad an dàil ud.
Ghlac Rùrach thu le chabhlach
's shèisd e do dhùn dìon le armailt,
's an uair a shaoil e gun do strìochd thu
ghairm e gu comhairl' a dhilsean. (I, 44-9, C62-3)

The sending round of the fiery cross, with orders for land and sea forces to assemble, while all fortresses are manned, recalls the same passage in 'Na Lochlannaich':

Dh'iarr iad gu lèir crois-tara
a ruith gu Càradail an toiseach,
is às a sin dà fhear dheug taghta
a dhol feadh geach ceàrn...
's na daoine' a choinneachadh gun dàil
air faiche Bhraclainn nan làn armachd...
's na birlinnean on Mhaoil gu Loch an Tairbeart
a bhith aig tràigh Shùnadail an òrdugh cogaidh (II,
379ff., C87-8)

There is even a precise verbal echo, 'Tha sin deant' a dhaoine'-uaise' (II, 407, C88) recalling Niall Garbh's 'Tha sin deante mo cheann-feadhna' ('Na Lochlannaich', 454, C18). The scout motif is compressed, altered and marginalised. MacIain Gheàrr's boat ploughs through the waves of Kilbrannan Sound with the news that Rùrach is on his way, but all the preparations have already been made, and his arrival merely informs the Gaels of when the inevitable is going to happen (II, 428ff., C89) MacIche and MacMhaoilean hear the warlike pipes of the men from Islay and Cowal approaching (II, 532-48, C92-3) just as Dòmhnall Aimeidh and Niall Garbh had heard the 'port caismeachd' of the Rinn Mackays in the earlier poem. There, the venerable Mackay chief had advised the young Dòmhnall on how to conduct the battle. In 'Blàr Shùnadail', it is Ailean nan Sop who urges the chiefs to order their fleet to draw in to land:

Ceadaichibh dhomh ruith le comhairle.
Iarraibh orm innseadh dhaibh
an ruith air tìr, no caillear
na chì sibh, gun aon diubh fhàgail. (II, 626, C96)

A similar formula introduces the second day in 'Na Lochlannaich', the first in 'Blàr Shùnadail': 'Madainn Diciadain nuair a shoillsich/ a' ghrian' ('Na Lochlannaich' 780-1, C30), 'An ath mhadainn, aig sgarthanaich nan neul' (II, 553, C93).

These echoes are present, yet are hardly likely to impinge on the consciousness of the reader. One has no sense of the later poem depending overmuch on the earlier. Livingston has introduced new elements into 'Blàr Shùnadail' which absorb the reader's attention, and beside them those features shared with 'Na Lochlannaich' dwindle into insignificance.

This novelty and freedom of invention is announced immediately in the prologue. Where 'Na Lochlannaich' had remodelled traditional lore from Islay, and was therefore only to be attributed in part to the poet's imagination, in 'Blàr Shùnadail' he is dealing with a locality where no such lore exists:

A Shùnadail a' chladaich bheàrnaich,
ged is corrach glas do shlios
's ged nach robh thu tric an saothair nam bàrd,
mun teirig do sgeul creiche 's blàir
bithidh tu measg chàich gad iomradh. (I, 1-5, C61)

The complete fictionality of the poem is avowed from the very start. Blair's introductory note tells us that Livingston visited the district in the winter of 1865 to 1866, and that he was 'the guest of the Parish minister, whose manse is not far from Sunadale'. In 1864 John Grant Levack, from Halkirk, Caithness, had been appointed to Saddell and Skipness parish. (Created in 1753, when the Rev. Donald MacNicol was translated from here to Lismore, the joint parish was to be sundered in 1870). Levack was just 34 at the time. He had been licensed by the Islay presbytery three years earlier, and this could be the source of his connection with Livingston (Fasti: 4, 65).

Sunadale is on the east coast of Kintyre, separated from Pirnmill in Arran by the waters of Kilbrannan Sound. One reaches it, travelling southwards, just before the road descends to the shore at Grogport, where Allt Sunadale enters the sea at Garrachcroit Bagh. This is the setting Livingston has chosen for his imagined battle. According to Blair, the manse appears in the poem as 'Dun-Leabhair', and indeed the prologue mentions 'tonnan

Chaolais Bhranndain, / mullaichean mara le stoirm faoilich / a chunnaic mi bho thaobh Dhùn Leabhair' (I, 9-11, C61). At a later stage, the land forces watch the naval battle 'an talamh tolmach nam bruachan tric / bho chrìoch Shùnadail gu Craobh a' Bhàird / aig allt Dhùn Leabhair' (II, 607-9, C95). While we know the placenames in 'Na Lochlannaich' to be authentic, from external evidence and from Blair's own testimony, Livingston's name for the manse would seem to be invented, and Craobh a' Bhàird may well be a playful reference to a favourite spot of his own. He did not possess the intimate knowledge of field names and minor topographical items which emerges from 'Na Lochlannaich'. The stretch of coast evidently made a great impression on him, as can be seen from this description, where it almost leads Rùrach to abandon his expedition:

Dh'amhairc Rùrach le ioghnadh
 air aodainn charraigeach nan aonach
 ag èirigh o chòmhnard na fairge,
 ursannan iomall àrd na h-Alba...
 's e faicinn cladach glas Chinntire
 le tùraibh aosda mar dhìon da (I, 153ff., C66)

The motivation of the poem is, then, that such a splendid setting deserves to have a history and, if none is available, the poet will supply it. It is possible that, due to the shortness of his stay or the nature of his contacts, Kintyre lore was not available to Livingston, and that the vacuum he perceived existed in his own mind rather than in reality. He resolved this dearth with a playfulness the tone of the whole poem bears out, using 'the names of the decent farmers and cottars who lived in the district in 1865' for 'the brave chieftains of the olden time' (C 74). It could not be done as effectively as with Islay, but the desire to root his historical fantasies in the real world is the same.

The 'decent farmers' are presumably 'Mac Mhaoilein Mòr a' Chnaip', 'Mac Calum, Dòmhnall Lag an Fheòir', 'Duibhneach Bhraclainn' and 'Mac Alasdair Tigh na Luachrach' (II, 371ff., C81), along with 'Mac Iche Shùnadail' (II, 2, C74). The *New*

Statistical Account, which had been written by the preceding minister, Rev. John MacFarlane, notes that a burying ground at Brackley has the largest cairn or tumulus in the district. This would naturally have attracted the attention of Livingston the antiquarian, and may be why he chose 'Faiche Bhraclainn' (II, 420, C89) as the gathering place of the Gaels, and 'bearradh Bhraclainn' (II, 715, C99) as the spot where invaders and defenders eventually join battle. There is a ford across Carradale Water at Brackley, and it is separated from the shore by a low ridge between Kirnashie Hill to the south, and Cnoc Reamhar to the north. Macfarlane singled out Beinn an Tuirc as the highest mountain in the parish: 'From no point of the same altitude in the county is the view more grand, extensive or picturesque' (New Statistical Account 1845: VII, 437). Livingston duly exploited this feature, too. Preparing for the Viking invasion, the local leaders order 'tein'-èiginn a lasadh air Beinn an Tuirc/ a thoirt rabhaidh do mhuinntir Ile 's Chòmhail' (II, 401-2, C88), and when MacIche and MacMhaoilean hear the Islay forces arriving, the former remarks ''S e teine Beinn an Tuirc a rinn seo.' (II, 542, C93)

'Blàr Shùnadail' has a much looser structure than 'Na Lochlannaich'. In the earlier poem, from the moment the Viking fleet is sighted, battle is impending, and this gives a swift pace and an overwhelming sense of urgency to the events contained in it. Nowhere in the later poem does Livingston attempt the kind of complex multiple movement we have observed in the messenger section of 'Na Lochlannaich'. In 'Blàr Shùnadail' the preliminaries to battle have expanded sufficiently to constitute four fifths of the poem (965 lines out of 1173). There are three major episodes, which are gratuitous in the sense that none of them leads inevitably towards the final battle. They are not concurrent and do not contribute to the 'main action' of the poem. In a sense they replace it. This combines with their size

(from 82 to 365 lines) to explain the leisurely atmosphere of 'Blàr Shunadail' as a whole.

The first is the Viking council and reconnaissance expedition which take up Part 1. Here is Livingston's most daring use of viewpoint: the opening episode, the longest in the poem, is seen through the eyes of the Vikings. Although this viewpoint is abandoned in Part 2, it involves a humanisation of the invaders which naturally lightens the much grimmer atmosphere of 'Na Lochlannaich', where they were merely 'creachadairean allta lionmhor,/ iargalta gun iochd gun fhirinn' (106-7, C5). Rùrach is characterised by his feats in the past in much the same way as Niall Garbh or Colla Glèidhteach had been:

Lochlannach cruadalach, seòlta,
b' iomadh buinne doirbh a sheòl e,
b' iomadh uamha, coill' is cladach
anns an do shèid e turlach rathaid,
b' iomadh buaile mhòr a chreach e
's bu lionmhor fear garg a ghleachd e
eadar Tìr Chonaill is dà Arainn,
gleannaibh na Rut' is Manainn (36-43, C62)

The council of war which follows shows Livingston transferring to the invaders a motif Macpherson and the ballads had reserved for the defenders, in a way that mirrors the shift of viewpoint he has adopted. Rùrach turns for advice to Gargan, the eldest of the Viking captains, who soon replaces him at the centre of the stage and is unequivocally the hero of the whole episode.

The first point Gargan makes is that, while vanquishing the Irish may have been an easy matter, the Scottish Gaels are a very different proposition. Livingston skilfully places praise of his own race in the mouth of their arch enemy, where it has a much more genuine ring. This is enhanced by the liveliness of Gargan's idiom. His speech is highly figurative in a manner reminiscent of the proverbial concreteness of peasant talk:

Ma thèid thu rùisgte tro thom droighinn
's coiseachd cas-lom air preas cuilinn,
cadal gun lèin' air an fheanntaig
's ràcadal ithe gun draing ort,

's usa dhuit sin na dol a spionadh
friadhan stàilinn Chinntire. (104-9, C64-5)

Indeed, at times he seems to be merely quoting proverbs from current usage:

mar 's lugha a their 's is mò a ni sinn
's ann as àirde a bhitheas gach gnìomh dhuinn.
(112-3, C65)

Rùrach answers in the same tone: 'Is treise foill aig àm na dùbhlán' (133, C65). This realism of idiom is matched by a realism in Livingston's treatment of the narrative. Gargan proposes that they reconnoitre Kintyre disguised as fishermen from Arran. Five of the group have Arran Gaelic, while a further three were in Lewis as young men 'nuair dh'iarr na Lochlannaich còir air' (129, C65). The king must pass for the lowest member of the crew:

A rìgh Ath Cliath - ort an lùireach!
Glac an taoman 's aom do chùlaibh.
'S tu nis sgàlag a' bhàta,
's bi bodhar o nach d' fhuair thu Gàidhlig.
Bidh sinne smèideadh riut 's gad sheòladh
mar bhalbhan bochd nach cluinn ar còmhradh. (183-8,
C67)

There is a rich comedy in the reversal of the king's status which Gargan himself seems to enjoy. When they reach West Loch Tarbert, Rùrach can take no more, and wants to shed his disguise, but Gargan warns him that to do so would be more than his life is worth (289-94, C70-1).

A similar attention to realistic detail is evident throughout the poem. At Loch Campbeltown, Livingston describes the two channels on either side of Davarr Island:

aon diubh làn domhain, fìor-ghlan,
's an t-aon eile tràghadh 's a' lìonadh
on linne gu bràighe chala (198-200, C67)

In Part 2, Griogair Mòr of Cowal and Ailean nan Sop at once identify each other's speech as from Argyll, while the gesture with which Griogair summons his companions lying in wait has an almost theatrical precision and naturalness:

Thog Griogair cirb a bhreacain
 mar ga cheartachadh mun cuairt air,
 sanas a chunnaic dithis air an uilinn
 an glacag dhiomhair 's iad ag èisdeachd... (II, 172-5,
 C80)

The thread Ailean and Dùghallach use to give warning if an enemy is sighted shows just how far Livingston has come from the misty, insubstantial forms of Macpherson's heroes:

Ceangail an snàthain casta seo rim chluais
 's tarraing e a thoirt sanais dhomh
 ma thig an luchd-fair' ort 's thu 'd aonar (II, 289-91,
 C84)

The comedy deriving from the Viking monarch's disguise passes over into rich dramatic irony when, confronted by the Scottish guards at both Loch Campbeltown and West Loch Tarbert, his men fervently assert their loyalty to the Scottish crown:

Slàinte 's buaidh do Rìgh Coinneach,
 a' chroich do na dh'iarras a choire!
 Bu duilich leinn òrdugh a bhristeadh,
 a laoch mhòir as àirde misneach. (I, 224-7, C68)

Action is suited to words as they row away slowly, cheering and waving their bonnets, then start to row much faster when they are at a safe distance. In a narrative that is presented in a highly dramatic form, the main actors are consciously playing a part. Gargan at once lists those of his relatives who have met their death on a Scottish gallows, casting in retrospect an even more ironic light on the words he has used.

Because the Vikings are twice checked by the Kintyre guards, and have to seek permission to draw their boats across the isthmus at Tarbert, the Scots are presented to the reader externally, in a solemn, authoritative yet generous light. Eachann addresses the spies as 'Arannaich, luchd-ionmhainn Mhic Dhòmhnaill, / fasgadh is biatachd an còir bhuainn' (340-1, C72), and his nobility of spirit contrasts with the effective weakness and duplicity of the Vikings.

The choice of the invaders' viewpoint for the first part of 'Blàr Shùnadail' has a further consequence. Movement in the

episode is by sea, swift and almost effortless compared to the running of Dòmhnall's messengers in 'Na Lochlannaich', who have to strain their bodies to the limit within the narrow confines of an island, beyond which lies an occupied and threatening sea. The sea in 'Na Lochlannaich' is inaccessible, enemy territory, from which invasion may come at any moment. Gargan and his cronies visit Claonaig, Campbeltown and West Loch Tarbert in quick succession, their own viewpoint constantly changing, and the activities they observe taking place on land as they sail up the west coast of Kintyre, moving spectators watching a moving object, constitute one of the finest passages in 'Blàr Shunadail':

... calmanaich nan culaidhean breaca
 a chunnaic iad air feadh nan achadh,
 's cuid eil' air bruthaichean 's an glacan
 a' trusadh chaorach thun nan cròidhean,
 's an crodh aig buachaillean 's aig òighean
 gan iomain gu h-eadradh do bhuailtean,
 na minn a' mireag air na cluaintean,
 eòin na mara 'n cuisle an tràghaidh
 a' glacadh nan iasg meanbh gun àireamh,
 faoileann a' chneis ghil gun smal
 ag itealaich, a' teachd 's a' dol.... (I, 270-80, C70)

With its lively humour and narrative realism, its genial tone, spaciousness and ease of movement, the first part of 'Blàr Shunadail' marks a high point in Livingston's oeuvre. It is worth noting that, after the 31 lines of prologue, he consistently uses the same metre throughout this 'earrann', basically lines of eight or nine syllables rhyming in couplets. His mastery of this medium contributes to the sense of ease and harmony the episode conveys. He does not return to it in the remainder of the poem.

In Part 1, as in the major episode of Part 2, Livingston shows an increasing preference for dramatic presentation through direct speech. This leads, with the episode set in Man, to an awkwardness we have already noted in the case of Donnchadh Mòr Laoirinn's leap in 'Na Lochlannaich'. Eight days after Gargan and

Rùrach's expedition, the son of Dòmhnall Ailpeineach, King of Man, is received courteously by Mac Iche of Sunadale. As custom demands, he tells his story at the banquet table, in a way that distantly recalls the account Aeneas gives to Dido in Book 2 of the *Aeneid*. Both, after all, are princes in flight from a defeated kingdom. After only some 50 lines, Ailein nan Sop intervenes in direct speech, and the poem continues in this mode, with minor interventions by a narrative voice, until Ailein's 'duan beag', in a rather clumsily managed strophic metre, upon which the character of the prince returns abruptly ('Dh'òrduich m' athair...' (356, C86)). Livingston has chosen a framework with a single narrative voice, but the substance of the episode is conveyed dramatically. It is not believable that the prince would imitate the actual speech of the characters he is dealing with, so that framework and mode contradict one another. Moreover, as the prince left Man at the beginning of the episode he is describing, and Ailein and the others have not yet rejoined him, he is hardly in a position to know what has happened to them.

This is another case where Livingston has created more complexity than he can easily deal with. Taken on its own, the episode is effective. It is its insertion in Part 2 as a whole that presents problems. Whereas the transition to direct speech at the beginning of the episode can pass relatively unnoticed, the attempt to return to the framing situation at the close is a glaring dissonance, and Livingston's failure to integrate the time scheme of the episode with the main action cannot help but confuse the reader. It is just possible that he intended a new section to begin at II, 116 (C78), with 'Dà latha na dhèidh' being the voice of the overall narrator, rather than that of the prince. Mac Iain Gheàrr's direct speech a few lines earlier, however, tends to blur the distinction, and if the transition is imperceptible here, that smoothness only adds to the jolt when at 356 we return to the prince's own words, no attempt having been made to negotiate the leap.

In 'Na Lochlannaich', Livingston combined elements derived from the ballads and Macpherson with material from current oral tradition. This material derives from Islay sources, and is therefore homogeneous. The same cannot be said for 'Blàr Shùnadaill'. The two chief actors in this episode, Mac Iain Gheàrr and Ailein nan Sop, are connected with Mull, and their appearance in the Isle of Man in the ninth century is not merely an anachronism, but something of a geographical solecism. Mac Iain Gheàrr is in fact mentioned in Part 1. Rùrach is praising his boat Druim Direach:

'S iomadh tonn a sgoilt i dhuinne,
 sruth is gaoth d' an d' thug i gualainn.
 Chan fhacas fathast seise luathais dhi,
 's mur tig Mac Iain Gheàrr gar tòrachd
 cha ghlacar le luaths ràmh no seòl i! (138-41, C65-6)

Although it could easily escape the reader's attention, this is undoubtedly a careful anticipation of one of the principal figures in Part 2 of the poem. Mac Iain Gheàrr (also spelt Ghiorr and Ghiarr) was a celebrated pirate of the west coast of Scotland. While it is not necessary to posit a written source, an account of him had been available since 1836 in *An Teachdaire Ur Gàidhealach*. He was in fact one of the MacDonalds of Mingarry in Ardnamurchan. His mother, early left a widow, married a Mull farmer. Among the stories told of him are how he and his brother stole their mother's body by night so as to bury her with their own father; how his boat was painted black one side, white the other, so that those who saw it sailing up a loch in the morning would not recognise it coming down the same evening, whence the proverb 'Taobh dubh is taobh bàn a bh'air bàta Mhic Iain Gheàrr'; and how, when accused by MacLean of lifting cattle, the reiver managed to be next the chief at sleeping and waking while stealing some more during the night, thus apparently proving his innocence - someone else must have done it! (McKay 1960: 2ff. Mary Mackellar, in the second of two papers on 'The Sheiling: its

traditions and songs' (Mackellar 1888-9: 162), tells how Mac Iain Gheàrr overheard a milkmaid's song to her favourite cow, and sang in reply:

A bhean ud thall ris an t-sior bhleoghann
Bheir mi 'n dubh 's an donn 's a chlar uat
'S dusan de na aighean [sic] ceud-laoigh.

Livingston's treatment of the reiver is in character. When he and Ailean notice a stranger approaching, Mac Iain recognises a man whose cattle he has raided, and quotes the traditional formula:

Sheachainn mi e gus a seo mar mo chomas.
Bu tric a bha e 'gam iarraidh
nuair a thug mi "'n dubh 's an donn 's an ciar" leam.
(II, 132-4, C79)

The stranger who introduces himself as Griogair nam Bò, from Cowal, on learning that Mhic Iain Gheàrr is close by, displays a magnanimity in keeping with the genial atmosphere of 'Blàr Shunadail':

An ceatharnach treun, uasal,
's beag a chuireas ruaig no tòir air,
's airson na thug e uamsa, fàsaidh tuilleadh.
'S duin' e dh'aindeoin gach fàilinn -
bu duilich leam fhàgail am bealach cumhann. (167-71,
C80)

Another element which Livingston seems to have adopted from tradition is the little cave where Iain and his brother are said to have hidden themselves and their mother's body ('Agus bha uamhag ann an sin, agus chuir iad chuige teine' (McKay 1960: 4). All MacIain can offer Griogair on Man is the mean hospitality of a cave:

'S duilich leam gur fìor nach urrainn mi
do chuireadh ach gu suidheag na h-uamha (197-8, C81)

Ailean speaks of him as 'Mac Iain Gheàrr/ d' an dùthchas Suaineart' (162-3, C80), which is close to Mingarry. Livingston writes of him as a member of Clan Maclean. To the prince of Man he is 'curaidh uaibhreach a sheas am blàr leinn,/ Leathaineach làidir, gaisgeil, dileas' (99-100, C77), and MacIche addresses him as 'a Leathanaich thrèin' (682, C98).

The presence of Mac Iain Gheàrr and Ailean nan Sop therefore constitutes an infusion of Maclean traditions into the poem. It would be interesting to discover whether Maclean lore had a particular interest for Livingston at this stage of his career. This celebration of heroic freebooters from Clan Maclean may have been a tacit compliment to a friend or patron of the poet's at this time. On the other hand, the coming together of heroes from Kintyre, Cowal and Mull to fight against the invader may carry the underlying message of a Gaelic patriotism which goes beyond clan boundaries. The barefaced anachronisms, and the mixing of traditions from different islands, imply that purism was of little importance to Livingston. He unabashedly conflated material from heterogeneous sources, presumably confident that this would disturb his readers no more than it did himself. On the one hand, this is a further aspect of the lighthearted, playful quality of 'Blàr Shùnadail'; on the other, it is a useful pointer to what for Livingston was essential and inessential in his battle poems. He evidently did not wish to present them, or to have them understood, as conscientious historical reconstructions.

It is Ailen who refuses to leave Man with the other survivors 'gun lasair a chur ri Rùrach' (104). Mac Iain Gheàrr follows his lead in deciding to stay. Livingston introduces Ailean as 'fhear-cinnidh Rìgh na misnich' (101). The punctuation of the 1882 text, here as so often, is probably defective, and the implication that Ailean is related to the king a misreading. It makes better sense to read 'fhear-cinnidh, rìgh na misnich', with Livingston celebrating Ailean as figurative 'king of courage', and making him and Iain kinsmen for the purposes of his tale. (We have already seen that Iain is an honorary Maclean).

Ailean tells Griogair that he is 'fear gun rath', and was reared at Torloisk in Mull. According to Maclean Sinclair, the historical Ailean was the younger son of the Maclean chief Lachlan Cattanach and a daughter of Maclean of Treshnish, almost

a grown man in 1517. He received 'the non-entry mails of Gigha and certain lands in Kintyre and Islay' as a gift in July 1539. The same gift was made to his son Hector in 1552, which would suggest Ailean had died by this date (Sinclair 1899: 85, 104). A note in *Na Bàird Leathanach* describes him as

a man of courage and ability. He got a small fleet under his command and made plundering excursions to Ireland, the Lowlands, and parts of the Highlands. He received the name Ailein nan Sop from the fact that he frequently set wisps of burning straw to the buildings of the districts invaded by him, and reduced them to ashes. (Sinclair 1898: 26-7)

Again there is a link with Kintyre. He is said to have killed Malcolm MacNeill of Gigha in 1530 and to have received the lands of Cille Charraig in Knapdale from the Earl of Argyll, as well as Tarbert Castle from Macdonald of Islay. The 'Caismeachd Ailein nan Sop' printed by Maclean Sinclair from the manuscript collection of Dr Hector Maclean of Grulin, and dated therein to roughly 1537, praises the hero's skill in seafaring. If it was known to Livingston, it may explain why Ailean sings his 'duan beag... air fuaim clàrsaich' while he is 'air ràmh guailne' (332-3, C86), sailing the rough seas between Man and Kintyre, as if rejoicing in the danger of his exploits and of the journey he is making:

Tha 'n linne seo buan,
's fhad' a chithear thu shuas,
a thalaimh ghleannaich nan ruadh-bhoc siùbhlach!

Ged tha Manainn fo chis
's a laoidh a' tuiteam san strì
tha thus' is do rìgh gun mhùthadh. (334 ff., C86)

(The 1882 text divides our third line into two at 'ghleannaich/nan ruadh-bhoc').

I have not found sources for the other two heroes of this episode. Griogair Mòr nam Bò may be a generic figure, coming as he does from Cowal, an area with MacGregor associations. (Sorley Maclean describes him as 'a mythical Griogair nam Bó from Cowal' (1985: 138)). He and his foster brother are blown off course

when returning from Portpatrick in Ireland, and are offered food and shelter by Dùghallach. The latter was taken when barely three months old 'à dùthaich Mhic Aoidh/ an taobh tuath na h-Alba do Lochlann' (237-8, C82), and brought up among the Vikings. He has been until now a faithful naval lieutenant or 'ceannard-ceud' to Rùrach, but is only too ready to betray him and return to the allegiance which befits his blood.

Despite being transported in time and place, Ailean remains true to his nature. With Dùghallach's help, he sets fire to Rùrach's fort:

Chuir e chual ris a' chòmhla:
bha sop lasrach on làimh gun mhearachd
am priobadh na sùl' ris na gasan tioram (295-7, C84)

At the height of the naval battle, Ailean is instructed as he desires to order the fleet into land. No boat is left to take him out to them and, strapping on his sword, he leaps 'gun sgàth am buillsgean nan tonn' (638, C96) and swims out to Mac Iain Gheàrr with the message. Not content with this, he proposes setting light to the defenders' ships to cut off any possibility of pursuit:

Cuiribh teine riutha; cumaibh balla lasrach
eadar sibh fhèin 's na nàimhdean...
An ath-shealladh a chunnacas
Tràigh Shùnadail am buidealaich dheirg
bho Dhùn Sgolb gu lagan Ghròb Phort (654ff., C97)

It is lucky that his pyromanic tendencies can find such useful employment.

The third and shortest episode is concerned entirely with feats. It is the only occasion here or in 'Na Lochlannaich' when such demonstrations of strength can be said to be entirely gratuitous, and this highlights their celebratory, ludic quality. Structurally, the episode replaces that of the council as a transition between the preparations and the battle scene. Livingston had already shown a council of Vikings in Part 1, and the council held at Sunadale is not dramatised, but reduced in a

rather perfunctory way to a brief speech by MacIche, a list of those present, and a summary of the orders issued.

The episode has a neat binary structure. MacIche and MacMhaoilein, who has been elected (an important detail) commander of the defending forces, retire to Sunadale. MacIche's son is arranging the weapons, which include three fine swords passed down in the family. He shows his father a new sword the smith, Mac Thuilceann, has just made, but his father scoffs at it as a 'bioran', introducing the tale of a 'geimhleag' or crowbar which, for want of anything better, MacMhaoilein's great grandfather, Alasdair Mòr a' Chnaip, had wielded at Bealach na h-Iolaire. MacMhaoilein insists MacIche should carry it:

Chan eil fear dhinne 'n diugh air thalamh
as urrainn a' gheimhleag sin iomairt.
Tha thusa, Mhic Iche, ad aonar
de spionnadh nan laoch o shean. (493-6, C91)

Now young Sunadale suggests they draw the galley up off the beach, introducing the second half of the episode. MacMhaoilein instructs the men to push against MacIche, whose strength shatters the galley to fragments:

...las e, 's gun fhacal
thug e saidh-thoisich na sè-ràmhaich,
na cinneadan 's an ailbheag
nan spealgan air grinneal na tràgha! (516-9, C92)

MacIche's heroic stature is proven again, and along with it his right to the crowbar:

Co oighre na geimhleig a-nis
's a sheasas àite Alasdair Mhòir
ach thus' air fòid còmhraig? (525-7, C92)

The rather ponderous humour may not be to all tastes. The episode, however, provides a moment of light relief before the battle. Certain passages in John Murdoch's accounts of Islay life show that Livingston is only slightly exaggerating feats of physical prowess which both provided entertainment and affirmed the crucial role of male strength in an agricultural community:

While this lighthearted body worked as one for the party whose turf was being cut, there was ample scope for competition among the members as to who should do most and best. At a word, too, the scene of labour was turned into that of sport and the instruments of industry were thrown aside in order that the best leaper, the best runner, the best thrower of the stone might be made manifest on the spot... (Murdoch 1986: 111)

The runners of 'Na Lochlannaich' are not so very far from men Livingston must have rubbed shoulders with in his boyhood:

John Campbell, or *Iain Mac Thearlaich*, was a man with whom I liked to spend some time. John was remarkable for his swiftness. Dugald MacGregor, an older man, said of John's running, that he was not at full speed as long as one could see his feet. At his best his feet became invisible. (Murdoch 1986: 48)

As we have already noted, contemporary elements are an essential ingredient in the new kind of poem Livingston aimed to produce.

There is a blurring of focus in the battle scenes. Livingston is no more able here than in 'Na Lochlannaich' to conceive of his heroic individuals in the moment of conflict. In neither poem does any named Gael fall. Yet the course of the battle is carefully argued. The Gaels trick the Vikings into attacking with the rising tide, and respond to 'frasan bàsmhor, / gathan is saighdean' (572-3, C94) by using grappling hooks to force hand to hand fighting. The severed heads and feet of the Vikings redden the water until the weakening current leads them to attempt encirclement. This is when Ailean sets fire to the Gaels' ships.

Next morning, the Gaels allow the Vikings to land and climb up from the beach before confronting them. When the Viking archers advance, the Gaels feign flight, and the trick is successful. The closing image is of the stunned Viking survivors tottering like drunkards:

'S na chaidh às diubh
mar mhigear ag iarraidh a rathaid
an uair a bhios a lùithead

a' diùltadh a chumail dìreach,

's deoch làidir air ghoil na eanchainn. (767-71, C100)

This is a further humorous touch, one more confirmation of 'Blàr Shunadail''s lightheartedness, its character almost of a *divertissement*.

In conclusion, we may emphasise again how the original elements which Livingston had used in 'Na Lochlannaich' to balance those shared with Macpherson and the Ossianic ballads become, in 'Blàr Shunadail', the stuff of the poem itself, and give it the spaciousness, the lively imaginative quality and creative zest that make it perhaps the most attractive of Livingston's battle poems.

Our discussion of Livingston's battle poems has not respected the chronological order of their composition, in so far as this can be divined from the time of their appearance in print and from other potential clues. In moving from an analysis of the contradictory patterns of influence and disavowal, which linked Livingston and James Macpherson, to direct examination of Livingston's work, the priority was to compare how each had handled a major underlying structural element, the successful repulsion of invasion from the sea, with all its attendant circumstances. In this sense 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' and 'Blàr Shùnadail' have more in common with each other, and with *Fingal* and *Temora*, than with the remainder of Livingston's poems in the genre.

None of his poems about historical battles can compare, for size or ambition, with the imaginary battles of Gartmain or Sunadale. There are four poems dealing with the Wars of Independence, one of them not, strictly speaking, a battle poem, although thematically its place is clearly with these. Two concern William Wallace: one is a dialogue between his mother and Thomas the Rhymer, and the other an account of a skirmish between his guerrilla band and a group of English soldiers at Tom Balachaidh. Both poems deal with imaginary incidents for which there would appear to be no factual basis: but the figures they concern are historical, and the dialogue poem is clearly derived from a pseudo-historical source, in Jamieson's edition of Blind Harry the Minstrel's poem on Wallace. The two poems on Bruce are both battle poems to all effects: the first concerns his defeat at Dalry, near Tyndrum in Argyllshire, at the hands of the combined forces of the MacDougalls, the MacNabs and the Islay Macdonalds, the second the victory at Bannockburn which ensured

Scotland's continuation as an independent nation for at least the next two centuries.

Three other battle poems cover widely ranging periods. 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca' narrates the battle of Mons Graupius, situated by Livingston near Braco in southern Perthshire. It is related to the poems concerning the Wars of Independence in that the fate of a whole nation is at stake. The inhabitants of Scotland must combine forces to at least halt a hostile invader, given that it may not be possible to drive him back from the positions already assumed. Livingston's approach to the battle is transhistorical and in some respects anachronistic, so that it was easy for him to perceive parallels between Calgacus and Bruce or Wallace and between Agricola and the English kings. 'Blàr Thràigh Ghruineart' did not appear until the 1865 *Duain agus Orain*, so that one is tempted to see it as trailing between the earlier, shorter battle poems and the long poems about the Vikings. It is unique in that it deals, not with national issues, but with conflict between clans, although the motif of invasion from the sea was to recur, projected back in history. This is the last truly 'historical' battle poem, and the choice of an Islay setting may have initiated the fruitful interaction with local lore which gave rise to 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' and, as it were, finally pushed Livingston over from history into legendary history. The 1858 *Duain Ghaelic* places a 'Duan Geall' fifth, immediately after three battle poems and the extended medley 'Cuimhneachan Bhraid-Alba'. It was written to order, the Glasgow Celtic Society having stipulated that 'the military services of the Highland Regiments during the late war' (A 52) be the topic. Livingston is therefore not entirely to blame for the unease which may ensue from the extension of his Gaelic patriotism to the Crimean battles at Alma and Balaclava.

These poems will be dealt with chronologically, moving from Mons Graupius through the Wars of Independence to Gruinard Bay, and finishing with the exploits of Queen Victoria's loyal

Highlanders under their commander Colin Campbell near the shores of the Black Sea.

The symbolic significance of Mons Graupius emerged in our discussion of Livingston as historian and polemicist. Relying on traditional histories of Scotland, patriotic writers supposed a racial continuity which meant that this was the first of many instances in which the native soil had been successfully defended, and was therefore an earnest that such would continue to be the case in future ages. The Popes having followed the Emperors as rulers of Rome, the driving back of Agricola's troops came to be seen as a foreshadowing of Scotland's doctrinal, as well as territorial inviolability. National and anti-Catholic sentiment were densely interwoven in this symbolic investment of a battle of which, rather paradoxically, we have only the invaders' account.

Livingston's description of Calgacus' soldiers is strikingly, perhaps deliberately anachronistic. They are 'Gàidheil threun nam buadhan tric', 'biùthaidh mhòralach nam Mac', 'suinn gharbh nan earradh breac'. This application of the tartan rhetoric of post-Culloden Scotland to the first century of the Christian era highlights the connection Livingston saw between Alma, Balaclava and Mons Graupius, drawing our attention yet again to the problematic constitution of his nationalism. The battle poems were the lynch-pin of his work as a poet and a patriot, consciously and deliberately crucial to him in a way his poems of the Clearances never were. Yet the emphasis on military valour was very much in danger of backfiring. If Scotland had been dismantled by his day, this had not been done through military invasion but by the infinitely more subtle and ambivalent processes involved in uniting two nominally equal parliaments and crowns. Glorification of Scotland's military history therefore ran the risk of acting as a smokescreen obscuring the factors

which really threatened the continuation of the national community. It played into the hands of an ideology intent on exploiting Scottish manpower in military actions in the colonies, and helped to deflect attention from the real causes of Scotland's political dependency.

Our putative chronology for the battle poems suggests that Livingston may in some way have grasped this difficulty. The prologue to 'Na Lochlannaich', apparently tangential to the poem, may show awareness of the Clearances impacting and problematizing the rather simplistic celebration of valour in the battlefield to be found in the shorter battle poems. If the battle poems are to be read as an attempt at rehabilitating self-esteem and restoring national confidence ('national' here meaning both 'Scottish' and 'Gaelic within Scotland'), he could no longer separate this project from his awareness of the relentless dismantling of the society from which he originated. As a consequence of this impact, he moved away from historical conflicts which could relate meaningfully (and therefore ambiguously) to the present, towards a less Scottish and more Gaelic world where Argyll men and Vikings faced one another on the shore. The ultimate destination of this procedure was the sunny, playful yet oneiric vision of 'Blàr Shùnadail', an entertainment and a form of escape.

Livingston returned to Mons Graupius more frequently in the course of his prose writings than to any other battle from Scotland's past. In the *History*, the native forces are already using the lion rampant as their standard as they resist the Roman invaders (H 188), and Livingston gives a detailed account of the state of the country at the time of Agricola's arrival, when it was

a kingdom of considerable antiquity, properly arranged into provinces, each with their cities, chiefs, and clans (H 135)

The ninth tribe occupied the land north of Comrie, that is, Breadalbane, Atholl and part of Lochaber, and had a capital at Inverlochy, built by Ewen II in 77 B.C. Livingston interprets their name Albannaich as derived from a Gaelic root 'aill' meaning lofty or elevated, and 'beannaibh', while the Caledonians are woodmen, 'coille-daoine'. Mention of the Cornanaich, who occupied a portion of Sutherland and Ross, brings the clearances there to his mind:

How their descendants were extirpated under the felon reigns of the Georges, is a humiliating exhibition of the treachery and ingratitude of these men, whose rage against the inhabitants of Caledonia have [sic] no parallel even in the enormities of the heads of the Mahometan delusion itself. The latter never extirpated any people who fought under their banners, and who proved faithful to them against all enemies; whilst the former, at all times, and on all occasions, maliciously and perseveringly sought the destruction of those brave, loyal, and peaceful Highlanders, with a relentless hatred, till they rooted them out of their fatherland, for no other crime but their bravery and Christian virtues. (H 143)

Calgacus, leader of the native forces at Mons Graupius, was a remote descendant of the Otadeni or At-dhaoine, therefore originally south British. Carranach, king of the Picts, was the first to be attacked by the enemy, but disputed every mile with them, before retreating into Fife. He was slain while attempting to settle a quarrel among his own men, thus leaving the Scots to face the Romans unaided. Having entered the Clyde with his fleet, Agricola laid siege to Dumbarton without success, then bridged the Forth and advanced to the River Eden at Strathmiglo. (Livingston's sources throughout this account are Holinshed and Bellenden, both of whom he quotes).

Moving north, Agricola found Strathearn and Strathallan covered by the great Caledonian forest. Livingston tells us that during his time in Comrie

In 1840-41, I saw the then tacksman, Duncan McGregor, burning and trenching the deep moss on that level, contiguous to the highway, during which process large

trunks of black oak trees were dug out, at the depth of five and six feet below the surface, the indubitable remains of a primeval forest. (H 154)

Agricola fixed his headquarters at Ardoch, and from there penetrated to the Water of Ruchill near Comrie, where he also erected a camp. Calgacus and his forces were defending the passes of Glen Artney, Glen Lednock and the western gorge of Strathearn. Indeed, Livingston tells us that the point where Calgacus crossed the Ruchill is known to this day as Ath an Righ, the king's ford. In the spring of 85 A.D.,

Both leaders finding it impossible to avoid battle, arranged their forces on the heathery plain, called the Moor of Ardoch. It is about five miles in length, extending east and west, in the parish of Muthill, and county of Perth. There is a long ridge of high ground on the east side of it, and [sic] is bounded on the west by the roaring stream of the Braco. Between these two natural barriers the Gaelic lines formed, nobly resolved to free their country... (H 158)

This account from the *History* is an extension of the earlier treatment in the *Vindication*, where Livingston clinched his championing of Ardoch as the site of the battle in the following rousing terms:

Indeed, believe me, you may travel from Tweed to the Sound of Islay, but you can never think yourself in Caledonia till you enter the moor of Ardoch. There you will see the famed heath in its primitive garb of eternal heather, stretching from the crystal burn of Tay nam Blar to the Roman camp at Ardoch, its southern extremity. No one but a finished blockhead or a raving sceptic could miss the meaning of Tacitus as to the certainty of this heathery plain being the very place where his father-in-law, Agricola, fought his last battle in Britain. (V 32)

He is disposed to treat the Rev. Andrew Small kindly, even though his *Interesting Roman Antiquities, recently discovered in Fife, ascertaining the site of the great battle fought betwixt Agricola and Galgacus; with the discovery of the position of five Roman towns* (1823) had proposed an alternative site. In the *History* he quotes Small's account of a battle fought at the River Eden and

cites the Fife clergyman's discovery of ashes, urns and bones in that area. Nevertheless,

Had Mr Small been on the field of Ardoch, and had he reviewed that field, he would have been of a different opinion (H 169).

For Livingston, the coincidence of one of the four passes into the Grampians with the 'principal depot' of the invading army at Ardoch is conclusive, and amply supported by local placenames such as 'Thigh [sic] a Bhclair' ('the battle stage'), 'Dal Ranich' ('the field of the war shout'), 'Blar Mor' ('the great battle field') and 'Dal Bhraighdean' ('the field of captives', in Glen Artney) (V 28). Dalchonzie, properly 'Dalachaoinidh', means

the field of lamentation, where the Caledonian women lamented over their slain husbands, sons, and brothers. (H 156)

That Livingston was intimate with the area in question is evident from his knowledge of the current landowners. The field of 'Galachan Ross' (which he derives from a name for the Scottish commander) is 'at present in the occupancy of Mr William Brown, farmer', while

the Celtic lines extended from the spot where now stands the baronial house of Aberuchill on the right, to the bank of the Earn, where at present is the summer mansion of the honorable Miss Douglas Moncrieff. (V 29)

There is a cairn on the hill above the moor of Ardoch

where the slain of the Caledonian army were buried after the battle of the Grampians. Having been for eight years in that country, I had ample opportunity of visiting that memorable spot as often as I pleased. (V 21)

Livingston derives Tacitus' 'Grampius' (a misprint for 'Graupius', from the late fifteenth-century *editio princeps* of Puteolanus) from Gaelic 'Cnapaich', the name for the lofty peaks north and west of Comrie, and his solution was substantially, if not literally correct. Watson suggests that the probable Latin original 'Craupius' may come from a form *'craup' related to Old

Welsh 'crwb', 'a hump, haunch' (1926: 56). Maxwell hints that Puteolanus' variant could even be 'a copyist's substitute for an unrecognisably mis-spelt original', so that

a range of mountains and, nowadays, a local government region were named after "Mount Something-or-Other!" (1990: 55)

The name shows a capacity for sustained metamorphosis: Bellenden has 'Granyebane', Holinshed 'Granzbene'.

Jackson derives Calgacus (earlier editions of Tacitus had Galgacus, the form known to Livingston) from Irish 'calgach' and interprets the name as meaning 'swordsman' (1955: 135). For Livingston, he is the twenty-first king of Scotland, Corbred II:

His name, Corbred, after his father, is undoubtedly the proper hereditary and historical one; but his other titles, Galdu and Geal-Cheann, are mere appellatives to distinguish him for other qualities. Geal-Cheann, Latinized by the venerable Buchanan, Galgacus, imports in our language his white hair; Galdu signifies the scourge of strangers, undoubtedly in allusion to his matchless wrestling with the Romans. (V 26-7)

The poet gave the Roman historian short shrift for his

ridiculous narrative of the battle of the Grampians, particularly his pretended smallness of the Roman army compared with that of the Caledonians. (H 169-70)

He scornfully rejects Tacitus' claim that Agricola's navy circumnavigated Britain, for

No man who is at all acquainted with the nature of that coast, and with the tides with which its is environed, can for a moment give credit to that most ridiculous of fables, that the Romans navigated the western seas of Scotland (H 176)

and prefers Boece's account of how the Romans met with disaster in the Pentland Firth, the survivors turning back defeated. Most preposterous of all is the extremely low number of casualties admitted to by Tacitus among the Roman forces:

Was it possible that the prowess which not only made the Roman ranks shake, but also forced their cavalry to give ground, or, in other words, compelled them at the

sword point to retire, could be displayed without great sacrifice of life on the part of the Romans, even granting that it was greater on the side of the Scots, or that only three hundred and forty could have perished of the Imperialists during a contest wherein they slaughtered ten thousand?... Here we see that Tacitus, according to this version of his history, attempts to cover the disgrace of his countrymen at the cost of truth and his own reputation (H 164-5)

Everything quoted from Livingston so far must have antedated or (in the case of the *History*) been roughly contemporary with the gestation of the poem on 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca'. Even after he had written the poem, however, the battle could still rouse him to strong emotion. His treatment of Mons Graupius in the 1860 *Lecture* rises to an exciting peroration, and it is not hard to imagine Livingston thumping his fist on the table before him to emphasise each point, as his enthusiasm gradually communicated itself to the audience gathered in the Protestant Laymen's Hall in Glasgow's Candleriggs:

Stand you there, Agricola, till you receive your sentence. There you are on a heathery plain five miles in length, where your brave opponents had not the size of a blue bonnet to cover their heads; and yet your boasted legions dare not meet the sons of SCOTIA honourably steel to steel; for your own son left to all posterity that you arranged your legions, with the camp of Ardoch in your rear, and that you "cut a deep ditch of considerable length on the moor before your front ranks," to impede the impending torrent of the bravest blood under heaven, - which is an eternal monument of your fear of them, and likewise an unanswerable refutation of the aspersion, that the Gaeil could not defend their country, were it not for their fastnesses. You got enough of them; for the next sight that we have of you is, with a turned back, in the country of the Horestii, upon the Tweed. Thus' a *gharraich*, daring to attempt the conquest of SCOTLAND. (L 14)

Such vehemence of style, and the anachronistic mixing of contemporary patriotism and history, may bring a smile to present day lips. Yet it would be wrong to look on Livingston with condescension. He had understood something which postwar culture

in Europe repeatedly warns us of, namely, that history not only fuels ideology but is itself ideology. On one level, Livingston is trying to correct the almost inevitable bias resulting from the fact that we have only the victor's account of this battle and that our view of Scottish history at this point is Roman-centred. The nineteenth century historian Browne had written that

We are not to regard him [Agricola] as the ruthless invader carrying fire and sword into the bosom of a peaceable country, but rather as the mild and merciful conqueror bringing in his train the blessings of civilization and refinement to a rude and ungovernable people; nor should we forget that it is to him chiefly we are indebted for the information which we now possess of the earliest period of our history. (1849: 1, 18)

This is victors' history with a vengeance as well as being, in all probability, a cogent example of how those who brought the benefits of British civilization to its colonies could unconsciously project their illusions back in time. The ethos which justified the occupation of India and of large tracts of Africa could turn Agricola from an aggressor into a benefactor who was unfortunately prevented from carrying out his humanitarian intentions in full.

In defence of Livingston's approach, Smyth can be quoted, where he complains that 'the bias of Tacitus... has caused an immense distortion in early Scottish historiography' (1984: 36), given the eulogistic intent of his account, and the very limited nature of his father-in-law's victory. Two-thirds of the native troops escaped, their territory was never to be effectively subdued, and Agricola's sending the Roman fleet to sail round northern Britain looks suspiciously like a mere propaganda gesture. Rather puzzlingly, the editors of the 1967 Oxford Tacitus see Mons Graupius as 'a victory which was as final for its generation as Culloden' (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967: 65). The very processes of assimilation and backward projection which animated Livingston's rhetoric subtend this statement. If anything, the Oxford editors are less aware of their instinctive

prejudices as they identify Calgacus' warriors with the Gaelic soldiers opposing 'butcher' Cumberland in defence of the Stuart claim to the throne.

Contemporary scholarship is still unable to settle the question of the site of the battle, which so exercised Livingston. The most recent work on Mons Graupius offers two alternative chronologies (Maxwell 1990: 10-11), dating it to AD 83 or 84, as Agricola's seventh campaign could conceivably have taken place in either year. In his chapter 'Locating the Battlefield', Maxwell considers no fewer than four possible sites, from Raedykes (north-west of Stonehaven) to the Pass of Grange (just north of Keith, some twenty miles east of Elgin). There were precedents for Livingston's choice in Chalmers' *Caledonia* (1807: 1, 112-3) and Stuart's *Caledonia Romana* (1845: 70-8).

Given this background, 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca' itself comes as something of a surprise. The tone of the poem is predominantly lyrical and elegiac. Of its 261 lines, only the last 80 in fact concern the battle. The entire preceding section is focussed on the ruminations and dream of the solitary king. We will summarise the poem briefly before examining the use Livingston makes (or fails to make) in it of the available sourcesⁱⁿ detail.

The opening lines (1-20) show the army lying down to rest as night falls. Calgacus, King of Scotland, is unable to sleep, and steals away unnoticed to the bank of a stream, where he delivers a long soliloquy (21-92). He considers yielding, describes how the Romans have ravaged his country and delivers a moving elegy on the Pictish king Carranach. Returning, he falls asleep (93-112) and, in a stirring prelude directed at contemporary Gaels (113-124), the poet announces the king's dream (125-156). The vision of a threatening female harpy, then of two giants with a red iron net into which they sweep everything, while fire devours

any remnant, is clearly allegorical. Awakening in dread, Calgacus at once orders the Scottish army to prepare for battle (157-180).

So far Livingston has alternated long and short lines, basically of three and two stresses respectively, in which pairs of short lines rhyme:

Dh'èirich an Rìgh le iomagain gheur
on torran ghlas
am bràighe ghlinn, aig bun nan stuadh,
fon d' iarr e fois;
ghluais e gu fòil, air bruachan
rèidh an uillt,
a' cnuasachd diùbhail, euceart,
àr nan oillt... (9-16)

He will return to this form very briefly at the end of the poem, to give the whole a circular feeling which echoes the inconclusive outcome of the battle (257-261). The battle itself is described in three-stressed lines, with freer rhymes following a less regular pattern:

Barraibh nan lann bàsmhor cruaidh
a' frith-chrith le gluasad slòigh
a' teach a dhìoghladh fòirneadh geur
nach coisgt' ach le streup nan leòn... (199-202)

The effect is of a quickening in pace and urgency.

First the Scottish host is seen drawing up for battle (181-210). The two armies face one another briefly (211-216), then battle is joined. After a shower of arrows, the Scots advance with bared swords against the heavily armoured Roman contingents, upon whom a flurry of spears is released, driving them back (217-250). The Scots then form closed circles and hold their positions, in spite of hard fighting. The total of fallen on both sides is 30,000, and night brings an end to the battle without either gaining a clear victory (251-261).

Our only written source for the battle, and the series of campaigns which led to it, is Cornelius Tacitus' *De Vita Iulii Agricolae*, written in AD 97-98, some fifteen years after the events described (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967, Mattingly 1948). Agricola, having sent his fleet ahead to plunder, marches north

to Mons Graupius where a confederation of some 30,000 Britons awaits a confrontation (29). Calgacus addresses his troops in words which have made of him something of a folk hero in Scotland even to this day: 'Auferre trucidare rapere falsis nominibus imperium atque ubi solitudinem faciunt pacem appellant' ('Robbery, butchery, rapine the liars call Empire; they create a desolation and they call it peace') (30-32). Agricola, too, harangues his men (33-34) then places his auxiliary infantry of around 8,000 in the centre ('victory would be vastly more glorious if it cost no Roman blood') and his 3,000 cavalry on the flanks. The van of the British army is on level ground, while the remainder is disposed on the rising ground behind. The charioteers occupy the space between the two armies (35).

After an initial exchange of missiles, the British find themselves at a disadvantage in close combat 'with their small shields and unwieldy swords - swords without a thrusting point'. The onslaught of the auxiliaries, Batavians and Tungrians, comes however to a halt on the slope. So far mere spectators, the Britons on the hilltops descend on Agricola's forces, which are inferior in number, but they are blocked by four squadrons of Roman cavalry, who then attack the enemy from the rear. A rout ensues, and the Britons retreat into the woods, leaving some 10,000 dead. Roman losses are 360 (36-37).

What is perhaps most striking is how much of Tacitus' account Livingston leaves out. The speeches of the two leaders, particularly Calgacus', would seem to offer an excellent opportunity for poetic elaboration and a display of nationalist sentiment. Instead, he passes over them in silence, preferring a pessimistic monologue and a dream whose intimate atmosphere is restricted to the figure of the king. We have seen how in both 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' and 'Blàr Shunadail' Livingston constructs a clear account of his fictional battles, in which strategy plays an important part. With Mons Graupius, he had a

detailed account of a historical battle which he chose not to make use of. There is no mention of cavalry or auxiliaries, of swords without point, or small shields, or outflanking manoeuvres. Most striking of all (and it may be an indication that this was indeed Livingston's first attempt to describe a battle in poetry) there is none of the movement from large-scale forces to the exploits of individual heroes which so enlivens the climaxes of his longer battle poems. All he retains from Tacitus is the shower of arrows preceding close combat, 'fiùbhaidh on iubhar air laight,/ a' caitheadh frasan eig is lot'.

He does, however, make interesting and more subtle use of Tacitus earlier in the poem. The change of context, from the sober Latin account to Calgacus' impassioned lament, effectively disguises the borrowings. Before setting out, Agricola had 'sent his fleet ahead to plunder at various points and thus spread uncertainty and terror' (29). We are told that Calgacus' enemy was 'casadh ris air tìr/ 's air muir', and he complains that Agricola has seized 'cal' a chuain;/ ghlac a phlòd gach òb is caolas,/ uig is loch'. Tacitus had indeed written that the appearance of the fleet amazed the Britons: 'The mystery of their seas was divulged, their last refuge in defeat cut off' (25). Much of the first part of Calgacus' monologue is in fact an imaginative recasting of elements of the speech attributed to him by Tacitus:

There are no lands behind us, and even the sea is mastered by the Roman fleet... to-day the boundary of Britain is exposed, beyond us lies no nation, nothing but waves and rocks and the Romans... they have exhausted the land by their indiscriminate plunder, and now they ransack the sea... (30)

Agricola had entered what is now Scotland on his third campaign, consolidating this advance the following year, when garrisons were built to secure the Forth-Clyde line (23). This is echoed in the loss of 'ar biotailt bhuainn,/ a' mhaigh-tìr thorach, bladh ar fuinn'. The 'sraithean tiorail' have been plundered, and 'beul gach glinn' is 'fo cheannsal bhuidhnean borb'. During the advance

from what is now Stirling across Earn and Tay towards Stonehaven, Agricola had constructed a series of forts which blocked the passes from the Grampians, and may also have been planned as bases from which to attempt an occupation of the Highlands (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967: 67, Breeze 19 : 6): 'a' toirt/ nan garbh-crioch dhinn'. Mons Graupius was the culmination of the seventh campaign, and Calgacus appropriately comments that the depredations of 'armailt fhiat'/ an namh' have lasted 'Sè bliadhn''.

Livingston presumably conceived of the defenders as fighting in plaids ('earradh breac') and, although a phrase like 'greim teannachdais an Leòghainn' is metaphorical, as is the reference to Carranach as 'mo leòghann dearg', we know from the *History* that he believed the defenders to have used the lion rampant as their standard. It is probable that the Caledonians stripped naked for action (Maxwell 1990: 63), but these anachronisms in Livingston's account are balanced by the careful use of a trumpet (rather than bagpipes) in 'fuaim na dùdaich', or Calgacus' reference to 'na Dèe bhiothbhuan'. Mail was worn by centurions, standard-bearers, cavalry and auxiliaries in the Roman army. It

could only be manufactured by specialised craftsmen as it was made up of numerous rings each one passing through four others to form a shirt stretching to the upper thigh (Holder 19 : 13)

Livingston speaks of 'stàirn nan sleagh air maillich liath/ nan sparrag dlùth'. Roman legionaries carried

a large curved rectangular shield (scutum) which covered most of [the] body, but the boss could also be used as a weapon by pushing it into the enemy's face or stomach.... [the cuirass] was made up of a number of plates encircling the body with front and back plates and curved shoulder pieces held together by leather straps. The result was a highly flexible, yet sturdy, set of armour worn over a tunic. (Holder 19 : 12)

Information of this kind may lie behind Livingston's characterisation of the advancing Romans as 'tuisg iarainn

uilebheist nam mort... crioslaicht' an lùirichean teann/ gan dìon
o bhathais gu bonn', which also has an effective allegorical
horror to it. The invaders are dehumanised, like some merciless,
invincible beast. Tacitus, however, implies that legionaries were
not used in this battle. Auxiliaries and cavalry wore lighter
armour, so Livingston's description is imaginative rather than
accurate.

It is consistent with his overall approach that Livingston
should prefer the accounts of pre-Union historians to that of the
Roman invader's son-in-law. The recent death of Carranach, King
of the Picts, is mentioned by Boece, who also explains the
circumstances in which it occurred:

Now war the Pichtis cumand ouir the montanis of
Granyebane, quhilkis rinnis fra the fut of De to the
castell of Dunbritone, and wer nocht five milis fra the
army of Scottis, quhen thay, be unhappy chance, wer
devidit in two factionis, and faucht amang thaimself,
to the gret murdir of baith the partis, for an vane
cause. The King of Pichtis, seing this lamentabil cais,
ran feirslie, but his coit armour, amang the preis,
quhar thay wer maist keinely fechtand, to have put thaim
sindry; and wes slane thair, unknowing quhat he wes.
The residew of Pichtis, quhilkis ware left on live fra
this unhappy bargane, knowing the slauchter of thair
king, skalit, and returnit hame. (1821: 143)

We learn at the beginning of the next chapter that 'Galdus
heirand the deith of his tender freind, the King of Pichtis,
become richt sorowfull'. This sentence presumably sparked off the
fine elegy incorporated in Livingston's poem. Like Livingston,
Boece omits Calgacus' address to his troops, compressing Tacitus'
harangue to a few clauses:

and [he] exhortit thaim, with schill voce, to perseveir
in ithand bergane, and outhir to conques immortall
gloire, or perpetual servitude; for that was thair last
day, in quhilk thay nicht win outhir honour or schame.
(1821: 152)

He has 'Danis' and 'Norowanis' fighting alongside the 'Albanis'. Livingston makes no reference to this, or to Boece's admission (drawing on Tacitus) that the

bowmen, efter flicht of arrowis, faucht with swerdis and litil buklaris, as we do yit in our days, mair semand for nichtboure weir, than ony defence of realmis; throw quhilkoure pepill hes gret damage, quhen thay meit with ennimes of uncouth realmes. (1821: 153)

The presence of allies, and the inadequacy of the Scottish arms, could not be expected to add to the honour of the defenders. Boece's account of the battle itself, however, was almost certainly Livingston's preferred source. The bowmen release their arrows, then engage in close fighting. Next comes the 'battal of speiris... with sic slauchter, that the Romanis had bene all utterly discomfist'. This is 'an tuil chreuchdach, / sruth loinnireach nan gathan reubach / a sguab na Ròimhich air ais'. The Romans are saved by the intervention of a 'band of Almanis', with which Agricola cunningly 'stuffit his army... in al partis quhare he saw ony danger occurring'. Livingston again omits a detail irrelevant to his main purpose, joining Boece where the Scots, 'seing na refuge bot in thair handis... thay ruschit al togidder in ane knot'. This is 'òrdugh cath nan riombal tiugh', and Boece's description of their predicament is grim:

Mony of thaim, sloppit throw the body, fel downe above thair slaaris; otheris offerit thaimself wilfully to be slane; otheris, efter thay had eschapit thair ennimes, slew thaimself. The place quahre thay faucht was bludy; all ouercoverit with leggis, armis, and wappinnis, skatterit throw al boundis thairof. (1821: 153)

The conclusion of the two accounts is the same: 'the nicht constranit thaim to sever'.

Buchanan's *History of Scotland*, with which Livingston was familiar, devotes a mere four lines to the battle. He is the source for Livingston's interpretation of one of Calgacus' names:

The surname of Galdus was given him by the Scots, because he was educated among the Britons, for the Scots, by ancient usage, were accustomed to call

strangers, Galds, or Gauls, as the Germans denominated them Walsch, as I have already noticed. (1827-9: 1, 176)

According to Buchanan, what saved the Scots was Domitian's recalling Agricola in order to put him to death. The footnote in Aikman's edition provided further support for Livingston's own choice of site, maintaining that 'the most probably conjecture appears to be, that which fixes on the moor of Ardoch, Perthshire' and quoting in English from Gordon's *Itinerarium Septentrionale* (see also Maxwell 1990: 78-81).

'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca' is probably the most distinctive of the shorter battle poems. It has none of the dramatised dialogues which characterise the majority of Livingston's efforts in the genre. In fact, it contains the only soliloquy to appear in any of them. This means that for much of the earlier part of the poem we inhabit Calgacus' mind, and get more effectively inside him than we ever will for any of Livingston's other warriors. 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca' derives from this device a tremulous and very human subjectivity. There is nothing wooden or hollow about the Caledonian leader. One can even detect a progression in the way the poem moves from his articulated thoughts to a dream, from conscious pondering over his predicament to unconscious fears symbolically expressed. And the abrupt transition from dream to action is highly effective, as if the only way to deal with apprehensions of this kind were to rush into the struggle, prepared to face the worst.

Study of 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' and 'Blàr Shùnadail' implied that Livingston increasingly freed himself from such influence as Macpherson's work, and the Gaelic *Ossian*, exerted on him. While sharing the invasion motif, 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca' has few structural elements linking it to *Fingal* or *Temora*. There is no scout arriving breathless with news of the enemy, and no encounters between individual warriors enliven the progress of the battle. Yet it seems appropriate to describe the atmosphere

of the poem as Macphersonic. Most of it (1-180) takes place at night-time, in a mood of isolation, helplessness and foreboding which parallels the melancholy of Ossian's heroes. Introspection prevails over action with a suggestion that the cult of sentiment has not entirely lost its attraction. And the terms in which Calgacus speaks of his dead ally, Carranach, and of his opponent Agricola, are redolent of the aristocracy of feeling and etiquette which linked Macpherson's protagonists, no matter what side they might be on. Indeed, the opening words evoke a type of weather which is quintessentially Macphersonic ('sgaoil na speuran doilleir/ neòil mun cuairt').

The first twenty lines set the scene for the king's soliloquy. The host is asleep, with sentinels appointed to guard it on each side. The king cannot rest and, 'le iomagain gheur', strolls by the sides of a stream, meditating the ruin that has fallen on his country. His speech falls into three sections. In the first he speaks of the weariness which prompts him to abdicate and abandon the struggle against the Romans:

An iarr mi sith, 's an toir mi
Albainn bhuam,
mo chrùn, 's mo ghaisreadh àrd,
len trice buadh
na aon fheachd fo bhrataich rìgh
tha beò?

Never again will we see a hero of Livingston's contemplate giving up. The question is answered at once in the negative. There follows a detailed account of the depredations Scotland has suffered at Agricola's hands, concluding in the knowledge that Calgacus himself is perhaps the prize booty in this whole war:

mo sheise seòlta, gaisgeil
air mo lorg gun fhois,
an dùil rim chiomachas gun dàil,
no tuiteam leis.

There is no rancour in the way Calgacus speaks of the man who would like to be his captor, and the overall effect is to increase the reader's sense of the king's vulnerability (and

therefore of his courage in continuing to resist). The third part of the soliloquy is a fine elegy for Carranach, king of the Picts. The Romans are practically forgotten here. Death has been the victor, not they. What Calgacus complains of is his own loneliness, and the fact that Carranach can no longer enjoy the exciting panoply of war:

O Charranaich, a laoidh, an d' thug
an t-eug ort buaidh,
thu sint' gun diog, gun chàil
fo ghlaib na h-uaigh?
A chòmhlain rioghail, churrant',
dhàna, ghlic,
cò sheasas leam san àraich dheirg,
's thu balbh fon lic?

Livingston succeeds in turning the traditional language of Gaelic elegy to use in the context of early Scottish history: the grave is 'leaba dhorch nan daol', and the approach to death is throughout stark, direct, without any note of pietism or transcendence. The absence of any Christian hope of resurrection is both historically appropriate and natural to the tradition Livingston is exploiting. Most significant of the experiences Carranach will miss is the coming battle, and the soliloquy ends with a kind of prophecy of a positive outcome:

Chan fhaic thu tuilleadh seòid
nam beann fon airm,
no grunn nan sàr mar aon
a' freagairt gairm
gu faiche Bhraca, far an sgaoilear
cuirm a' bhàis,
's am brist na Dèe bhiothbhuan dhinn
cuing ar càs.

Now the voice of the narrator returns, providing a transitional passage which will lead into the king's dream. The details he supplies heighten the atmosphere set at the beginning of the poem. The king is 'an t-ànrach rioghail', and he moves 'le ceuman mall/ is osnaich trom' (with perhaps a suggestion of the predicament of Prince Charles Stuart after the defeat of his army

at Culloden). Nobody knows that he has wandered 'san duibhr' a-mach', so that we as readers alone share his thoughts and apprehensions. Although he does get some sleep now, is it 'fo mheachain fhuair/ na h-oiteig bheur', a shrill breeze which blows 'air an leitir nochd'. He is lying 'Air dus a dùthchais', and the use of 'crè' to describe him emphasises how easily he, too, might become dust or clay, and mingle with the earth to which he is so close.

Livingston announces the dream with an address to fellow Gaels which will recur, in differing forms, as a prelude to several of the shorter battle poems:

Gun cluinneadh Gàidheil sgeul
nan linn a dh'fhalbh
's gum biodh iad fhathast mar bu dual
an tìr an seilbh;
gun glèidheadh iad an cliù 's an gnè
o linn gu lìn
o thnù nam foireigheach fiar',
nach aontaich leinn.

That final word moves tellingly to the first person, drawing narrator and listeners into a single community which has a great deal to learn from the exemplary situation being presented. The 'foireigheach fiar' presumably are not just military invaders, but all those whom the clearances, and hostile economic change had brought to the ancestral territories of Gaelic Scotland.

The dream itself symbolically enacts what has occurred so far, with what could well have been the culmination of the invasion, in a way Livingston would never again attempt. There are four components to this allegorical vision. A particularly obscure diction increases the impact of the passage. Of twelve words glossed at the end of the 1858 *Duain Ghaelic*, no fewer than seven occur here in the space of little more than forty lines: 'bragh', 'caont', 'coirb', 'dearg-las', 'dreòs', 'eangach' and 'glàmaich'. (Two more, 'braight' and 'brolluinn', crop up during the battle section, at line 243). A 'female fury' or 'coirb' has subdued all of south Britain and is now looking threateningly

northwards. She spreads a 'drag net' or 'eangach' along the border with Scotland, from sea to sea. It is made of red-hot iron, and resembles 'the glare of sparks rising from a furnace' (Livingston's gloss for 'dreòs'):

lìon iarnaigh dearg, 's a dhreach
mar dhreòs nan càir
à slugan sùirn, a' sputadh dian
an goil am bàir.

(The unusual 'càir' for 'caoir' is presumably introduced for the sake of rhyme). Two fiery giants use it to trawl the valleys and mountains of Scotland rather as fishermen might drag the sea bed, sweeping 'gach duine 's beathach, caistéal dìon is teach' up into it. Last come 'glàmaich theine', a 'ravenous fire' like a 'stormy nebula' in the sky ('an dath/ mar dhearg-las sìon'), who swallow up whatever the net had spared.

The king's awakening is convulsive ('le allsa gioraig') and the world of morning, of reality, is very effectively announced by the appearance of the first placenames in the poem, and of a subordinate prosaically defined by his role, and having a comfortingly familiar name, the 'gille caimp', MacSween. Graspable realities exist, and effective action can be taken. The army has camped at Glentarf farm (beyond Dalginross, on the south side of Comrie and not far east of the road which leads by the River Knaik down to Braco). Before the sun rises over Torlum hill (south east of Comrie - it dominates the country immediately to the south) the Caledonian forces must move to 'leac nam marbh'. The phrase 'sgaradh neòil' (168) reminds the reader of the poem's opening and warns that the atmosphere of gloom and stasis is to be dispelled, the narration having reached a turning point. This section ends with a command to the forces in direct speech, another realistic touch:

cluinnadh na Gàidheil - "Tàirrnibh
suas gu strì!"

As if with a violent jerk, we are suddenly face to face with the Romans.

'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca' is among the most poorly edited texts in the 1882 *Duain agus Orain*, while in the 1858 *Duain Ghaellic* Livingston's own punctuation is erratic, to say the least. Our discussion so far, and the edited text offered as an appendix at the end of this thesis, respect the presentation used by both collections, where long and short lines alternate. Nevertheless, it is easiest to consider the metre used as being one single, long line of five (less frequently six) stresses. Pairs of lines form rhyming couplets, and Livingston introduces a wide range of different kinds of rhyme, involving vowels only ('cuairt/suain', 'beò/leò'), vowels and one or more consonants ('nàmh/tàmh', 'airm/gairm'), consonants only ('uchd/fheachd', 'uillt/oillt'), a palatal and a non-palatal consonant ('ghlas/fois'), vowels of adjacent but not identical degrees of opening ('mò/slòigh'), and further permutations of these basic elements ('bàis/càs'). The effect of regularity within variety matches the oscillation in line length, and enjambement is freely and naturally employed.

The remaining part of the poem, dealing with the battle, is much less successful. Livingston uses shorter lines of three or four stresses (the latter with a clear central caesura) rhyming in irregular patterns, and sometimes failing to rhyme altogether. Up until this point, finite verbs in the past tense have punctuated the narrative. In the passage linking the end of the dream to the beginning of the battle (157-180), we have 'dhùisg', 'ghlac', 'dh'iarr', 'ghluais', 'thog' and 'thug', six in twenty-four lines. The thirty lines at the start of the battle (180-210) have only two, 'chit' and 'coisgt', neither of which informs us of its progress. The first is static, referring to what could be seen, the second to a possible outcome. The paragraph accumulates rather than moving, with extensive use of apposition (application of different phrases to the same object) which produces a

clogging effect. The dominant syntactical pattern is of a noun, an adjective, and a further noun in the genitive:

cath-bhuidhnean laochail nan clann (185)
gaisgich feusagach nam beann (187)
armailt neartmhor nan treubh (189)
biùthaidh mhòralach nam Mac (193)
armailt fhineachail an laoch (205)

Even slightly different patternings, such as 'sealladh gairisneach do nàmh' (190), 'Gàidheil threun nam buadhan tric' (191) or 'beinge ghris nan sleaghan glas' (195), tend to be drawn into the effect of monotony. Livingston shows a predilection for phrases of two nouns joined by a genitive article, occupying half a line:

rian nan sreath (182), nòs nan sonn (188), strì nan gleachd (192), streup nan leòn (202), strì na feirg (207)

This intensive use of syntactical repetition in a small space deprives the verse of movement, and moreover creates difficulties for the reader. The linguistic expansion does not correspond to anything that is happening in the underlying narrative. So far 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca' has proceeded smoothly, fluidly, with effective transitions. When the battle commences, the verse seems to come to a halt.

This section is continuous in both printed editions. Following the summary given earlier, it can tentatively be broken into three paragraphs. Nothing actually occurs in the first, while the second sees the armies facing one another across a ford in the positions fate has assigned them. The third has much more movement, and works best where Livingston describes the battle formations of Romans and Scots. Yet the rather starchy rhetorical patterning of the opening paragraph recurs:

suinn gharbh nan earradh breac (225)
stiocall trom nam mìltean roinn (236)
sruth loinnireach nan gathan reubach (239)
sreathan nan Albannach àrach (250)

spàirn nam pian (224), casgradh nan cràdh (229),
uilebheist nam mort (231), milidh an sleagh (251)

Such phrases introduce an element of abstraction into the narrative and make it less unreal. They seem to interpose themselves between the reader and what is happening, drawing attention to themselves inappropriately and deflecting attention from the battle. It is as if the real issue were not the outcome of the battle, but how what is occurring can best be formulated linguistically. The cruellest test of this generic quality of the verse would be to see how many lines could theoretically be transferred to one of the other battle poems, and therefore have little specific relevance to a combat between these forces at this particular historical time.

We shall not examine the remaining 'historical' battle poems in as much detail. The space devoted to 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca' seemed justified by the important role it plays throughout Livingston's prose works, and by its position at the head of the battle poems, both in terms of its chronology and because it may well have been the first of them to be written. A close reading of the battle section hoped to show diagnostically why so many have expressed dissatisfaction with Livingston's treatment of armed conflict, why he apparently lets us down at the crucial moment. The poet undoubtedly went some way towards solving his difficulties in this area, as our reading of the battles at Gartmain and Sunadale has shown. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the finest passages in these poems deal with the preparations for fighting rather than with the fighting itself. At the same time, 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca' tells us something about Livingston's aims in the battle poems. Even when authoritative historical accounts were available, these remain tangential to his creative process, and it bothers him little that they might be used to undermine the poem he has produced. He is not aiming at reconstructive historical accuracy. The battle poems are in the nature of *exempla*, didactically aimed at awakening national

pride and valour in those who read or hear them. Their approach is transhistorical, or ahistorical, because their author saw the relevance of these qualities as transcending history, linking the different epochs of the national past in a single patriotic urge.

Chapter Nine: HISTORICAL BATTLES (2)

Livingston's 'Còmhradh mar gum biodh e eadar Baintighearna Ellerslie agus Tomas Learmont, nuair a theich Uilleam Wallace an dèidh dha Seilbie a mharbhadh' (C 193-7) is based loosely on 'Blind Harry', or Henry the Minstrel's metrical account of the hero's life and deeds. Henry continues to be our only source for many incidents in Wallace's life, and the elements from Wallace's biography included in the dialogue point clearly to him as the inspiration for Livingston's poem. Wallace's mother is still mourning the death of her husband and eldest son:

Nach do thuit mo choimpiir' uasal treun,
athair reubt' le iomadh lot
fo shleaghan bàsmhor Ghall,
's ar mac gun deò ri thaobh
an cath mo chreach,
a thug iad uam araon?

According to Henry, Wallace's family broke up at the time of Scotland's loss of independence. (The poems of both Henry the Minstrel and John Barbour are quoted from the texts edited by John Jamieson, the authoritative version in Livingston's day and one with which he was almost certainly familiar).

Scotland was lost quhen he was bot a child,
And our set throuch with our ennemyss wilde.
His fadyr Malcolm in the Lennox fled;
His eldest sone thedir he with hym led.
Hys modyr fled with him fra Elrislé,
Till Gowry past, and duelt in Kilspyndé. (Jamieson
1820: II, 5)

Henry gives as the hero's parents 'Malcolm Wallas', who had inherited 'Elrislé' (now Elderslie, between Paisley and Johnstone) and 'Auchinbothe', and a daughter of 'Schir Ranald Crawford, rycht schirreff of Ayr'. He mentions the death of Wallace's father and brother after the killing of Selbie, when he and his mother, fugitives passing themselves off as pilgrims, arrive back home at Elderslie:

Hyr fadyr was dede, a lang tyme leyffyt had thar;
Hyr husband als at Lowdoun-hill was slayn.
Hyr eldest sone, that mekill was of mayn,
Schir Malcom Wallas was his nayme but less,
His houch senons thai cuttyt in that press;
On kneis he faucht, felle Inglismen he slew;
Till hym thar socht may fechtaris than anew;
On athyr side with speris bar him down;
Thar stekit thai that gud knyght of renoun. (II, 10-11)

Robert Bruce gained a victory over Edward I's lieutenant in Scotland at Loudoun Hill in May 1307 (Fisher 1986: 31), but there is no other record of an earlier battle there. Livingston's 'sleaghan bàsmhor Ghall' accurately reproduce the manner of Malcolm Wallace's death as recounted by Henry, pointing clearly to his dependence on this source. The younger brother had his weapons ready to hand, and did not hesitate to murder Englishmen stealthily when the opportunity presented itself:

Wapynnys he bur, outhir gud suerd or knyff;
For he with thaim hapnyt richt offt in stryff.
Quhar he fand ane without the othir presance,
Eftir to Scottis that did no mor grewance;
To cut his throit, or steik him sodanlye,
He wayndyt nocht, fand he thaim fawely.
Syndry wayntyt, but nane wyst be quhat way;
For all to him thar couth na man thaim say. (II, 7)

According to Henry, it was while staying with his uncle in Gowrie that Wallace killed the constable of Dundee's son:

The constable a felloun man of wer,
That to the Scottis did full mekill der,
Selbye he hecht, dispitfull and owtrage.
A sone he had ner twenty year of age:
Into the toun he wsyt euerlik day;
Thre men or four thar went with him to play...

The two young bloods come up against one another in the street. Selbie insults Wallace:

He callyt on hym, and said; "Thou Scot, abyde;
"Quha dewill the grathis in so gay a gyde?
"Ane Ersche mantill it war thi kynd to wer;
"A Scottis thewtill wndyr thi belt to ber;
"Rouch rewlyngis apon thi harlot fete.
"Gyff me thi knyff; quhat dois thi ger so mete?"

Wallace's response is swift and pitiless:

Fast by the collar Wallace couth him ta;
Wndyr his hand the knyff he bradit owt,
For all his men that semblyt him about:
Bot help him selff he wsyt of no remede;
With out reskew he stekyt him to dede. (II, 7-8)

His aunt conceals him from his pursuers by dressing him as a woman and sitting him down to spin. The despair of Wallace's mother when she learns what he has done is probably the source for Livingston's portrayal of her in the dialogue:

His modyr bade in till a gret dispar.
Quhen scho him saw scho thankit hewynnis queyn,
And said; "Der sone, this lang quhar has thow beyne?"
He tald his modyr of his sodane cass.
Than wepyt scho, and said full oft, 'Allas!
'Or that thow cassis thow will be slayne with all.'
(II, 9)

There are indications that Livingston was working from his memory of Henry's poem rather than having it directly in front of him. The title suggests he may have forgotten that it was Selbie's son, rather than Selbie himself that was murdered, and Henry makes it clear that the incident did not separate mother and son (as Livingston has it), but that they escaped together.

Nor does Henry have any record of Wallace's mother and Thomas the Rhymer ever meeting each other. In the introduction to his edition of *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*, Murray dates Thomas' birth to between 1210 and 1220. He may have been dead by 1294, but the incident connecting him with Wallace recounted by Henry cannot have taken place earlier than 1296 or 1297 so that, if it is true, Thomas must still have been alive at that time. Murray suggests that he may have retired to the Faile, a priory of the Cluniacenses near Ayr. Indeed, frequent visits there may have given rise to the legend of his sojourns in fairyland. Henry introduces Thomas as a prophet:

Thomas Rimour in to the Faile was than,
With the mynystir, quhilk was a worthi man:
He wsyt offt to that religiouss place.
The peple demyt of witt mekill he can;
And so he told, thocht at thai bliss or ban,
Quhilk hapnyt suth in many diuerss cace,

I can nocht say, be wrang or rychtwisnas,
In rewille of wer, quhethir thai tynt or wan;
It may be demyt be diuisioun of grace. (II, 23)

Both Barbour and Andrew of Wyntoun mention Thomas' prophecies, and Murray underlines the importance these must have had in the course of the Wars of Independence, when the vision of success they offered may have done much to resurrect failing morale among the Scots. He nevertheless assigns most of the *Romance and Prophecies* to the early fifteenth century, making it posterior to the events predicted, with the exception of Fytt III, 'in all probability a *melange* of early traditional prophecies' (1875: xxv).

Wallace has been found dead in an English prison in Ayr and his corpse thrown out on to a midden heap. The first wet nurse he ever had finds him, takes him home, and gives him her own child's breast to suck. Thomas repeatedly refuses to accept the news of Wallace's death. If it is true, his prophetic powers must have lapsed. Eventually, a servant brings news that the hero has been nursed back to life:

Than Thomas said; 'Forsuth, or he decess,
'Mony thousand in feild sall mak thar end.
'Off this regioun he sall the Sothroun send;
'And Scotland thriss he sall bryng to the pess:
'So gud off hand agayne sall neuir be kend.' (II, 25)

Boece is the first to give Thomas the surname Leirmont (Murray, 1875: 13), so Henry is not Livingston's source here. Bellenden in his translation speaks simply of 'ane propheit, nameit Thomas Rimour, othirwayis namit Ersiltoun' (1821: II, 358). It may be that the association of Thomas with the name Learmont had become habitual by the nineteenth century, so that Livingston did not require a particular authority for using it.

What he has done, then, is to conflate at least two incidents from Henry the Minstrel's poem so as to form the basis of his own. The dialogue has no specific geographical location, but we are presumably to imagine that Thomas is comforting Lady

Elderslie now that her son has taken to the woods, rendered an outlaw by the killing of Selbie. The poem falls into two parts: a speech of some forty lines by Wallace's mother, and a rather longer speech by the seer.

A religious tone pervades the words of both. Lady Elderslie invokes God almost at once:

O thus', a Rìgh na glòir
on d' fhuair sinn bith,
glèidh na dh'fhuirich beò!
Nach leòir na thuit
mar iobairt chasgraidh
do nàmhaid borb, nach sguir
a thòrachd mo mhic ghaoil...

And her speech ends with her turning once more to the only source of comfort she can imagine:

O uile-chumbachd, dan lèir gach nì,
thug t-ainm glòrmhor do gach àl
mar athair gaoil is sìth,
dèan furtachd air mo chàs,
a rìgh nan rìgh!

What Thomas draws from the idea of God is the certainty of an ongoing, overarching scheme of things. His view of mortal life is stern:

Carson a tha thu caoidh,
's nach eil an seo ach seal?
Mar bhoìn' an doimhn' a' chuain
tha ùin' an duin' a-bhos,
an coimeas ris a' bhith gun chrìoch
a bheir caochladh beatha dhuinn
an rìoghachd na biobhhuantachd...

The troubles Scotland is going through are, for him, a punishment for disobedience sent by God, and the assimilation of the Scots to the chosen people of Israel is unmistakable. Notice the appropriately archaic 'ta':

An Tì dam buin gach cliù,
a ta gar smachdachadh an-diugh
mar chinneach ciontach
nach do lean a ghuth,
ged shaor e sinn cho tric

or nàimhdean làidir fiat,
a bha fad air tith ar sgrios...

The portrayal of Wallace's mother is conventional enough. Her son is condemned to live 'do fhaobh nam brùidean allt' / no luibhean searbh na frith', and she torments herself by picturing how his enemies might come upon him when he is weakened by the hardships of an outlaw life 's e fann, 's nach adhbhar eagail / do na daoi a làmh no lann'.

Her speech is written in free verse with two, three or four stresses in each line. There are sporadic end rhymes, normally two lines apart, but no emphasis is placed on them until the sequence 'àl / sìth / chàs / rìgh' indicates that her section has come to an end. Rhymes are more frequent in Thomas's speech. They are overshadowed, however, by Livingston's use of refrain, which gives an incantatory, almost pulpit-like quality to the prophet's words. His opening line 'Carson a tha thu caoidh?' occurs seven times, the other refrain 'Bi cinnteach, thig an là' five, and the lines immediately following the latter are themselves patterned:

sam faigh sinn fois mar fhuair (61)
sam faicear àgh nam fear (72)
san cluinnear anns gach tìr (76)
sam faicear Albainn saor (90)
san sgoilt an stàilinn glas... (99)

Thomas speaks of the shortness of human life and of God's plan for Scotland before turning to Lady Elderslie's personal concerns. His tone quickly rises to something very like prophecy:

Bi cinnteach, thig an là
san cluinnear anns gach tìr,
is mairidh gu là bràth,
air feadh gach linn ga luaidh,
a' ghibht a fhuair do mhac,
nach ceannaich òr no luach...

As the poem closes, he speaks more closely of the fighting ahead, and Livingston's characteristic language of invective makes an appearance:

Bi cinnteach, thig an là
san sgoilt an stàilinn glas
goilleann nam mùgach allt'

's an giallan a' spreadhadh air feur
le deannal nan cruaidh-lann beur.

Just at the end, one of Livingston's favourite motifs, the fiery cross, is introduced, as Thomas encourages Lady Elderslie to look up and around and see the beacon fires lit on each hill,

a' tional nam fear mòr,
connspainn euchdach nan càs dearg,
neart mar leòghannaibh frith
fo bhrataichean iomadathach gu buaidh...

Livingston's second Wallace piece has no identifiable source. In the 1858 *Duain Ghaelìc* it does not appear with the other battle poems at the beginning of the book, but is placed separately from the dialogue between Lady Elderslie and Thomas and just before two translations, at the end of the volume. Livingston describes it as 'Cath Thom Ealachaidh, eadar na Gàidheil Albannach agus na Sasannaich, anns a' bhliadhna 1302' (C 112-5). The date is puzzling as 'There is no record of Wallace's actions after August, 1299, for over four years' (Fergusson 1938: 181). An English spy was present at a meeting in Peebles in August 1299 where Sir David Graham demanded Wallace's lands and goods because he was leaving the kingdom without permission from the Guardians (Fisher 1986: 94). His brother Malcolm (apparently in fact alive at this point) defended him and the incident nearly led to violence. From this point on

we find ourselves entirely deprived of precise details of his movements and his activities. If he does not entirely disappear, he fades, not from the popular memory, but from the accounts of the chroniclers. Such slight information as we have suggests that he may have visited Norway, France, and Rome, probably in that order... (Fisher 1986: 94)

If Henry the Minstrel is to be believed, Wallace fought with a French pirate and an Englishman before being invited by Philip IV of France to enter his service, and declining. There is no convincing proof of his return to Scotland until an English

chronicler speaks of his role in the campaigns of 1303-4 (Barrow 1965: 177). Livingston may well have placed his poem in this biographical vacuum because that would give him the greatest freedom in inventing a skirmish without the constraints of authoritative accounts. If one were determined to relate 'Cath Thom Ealachaidh' to a passage in Henry's poem, it could only be to one describing the plight of Wallace and his men as fugitives, after he has returned and landed at the mouth of the River Earn:

To Meffen wod with ane assent thai far,
Sone gat thaim meit off bestiall at thai fand;
Restyt that day; quhen nycht was cumyn on hand,
To Byrnane wode, but restyng, ar thai gayne,
Quhar thai found the squier gud Ruwayn.
In utlaw oyss he had lang lewyth thair
On bestiall, quhill he mycht get no mair.
Thai taryit nocht, bot in til Adell yeid,
Quhar mete was scant; than Wallace had gret dreid,
Past in till Lorn, and rycht litill fand thair:
Off wyld and taym that contré was mad bair.
Bot in strenthis, thar fud was lewyth nayn;
The worthi Scottis than maid a petouss mayn. (II, 333)

Livingston does not speak of lack of food. The incident he recounts has, however, a heroism like the next of Wallace's deeds in Henry. He sets out on his own and slays five men who have been following his tracks for three days, then returns to his band, bringing with him their servant and provisions.

'Cath Thom Ealachaidh' opens with an address to Scotland which has a similar function to the brief introduction to Calgacus' dream in 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca' (113-124 in that poem). Livingston wants his country to resurrect her former glory:

Carson nach bi thu mar a bha,
nach tog thu 'n àird do cheann,
nach seas thu rithist mar bu nòs,
aig toiseach rioghachdan na h-Eòrp'?

Once again 'gur neo-ghlan/ nan garr mucach' threatens to deprive her of her resources, her rights and her God. The narration that

follows is aimed at motivating this aspiration: "'s cluinneadh do mhic/ le seirm nam bàrd carson'.

This is the shortest and simplest of all the battle poems, cast in sporadically rhyming lines of basically three, and occasionally two or four stresses. News arrives that the enemy is approaching (19-22). The Scots withdraw into the wood, and Livingston gives his evaluation of them and of their adversaries who, he predicts, will be carrion by nightfall (23-51). The English are unable to exploit their superiority in numbers (they are three hundred against twenty) as they find themselves in a narrow pass, well defended by holly bushes (52-78). They retreat, not realising the Scots are almost at the end of their strength, then return in three battalions. The fighting lasts a day and a night (79-95). As in 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca', the outcome is inconclusive, and mist arrives to separate the fighters:

gus an do sgaoil fallaing neòil
a sgiort a sgar a' chonnspaid,
mar a dh'òrdaich rìgh bhothbhuann
nan gràs a bhith.

The reference to God's intervention may be a memory of Henry, who was equally certain of the divine, guiding hand:

Quha brocht Wallace fra his enemyss bauld?
Quha, bot gret God, that has the world in wauld? (II,
336)

Livingston, however, poeticises this intervention with an unusual touch when he describes the pass as

coisrigt' a chithear o linn gu linn,
far an d' itealaich an t-aingeal dìon
os ceann nan Gàidheal nan airc,
a' frithealadh neart don bhuidhinn bhig,
claidhte le ionnsaigh nan sgaoth.

His praise of the defenders uses characteristic hyperbole:

Cò ach Albannaich le treòir,
an samhail nach cualas riamh,
a sheasadh an dùiseal nan spèic,
treubhach an gnìomh,
an fhichead fear a b' fheàrr

a tharraing cruaidh
o na dh'fhosgail Adhamh a shùil...

This is a small-scale battle, and Livingston does not pile up phrases repetitively as he had done for Braco Moor. Nonetheless, a phrase like 'dùiseal nan spèic' has the familiar stylistic marking. Wallace is 'an dara Samsoin', while his attackers are compared to brute animals:

Fiata mar thuir a' dion
an garraidh-cùil, am broclainn
àrd nan stùc,
b'ionnan na luinnsichean ciar
a' ruith an coinneimh nan sonn...

Their armour had made the Romans seem an invincible machine before the spears of the Caledonians wreaked havoc among them. The slaughter of Wallace's English attackers is graphic and anatomical in a way that anticipates the furious violence at the climax of 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile'. The Scottish blades

bhuail mar dhealain air sròin
nan laoighchionn gun ghràs,
a' ruith do ghiallan a' bhàis
fo bhuillean nan treun,
a bha spreadhadh nan cabhadh dearg
claiginn, smuais is fèithean
na thàinig a-steach...

Livingston returned to Wallace once more, in what is not in any real sense a battle poem. The 'Rannan do Uilleam Macille Chrìosd' (C 201-4) celebrate a visit to Islay by the poet's publisher. After a brief dialogue with Dun Athad, a fortress on the Mull of Oa at the island's south west point, the poet describes the arrival of a vessel over the stormy waters separating Islay and Kintyre, with an extreme and at times rather strained richness of vocabulary. Then a piper greets the newcomers, his welcome taking, on the page, the form of a song of ten quatrains. The instrument is singing its own praises:

B' iomadh flath greadhnach is mìlidh
a dh'èisd mo sgàil an strì nan àrach.

It remembers ringing out from the walls of Stirling Castle, and from a footnote reference to Fordun we can gather that Livingston is thinking of the protracted seige of that fortress by Edward I in 1304:

Aig Sruith-liath ard nan daingeann mùral,
am braise dùbhlain, sheinn mi 'n àr-ghaoir
le riar an fhirein do-lùbaidh
ga chrìch nach d' ùmhlaich do nàmhaid.

Wallace was not present at Stirling, so that the pleasure he took in hearing the pipes ring from its battlements is a fictional invention of Livingston's. It is not clear whether the same incident is meant when, two stanzas later, Livingston introduces Malcolm II, Earl of Lennox, leading what could be a sortie by the Scots. Alternatively, the battle of Stirling Bridge in 1297 may be intended, where Lennox and Wallace fought on the same side. The description of the men engaged in combat is effective:

Rùisgt' ach cneasag, crios, is fèileadh
le slisich ghèir ri grèin a' deàrrsadh,
liobhaidh, glan mar leacan reòta
fo anail fuachd air lòintean fàsail.

Dwelly gives 'sliseag', but not 'sliseach': a sharp wooden stick springs first to mind, but the mention of gleaming suggests that Livingston is using the word as a more intensive term for 'lann'. The garrison defending Stirling under Sir William Oliphant did in fact surrender, on July 20th (Barrow 1965: 181). Wallace, of course, held out, and it is this stubborn patriotism that so fascinates Livingston and that he believes to be still expressed in the music of the pipes. Lennox is mentioned honourably in a second footnote, so that one is all the more surprised to find him, as a faithful friend, caught up in the unfavourable portrayal of Robert Bruce in 'Blàir Dhàil Rìgh'.

In his book on *The Scottish War of Independence*, Barron writes that

It has always been a tradition in the Highlands that both Wallace and Bruce spoke Gaelic. The wonder,

indeed, would be if they had not, for they were both born and brought up in Gaelic-speaking districts, and Bruce, at least, had a Gaelic-speaking mother. (1934: 213)

As a consequence, one might expect Livingston to evince sympathy and interest in equal measure for the two heroes. This is, however, not so. It may, on the one hand, be a question of instinctively democratic attachment for one who was neither a yeoman nor a feudal nobleman, but something in between. Again, the tergiversations and vicissitudes of Bruce's career throughout the period in which English kings attempted to gain control of Scotland may have required a complex reaction ill-suited to Livingston's urgent, unquestioning patriotism. Wallace became a folk hero among the Scottish people in a way Bruce could not hope to rival. The eloquent tribute which closes the 'Life of Sir William Wallace' in Abercromby's *Martial Achievements* is a fine example of this glorification, and would have been familiar to Livingston:

He had that air and make of body, that seems to give right to command; his stature was tall and majestic, his strength incredible, his health not to be shaken by hunger or toil; he was broad-coasted, large and broad-shouldered, and big-boned, yet had a pleasant aspect, and a countenance always serene; nor was his bulk unweildy, though gigantic. These advantages of the body made him superior in combat to all men living, and it was ordinary for him to fight and defeat three or four at a time. But the strength of his mind was superior even to that of his body: he had the true spirit of a soldier, and such an inclination to the noble employment, that he learned it without experience; and his first essays were really masterpieces. No man ever dared more than he; yet none was more cautious, or understood better the arts of stratagem. Untaught himself, he taught the whole nation to be soldiers... he never did harm to women or children, but, on the contrary, was a father to orphans and widows, a protector of the poor and the miserable, a severe punisher of robbers and thieves, a declared enemy to liars and cheats, had a love to his country, nothing could equal, but his hatred and aversion to the English. (1715: II, 545)

A description of this kind makes him seem the ideal hero for Livingston. Perhaps a further attraction lay in Wallace's martyr's death and in the fact that much of his life was spent on the run, marginalised in both social and military terms. These lines from 'Cuimhneachan Bhraid-Alba', prompted by the clearances in that area, apply just as well to Wallace's plight, and may very well have something of the resonance of Livingston's own self-perception:

'S gearr aoibhneas an duin' aig fheabhas
mar a chualas,
mairg is fearg is neo-shèamhas
ga shior-ruagadh:
's trom an t-eallach gaol dùthcha
's fòirneart aindheoin,
biothanaich allmharach gar spùinneadh
's gun dìon againn. (C 127)

The things that drew Livingston to Wallace, then, were the qualities he shared with Calgacus, such as the ability to face a more powerful enemy in a situation that appeared hopeless, without flinching for one moment.

Bruce's enterprises were crowned with success. Livingston may therefore have perceived him as a less suitable hero, and it is interesting that he balances a poem on Bruce's outstanding military victory at Bannockburn with another where he is presented with little sympathy and defeated by an alliance of Argyllshire clans. The choice of the battle of Dalry as subject for a poem is more than a little puzzling. 1306 was Robert Bruce's darkest year (Barrow 1965: 205ff.). Within six weeks of murdering his rival John the Red Comyn of Badenoch at Dumfries Bruce had himself crowned king of Scotland at Scone. Edward I appointed Aymer de Valence his special lieutenant in Scotland, and he routed the Scottish forces at Methven, west of Perth, in the second half of June. Less than three months after his coronation, Bruce was forced to take to the run with a few hundred men. He sought refuge in the mountainous country on the borders of Argyllshire and Perthshire. Interestingly, Barrow

suggests that Bruce may have trusted in the protection of St Fillan of Glendochart: he was to meet with defeat close to a pool linked with the saint. Bruce found his escape blocked by John MacDougall of Argyll, related by marriage to the dead Comyn and now a dangerous enemy.

Our chief source for this battle is Barbour's account at the opening of Book III of *The Bruce*. He does not name Dalry. Livingston could have found the name in Bower's Latin chronicle, but he may well have simply used the notes to Jamieson's edition:

The conflict here described is called by Bower "the battle of Dalry;" *Scotichron.* XII. II., more properly *Dalree*, i.e. "the King's Dale." It is close to the celebrated pool of St Fillan, about a mile, or little more, below the village of Tyndrum. There are a great number of cairns on the plain, where, it is said, the slain were buried. They still show the places where the different hosts were posted. Near the spot is a farm, the name of which is supposed to allude to this action; Aghariogh, or "the *haugh*, or "field of the King"... The cave in which he took refuge on the night succeeding the action, and in which he left the fragments of his sword, bears the name of *Craigree*, or "the King's Craig." (I, 433)

Jamieson further informs his readers that local tradition is firm in asserting the participation of the MacDougalls, the MacNaughtans and the MacNabs on the side opposed to the king. (The MacNaughtans and the MacNabs are also brought together in 'Cuimhneachan Bhraid-Alba'. Livingston adds the Macdonalds to their number without apparent justification. Although Alexander Macdonald had married Juliana, aunt of John of Lorne, and was therefore hostile to Bruce, his brothers Donald and Angus Og were 'anti-Macdougall and therefore pro-Bruce', and 'seem to have had the people of Islay and Kintyre very firmly under their control' (Barrow 1965: 231). This loyalty probably motivated the route Bruce took after Dalry. A retreat to Rathlin through Kintyre would be safely covered.

Once more, Livingston's approach to the available material is selective and idiosyncratic. (He may just have been misled by

Barbour's assertion that John of Lorne 'had in till his company/
The barownys off Argyle alsua' (I, 41)). None of the lore of
local placenames supplied by Jamieson appears in the poem, nor
does he exploit an incident subsequent to the battle, narrated by
Barbour. Three brothers named 'Makyne Drosser', that is,
'Durwarth', attacked Bruce when he was at a disadvantage, caught
between the shores of the loch and the hillside, and he fought
them off with heroism but considerable difficulty. A further
incident connected with the battle was available to Livingston in
Scott's notes to his *The Lord of the Isles*:

There is a tradition in the family of the MacDougals of
Lorn, that their chieftain engaged in personal battle
with Bruce himself, while the latter was employed in
protecting the retreat of his men; that MacDougal was
struck down by the king, whose strength of body was
equal to his vigour of mind, and would have been slain
on the spot, had not two of Lorn's vassals, a father
and son, whom tradition terms MacKeoch, rescued him,
by seizing the mantle of the monarch, and dragging him
from above his adversary. Bruce rid himself of these
foes by two blows of his redoubted battle-axe, but was
so closely pressed by the other followers of Lorn, that
he was forced to abandon the mantle, and brooch which
fastened it, clasped in the dying grasp of the
MacKeochs. (Scott 1917 etc.: 485).

This strikes one as a splendid hand-to-hand encounter such as
Livingston used in the much more articulated and varied battle
scenes of 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile'. That he should have ignored
both this and the Durwards' ambush demonstrates that he was not
concerned to bring available, and perhaps historically well-
founded material to life, but preferred to let his own
imagination play on a mere outline borrowed from his sources.

The battle of Dalry is tangential to Scott's poem. In Canto
II, however, he makes much of the enmity between Alexander, head
of the house of Lorne, and Bruce, whose brother discloses the
identity of the fugitives at a wedding feast in Artornish castle
on Mull. It is possible that familiarity with Scott's poem
focussed Livingston's attention on the hostility of the

Argyllshire clans to Bruce, and was instrumental in leading him to base a poem on the conflict at Dalry.

'Blàr Dhàil Rìgh' (C 46-54) is second only to 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca' among the shorter battle poems as regards interest and originality. It opens with a protracted conversation between the poet and his muse, which was discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. Although it dramatises Livingston's return to poetry, this does not necessarily mean that 'Blàr Dhàil Rìgh' was the first of the battle poems to be written. Indeed, it seems likely that Livingston would only make his newly awakened creativity the subject of a poem once he had ensured that it was not a momentary burst, but destined to continue.

Both the introduction and the poem use lines of four (occasionally three) stresses. The last stressed vowel in each is a rhyming vowel. In the introduction, one rhyme embraces anything from four to seven lines (although unrhymed lines do occur). In the narrative, lines rhyme in pairs.

A messenger comes to MacDougall with the news that Bruce and his men are hiding in the woods by Loch Lomond, while the men of Lennox have been put to flight and their leader (Malcolm II, Earl of Lennox) is a lone fugitive (74-83). Livingston then gives the messenger's own words as he urges the MacDougalls to join the MacNabs, who are waiting for them at Drumalban (84-91). John of Lorne suspects a trap (92-99), but the messenger reassures him that he has been sent from MacNab's tower by the assembled chiefs of Breadalbane, and reveals MacNab's seal in blood on his shirt (100-118). MacDougall swears that the men of Lorne will be at Loch Tay within three days, along with the Macdonalds ('Sìol Chuinn'), and sends round the fiery cross (119-143). Bruce learns that a force of five hundred is lying in wait for him at the ford in Glen Dochart and moves north from Loch Lomond through Glen Falloch, hoping to avoid a confrontation and join a contingent of Campbells. (Is this a generic association of a name he disliked

with the enemy side on Livingston's part? Or is he thinking of Neil Campbell of Lochawe, one of Bruce's 'almost inseparable companions' at this stage, along with Lennox, James Douglas and Gilbert de la Hay? (Barrow 1965: 219)) Bruce's attempt to elude his enemies fails (144-163).

Livingston does not give a consequential account of the progress of the battle, but focuses in turn on each of the groups involved: the MacDougalls fighting on the right hand (164-194), the soldiers intent on defending the king (195-198), the MacNabs with James Douglas hard-pressed in their midst (199-204), the Macdonalds wielding their Islay blades (205-212), the men of Kyle (213-219) and the Douglasses from Annandale (220-230). Seeing that the day is lost, Bruce sets his spurs to his horse and has his trumpeter sound the retreat (231-246).

'Blàir Dhàil Rìgh' stands out from the other battle poems in the 1858 volume because of the space devoted to the preliminaries to the fighting, and because of the striking tendency to dramatise events through the use of direct speech. There are no soliloquies here. The words of MacNab's messenger and of the MacDougall chief are motivated by the situation in which they find themselves, filled with the narration or the promise of action, and thereby generating an excitement which will culminate in the opening of hostilities. The moment when the messenger presumably opens his cloak to reveal the bloodstained seal on his shirt is visually conceived, and means that the encounter is not dramatised through words only but through gesture and action. These features, along with the motif of the messenger and the council of nobles at Kinnell (though we only hear of it indirectly) all anticipate the large-scale structures of 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' and 'Blàr Shunadail'. This poem can therefore be seen as constituting an important stage in Livingston's movement towards his most ambitious battle poems.

A patriotic address would be inappropriate here, and instead we have a brief lamentation on the strife between brothers which is the poem's subject:

O Albainn ghaoil, cò thug do shith bhuaith?
Mallachd buan dod luchd mi-rùin!
Tìr nan cùmhnantan 's nan gaisgeach,
nan tuil, nam beann 's nan creachain fàsach,
an iad seo do mhic san àr-fhaich fhuileach
nach d' fhannaich an gaoir nam buillean?

This comes as an interjection in the course of the battle. It is not echoed elsewhere, and is indeed rather tangential to the poem, which seems to delight in the energy and violence of the conflict, even though Scots are involved on both sides. Also curiously detached from its context is a seven-line passage on the MacDougall's banner, a cypress tree:

dan suaicheantas an iodh-chraobh ruighinn
nach searg le teas no le gaillionn,
nach marbh aois 's nach caochail dathan,
a loisgeas fon uisge gun mhùchadh
's nach cnàmh le fiacail an riudain,
on d' thig an dearcag iocshlaint neònach
a dh'fhàsas air cruach 's air còmhnard.

Livingston sees no incongruity in indulging in an excursion into heraldry and fanciful botany while the battle is in progress. The implication is that, here at least, his attitude to the battle is playful and celebratory, and that the outcome and the broader historical context are of little importance to him. The vocabulary of invective makes only a lightning appearance, when MacDougall characterises Bruce as 'rìgh nan ialtag/ ...tha nìs na chrùban'. The presentation of the battle in terms of participating groups rather anticipates the movement of a film camera from one angle to another, and there is none of the verbal clogging which so mars the treatment of the fighting in 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca'.

The same cannot be said of 'Cath Allt a' Bhannaich' (C55-60). The fighting occupies nearly two-thirds of a rather shorter poem.

Three-stress lines predominate, rhyming sporadically, with lines of two or four stresses occurring now and again. Livingston's account makes difficult reading, not only because the punctuation in the available editions is unhelpful. His control of the movement of the verse is poor and it lacks overall syntactical planning. In attempting to break the verses up into units one frequently finds groups of lines referring both back and forwards, as if Livingston had composed by accumulation, and the overall effect is of breathlessness.

He is unsurprisingly partisan in his sympathies. If his indignation gets in the way, this may be because of the reader's consciousness that battles are won by tactics and physical strength rather than by a sense of moral outrage. Scottish aggression against the English troops is too often obscured by Livingston's lavish verbal aggression.

The outcome is known to writer and reader, yet this need not totally exclude any kind of suspense. One also misses what one might call moral suspense. The trouncing of the English so matches the narrator's aspirations that the whole is peculiarly lacking in tension and energy.

(67-83) The English cavalry open the hostilities, and

nach d' iarr 's nach d' fhuair
fathamas, ach an sgrios a thoill,
air barraibh sleaghan gaisgich Chaill...

Heaven's power defends the Scots, whom Livingston compares to a rocky outcrop:

mar ailbhinn am meadhan cuain
fo onfhadh dùile nan stuadh,
b'ionnan na h-Albannaich gharbh
an dùiseal tuagh is lann...

Steel transfixes horses and men as the cavalry bear down with their lances. (84-96) Scotland is personified 'le colg neart a gnàth' cleaving the villains' skulls, and acting 'le dearbh reachd nèimh'. With a switch to the past tense, we have an anticipatory vision of the English dead:

a thug don fhitheach ròcach cuirm
air closaichean nan neo-ghlan fiar
nach togadh tuilleadh airm
an aghaidh sgiùrs na dh'fhan
gu bhith nan creich don eug.

Not only does this flash forward weaken the interest of the battle being described: Livingston's attention moves to and fro confusingly between English and Scots, fallen and fighting (97-106). The English renew their onslaught, and again Livingston is diverted into abstractions, and the not immediately relevant issue of the opprobrium which will attach to them once they have lost:

claidhteach, lìonmhor 's laist le boil,
mallachd, fèin-sgrios is tàir
nach fhalaich tiom 's nach cuir
lior nam bolla-cheann diubh
co fad 's a dheàrrsas grian
no mhaireas bith nan dùil.

The reference is presumably to the victories of the Cromwellian forces during the civil wars of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the effect is to deflect attention from the battle in progress and to dispel any tension the narrative may have built up. (107-21) The English rally, and Livingston is again sidetracked to the Scots' memories of what their enemies have inflicted on them:

's am fuil air ghoil le cuimhne
sgrios na mairg, a dhithich ceud mìle
's còrr, le claidheamh, croich is gort,
on a chaidh Rìgh Alasdair fon ùir...

At the close of this section (107-121) one can almost see the narrator with outstretched arm, pointing to the scene before us and dictating our reaction:

Gaol do na curaidhean-feachd
a dhearbh an sgeul ud dhuinn!

The next paragraph introduces the Islay Macdonalds, ten thousand in number, assembled beneath their seven banners (Livingston supplies a heraldic footnote) (122-131). The lines

are static, and not integrated with what precedes or follows. But now the quality of the account improves, sweeping through with considerable verve and energy to the close of the poem. Livingston employs a fine extended simile, based on the one he had used earlier in the poem. The English are like waves cleft by the rocky bulwark of the Scottish blades:

sgàin mìltean Shasann air grab
nam faobhar, grìs nam feòil
's tuil dhearg on cairbhean a' ruith
an claisean caol nan cluain
o lotan leòn nan gearradh,
nach druideadh sgil, 's nach d' iarr.

These lines move convincingly from the image to the reality, unhindered by abstractions or moral comments from the narrator (132-141). The next section is less well organised, Livingston once more working by accumulation. Grammatically, the lines use verbal nouns as pivots which offer almost unlimited possibilities of extension ('a' co-fhreagairt... a' triobhualadh... a' sitheadh... a' bodhradh') and the topics mentioned have no clear relation to one another: the ground and the air trembling, the difficulty of making out enemy from friend, the cries of the wounded deafening those who continue to fight, the blocking of glen and river with corpses (142-159). Livingston piles on abstractions ('cuthach, nàir is tnù,/ diombuaidh is mallachd nèimh') and the close is perfunctory:

Theich na bolgairean gun ùin',
a chaidh an leth-cheud mìle fear
a luidh gun deò
air àrach nan iomradh gun chrìoch,
mun cualas gu leòir.

A phrase like 'àrach nan iomradh gun chrìoch' peoples the battlefield, not with the victorious Scots, but with what will be said about this battle in the future. The self-reference is awkward and disorienting for the reader.

A close reading of this kind can help to pinpoint the difficulties which Livingston encountered in his attempt to create a new genre, a poetry of historical battles. 'Cath Allt a'

'Bhannaich' is one of the weakest of these poems, yet only if Livingston's faults are clarified can his stronger qualities emerge. The account suffers from the lack of any overall organising principle, whereas we have seen that in 'Blàir Dhàil Rìgh' this was derived from a review of the participants, and in 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' especially, Livingston was able to generate suspense by a thoroughly conceived strategy of movements of the differing forces.

'Cath Allt a' Bhannaich' opens with the announcement of its subject, 'Alladh nan curaidh a dh'fhalbh' (1-9) before Livingston gives the customary address to his listeners:

Eisd, a Ghàidheil òig is mòrail gnè,
fhiùrain ghloin den fhreumh gun ghaoid
a chinn san ir' a dh'àraich riamh
laoich àileil nam miadh còrr...

There are signs that he was familiar with Barbour's account of Bannockburn in *The Bruce*. The dialogue between Edward II, 'sladach nan ronn' and his 'fear-rùin', Sir Ingram de Umfraville, is modelled on this passage:

The Scottis men comounaly
Knelyt all doune, to God to pray.
And a schort prauer thar maid thai
To God, to help thaim in that fycht.
And quhen the Inglis king had sycht
Off thaim kneland, he said in hy;
"Yone folk knel to ask mercy."
Schyr Ingrahame said; 'Ye say suth now.
'Thai ask mercy; bot nane at yow:
'For thair trespas to God thai cry.
'I tell yow a thing sekyrly;
'That yone men will all wyn or de:
'For doute of dede thai sall nocht fle.' (Jamieson
1820: I, 250)

Livingston introduces the incident after dawn over Stirling has led 'na Gàidheil' to seize their arms, and after a description of King Robert with his Lochaber axe and of the Scots assembling 'an

òrdugh cath mar bu dual'. His version of the exchange is considerably shorter:

Thuir sladach nan ronn ri fear-rùin
a sheas dlùth dha freagairt da thoil:
"Tha na daoine ud ag iarraidh sìth,
striochdte le eagal, 's leinne bhuaidh."
Fhreagair an sgreunaire fiat:
"Tha 'n iarrtas gu h-Athair na glòir,
a' guidhe airson an ciontan fèin -
cha gheill iad duitse 's iad beò."

Livingston may have followed Barbour at the opening of the battle, when the English cavalry 'prikyt upon thaim sturdely', and 'War stedis stekyt mony ane' (I, 251). Barbour gives the detail of the river blocked with the dead:

The mast part of thaim drownyt war.
And Bannokburne, betuix the brays,
Off men, off hors, swa stekyt wais,
That, apon drownyt hors and men,
Men mycht pass dry owt our it then. (I, 263)

Further common elements are how 'The greyss woux with the blud all reid' (I, 253), and the axes which 'sic duschys gave,/ That thai helmys and hedis clave' (I, 258).

Yet Livingston makes no attempt to reproduce the detailed account offered by Barbour and which formed the basis of other accounts available to him, as well as being crucial to contemporary discussion of the battle (Barrow 1965: 310ff.) A host of promising incidents is passed over. They include an encounter between Moray's phalanx of spearsmen and a contingent of English cavalry under Clifford which 'was the crisis of the whole battle' (Barrow 1965: 316), Moray being spurred on by the king's taunt that 'a rose of his chaplete/ Was fallyn' (I, 231); a single-handed combat between Bruce and Sir Henry de Bohun, where the king split his adversary's head in two (Barrow 1965: 312, Barbour I, 235-6); and the arrival of the camp followers to join battle. Livingston ignores all these incidents, telescoping the two days of the battle into one (or simply passing over the first day in silence).

Indeed, the comparison of his account with Barbour's is instructive in the way it makes us aware of other possible ways of presenting the same material. Barbour gives an impressive description of the English army, presumably knowing that the effect of this will be to increase the prestige of the Scottish victory. Bruce does not wish this to be passed on to his troops:

Than the king bad thaim thai suld ma
Na contenance that it war sua;
Bot lat thaim in to comowne say,
That thai come in till ewyll aray,
To comfort his on that wyss. (I, 229)

Edward II is not caricatured, but presented with a rather attractive gaiety and vulnerability:

His bataill gert he weill aray.
He raid apon a litill palfray,
Laucht; and joly arayand
His bataill, with an ax in hand.
And on his bassynet he bar
An hat off tyre aboune ay quhar;
And thar wpon, in to taknyng,
Ane hey croune, that he wes king. (I, 235)

Where Livingston's description of the impact of the two armies is confusing and prone to getting sidetracked, Barbour is clear and linear, with effective use of parallelism:

Sa gret dyn thar wes of dyntis,
As wapnys apon armur styntis;
And off speris sa gret bresting;
And sic thrang, and sic thrysting;
Sic gyrning, granyng; and sa gret
A noyis, as thai on othyr beit;
And ensenyys on ilka sid;
Gewand, and takand, woundis wid (I, 258)

Nor is Barbour so intent on eulogy that he hides the baser actions of some Scottish fighters:

And laddis, swanys, and rangaill,
Quhen thai saw wencussyt the battaill,
Ran amang thaim; and swa gan sla,
As folk that na defens mycht ma,
That [it] war pitté for to se. (I, 263)

The figures given by Livingston differ from those in Barbour. Debate is still lively today about the size of the forces involved on either side (Barrow 1965: 293-8). It is possible that the nine battalions of seventeen thousand each (61-2), like the over a hundred thousand dead in the Wars of Independence (113-4), are notional estimates supplied by Livingston himself.

'Blàr Thràigh Ghrùineart' deals with a battle between the men of Lachlan MacLean of Duart in Mull and James Macdonald of Islay at Gruinard Bay on August 5th 1598. The cause of their meeting was a dispute over the ownership of the Rhinns of Islay (Mackay 1922: 148ff.) which had been referred to the Privy Council as far back as 1563. In 1565 the chiefs of both clans were prohibited from leaving Edinburgh until they had given security for good behaviour, and in January 1579 the Privy Council ordered both parties to keep the peace under pain of the severest penalties. The marriage of MacLean's sister to Angus Macdonald did not serve to pacify relations, and MacLean's visit to receive enfiefment of the Rinns in July 1586 very nearly ended in the massacre of the chief and his entourage. The battle at Gruinard Bay was therefore the culmination of a longstanding dispute between the two clans, and figured largely in oral tradition on Islay, enriched with details which Livingston, as is his wont, remodels according to his own wishes. The tradition centres on two incidents: MacLean's treacherous assassination at the hands of a certain Shaw or MacDuffy from Jura, an archer who had procured himself a firearm on this occasion; and the transportation of MacLean's body to its burial place in Kilchoman, appropriately enough in the Rinns, whose contested possession had provoked the battle in the first place.

Livingston's poem opens with a sentry warning the MacLean forces that the Macdonalds are approaching in battle formation:

a' toirt dùbhlàn le piob a' ghruamaich,
rabhadh nach d' fhuaradh riamh gun strìochdadh
do fhìne na làmh dhearg 's chrann-fhìge.

The assertion makes it clear at once where the narrator's primary loyalties lie (1-11). Lachlan Mòr addresses his forces (12-19), surprised at the number of men the Macdonalds have raised, and the banners of Duart and Torloisg are unfurled (12-29). The poet praises MacLean for his stature and prowess and mourns the coming slaughter in a brief aside (30-43):

O sgrìos! Nach taisg thu claidheamh bàsmhor
treubh àrdanach bratach an leòghainn
mun tig na gallain ud fo fhaobhar,
's gun cluinnear caointeach nach beò iad?

Now the Macdonald chief harangues his troops (44-90). His speech is between five and six times as long as MacLean's, much of it in tones of wounded benevolence:

Mheasadh leinn iad gach àm mar chairdean,
's rinn m' athair uasal-sa dhiubh bràithrean -
bhrìst iad gach ceangal dàimh a dh'fhàgadh.
Tha 'n stàilinn ud a-nis nan làmhnan
ag innseadh nach till iad on àrfaich
gun sinne chur fo mhasladh,
ar marbhadh 's ar dùthaich a ghlacadh.

He describes the shame that would come on the Macdonalds were the day to go against them, and recalls their military glories before urging that Lachlan be spared at all cost:

A mhaithean 's a luchd-cinnidh - air mo sgàth-sa,
caomhnaibh bràthair mo mhàthar!

Ragnall Mòr na Lùibe intervenes briefly to observe that no ten men among them could match Lachlan in a fight (91-97). His words constitute a careful anticipation on Livingston's part of Lachlan's killing:

Mur an caithear e le luaidhe,
bàs no buaidh dhuinn, thig e beò às.

Battle is joined at the sea's edge:

tonnan gun smal na fairge on chuan fharsaing
a' taomadh 's a monmhar aig an casan,
's mar gum b'ann a' caoidh ri bhith toirt fianais
air gearraidh nan leòn nach lèighseadh...

Both sides let out their battle cry, and the narrator again expresses his dismay that Scots are dying at each other's hands:

O Albainn, caoidh do mhic, a' tuiteam le neart
nan gairdein
a bu treise dh'fhàs san t-saoghal
's nach robh rim faotainn ach an talamh nan Gàidheal!

The forces are evenly balanced ('buaidh air meidh cothromach gun aomadh') until the MacLeans outflank the Macdonalds on the left and their barrier is lowered, 'cor nach cualas riamh roimhe an sgeul Chlann Dòmhnail' (98-138). As elsewhere, Livingston imagines the clashing of swords in terms of fire, 'fras shradan dearg... mar bheul àmhainn', 'sruth nan caoirean loisgeach'.

He would not have allowed the Macdonalds to reach this extremity had he not wished to portray the opposing side with courtesy and admiration, and the assassination incident gives him an excellent pretext for turning the battle to the Macdonalds' advantage without detracting from the prowess of the MacLeans. The reader's glance is directed to a streamlet and to the age-old grey hawthorn scrub growing next to it in a hollow. There a dwarf, 'crannas nam mìle mallachd', shoots a poisoned bullet which penetrates Lachlan Mòr's belt (139-148: the unmanly target reflects the treachery of the marksman). MacLean urges his men to fight on and prop him up beneath the banner, but his clansmen are so inflamed with the desire for vengeance that they break battle order (149-165):

sgaoil iad nam buidhnean gun aonachd
's Clann Dòmhnail mar charraig Dhùn Naoimheig,
gun bhristeadh fo iùil an ceann-feadhna.

Livingston now anticipates a technique of description which he would put to important use in his accounts of Gartmain and Sunadale. In a sense, with the assassination of Lachlan Mòr, he has already effected a transition from warring forces to the fate of individual heroes. The next section (166-225) moves from the Islay champions 'na trì Raghnaill' to Alasdair Arois, a Maclean warrior who, although he is isolated from his companions, succeeds in keeping the enemy at bay:

Ghlèidh cearcall fosgailte man cuairt d' e;
gach fear a thàinig fo fhaobhar,
b'e 'n tiota mu dheireadh e de shaoghal.

Ragnall Arainneach orders that Alasdair should be spared, and his meeting with Macdonald is infused with a tender sentiment that recalls Macpherson, though the detail of the sword grip adds an exaggerated (and very Gaelic) valour:

Thachair MacDhòmhnaill is fear Arois:
thairg am flath don uasal fàilte,
shin e 'n lamh chli, 's neul guil na ghruaidhean,
's a làmh dheas fo ghlas nach d' fhuasgail
gus an do ghearradh saidh a claidheamh,
a thug tiom' air MacDhòmnail 's air a mhaithean.

The following day, both men and women make their way to the battlefield to seek their relatives among the dead. There is no trace of any of the MacLean chiefs until a noblewoman is seen looking expressively towards the hollow and the hawthorn tree 's ag iarraidh Dhubh Sith a cheusadh'. Alasdair of Aros identifies her as his chief's nurse, and concludes that Lachlan Mòr has fallen (226-256). Beside him lie his two foster brothers. Ragnall na Learga proposes that the Islay chiefs should carry him to Kilchoman, each holding a corner of the plaid on which he is transported:

's ma leigeas aon a ghreim gu fàillinn
gun cuir an triùir eile,
gun anail dàil da, na biodagan
tro far an d' fhàg.

The remainder of the poem (284-326) is taken up with the lament for Lachlan.

So far Livingston has used lines of three and four stresses with the last stressed vowel in each generally (but not always) rhyming in couplets. The lament has the effect of a chanted litany, with individual phrases taken up and repeated as refrains. The repetition is arbitrary, and the refrains do not follow any regular pattern, yet the lines have an affectingly mournful tenderness:

O nach tig thu, mar b' àbhaist,
 gu àros Rìgh Seumas, Rìgh Seumas,
 's gun do thogadh leis fèin thu
 's tu òg, 's tu òg.
 Chan fhacas ad latha, air talamh
 na h-Eòrpa, na h-Eòrpa,
 air talamh na h-Eòrpa,
 fear eile do shamhail, do shamhail
 fhir àillidh, fhir àillidh...

The 'Duan Geall' (C 116-9) stands apart from Livingston's other battle poems: there are two battles, not one, they are contemporary rather than historical, and they do not take place on Scottish territory. Its placing in the 1858 volume, and the fact that it is the only poem from that book to be reprinted in 1865, suggest, however, that he looked on it with some pride. It has none of the structural complexity of 'Blàr Thràigh Ghruineart', none of its remodelling of Gaelic tradition or focus on individual warriors within the battle. The figure Livingston singles out is General Sir Colin Campbell (1792-1863), who was advanced in age at the time, having seen forty-six years' service before he took part in the Crimean War (Pemberton 1962: 21). But he is not integrated into the body of the poem: praise of him is reserved for the end, and the Ossianic rhetoric seems to emphasise how unreal the conflict as a whole was for the poet:

'S cian sgaoilteach do chliù a-nochd,
 a làmh dheas nam miltean feachd!
 Ghrios mi Fionn' le Mac an Luin
 a bhith rid thaobh an gaoir nan guin,
 nuair bhual thu 'm buillsgein a' ghàbhaidh.
 Sheas thu 'd chliù do t' ainm 's dod Bhànrigh'n,
 sheas thu t' uamhas dod nàmhaid,
 thug thu buaidh is sguab thu 'n àrach.

This distancing is evident from the very start of the section of the poem devoted to Alma. The poet has heard a dreadful description of events in the Crimea, and climbs Drumalban 'a dh'fhaotainn sealladh'. His ability to see the fighting and the

narrative he supplies are an undisguised fiction. The account of Alma is generic, yet couched (like the whole poem) in elegant verse alternating three and four stresses per line in Livingston's characteristic way.

Colin Campbell's Islay connection was a rather tenuous one (Stephen 1885-1900: 8, 351ff.) Son of a Glasgow carpenter named MacIver and of Agnes Campbell, of the Shawfield Campbells of Islay, he was presented by his mother's brother to the Duke of York as candidate for a commission. The commander in chief noted him down as Colin Campbell and, though the boy was inclined to protest, his uncle insisted it was a good name to fight under. In the Crimea he commanded the 2nd or Highland brigade, consisting of the 42nd, 79th and 93rd Highlanders. The victory at Alma was substantially his achievement:

He led his brigade steadily against the redoubt which had been retaken by the enemy after being carried by the light division, and with his highlanders in line overthrew the last compact columns of the Russians. His horse had been shot under him, and he had won the victory, but the only reward he asked was leave to wear the highland bonnet instead of the cocked hat of a general officer. (Stephen 1885-1900: 8, 353)

Pemberton's account of the battle is rather more circumstantial. The Scots Fusilier Guards were reputedly Queen Victoria's favourites among the regiments. At an early stage in the battle they retreated as the result of a misunderstanding, later advancing uphill in a 'fortuitous Highland echelon formation' and following tactics 'unauthorised by regulations'. Nevertheless, the Highlanders distinguished themselves in forcing the Russians into retreat, and the victory on the left flank was entirely due to the Scottish soldiers. Sir Colin had exhorted his troops, before action began, to make him 'proud of the Highland Brigade'. (Pemberton 1962: 57-60).

Livingston has none of these details. He has an eagle's eye view of 'an tuath-thìr Eòrpach' gathered 'fo aon mheirgh'', before the Highland soldiers receive the full force of a Russian onslaught:

O bhearradh nan liath-chreag carrach
thaomadh fras nan sgrìos nam broilleach.
Am buillsgein dubh-neòl a' chasgraidh,
leum na h-àrmainn gun ghealtachd,
bheuc an leòmhan "Buaidh a dhaindheoin!"

The Scots are compared to the Falls of the Clyde:

Mar thuil Chluaidh chuisleach le gleann,
luath 's mire sruth airgid Eas Linn,
b' ionnan siud braise nan sonn,
a' macmadh don àrfhaich nan deann.

What is lacking in realistic detail is made up for in clarity of presentation. The battle here has none of the confusion, the rhetorical clogging which mars other poems. It may well be that the detachment with which Livingston was forced to view it prevented him losing control through too emotional a patriotic involvement. Heraldic personification is used economically and effectively:

Chuir sibh ruaig air feachd an t-sneachd':
chrithnich iad le cillt ro sgraing
an leòmhan dheidh, nuair chrath e mhuing,
gan sgànradh le bruthach gun taing.

The section on Balaclava effectively counterposes the Russian eagle and the Scottish lion, building up an atmosphere of menace before focussing on the horses and men:

chunnaic mi spàirte ri crann
iolair spùllach an dà chinn,
feitheid ifrinn gun chlos
a' reubach creich tuath is deas;
miltean a' freagairt da smachd,
foill is fuil is àr nam beachd.
Dùdach nan ràn searbh a' beucaich,
steudan-còmhraig a' leumnaich,
buidheann bhorb nan cochall lachdainn
nan sreathan dlùth air an leacainn.

Giving the colour of the Russian uniforms is a sensitive touch matched when Livingston subsequently presents the Highlanders 'san earradh fliuch le braon na moiche'. Over their heads flutters

meirghe na h-Alba sgaoilte,
suaithcheantas a mòrachd aosda

os ceann reang nam mìlìdh uaibhreach,
gan stuigeadh gu toiteal a' bhualaidh.

The battle of Balaclava took place after a first attempt to take Sebastopol had failed (Pemberton 1962: 76ff.). A huge Russian force of 22,000 infantry, 3,400 cavalry and 78 guns appeared in the early morning on the Balaclava plain. Campbell was in command in an engagement which included the foolhardy if celebrated Charge of the Light Brigade. Livingston concentrates on a single incident, when Campbell's men withstood the attack of four squadrons of Russian cavalry:

Bhrùchd am marc-sluagh an coinneamh
nan Gàidheal nan cois, 's iad annamh,
deich mun aon air an aodann
's gun chùl-taic ach gleachd nan aonar...

We have earlier seen how Livingston delighted in imagery of fire when describing a battle. One of the finest examples now occurs:

Mar lasair dheirg à amhainn loisgich
o fheadain ghorm nan cuilbheir cinnteach
chunnaic mi na caoirean teinnteach;
an gleann na bhuidealaich strianach;
mar bhruaillean doireann san iarmailt,
na dealan-ghobhlach a' spùtadh,
a' bolg neòil nam fillean dùbhlaidh...

The passage that follows, with Islay swords scraping in their sheaths and the grating of chain mail, reads like an archaic projection forward of the fighting at Bannockburn:

chuala mi sgread nan làn cheann ileach
gan tarraing à truaillean rìomhach.
Stad an teine 's thòisich spealtadh,
marcaichean gnù gan sgoltadh,
lùirichean sligheach nan alt
a' bruansgail le beumaibh neart...

If one were to grade the shorter battle poems according to complexity and invention, leaving the 'Duan Geall' to one side, 'Blàr Dhàil Rìgh' and 'Blàr Thràigh Ghruineart' would take first place, with 'Cath Thom Ealachaidh' and 'Cath Allt a' Bhannaich' definitely classed as less successful compositions. 'Cath Mhonadh

Bhraca' stands a little apart, its opening section unmatched for delicacy of atmosphere and sensitive portrayal of character, its battle section representing a break in both metre and approach, confused and clogged, lacking in clarity and organisation. Whether such an ordering as to quality can be made the basis for a hypothesis as to the order in which they were written is open to question. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that Livingston's involvement with the poetry of battle saw him gradually expanding from a relatively small beginning, experimenting with new perspectives and motifs, moving by preference to battles that would give greater scope for autonomous imaginative treatment, and preparing the ground for the major achievements of 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' and 'Blàr Shunadail'.

Livingston's poetry of the clearances cannot compare in bulk with his poetry of battle. Only two full-length poems take the evictions as their main theme ('Còmhraidh air fàsachadh na Gàidhealtachd' and the song 'Fios thun a' Bhàird') and, at the most generous estimate, a little under 900 lines of verse are devoted to the subject. 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' and 'Blàr Shunadail' alone run to over 2,000 lines (just under a third of Livingston's entire output), with the shorter battle poems bringing the total of verse on this topic to roughly 3,300. Battle poetry, then, accounts for more than half of Livingston's production, poetry of the clearances for roughly one seventh, a proportion of nearly four to one.

The implication is that Livingston did not conceive of the removal of the Gaelic population from their ancestral territory primarily in poetic terms, as a spur to composition. His battle poetry can be seen as part of a conscious project deriving from his historical and antiquarian researches, aimed at creating an unprecedented literary form and glorifying the heroic qualities and military valour of Gaelic Scotland in particular. It was suggested above that the prologue to 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' (analysed in detail in the fifth chapter of this thesis) is the place where, so to speak, the two strands in Livingston's work collide, the depopulation of his own island at the hands of the newcomer John Ramsay providing, almost against the poet's will, the context in which his attempt at celebration will be read. There are grounds for seeing Livingston's flight into fantasy, his definitive abandonment of actual for fictional history, as conditioned by awareness of what the clearances were doing to the community whose past he wished to evoke.

The clearances, then, jogged Livingston's elbow as he wrote, introducing a discordant, unplanned strain into verse animated by very different intentions. That such is the case emerges clearly from the three poems written in honour of the Glasgow Celtic Society in 1858, 1859 and 1867. The most striking thing about these is the extensive use they make of a militaristic rhetoric which seems peculiarly inappropriate to the mercantile and industrial realities of Glasgow at the time. The 1858 'Rann' (C 186-188) opens with a stirring evocation of the landscape of western Scotland, before sounding a note that is familiar from Livingston's poetry of battle:

A mhàthair laoch, is uaigh gach nàmhaid
 a dh'fheuch rid shaors' a chur an cunnart
 le gairge, le mi-rùn no le ainneart,
 a bhan-rìgh'nn nan rioghachd is àird' urram,
 a sheinn na bàird le buaidh chaithream,
 's a tha nis do mhic rathail, laochail
 a' dìon, mar urram nach caochail,
 cànan is culaidh Fhiann san cuimhne...

He casts the gathering as an assembly of warriors, and slogans and heraldry are used to underpin the roll-call of clans that follows:

Clann Donnachaidh, àrmainn nan lann rùisgte,
 's ioghnadh bhur seanachas do na dh'èisd e!
 Bhur meirghe gun choimeas fhathast -
 chan fhacas riamh 's cha tig a-rithist
 am bratach, treubh, no fine eile -
 calman, is beithir nimhe,
 riochd sgrios, 's teachdaire nàmhaidh...

The address ends with the arrival of a piper:

Toirm piob-mhòr a' reubadh adhair,
 reang laoch a' freagairt le co-fhoghar,
 lannan tàirngt' an làimh gach curaidh...

What is presumably a New Year's dinner is experienced by Livingston in terms of sheer fantasy, as everyone present rises with bared sword to greet this military music. The poem is remarkably self-consistent, yet what alarms one in it is the stubborn refusal to see anything other than its own imaginings.

Livingston was not troubled by the glaring anachronisms which occur in his evocations of a glorious past. The reverse anachronisms (viewing the present in terms of the past) of the Glasgow Celtic Society poems are no less startling and, if anything, more disquieting. It is one thing to conceive the past in terms of fantasy, another to approach the present exclusively through this medium. One cannot help wondering if some of those present at the celebration were embarrassed by the role in which their bard had cast them.

The 1859 'Oran' (C 146-8) uses quatrains rather than couplets, opening with an enthusiastic espousal of tartanry that highlights even more painfully the poet's capacity for wilful self-deception:

Bha mi 'n dèidh, 's tha mi 'n dèidh,
 's bidh mi 'n dèidh air ur n-eachdraidh,
 air Gàidhlig, claidheamh mòr is piob,
 's còir nam mac air riogh'chd nam breacan.

Once again he casts those present as warriors, though the emphasis on sartorial elegance hints unintentionally at the merely representative nature of their dress. It is no less of a rhetorical gesture than the image the poet is imposing on them:

Riochd nam fear nach d' fhuiling riamh
 duais no iarrtas a thug dhaibh masladh;
 seasmhach mar charraigeann nam beann,
 cha d' aom iad le feall no gealtachd.

Sealladh nach b'ait leis na Gaill,
 boillsgeadh soills' o chriosan breacnaicht'
 le spangan airgid, uaill nan rìgh,
 a' cur mais' air lith nan leugan snaidhte.

After eleven verses in this strain, however, Livingston suddenly turns aside to speak in different tones and with a different sincerity. The effect is of the intrusion of an unexpected, disturbing and perhaps unwanted guest at a conventionally happy celebration:

O Albainn, 's dlùth dhuit cumha bròin!
Thig cionta fògradh is ancheart ort.
Eugaidh tu 'n tuil fol' is dheur
airson d' eucoir dod chùl-taice,

na trèibhdhìrich bu dìon duit riamh,
a sgap thu cian, 's nach till ad fhaicinn
no thogail d' èiric dod nàmh,
a reubas tu gu bàs gun aichbheil.

Did a flicker of distaste cross the faces of the banqueters on hearing these lines? Two aspects of Livingston's approach here are worthy of attention. In this context, he does not point a finger at those responsible. (Indeed, he praises Artt MacLachainn's nephew Neil White, originally from Luìng and later a Greenock businessman, for his efforts in defence of the Gaels). The words are directed towards an abstract entity, Scotland, as if in a secret aside which those present are allowed to overhear, but to which no response is required. And Scotland is expected to conceive of the tragedy of its Gaelic peasantry as a loss of military potential, whereas it was argued earlier in this thesis that the military paraphernalia of tartanry and Highland valour was in fact instrumental to the uprooting of traditional Gaelic society at a time of imperialist expansion.

The 1867 'Rannan' (C 174-6) lack the swaggering, militaristic confidence of the earlier two poems, and are in comparison chiller, more withdrawn and even menacing. They use a modified form of 'iorram' (Watson, W.J. 1976: 1-11), with three phrases, normally of three stresses, rhyming on the last stressed syllable. Each phrase is printed as one line. The third continues beyond the rhyme in a half-phrase with a single stress on the penult. The half-phrases rhyme in pairs. Strophic metres of this kind are familiar from at least as far back as the work of Màiri Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh (Watson, J.C. 1965: 142). In Livingston's poem, lines are grouped in strophes each with two rhyming half-phrases. The first stanza has two groups of four lines:

Cluinn a' chaismeachd seo nall
o phìob thrusaigh nan Clann

a dhùisg Mac-Talla nam beann
 le seirm chiùil nach bu ghann don t-seòrs' ud.
 'S iomadh creachan is raon
 fo thrusgan daraich is fraoich
 an gleanntan cùbhraidh a' bhracoin
 am fonn nan Gàidheal, nach caochail còmhдах.

The second has seven lines (four plus three) while the remainder fall into the regular pattern of six.

The poem uses the Highland landscape to symbolise the qualities of steadfastness, heroism and impregnability it wishes contemporary Gaels to embody. This thematic technique is more subtle than that used in the two earlier poems, partly because it works by implication rather than direct statement. The speech situation changes in the course of the poem, and this uncertainty as to source and point of view actually increases the gravity and impact of what is being said. The first stanza encourages those present to listen to the music of the bagpipes and at once sidesteps to natural description, as if that music were the instinctive expression of the material (rather than human) realities of Gaelic Scotland. If the human occupants cannot offer permanence, then this can at least be found in the vegetation 'nach caochail còmhдах'. The second stanza sees 'tìr nam breacan 's nan sgiath' as the place 'às an d' èirich sibh riamh', so that the listeners become the expression in human form of the scenes they were reared among, then makes a swift transition from military to natural imagery, from plaids and shields to flocks, salmon and deer. The music of tumbling waters replaces that of the pipes:

tìr nam breacan 's nan sgiath,
 nan treud, nam bradan 's nam fiadh,
 's nan easan steallach gu dian a' leumnaich
 le toirm bhòdh'rach gun tàmh
 o ghrunnd nan linneachan làn
 a' toirt rabhaidh 's gach àit' an ceumar.

In the third stanza, the mountains themselves begin to speak, although military imagery still influences Livingston's diction:

cha dèan misneach no lann do theàrnadh.
 Ma gheibh mo bhearradh ort còir

tha crìoch air d' aont' a bhith beò
ged a mhaireas mise gun leòn am àite.

Then the imagery becomes exclusively natural, as the mountain boasts its own permanence and immovability:

Cha chuir tuiltean an t-slàibh,
gaoth, no teine nan speur,
teas no gaillionn mo stèidh gu ghluasad.
Tha 'n sruth seo taomadh om cheann
's cha toir an aois air bhith fann,
cha b'e òrdugh a bhith mall a fhuair e,

a' ruith om mhullach gu làr,
geal mar shneachda nan càrn
a thig a' frasadh o chàil nan speuran
air frithean farsaing a' cheò,
's an cinn am falach sna neòil
an àird an adhair, an glòir an èididh.

There are no first person markers in the sixth stanza, an indication that we are moving away from soliloquy on the part of the mountain. In the seventh, the speaker addresses what would at first appear to be the mountain, but the perspective quickly returns to warriors and the battlefield:

Cò nach seinneadh do chliù?
Cò nach seasadh rid chùl?
Cò thilleadh 's a lùgh na ghuailllean?
A dhol gu làna na strì
a ghleidheadh t' urram 's do chrìoch
le laoidh na Gàidhlig, nam piob 's nam buaidhean.

The movement is so adroit as to be almost imperceptible. Earlier, the mountain embodied the qualities soldiers must seek to emulate. Now it embodies the values for which they will fight. The eighth stanza brings us back to the banquet, to drinking and banners, although in Livingston's imagination the latter produces a military noise as it flaps in the wind:

's bratach rioghail a' chrùin
a' toirt fuaime chathach à rùch na gaoithe.

The close echoes the two earlier poems in rather unrealistically imagining those present on their way to 'faiche nan ceud'. A further shift from second to first person includes the speaker in their number in the very last line.

Discussion of these poems may seem to have led us some distance from the clearances as a focus for Livingston's verse. In fact, the third poem, in particular, serves as an extremely useful introduction to Livingston's work on this subject. The Glasgow Celtic Society poems show him moving from military to natural imagery, to allowing the landscape of the Highlands to speak with its own voice. As compared to the battle poems, Livingston's poetry of the clearances is rich in natural description. If we are to understand it, we must remember that were such descriptions to be read at face value, their function within the poems would be merely archaic, as pastiche. The truth is that, where Livingston uses extensive natural description, this is never inert, but is instead subtly thematised within the poem as a whole. In other words, the landscape is not there primarily for itself.

The reasons for this change in the function of natural description may be more literary than anything else. Livingston's poetry of the clearances is formally and thematically conservative, faithful to closed traditional forms throughout, with the significant exception of the 'Còmhradh'. It was therefore a necessity that he should galvanise and redirect the vocabulary of natural description he inherited from Duncan Bàn and, above all, from MacMhaighstir Alasdair. But the change may have had more immediate causes. The effect of the clearances on the landscape of Gaelic Scotland was to highlight the relation between landscape and human settlement. The presence of human beings within the landscape could no longer be taken as axiomatic. Its ancestral occupants had disappeared to be replaced by newcomers or by sheep. This meant that the landscape could never again be innocent, nor could its description in poetry be one-dimensional. Both the absence and the presence of human beings were full of implications which could not be ignored. Natural surroundings were caught up in economic history, and must

inevitably raise the question of the fate of the Gaelic society they had nurtured.

This problematisation is not immediately evident in the longest and most carefully structured of Livingston's poems to touch on the clearances, 'Cuimhneachan Bhraid-Alba' C 120-33). It takes pride of place after three battle poems and before the 'Duan Geall' in the 1858 *Duain Ghaellic*. Our examination of Livingston's poetry of the clearances will take the 'Cuimhneachan' and 'Fios thun a' Bhàird' as opposite poles. The former, as its title indicates, is backward-looking, retrospective, its optimistic close contrasting powerfully with the unrelieved yet bitterly honest pessimism of the later song. If, as has been suggested, Eugene O'Curry's 1855 *Cath Mhuighe Leana* was instrumental in reawakening Livingston's creativity, this would establish that year as a tentative 'terminus post quem' for the poems in the 1858 *Duain Ghaellic*. The 'Cuimhneachan' would then have been written between 1855 and 1858, so between thirteen and sixteen years after Livingston's move from Comrie to Greenock. In other words, a decade and a half separated the poet from the journey through Breadalbane mentioned in our first chapter, undertaken to witness at first hand the effects of the clearances that had taken place on the Marquis's estates.

Like 'Fios thun a' Bhàird', the 'Cuimhneachan' is a piece of occasional verse, intended to celebrate Livingston's friendship with his Glasgow benefactor Duncan MacNab, who originally came from that part of Perthshire. The 'Fàilte Mhàiri Nic Neachtain', a short verse tribute to 'bean uasal ann an Glaschu', forms a pendant to the longer poem. Passing time may have allowed Livingston to distance himself from the events in Breadalbane, facilitating the introduction of Iain Mhòr as a 'deus ex machina' capable of altering the course of history and of the poem.

We have suggested that the prologue to 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile' was written soon after the first wholesale clearances in Islay. 'Fios thun a' Bhàird' came out as a broadsheet in 1863. The despairing and dramatic tone of these two poems may well be the result of the closeness in time and place of the clearances they deal with to Livingston. Tragedy was affecting the region with which he most strongly identified and to which he returned regularly. In a sense the real figures involved are emblematic of the approach of either poem: 'Cuimhneachan Bhraid-Alba' is directed by one Glasgow exile to another, and describes a place which belonged to the realm of memory for both. 'Fios thun a' Bhàird' takes the fictional form of an urgent letter from a woman still living in Islay to the poet in Glasgow. Yet both responses to the clearances, one distanced in time and idealised, the other immediate and desperately painful, produced poetry of the highest order.

'Cuimhneachan Bhraid Alba' begins with an idealised description of the Breadalbane landscape (1-52). Livingston uses a rather approximate form of 'snéadhbhairdne', a metre which must have been familiar to him from MacMhaighstir Alasdair's 'Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill'. MacMhaighstir Alasdair alternates lines of eight and four syllables, all ending on disyllabic words forming rhyming pairs at a distance of one line:

Ràimh mhinlunnacha, dhealbhadh,
 Shocair, aotrom
 A ni 'n t-ìomramh toirteil, calma,
 Basluath caoirgheal,
 Chuireas an fhairge 'n a sradan
 Suas 's na speuran,-
 'N a teine-sionnachain a' lasadh,
 Mar fhras éibhlean. (1924: 372, 374)

Livingston's verse is looser. He often has nine or five syllables, and does not consistently rhyme both short and long lines within any quatrain:

Neòil ghlas mu bharraibh stùc a' snàgadh
 is fèidh nan langan

ri creachainn a' dìreadh 's a' teàrnadh
le lùth eangan.
Coilich nan cneas dubh a' turraraich
air do tholmain
is miltean lus a' fàs nam maise
le brìgh talmhainn.

It would be a mistake to attribute Livingston's greater freedom to lack of skill. (Indeed, MacMhaighstir Alasdair does not follow his chosen rhyme pattern slavishly). As elsewhere, he makes interesting use of enjambement, and the varieties and inconsistencies of his rhyming avoid any risk of the verse becoming monotonous. The passage's indebtedness to MacMhaighstir Alasdair is not limited to its metre. Lines such as these, with their accumulating '-ach' adjectives, reproduce a stylistic trait in a way that may be deliberately intended to bring the earlier poet to the reader's mind:

Do ghraiseirean iséal coireach,
ire thorach,
's fasgach t' innseagan lurach,
tomach, gleannach.

The opening section apostrophises Breadalbane as 'a thalamh àrd nan coilltean uaine' and 'a thir nan curaidh', and praises its streams and clouds, its deer and woodcocks before focussing on a young roe deer and her offspring (21-44). A hunter is edging up close to her. The wild creature is a source of wonder to the speaker:

Leumaidh tu thar bruachan dìlionn
is stacan garbhlaich,
am boil gioraig nach gabh innseadh
le purp seanachais.
'S ioghnadh an obair nam feart
do luath 's do neart
's nach urrainn teallsanaich nan ceist
am breathnachadh ceart.

Livingston uses a rich vocabulary for this description, and phrases such as 'purp seanachais' and 'teallsanaich nan ceist' are indicative of the high, literary register he wishes to employ. There is a clear reminiscence of medieval dream poetry

as, abandoning the roe deer, the speaker makes his way down beside a waterfall, so as to hear the lowing of cattle and the song of the girls milking them. Switching to the past tense (53-60), Livingston introduces the first set piece of the poem:

Dh'èalaidh mi dlùth don bhuaile
is shuidh mi samhach
fo dhubhar daraig cheudan samhraidh
an lagan bòidheach,
's thug an oiteag chiùin gum chlaisteachd
sèisd nan òighean.

The situation, with the narrator eavesdropping from the foliage where he is hidden, leads one to expect an allegorical or symbolic creature, and indeed, the milking song which follows is an idealisation of sheiling life, its natural surroundings, and the art practised there.

Livingston's battle poetry is striking for its severely masculine qualities. With the exception of Lachlann Mòr's nurse in 'Blàr Thràigh Ghruineart', or the refugees from Man and the women of Kintyre in 'Blàr Shunadail', they are excluded from his evocations of the past. 'Cuimhneachan Bhraid-Alba' and 'Fàilte Mhàiri Nic Neachtain' can be taken as Livingston's celebration of women and of the feminine. In neither case is the interest primarily romantic or erotic. His concern is didactic, and the women he presents are models of what Gaelic womanhood should be. Not only the physical surroundings, but also the moral qualities of the inhabitants of Breadalbane are idealised.

The 'Oran na Buaile' which the poet overhears (61-100) is cast in eight-line stanzas. The lines have seven (sometimes eight) syllables, and three (occasionally four) stresses. Even lines rhyme on a final, stressed monosyllable; the disyllable at the end of each odd line is echoed in the course of the even line following, and Livingston observes this 'aicill' carefully during most of the song. The relatively intricate metre and the consistency with which it is followed help to set the song apart from its context and to give it the air of something linked to an

ideal past, yet still capable of life in the present. This accurately mirrors its subject matter:

Chaidh gruaim nan sianntan a chadal
's tha fèath air talamh 's air cuan,
's choisg gaoth fhuairidh na gaillionn
gu sìth a h-anail o thuath.
Tha neòil shoilleir na h-iarmailt
a' sgaoileadh cian air an cuairt
's a' pògadh gathan na grèine,
chuir blàths a' Chèitein a-nuas.

The freedom of the preceding 'snéadhbhairdne', which constitutes the background narrative metre of the earlier part of the 'Cuimhneachan', contrasts with the strictness of the 'òran'. A similar principle of contrast is observed in its startling close, whose plangent and contemporary note prevents the whole becoming oversweet, setting it in a perspective that makes its ideal vision all the more precious:

Ceòrach bhlàth o na speuran
a' fliuchadh rèidhleis is cruach
's cur neart fàs anns an dùslainn
nuair thilleas ùin' air a cuairt,
a dh'aiseag feartan na grèine
nach urrainn eucoir thoirt uainn,
ged a dh'fhògradh laochraidh nan garbh-chrìoch
le fòirneart searbh thar a' chuain.

This sudden reference to the clearances is as startling as the quatrains at the close of the 1859 'Oran Comann nam Fineachan Gàidhealach', yet in this context it appears to be planned. This impression will be confirmed as the poem continues, although for the moment the reference is ignored. It is interesting that the song sees the effect of the clearances in the absence of warriors. This could indicate that the decision to concentrate, at least initially, on female figures, then move to an aged harper, was part of a design on Livingston's part, aimed at showing a society affected by the clearances and destitute of able-bodied men, even before this predicament was made explicit to the reader. If this were the case, then there would be a profound gap within the idyll from the very start. The

idealisation, like that of the Islay landscape in the first half of 'Fios thun a' Bhàird', has a lack at its heart, so that the reader responding to the beauty of the verses is involved in, or even made responsible for, the predicament underlying that beauty. (In a similar way, the conscious tourist can never take unalloyed delight in the wildernesses of western Scotland because awareness of how these came to be wildernesses must always condition the way such landscapes are read).

The next section (101-142) returns to 'snéadbairdne', and falls into three parts. The poet is now presented in the third, rather than the first person, and as he moves to greet the young girl, the diction stresses the courtesy and absolute propriety of the scene. It is clear that the two (like other figures in the poem) represent a racial as well as a moral and human ideal. The form their interchange takes, and the respect and affection that animate it, are the consequence of blood and descent as well as of culture:

Cho-fhreagair am Bàrd fon daraig
 le bras-chaoin Gàidheil,
 dh'èirich e 'n coinneimh na maighdinn
 's thairg e fàilte,
 bheachdaich e le fiamh duin'-uasail
 air gnùis na seirc,
 làn banndachd is mothachadh tearc,
 gun stuirt mairc,
 a rinn air innis nan earc
 a bheatha gun airc...

The cluster of '-rc' endings shows Livingston attaining a highly literary colouring through his own, not entirely conventional methods. He briefly mentions the lovage and ladies' glove underfoot, and the birch and swans which lovingly frame this vision. Abstract nouns come to dominate the verse as the passage reaches its climax:

a' bheithe chùbhraidh fo lòd braoin
 's na h-ealtan sgiathach
 a' co-sheirm le pongan gaoil
 don òg-bhean sgìamaich,

iomhaigh an duine, maise daonndachd,
 leug na h-annsachd
 a neo-chiontachd òig' is faileachd,
 àgh na ceannsachd.
 Sin duit modh is gnè na Finne,
 is tuigear uatha
 beusan òighean na Gàidhlig
 mar a chualas.

There follows a transition in which the poet introduces us to the girl, who is Duncan MacNab's daughter, then moves on eagerly to behold the second tableau:

Ràinig am Filidh buth na frithe
 le dealas laiste,
 's a' Cheòlraidh ga stuigeadh gu dìomhair
 le rùn faicinn,
 fo gheugan uain' an fhasgaidh fhàsail,
 bean uasal
 an earradh a dùthchais,
 tìr nan Gàidheal.

The next section (143-176), entitled 'Cruth Mnà Gàidhealach', is a description of MacNab's wife, although only in the very last line does Livingston identify her ('cèile rùin Mhic an Aba'). It is written in four-stress lines rhyming in pairs. As elsewhere, Livingston uses a wide range of rhyming devices, including assonances and matching final consonants: 'cruinne/ fainne', 'choinneimh/ Fhine', 'feachd/ uchd', 'mheadhan/ ealaidhean'. The heading strictly means 'form (or figure) of a Gaelic woman', though 'a pattern of Gaelic womanhood' might be closer to Livingston's actual intention. The description forms a diptych with the preceding one, the mature matron and the young virgin representing woman in her two crucial aspects (as conceived by Livingston). The remainder of the poem will set a male diptych beside them, composed of the aged harper and the patriarch Iain Mòr.

The wording of this passage supports what was said earlier about Livingston's ideal being racial as well as moral. Mrs MacNab is of pure Gaelic blood, of a stock believed to have inhabited Breadalbane for several thousand years:

a h-aogasg mòdhar, ceanalt', stuama
a' nochdadh tàbhachd neo-thruaillte
na fola 's glain' air cuairt na cruinne,
neo-mheasgte gun mheang fainne
miltean bliadhn' an rìoghachd nam breacan...

She represents not only her people but a specific clan within them which can be defined as much by its homeland as by any other attribute. She is:

...màthair mhac don àrd fhine
fo chulaidh do bhreacan nan Abach
dan dùthchas Cinne Alla chorrach,
Lic is Fionn Lairig choilleach,
Cill Fhinn is Bualtachan gleannach.

Her hair is caught up in a 'rìochd-fleasg' or married woman's fillet, the 'earasaid' or square of tartan on her shoulders is fastened with a 'bràisde' or brooch bearing the dove and serpent mentioned in the 1858 'Rann' as emblems of Clann Donnachaidh, and in her right hand she carries a clump of ferns,

suaithcheantas nan laoch o Shrùthan
nach d' fhuiling cuing 's nach d' iarr ràthan.

At the very end the poet addresses her directly:

Beannachd dhuit 's urram do shìnnsear,
rath ort 's gu ma buan a dh'innsear
coinneamh a' bhàird fo sgàil na daraig...

Compared to the preceding figure, this one is much more static. We hear the milkmaid singing before the poet describes her, so that she is defined, at least initially, by her own words. Mrs MacNab is not doing anything, she is not integrated into the Breadalbane landscape. Indeed, she seems distinctly posed, rather like an illustration for a nineteenth-century clan history or a Highland woman about to have her photograph taken. Yet Livingston has infused sufficient meaning into her appearance to quell any suspicion of comedy or bathos. The high seriousness with which she is presented justifies the artificiality of the portrait.

The celebration of the MacNab family is completed by four stanzas in praise of the husband and father (177-196). The basic

line has eight syllables and three stresses, but the syllable count varies from seven to nine, and four stress lines occur. Each stanza has four lines rhyming on the last stressed syllable, with a tag repeating MacNab's surname. Livingston adopts a different approach. He does not describe his friend, but praises the military achievements of his clan:

Chuir iad Dail Rìgh le dearras laochail
's cath Bhualtachain le deannal fhaobhar
fo mheirghe nan dathan fraochail
a thog seachd fineachan an adhbhar
Mhic an Aba.

Then, in lines quoted in our first chapter, the poet recalls MacNab's kindness to him when he was confined to bed with fever. This passage reads like an aside, as if a closer focus on Livingston's friend would run counter to the purpose of his poem. The way pairs of female and male figures match each other bears out this impression. If Duncan MacNab were presented in greater detail, he would upset the balance between the two parts of the 'Cuimhneachan'. Moreover, he is not really 'in' Breadalbane. If the lines associate him with any place, it is Glasgow, which must naturally be tangential to the poem as a whole.

The transition which follows (197-220) returns to the staple metre, 'snéadbhairdne'. Human wellbeing is short-lived, since sorrow, anger and ill fortune constantly pursue us. Livingston engages here in a particularly subtle alteration of mood. MacNab has reminded him of his own illness; from physical affliction he moves to social affliction, in particular the heavy burden of love for one's country; and a patriot's greatest pain at this juncture is provoked by the clearances:

O shliochd nan treun nach d' fhuiling tàir,
seo àm bhur diobraidh,
ainneart gar ruagadh gu càs,
's gur a' mhi-rùin
gar fògradh gu tìr aineoil
thall thar chuantan,
Bràid-Alba le gàmhlas foilleil
air a sguabadh,

sghlamhaiche gun iochd ga rùsgadh
na lom-fhàsaich
's a mic laochail fad on dùthchas
a' caoidh na dh'fhàg iad.

The change of direction seems casual, almost accidental, yet the anticipation at the end of the milkmaid's song suggests that it was planned for, and that we are approaching the thematic core of 'Cuimhneachan Bhraid-Alba'.

This takes the form of 'Cumha a' Chlàrsair' (221-306). It is cast in strophic metre, clumsily handled and clumsily presented on the page in both the 1858 and 1882 volumes. Livingston's basic pattern is of three two-stress phrases with end rhyme plus a one-stress half phrase. The half-phrases rhyme in irregular groups throughout the section. While our line numeration follows the 1882 volume, in quoting we will emend the text so as to restore the three-line strophes clearly indicated by the rhyme. The aural clumsiness is caused by Livingston's varying the length of the lines. As the ear expects the rhyme to occur at measured intervals, the longer lines seem rushed, crammed into the space available for them:

le màgaich ghreannaich tnù,
lior nan garrachain brù
's nan cràin sliopach gun chliù on d' fhàs iad;

pòr salach na foill
ris an dubhairt ar n-athraichean Goill,
's trom acain na roinn a dh'fhàg iad.

This is Livingston's invective mode, directed at the perpetrators of the clearances, 'greadhainn neo-ghlan an sgrìos', and familiar from the descriptions of adversaries in the battle poems. The harper states his theme at the opening of his lament:

Cuimhne na bhà
ghluais mi gu dàn,
's sinn claidhte le cràdh fòirneirt,

gar sgiùrsadh le smachd,
fon smàig nach do chleachd,
is sinn gun dùthaich, fo reachd fògraidh.

The caesura in the last line (a line division in the 1858 and 1882 texts) is related to Livingston's inventive use of enjambement elsewhere. The rhymed word in the third phrase is grouped by the sense with the half-phrase, so that the two elements are effectively 'run on' one into the other. The 'Cuimhneachan' cannot have been composed at a great distance in time from 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca', and is related to the battle poem by its geographical location. It is therefore hardly surprising that the harper recalls at length the feats of the ancestors of those who have been cleared, at the time of the Roman invasion:

na Dubh Albannaich dhian
a ghread na Ròimhich o chian
an deannal nam pian bàsmhor.

Air monadh Bhraca nan euchd
dh'fhàg sibh cuimhne nach trèig
fhad 's a mhaireas nar dèidh Gàidheil.

Air bearradh Chall Duin nan gas
fhuair na fithich an los
's air leirg Dhealgain an Rois dh'fhàg sibh

bèin nam biathanach cruaidh
a dh'fheuch bhur saors' a thoirt uaibh
nam plodraich fuar san àrfhaich.

Aig Dail Rànaich nan tolm
fhuair na feitheidean cuirm
air cairbhean nam borb sglàmhach.

Rather than being a case of battle rhetoric infecting or contaminating Livingston's poetry on other themes, the passage shows how an organic relationship existed between the various topics he dealt with. The situation is almost the reverse of that in the 1859 'Oran'. There awareness of the clearances intruded briefly on a rhetorical military celebration. Here the connection is subtler and more effective, military valour persisting as a distant memory once any possibility of its repetition has vanished irrevocably along with the descendants of those who embodied it.

The harper's address to Scotland is again a motif from the battle poems recast in a different context:

Alb', an seun thu mo ghlaodh?
Nach dùisg thu, mhàthair mo ghaoil,
mun toir mallachd na daorsa buaidh ort?

As he describes the effect of the evictions, images occur which will return in compressed, almost epigrammatic form in 'Fios thun a' Bhàird'. Creatures of ill omen now inhabit the deserted hearths, in a clear anticipation of the song:

Chithear cumhachag bròin
is ialtag nam fròg
gun eagal an còmhnaidh dhuaichnidh,

far an d' àraicheadh laoiach
sliochd nan Crìosdaidhean saor,
tha nis feadh an t-saoghail fuadaicht'...

('Cuimhneachan')

Tha 'n nathair bhreac na lùban
air na h-ùrlair far an d' fhàs
na fir mhòr a chunnaic mise... ('Fios', C 155)

The song complains that the 'soisgeulach' will no longer find 'luchd èisdeachd', and this motif of the gospel no longer being preached also appears in the 'Còmhradh air Fàsachadh na Gàidhealtachd':

Cha chuala mi gus a-nis
guth na cànan a' a' b' àbhaist
na Gàidheil a thional don teampall
ud shìos... (C 177)

The old harper's lament is more extended:

Chan eil athchuinge no ceòl
a' moladh trianaid na glòir,
ach balbh mhulad nan tòrr fàsail

far an cluinnte gu moch
aoradh molaidh; 's gach teach
tha cùirn chòinich, 's gun neach gan àiteach.

Vocal worship is an integral element of the complex involving landscape and its human and animal inhabitants: only human beings are capable of actively praising their maker in this natural

setting. Their replacement by dumb creatures means that God will no longer be worshipped amongst these hills.

The harper twice mentions the Fiann before two lengthened strophes, of six and five lines respectively, herald the end of his lament. The narrator (who would now seem to be completely external to the scene) winds up this third set piece in eight lines of 'snéadbhairdne' (307-314). He paraphrases the harper's last, untranscribed words in what seems like a foreshadowing of the figure about to appear:

dùrachd aichbheil còir an duine
an uair fheuma,
tiodhlac nèimh is colbh ceartais
a chosg eucoir.

The remainder of the 'Cuimhneachan' is written in couplets with Livingston's characteristic, loose end-rhyming and three or four stresses per line. The harper hears pipe music, climbs a rock and sees a heroic figure approaching (315-348). The motif is the same as in the rather theatrical arrival of a piper at the close of the 1858 'Rann', but in this open air, almost symbolic context its effect is much more powerful and natural. Livingston supplies it with mythological and genealogical underpinning. The music is both 'caismeachd chòmhraig Shìol Chuinn' and 'triall chaismeachd nan Dùgh'llach ainmeil'. In describing Iain Mòr, Livingston weaves Ossianic reminiscences into the fabric of his conclusion:

Bha àirde mar Fhiannach srèine,
Mhic Cumhail fo chrann Dheò-Ghrèine,
nochd a mhodh uaisl' is gean
is misneach sàr-churaidh na shùil ghlain,
bha labhairt flathail, duineil, suairce...

He listens to the old harper's tale and, asked about the identity of the tall man accompanying him, introduces him as his son before drawing his sword (349-362) and pronouncing the last set piece and the last passage of direct speech in the 'Cuimhneachan', 'Tiomnadh Iain Mhòir' (363-384). He lays upon his

son the burden of defending the Gaelic remnants left after the clearances, and in particular those in central Perthshire:

Tog do làmh is gabh mo ghuidhe,
purp na chual thu tric uam roimhe:
seas is coisg an tuaileas gràineil
tha mort an fhuigheil bhig a dh'fhàgadh,
Gàidheil mo ghaoil fo bhinn ceilge -
ach gu sònraicht' suinn Bhraid-Alba.

His son is to defend the Gaelic language and Gaelic customs against 'mi-run, tnù is triochdan/ nam bolgairean' and attend to the poet with kindness until he dies.

Although it is, as we have argued above, marginal within the context of his work as a whole, 'Cuimhneachan Bhràghaid-Alba' is the finest and most carefully crafted of Livingston's longer poems. Its progress is relaxed and unhurried, yet governed by an overarching intention which leads it inevitably to its main focus. The metres are varied and attractive, the speech situation changes frequently but not confusingly, and the range of figures depicted offer dramatic variety and useful contrast. Most important of all, it is Livingston's principal contextualised response to the clearances, and its gravity and substance make it a fitting match, in his own very personal mode, for John Smith of Iarshadar's 'Spiorad a' Charthannais'. Smith's referent is an overall moral and religious scheme. Livingston's context is made up of genealogy and mythical history, material and verbal culture, all linked to a specific geographical setting.

'Fàilte Mhàiri Nic Neachtain' (C 197-8) forms, as was said above, a kind of pendant to the longer poem. Like the 'Cuimhneachan', it was included in the 1858 *Duain Ghaelic*. The opening implies that it is a portrait of Iain Mòr's wife:

Sgeul a dh'fhàgas mi do chàch,
cuimhneachan na tha 's mar fhuair
mun tè mhaiseach is fheàrr gnè,
màthair mhac is cèil' an fhir mhòir
mun cualas na àit',

ri guallinn an t-seann laoidh
air fireach nam bòid

and a footnote referring to the 'Cuimhneachan' removes any doubt. The language in which Mary MacNaughtan is praised is reminiscent of 'Cruth Mnà Gàidhealach' in its choice of abstract nouns:

Beannachd dhuit, annsachd na seirc,
stòlda, daonnachdail, ciùin;
's tric thu furtachd na h-airc
le gean is toil t' fhear-rùin,
's barrant air sonas gun chrìoch,
macantachd, dìlseachd, is truas
is tuigse thar mòran beò...

The tribute also includes a rather curious summing up of the relations between the sexes (from a firmly masculine viewpoint):

Is ioghnadh òrdugh gach nì,
an obair an Tì thug o shean
mar choimpire don duine na fheum
roinn deth fèin dan goirear "bean".

If Mary MacNaughtan is indeed the wife of the patriarch who brought such comfort to the aged harper amidst the Breadalbane Hills, this would add a further strand to the pattern of celebration in the 'Cuimhneachan'. Iain Mhòr and his son, no less than Duncan MacNab's daughter and wife, would function as tributes to people Livingston knew and frequented in Glasgow, and who would presumably be familiar to many of the readers of his first volume of poetry. The hypothesis would leave only one figure in the poem without a real correspondent, the harper. It seems natural, if this is the case, to view the harper as a projection of Livingston himself. This would explain the abandonment of first person markers at an early stage of the poem, as the speaker detaches from the wandering bard, who vanishes definitively from the text when the harper appears. A further implication would be that the injunction to care for the harper in his dying years refers beyond the text to Livingston himself, and to the support he hoped to receive (or continue to receive) from his Glasgow patrons.

Before examining the 'Còmhradh' and 'Fios thun a' Bhàird', it may be worth reviewing some brief references to the clearances in other poems by Livingston. Two stanzas in 'Eirinn a' gul' (C 205-6) (the second recovered from a manuscript in the National Library of Scotland) mention the evictions in Ireland:

Sgeula mulaid, cuing is fògraidh,
gort is bròn is an-cheart,
's gun dòigh air t' fhurtachd od phèin
o na bhrìst thu fèin do neart.

Do thallachan nan caoirean dearg
's gun tèarmann duit o fhearg do nàmh,
do chlann gu h-iomall gach tìr
sgapta, gun dìon, gun tàmh.

Similar language (but for the accusation of self-destruction at the end of the first stanza) is used in 'Soraiddh Dhonnachaidh do Chòmhal' (C 148-51), which first appeared as a broadsheet in 1867:

Dh'fhàsaich fògradh do chrìochan,
lomair fòirneart gun dìon thu.
A mhàthair aosda nam mìlidh,
's tùirseach innseadh do sgeul
a bhitheas ùr do gach àl diubh
anns gach dùthaich am fàs iad,
's nach toir ùine gu bràth iad
gu tìr na Gàidhlig 's an fhèidh.

Bheir na h-aosmhoir don òig e,
's bithidh e daonnan nan còmhradh
mar bhuaidh eucoir gun tròcair,
a thug gach bròn leis na dhèidh.
Lasair chaoireach gun bhàthadh
a dh'fhàg do dhaoine gun fhàrdaich,
's gun aon a dh'fhaodadh do theàrnadh,
a thìr a Gàidhlig 's an fhèidh.

Again, this is an occasional, celebratory poem, dedicated to Duncan White, president of the Glasgow Celtic Society and a benefactor of Livingston's. The remaining stanzas do not develop the theme of evictions, but evoke the beauties of their dedicatee's native region.

The clearances are also mentioned in 'Tigh Dhòmhnaill' and the 'Rannan do Iain Mac Ionnhainn' (C 207-11), both from the 1865

Duain agus Orain. The former deals with an Islayman from Eorabus who provided an example of true Highland hospitality in Glasgow:

Chualas cuireadh rìgh Fèine
's na dh'èirich air iarrtas
a dhol gu fèisd fiadhach,
's fear is ceud aig gach bòrd diubh.
Sean acidheachd nan Gàidheal,
saor mar thonn an t-sàile,
's ged thug Fionn leis an àireamh
dh'fhan an àbhaist aig Dòmhnall.

It is just possible that Donald had opened an eating or drinking establishment in the big city and that this is an advertisement song along the lines of 'Pàraig nan Dealbh' (C 212-3, discussed in Chapter One). What interests us is how Livingston works in a reference to the Gaels in America, and hopes that the latest wave of emigrés may bring news of Donald's hospitality even to them:

Thug na Gaill dhinn ar dùthaich
gun dùil ri a factainn
's gu crìochan an t-saoghail
tha sinn sgaoilt' air ar fògradh.
Fhir a ruitheas na bràithrean
thar cuan salainn na gàirich,
thoir ar beannachd gu bràth dhaibh
's òran Gàidhlig tigh Dhòmhnail.

The patterns of rhyming in this song are delicately varied. In the stanza just quoted, lines 4 and 8 have end-rhymes, as have 5, 6 and 7; the last vowel of 3 is echoed within 4, and the same happens with 7 and 8, while the end-rhyme linking 2 and 3 anticipates the internal rhyme of 4, so that the two types of rhyme interact with one another.

The 'Rannan do Iain Mac Ionmhainn' (dated January 1858) are a more formal composition in which the Gaelic language intervenes in person, urging the poet to write in praise of his Coatbridge friend. The rhyming follows the expected pattern of 'òran', the longer lines and monumental diction producing an effect of much greater seriousness:

An tàinig màirneal air fuigheall nan clann,
neo-shunnd tiamhaidh, mar an trom a' bhàis?

Scotland, 'sgiùrs ghreadaidh nan Gall', is contrasted with the poor slaves habituated to 'geimhlean na daorsa', wretches 'riamh do nach b' aithne bhith saor'. In the second stanza the poet turns to address a harp, symbolising Gaelic poetry, in lines which can be read as a preparation for the much more extended treatment of the same theme in the prologue to 'Na Lochlannaich an Ile'. There the 'seanachaidh' urges:

Sin gu grad a' chruit a-nuas
's feuchaidh sinn buaidh na ranntachd
air euchdan Lochlannach is Ileach
a dh'innseas tu fathast fo chàch,
's bithidh òran no dhà againn do chòrr
mun stad an ceòl 's nach bi sinn ann.

Here Livingston makes rather more ornamental use of a similar conceit:

Nach tiamhaidh thu chlàrsach an tùir,
gun làmh ealant' a dhùsgadh do theud?
Dh'fhalbh na h-aosmhoir a mheasadh do cheòl
's a-nis chan aidich an òige dhuit spèis.
Tha smùr diochuimhn' a' dubhadh do chlàr
a chleachd bhith mùirneach an àros nam fèisd.
Sgeula mulaid, a' Ghàidhlig a' falbh,
is tabhann fiadhain nam borb anns gach beul.

The stanza covers many themes: the passing away of a generation which appreciated Gaelic poetry, the dearth of new practitioners, the younger generation's lack of interest in such pursuits, and the gradual replacement of Gaelic by English in the mouths of those surrounding the poet.

The implication is that the stanzas of praise which follow are an earnest of Livingston's attachment to older vocabulary and forms as well as to an older set of moral values embodied by his friend. Just as with 'Tigh Dhòmhnaill', the poet refers at the close of the poem to those who have emigrated overseas:

Far an èirich na Gàidheil thar cuain
mar lusan lionmhor nam bruach ri tìus grèin,
's gach treubh dhiubh a' gleidheadh le uaill
cuimhn' an dùthchais an "guaillibh a' chèil",
bithidh fuil ghaisgeil nam mac ud thar chàich,
's an gnìomh àraidh 's gach àit anns an tèid...

In 'Tigh Dhòmhnaill' the clearances were incidental to the main purpose of the song; in the 'Rannan do Iain MacIomhainn' they provide the background for the enterprise of praise Livingston is embarking on. Two poems, again from the 1865 *Duain agus Orain*, remain to be examined. The clearances are the principal focus in each case.

The 'Còmhradh air Fàsachadh na Gàidhealtachd' (C 176-81) is a dialogue for two Williams, one from Kintyre, the other from Islay. It is possible to see them as projections of two sides of the poet's character. They are carefully differentiated. Uilleam Ceanntireach opens the poem, inviting a passing traveller to enjoy his hospitality in warm, simple language:

Chan eil beatha choigreach
ri h-iarraidh am fàrdach Gàidheil,
àbhaist na sean aoidheachd.
Thig gun chùram,
mar a chleachd 's a chunnaic sinne,
luchd-tathaich a' dol 's a' tighinn
o mhonadh 's o chladach.
Tha còrr dhiubh ann fhathast
a dh'aindheoin eucoir.

Uilleam Ileach's reply is more rhetorical and ceremonious. He mentions the long journey he has made, speaks thrice of the fame of the Kintyre men, 'shean calmaich Cheann Tìre mòire', 'tìr nan Earraghaidh'lach treun' and 'fineachan Cheann Tìre', and points to the old church falling into ruin:

...a' tuiteam na mhonasg
le sìontan drùidhteach an adhair,
làrach uaigneach anns nach
cluinnear ni 's mò guth luchd-acraidh.

Each William speaks once more, at much greater length, and their topics are carefully apportioned. Uilleam Ceanntireach focuses with regret on the glorious past of the peninsula under the Macdonalds, while Uilleam Ileach reviles the incomers in tones of the utmost contempt and bitterness.

The Kintyre man indicates a ruined fortress, and describes it in terms which are almost the reverse of traditional praise of a chief's abode:

aon uair sealbh Mhic Dhòmhnaill,
am balla briste na chàrn
an samhchair linn-tean fada,
gun ghuth ceann-feadhna no gaisgich,
gun sgàl miol-choin, gun fhoirm clàrsaich
ach lombair nàdair mu charraig an dùin
a thug fasgadh na theinn do Rìgh Raibeart...

Livingston is referring to the time when Robert Bruce's fortunes were at their lowest ebb, after his defeats at Methven and Dalry and the fall of Kildrummy Castle in Aberdeenshire. The fugitive found refuge briefly at Dunaverty in September 1306. Where he spent the winter is still uncertain: Rathlin, Ireland, the Hebrides and Norway have all been mooted as possibilities. What is certain is that he passed through Kintyre again on the way to Carrick to start the struggle afresh (Barrow 1965: 232, 237-42). Although Alexander Macdonald remained pro-English, Bruce could count on the support of Angus Og Macdonald, as well as on that of Neil Campbell, who 'had lands and influence in Kintyre' (Barrow 1965: 231). Livingston does not mention the Campbells here: it is his purpose to celebrate the Macdonalds, with their strong Islay connections. There has been a definitive shift in his attitude to Bruce since he depicted his confrontation with the MacDougalls, the MacNabs and the Macdonalds. He recalls the efforts of the Kintyre and Islay Macdonalds in support of their king from 1306 on:

Nuair a las crois tàra Rìgh Raibeirt
b' iomadh broilleach tiugh fo chrìosan
a' giùlan nan ceann Ileach,
a chit' a' tional thar uchdach is còmhnaidh
a chuir an fhògaraich rìoghail
fo dhion nam faobhar cruaidh ud.

The sea was

còmhdaichte le loingean Mhic Dhòmhnaill,
fuaimean rannachd a' mosgladh
nam maraichean cruadalach
air uachdar gleann-tan na doimhne,
siùil min-gheal sgaoilt'
air slatan rèidh ruighinn gun fhiaradh...

The images are stirring and the language limpid and elegant, but the conclusion of Uilleam Ceanntireach's speech is filled with a despair that echoes through all Livingston's later poetry of the clearances:

Ged a chuir fòirneart an slìochd
feadh chrìochan an domhain;
fianais mhaireannach, nach dubhar a-mach
co fada 's a mhaireas muir is tìr,
gum bheil firinn leagte
is ceartas fo chasan nan aingidh.

Uilleam Ileach has hardly begun to speak when his fury at those who have taken the Gaels' place bursts out in violent invective:

...Biadh na croiche,
àlach nan cràin Sasannach!
Bior taghairm dheamhan is shiùrsach
gun sràd do dhuinealachd,
gun iochd, gun ghràs! Iarmad mhèirleach
o gharaidh muirt is braide!
Spùinneadairean fearann nam fineachan!
Luchd comainn chon
is brùidean crodhanach an fheòir!
Mic mhallachd an t-saoghail fharsaing,
gun dealachadh o na fiadh-bheathaichean
ach a bhith air dà chois,
a' ceannairc an aghaidh Dhia na firinn...

Very briefly, the image of burning roofs suggests that attention may turn to what the scenes of eviction were actually like. But this is not Uilleam Ileach's concern. His creator, the poet, may never have witnessed an eviction at first hand, so that this emblematic image could well be merely literary for him, something derived from hearsay and reading rather than from experience. Instead Uilleam Ileach describes a fitting punishment for an incomer who just happens to be passing by:

Lasraichean tro dhromanachan am fàrdach
air am fadadh le làmhnan a thoill
dul iarainn mun caoil,
is gad na croiche ag eagachadh
air am fèithean-titheach,
tro nach deachaidh riamh
greim do aran an ionracais.
Fhaic thu 'n crochaire sin shuas?

Their a cho-ciontach
fear fearainn saor ris.
Nam faigheadh e dhuais mar a chòir,
bhiodh alt-lùthaidh amhach
tro ubhal a sgòrnain
fad ro 'n- diugh!

This vituperation is the fruit of an unrelieved pessimism which animates the remainder of William's speech:

... 's nach toir ùine,
Dia no duine oidhirp tuilleadh
air an saoradh, ach dol
o olc gu ni 's miosa
fo chuing euceart.
Is tàir o na chi 's na chluinneas
cor muladach leth àrd na h-Alba.

The contrast with 'Fios thun a' Bhàird' could hardly be greater. Livingston's invective splutters and spits, but rarely reaches the level of real poetry. Some kind of control, formal or emotional, would be needed to give his outbursts a genuine energy. The impression that he wishes to withhold nothing, and seeks out the most extreme terms of revulsion and indignation, in fact weakens the effect of passages such as this. The verse itself is formless, capricious and irregular.

'Fios thun a' Bhàird' (C 151-155) is probably Livingston's most subdued, and in the last analysis his most powerful piece of writing about the clearances. It bears evidence of attentive planning. A crucial turning point comes half way through the poem, in the eighth of its fourteen stanzas, heralding a change both in mood and in syntactical patterning. Rather than of a change in mood, one should perhaps speak of the implicit mood of the earlier half becoming explicit. Tempo and dynamics are unaltered. The choice of a final refrain which remains constant throughout the song is an indication of the restraints Livingston freely chooses to place on himself. It forces him to find an 'à' rhyme for the sixth line in each stanza of the poem, a technical test he passes with supreme elegance.

In singing, the refrain will occupy six rather than four lines. This allows its subtle irony to develop to the full. Blair reprints a note from *An t-Oranaiche* explaining how the song originated:

The Bard expressed a great desire to have a piece of home-made "Islay Cloth" to make a kilt or jacket of; Mr. R. Blair, now minister of St. Columba Church, Glasgow, sent the Bard a web of grey home-made cloth, got from his mother for this purpose, with the following address upon it, "Fios thun a' Bhàird Ilich, o Bhean Dhonnachaidh." In return for this Wm. Livingstone sent the following song, hence the name and chorus.

In other words, the song represents the news he felt he should have received from Islay. He takes Mrs Blair's message and rewrites it, and the reversal carries with it an unmistakable reproach. Although he borrows her words for the refrain, the poem as a whole consists of words he puts into her (or her husband's) mouth. Livingston at one and the same time produces the song (borrowing a crucial part) and disowns it. Perhaps this distancing, achieved through the peculiar speech situation of 'Fios thun a' Bhàird', acted as a basis for the emotional distancing which makes it such a powerful poem.

The first seven stanzas build up tension by painting an ideal picture of what Islay is like. The approach is similar to that in the 'Cuimhneachan', where an appearance of perfection concealed a disturbing lack at its core. The reader or listener is affected with a growing sense of foreboding, a sense that something must be wrong, something that increases in gravity the longer its revelation is put off. The natural description in splendidly chaste and measured Gaelic follows the rationale outlined earlier in this chapter, according to which the clearances meant that nature poetry could never again be innocent in Gaelic. Only by the subtlest of interjections is our sense of disquiet confirmed: 'Cha robh mo roinn diubh 'n dè le càch' (18), 'mar a dh'iarramaid gu lèir' (32), 'mar gum b'ann a' caoidh na bha' (58). The irony

of that conditional verb will not emerge fully until the second half of the poem. Nonetheless, its suggestion of a slippage between desire and attainment implies a flaw in the picture being painted: the mood of the verb resonates beyond the reassuring semantic import of the line.

Overall, however, repetition of the syntactical pattern of the first line creates an impression of stability, of stasis, which is at once soothing and disturbing:

Tha mhadainn soilleir grianach (1)

Tha 'n linne sleamhainn sìochail (3)

Tha 'n long na h-èideadh sgiamhach (5)

Tha mìltean sprèidh air faichean (21)

Tha 'n còmhnaid 's coirean garbhlaich (29)

Tha 'n t-seamair fhiadhain 's neòinein (33)

Tha bogha mòr an t-sàile
mar a bha, le reachd bith-bhuan (45-6)

That 'reachd bith-bhuan', like the 'dùilean stèidh na cruithreachd' (53), is a reference to that which can never be changed, change in which is inconceivable, highlighting the poem's overall theme of change and paradoxical stability.

At the risk of seeming repetitious, it must be emphasised that, without the second half of the poem, and without the persistent undertone of irony, the description given in the opening stanzas would fall to the level of mere pastiche. Instead, it is like entering a house where one knows one will find the traces of some terrible event which has taken place: the house is deserted, and everything in perfect order, so that the longer revelation is delayed, the more the sense of horror can grow.

Livingston observes his chosen line length with remarkable consistency, and his lines are end-stopped throughout, with none of the enjambement which we have seen to be characteristic of his

use even of traditional forms. As a result individual lines have a powerful and (for Livingston) most unusual compression:

's cha chuir sgios i dh'iarraidh tàmh (6)

anns nach cuir 's nach buainear pòr (16)

far an òl am fiadh a phailteas (41)

In the second line quoted, the compression is achieved by an interesting morphological elision. One would expect 'far nach cuirear', and the passive desinence of the second verb in fact serves the first one, too. As we shall see, this compression produces epigrammatic formulations in the second half of the poem, with elisions not of a suffix but of one or two words, which leave an indelible impression on the memory.

The seventh stanza marks the turning point, heralded by a change in the predominant syntactic pattern: 'ged' replaces 'tha' at the beginning of the stanza. The alteration is all the more effective because, were it not for this initial word, the first half of the stanza could belong just as easily to the earlier part of the poem:

Ged a roinneas gathan grèine
tlus nan speur ri blàth nan lòn,
's ged a chithear sprèidh air àirigh
's buailtean làn de dh'alach bhò...

These lines continue to paint an ideal picture of the natural landscape in Islay. The same material is given a different syntactic setting, prefaced by a concessive, which draws everything that has gone before into its ambit. The implication is that 'ged' could have stood at the head of each of the seven stanzas heard so far. Two lines of absolute, lapidary concision then give the real news the poem has to convey:

tha Ile 'n-diugh gun daoine,
chuir a chaor' a bailtean fàs...

Livingston throughout 'Fios thun a' Bhàird' deliberately limits his range of imagery, metre and tone. In the second of the two

lines quoted, he limits his phonetic range to telling effect, in the consonant rhyme and vowel assonance of 'chuir a chaor'. The placing of dumb animals as grammatical subject adds to the shock, the unbelievable yet matter of fact impact of the line. How could sheep empty a township? This limitation of the phonetic and syntactical repertory underpins the theme of the poem as a whole, stability, things which do not change, and the terrible relief into which they throw the changes that have in fact occurred.

The two stanzas immediately following begin with the same crucial word:

Ged thig ànrach aineoil (69)

Ged a thogar feachd na h-Alb' (77)

However, very soon the pattern which had dominated the earlier part of the poem returns:

Tha tighean seilbh na dh'fhàg sinn (85)

Tha stèidh nan làrach tiamhaidh (89)

Tha 'n nathair bhreac na lùban (105)

Tha 'n Learga ghlacach ghrianach (111)

Tha 'n gleann na fhiathair uaine (113)

The reappearance of such lines after the turning point is consonant with its overarching concerns of stability and change. Against this sameness certain innovations stand out. 'Chuir a' chaor' a bailtean fàs' (66) is the first line in the whole poem to begin with a verb other than 'tha'. Moreover, the verb is finite, past and narrative, very much a word of action, intervention and therefore change. It is the first of a group of carefully placed lines having the lapidary compression mentioned earlier. They are powerful enough to stand on their own, each summing up the tragedy in its own small compass:

Chuir gamhlas Ghall air fuadach
na tha bhuainn 's nach till gu bràth (73-4)

Sgap mì-run iad thar fairge (81)

Dh'fhalbh 's cha till na Gàidheil (86)

Thug ainneart fògraidh uainn iad,
's leis na coimhich buaidh mar 's àill (97-8)

Bhuadhaich eucoir, Gaill is cis (104)

The last line quoted is particularly powerful. It creates a series of three subjects for the same verb. The two flanking nouns are abstract concepts, framing a national or racial word denoting human beings, which is by implication assimilated to them. Injustice and oppression are synonymous with being a non-Gael, an incomer.

This second half of 'Fios thun a' Bhàird' marshals a group of themes familiar from other clearances poems of Livingston's. The lone traveller will not find the traditional hospitality he might hope for (69-72, 101-2), singing girls will no longer be heard, fighting warriors no longer seen (93-6), the gospel will no longer be preached (103) and the once warm houses are now cold ruins inhabited by dumb animals (81-2, 85-90, 105-6). As one would expect, a quatrain is devoted to the military prowess of the Gaels, to the world of Livingston's battle poems. Here it functions like a faded tapestry or an old painting whose colours have darkened so much as to make it almost illegible:

Ged a thogar feachd na h-Alb',
is cliùiteach ainm air faich' an àir,
bithidh bratach fraoich nan ileach
gun dol sìos ga dìon le càch... (77-80)

The reference to banners and to heraldry is characteristic, as is the phrase 'faich' an àir', echoing so many from 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca'.

The things no longer to be found bring with them a series of lines beginning 'cha':

Cha chluinnear luinneag òighean (93)

's chan fhaicear seòid mar b'abhàist (95)

Chan fhaigh an dèirceach fasgadh
no 'm fear astair fois o sgios
no soisgeulach luchd-èisdeachd (101-3)

Though 'cha' does not occur at the beginning of the last two lines quoted, it is implied. The pattern is the same, the verb and particle being elided, yet serving three different subjects and objects. The effect is to speed up and intensify, the linguistic equivalent of a stretto in a fugue, further evidence of the concentration and economy which characterise 'Fios thun a' Bhàird' so strikingly.

Only once has Livingston named (or hinted at) a specific Islay location: 'bogha mòr an t-sàile' (45). He has resisted the evocative power of placenames, reserving it for his concluding stanza, and thus provides his poem with an effective ending, introducing a new element, yet still in tune with the overall mood:

Lomadh ceàrn na h-Oa,
an Lanndaidh bhòidheach 's Roinn Mhic Acidh.
Tha 'n Learga ghlacach ghrianach
's fuigheal cianail air a taobh.

'Fios thun a' Bhàird' has been examined in great detail because it is probably the most consummate example of Livingston's verbal art within a relatively small compass. It is also his best known composition, and therefore a fitting poem with which to conclude this survey of his clearances poetry and of his works as a whole in verse and prose.

As was said at the beginning of the chapter, 'Fios thun a' Bhàird' and 'Cuimhneachan Bhraid-Alba' can be seen as opposite poles defining the range of his clearances poetry. They embody very different reactions. One is expansive, the other compressed; one employs a variety of metres and dramatic figures, the other is unchanging, even monotonous in tone; one prospects a heroic figure who, if he cannot reverse the historical and economic processes which have led to the clearances, may at least protect those who have managed to stay on, while the other offers no ray

of hope, only the silence of an island voided of its people and given over to strangers whose language is, from the perspective of the poem, no language at all. From our present viewpoint, 'Fios thun a' Bhàird' is the more convincing and appealing of the two. The years since it was written would seem to have confirmed and justified its pessimism, and in a very real sense nothing produced since has surpassed it, or rendered its stance outdated. If much of what was written at the time of the clearances, and has been written, said or filmed since, rings false, this may be because Scottish society has only one option if it wishes to settle this particular account with its conscience and its past. Land reform, indeed land repossession, could offer a chance to lay the ghost of the tragedy of Scotland's Gaelic peasantry and interrupt the long sequence of laments which has followed their passing. Such reform may be a chimera, a dream of utopia. But were it to come about, with the revitalisation of the Scottish Gàidhealtachd which must needs ensue, it could well be that not 'Fios thun a' Bhàird', but 'Cuimhneachan Bhraid-Alba' would be read as Livingston's definitive word on the clearances.

Appendix One

Uilleam Mac Dhunlèibhe (William Livingston): Published Works

1850a

Vindication of the Celtic Character a prospectus

Greenock: William Campbell

see 1850b p397

1850b

Vindication of the Celtic Character or the Scotsman as he was and as he should be. In a series of letters to a young friend

Greenock: Joseph Blair

later referred to as 'Tagradh nan Gaidheal'

paginated 1-480, 480-575

1852a

MacNicol (Donald) of Lismore, Argyleshire

Remarks on Dr Samuel Johnson's Journey to the Hebrides

edited by William Livingstone

Glasgow: William Gilchrist

1852b

Livingston's Caledonian Critic

No.1: February 1852. Price 3s.

printed and published by William Livingstone at 303 Argyle St., Glasgow.

1855

Oran do Art Mac Lachainn Duin Uasal Earra-Ghaidhealach
Glasachadh air Cluaidh; Mios Meadhonach an Earraich
[Feb]

a broadsheet printed in double columns

1856

The History of Scotland

by William Livingston, author of "A Vindication of the
Celtic Character", &c.

Glasgow: William Gilchrist

only known copy in Mitchell Library, Glasgow breaks off
after page 280

1858

Uilleam Mac Dhun-Leibhe

Duain Ghaelic with a brief sketch proving the
authenticity of Ossian's poems

Edinburgh: MacLachlan and Stewart

Glasgow: Duncan Campbell, William Gilchrist

1859a

Duan Geall na Combradh Vaigneach mar gu'm bitheadh e
air a labhairt leis a Bhan-Rìgh Victoria

Glasgow: William Gilchrist, 25th June

a broadsheet

1859b

Primitive Christianity in Scotland by W. Livingston,
author of "A Vindication of the Celtic Character,"
"History of Scotland," &c. to which is appended St
Patrick's Confession, from the Book of Armagh

Glasgow: K. & R. Davidson

1860

Livingston, William

Lecture delivered on the evening of Tuesday 27th March
in the Protestant Laymen's Hall, 53 Candleriggs, at the
request of the United Highlanders of Glasgow

Glasgow: William Gilchrist

1863

Fios Thun A'Bhaird na Oran Bean Dhonnachaidh

Glasgow: William Gilchrist

a broadsheet printed in double columns

1865

Uilleam Mac Dhunleibhe

Duain agus Orain

Glasgow: William Gilchrist

1867

Tha na rannan so mar gum b'ann air leacan uaighean nam
bard

includes p6 'Soraiddh Dhonnachaidh do Chomhal, p9 Bha na
rannan so air an deanadh do uaislean Comunn nan
Gaedheal an Glasachadh air Cluaidh, mios deireannach an
t-samhraidh 1867

1873-4

Uilleam MacDhunleibhe

Blar Shunadail

published in nine parts in An Gaidheal with
introductory note by RI

Vol.II 237-9, 270-1, 301-2, 326-7, 366-7

(June/October/November/December 1873, January 1874)

Vol.III 6-7, 42-3, 77-8, 104-5

(February/March/April/May 1874)

?1879

Uilleam Mac Dhun-léibhe

'Gleann-da-Ruadhail a' bharraich'

in Sinclair, Archibald An t-Oranaiche Glasgow 1876-9
p524-6

1882

Uilleam Mac Dhunleibhe

Duain agus Orain air an cur a mach air iarrtus agus fo
iuil a' Chomuinn Ilich

edited with memoir by Robert Blair

Glasgow: Archibald Sinclair

n.d.

Tha mo gradh [sic] air Sine Eadar-Theangaichte le
Uilleam Mac Dhunleibhe. With the Author's permission
Glasgow: Neil Campbell, Gaelic Bookseller, 17 Malta
Street

a broadsheet headed 'Select Songs with Gaelic
Translations No.1'

Appendix Two

Additional Stanzas for 'Eirinn a' Gul' and 'Gleann Da Ruadhail a' Bharraich' surviving in manuscript

(1)

Two additional stanzas for 'Eirinn a' Gul' (C 205-6) from National Library of Scotland ms 14986, 81 b-d. The first is placed after the ninth stanza in C, the second after the tenth.

Do thallachan nan caoirean dearg
's gun tèarmann duit o fhearg do nàmh,
do chlann gu h-ìomall gach tìr
sgapta, gun dìon, gun tàmh.

Aig Beul Ath Bridhe na cruaidh spàirn
sgath sibh feòil ur cnàmhan thall:
le deannal nam faobhar nochd
thug sibh buaidh air lochd, mar gheall.

(2)

There are two additional stanzas for 'Gleann Da Ruadhail a' Bharraich' (Sinclair 1876-9: 524-6) in a manuscript version of the poem in the Museum of Islay Life, Port Charlotte, Islay, filed under 'Songs'. They are placed after the first stanza ('Chòmhail chorraich an garbh shlios') of the published version.

Bhitheadh an t-seabhag san sgàirneach
san do thàrmaich i òg,
's an iolair rìoghail sna speuran
a' deuchainn rèis ris na neòil,
sruithean fìor-ghlan nam bradan
a' ruith gu cladach nan òb
's mial-chù dianmhor nan sinteag
am braise dìreadh air tòir.

An fhir nach stadair le tuisleadh
's do dhoimhn' an uisge nach gèill,
a nuair a leigeas tu t' uchd ris
bithidh sgrìob chuisleach ad dhèidh!
Bheir thu dùbhlàn dod nàmhaid
air an t-snàmh 's anns an rèis;
's i 'n fhoill a leagas gu làr thu,
a' cur luaidhe bhàsmhor ad chrè.

Appendix Three: 'Cath Mhonadh Bhraca'

1858 text from A 1-12

CATH MHONADH BHRACA / EADAR NA / GAE'IL ALBANACH AGUS FEACHD NA
ROIMH. / ANNS A BHLIADHN' 85.

'NUAIR a sgaoil na speuran, doilleir neoil,

Ma'n cuairt;

Luidh an slògh, air lom an racin,

'Na'n suain,

Air min-fheur, tolmain choillteach,

Choir an uchd;

'S na freiceadain air leth gach taobh,

A' dìon an fheachd.

Dheirich an Rìgh*, le iomgain gheur,

O'n torran ghlas;

10

A'm braighe' ghlinn, aig bun na stuadh,

Fo'n d'iarr e fois;

Ghluais e gu fòil, air bruachan

Reidh an uillt,

A' cnuasachd, diubhail eaceart àr

Nan oillt.

A bha 'casadh ris, air tìr

'S air muir;

Us' mheoraich e mar so, air

Teinn a chor:

20

*Galgacus,

Ainneart, foirgneadh, leir-sgrìos,
 Eug, us' creach,
 A' teachd, gun stad 'gar claidh, 's cha'n ann
 M'a seach;
 Se bliadhn', tha armailt fhiat
 A' nàmh;
 A' slad, mo riogh'chd, 's gun duil ri
 Crìoch, na tamh.
 O chasgradh claidheamh, fòirneart,
 Teine, 's mort. 30
 Tha mìltean marbh, 's na dhfhuirich beo -
 A' dìon mo cheart;
 An iarr mi sìth, 's an d-toir mi
 Albin bhuam,
 Mo Chrun, 's mo ghaisreadh àrd, le'n
 Trice buadh.
 Na aon fheachd, fo bhratach Rìgh,
 'Tha beo:
 'S an earbs' mar bha, nach geill mi choidhch,
 Gun tuiteam leo. 40
 Thug a' namhaid, fuileach, taisg ar
 Biotailt bhuainn;
 A mhagh thir thorach, bladha ar fuinn,
 Us' cal' a chuain;
 Ghlac a phlòd, gach ób, us' caolas,
 Uig, us' loch,
 'Sa tha armailt leamh, nan sgaoth,
 Gach taobh amach.
 Ar sraithean tiorail creacht', us' beul
 Gach glinn, 50
 Fo cheannsal, bhuidhnean borb, a' to-'airt
 Nan garbh-chrìoch dhinn.

An cuan gun cheann, ri'r cùl us'
 'Slogh nan Gall,
 'Ga'r torachd feadh nan coilltean dluth,
 Le gairg us' feall.
 Mo sheise seolta*, gaisgeil, air mo lorg,
 Gun fhois:
 'An duil, ri m' chiomachas, gun dàil,
 Na tuiteam leis. 60
 O CHARRNAICH, s a laoch, an d-tug an t-éug
 Ort buaidh,
 Thu sint', gun diog, gun cháil, fo ghlas
 Na h-uaigh;
 A chòmhlaib, rioghail, churrant,
 Dhana, ghlic,
 Co' sheasas, leam 's an àraich dheirg, 's thu
 Balbh fo'n lic;
 Cha chluinn thu osag trompaid, air
 An fhaich ni's mo, 70
 Na srannail, steudan bras, a' leum
 'Am buillsgein sloigh:
 Na stairn nan sleagh, air mairlich liath,
 Nan sparrag dluth;
 Tinnean tatht' bu tric, a sgoilt fo d' lann,
 Le lùth:
 Do ridhe treun, le'n d-fhuair thu
 Urram gaisge Rìgh,
 Anis fuar' an leaba dhorch nan dàol, fo
 Smachd gun chli. 80
 B'e teibhneas, mo Leoghan dearg, air
 Dualadh sròil,
 *Agricola,
 S Carranach Rìgh nam Pìocach, a mharbhad goirid roimhe sin.

Us' gàir nan clann, a' rùsgadh cruaidh gu
 Strì nan spòll.
 Cha'n fhaic thu tuilleadh, seoid nam beann
 Fo'n airm;
 Na grunn nan Sàr, mar aon
 A' freagairt gairm;
 Gu faiche Bhraca, far an sgaoilear
 Cuirn a bhais,
 'S am brist, na Dee bhith-bhuan, dhinn
 Cuing ar càs.

90

Mar so le cèuman mall, us'
 Osnach throm,
 Thill an t-ànrach rioghail, 'suas gu
 Sgàil nan tom,
 O'n d'imich e gun fhios do chach, 's an
 Duibhr' amach;
 'S luidh e' rithist 'sios, 's cha b'eoil
 Do neach.

100

BRUADAR.

Dhfhurain samhchair, chiuin, us'
 Bhriodail fois,
 An sonn, gu sealan taimh, aig
 Sgùrr an eas,
 Bha urla ghlan, fo mheachain fhuair,
 Na h-oiteig bhèur;
 A' seideadh air an leitir nochd,
 A' rùchan speur.
 Air dus a duthchais, luidh a chre
 'Na clò:

110

Ged' bhris neo-bhasmhoireachd, a gheimheal
De'n spiorad bheo.

Aisling, Rìgh Alba, bragh nach
H-uraich lochd,
Le sriut fil'eachd, caont mar' thug
A cheolraidh reachd:
Gu'n cluinneadh Gae'il, sgeul nan
Linn a dhfhalbh,
'S gu'm biodh iad fhathast mar bu dual,
'An tìr an sealbh, 120
Gu'n gleidheadh iad, an cliu 's an gnè,
O linn gu linn,
O thnù, nam foirgneach fiar, nach
H-aontaich leinn.
Bhruadair an Rìgh', bhi 'mach air
Aonach cas;
Air monadh ard; 's an sealladh cian
Gu deas:
Chunnaic e Coirb, fad as aig cuairt
Nan speur; 130
Ag amharc tuath, le fracch, 's i
A' bagradh leir.
Tìr-mòr a' caoidh, gun lùth le 'smaig
Gun iochd:
'S deis-thìr Bhreatain, strìochd' fo
Cholbh a smachd:
Chunnaic e i 'sgaoileadh eangach
Trast an fhuinn:
Air oir na h-Alba; sìnt o thuinn
Gu tuinn. 140
Lìon iarnaigh dearg, 's a dhreach mar dhreòs
Nan càir;

A' slugan sùirn, a' sputadh dian 'an
 Goil am bàir:
 Chunnaic e Athaich lasrach aig
 Gach ceann;
 'Ga Dhraghadh, thar iosal shrath, us'
 Airde bheann.
 Gach duine, 's beathach, caisteal dion,
 Us teach; 150
 Sguab e leis gach aon, maraon, 's gach aon
 Ma seach.
 Chunnaic e' teachd' na dheigh, 's an dath mar
 Dhearg-las shion:
 Glàmaich theine 'shluig a suas, na
 Dhfhag an lion:
 Dhuig e le allsa gioraig,
 Ghlac e' airm,
 'S dhiarr e' Ghille caimp, MacSuinn
 Gu grad a ghairm, 160
 'S triall chaismeachd, a sheirm do'n t-slògh
 Gun dàil,
 'S na maithean, a choinneachadh an Rìgh
 Aig leac an àil.
 M'an d'eirich grian air Tùrleum ard
 A cheo,
 Us bruchdanaich na maidne glas, a'
 Sgaradh neóil;
 Ghluais laicich na h-Alb, o chuilidh dhorch'
 Ghlinn tairbh, 170
 Air taobh m'a dheas an t-sleibh gu
 Leac na' marbh.
 Ma'n gann a thog iad uchdach shlios
 Na mac;

Thug fuaim na dùdaich, ordugh stad
 Do'n fheachd;
 Gu'n robh na Roimhich dlùth aig bun
 Na frìdh;
 Cluinneadh na Gàedheil; tairrnibh 'suas
 Gu stri.

180

Faic anis gach ceann cath,
 A' ceartachadh, rian nan sreath;
 Albanaich, a b' uamhar cith,
 'Nan reangan dluth, fo bharrain ghath,
 Cath bhuidhnean, laochail nan clann,
 'Na miltean a' comhdach fuinn,
 Gaisgich fheùsagach nam beann,
 A' dol an ordugh, nós nan sonn.
 Armailt, neartmhor nan treubh,
 Sealladh gairs'neach, do' nàmh,
 Gae'il threun nam buadhan tric,
 Do-chiosaicht' an stri nan gleachd,
 Biuthaidh mhoralach na' Mac
 A' nochdadh an éuchd mar chleachd.
 Beinge ghris nan sleaghan glas'
 A' maomadh, gu reubadh chneas,
 Chit' am briosgardaich, fad as,
 Mar ghoil chuthaich, greann gaoir theas.
 Barraibh nan lann bas'or cruaidh,
 A' frith chrith, le gluasad sloigh,
 A' teachd a dhìoghladh foirneadh géur,
 Nach coisgt' ach le streup nan leòn.
 Far an d-tug gaisge' buaidh,
 Air an-seilbh, le cruadail chorr,
 Armailt fhineachail nan laoch,

19

200

Gae'il shaor 'na'n airm, fo'n t-sròl.
 A dhùlanaich, gu stri na feirg,
 Feachd lionmhor, nan Roimhach garg,
 Gu folachd, nach lasachadh cor,
 Gun aon diubh' gheilleadh, gu tur, 210
 An uidhe, eadar na sloigh,
 A' boillsgeadh, le gleò nan lann,
 A ghrab dàn 'nuair' roinn i'm fonn,
 A thoirt duinn, fa leith gach gnìomh a bh'ann,
 'Nuair bhrosnaich i stri nan calg,
 Iorghuill chreuchd, us' bas, us' mairg,
 Torraibh na' marbh, ag at'
 'S na beòthaibh a' dìoghladh na thuit,
 Le fiubhaidh, o'n iubhar air laight,
 A' caitheadh frasan éig, us lot'. 220
 Tharruing an da fheachd 'an dluth's,
 Mar 'dhaithris biuthas o chian,
 Gach taobh air bhoil le conbhadh àir,
 A' greasadh gu spàirn nam pian,
 Suinn gharbh nan earradh breac,
 Le faobhar ruisgte 's gach glaic.
 A spealg le gaisge gun gheilt,
 Cuing do-fhulang, neart thar cheart,
 'An ruathar, casgradh, nan cràdh,
 Bhuaill 'na'n dàil, na Roimhich chruidh, 230
 Tuig iarain, uile-bheist na' mort,
 A chiosaich an domhain le neart,
 Crioslaicht' an lùirichean teann,
 'Ga 'n dion, o bhathais gu bonn,
 Chomhlaich iad sleaghan nan Clann
 Stiocall trom 'na miltean roinn
 A teachd mar bhàinidh onfhadh thonn.

Co choisgeadh an tuil chréuchdach,
 Sruth loinnreach nan gathan reubach,
 A sguab na Roimhich air ais, 240
 'An spàirneachd deothaich na greis,
 'S an fhaiche le smùidrich lot,
 Mar dheatach o *bhrolluinn braight*;
 Le treoir neo-lighte nam fear feachd,
 A dhfhàg mar dhileab da'n sliochd;
 'S gun chothrom, ach leud am bonn,
 A' misneach, mhòrach 's fad an lann;
 Sgeul casgradh, nan Roimhach fuileach,
 'Nuair 'bhuaill an uchd bheartaich' am broilleach;
 Sreathan nan Albannach àrach, 250
 Tharruing milidh nan sleagh,
 'An ordugh, cath 'na'n riombal tiugh;
 'S ged nach, d' aidich na Gàe'il eigin,
 B'e sud, greim teanachdais an Leoghain;
 A ghleidh an larach a' gleachd;
 Gus an d' eug, le àr gun iochd;
 Deich mìle fichead de'n da fheachd. ---
 Ma'n do sgaoil na speuran, doilleir neòil
 M'an cuairt:
 A sgar na sloigh, gun aon diubh
 'Dhfhaotainn buaidh! 260

CATH MONADH BHRACA

eadar na Gàidheil Albannach agus feachd na Ròimh
anns a' bhliadhn' 85

Nuair a sgaoil na speuran doilleir
neòil mun cuairt,
luigh an slògh air lom an raoin,
nan suain,
air min-fheur tolmain choilltich,
choir an uchd,
's na freiceadain air leth gach taobh
a' dìon an fheachd.

Dh'èirich an Rìgh le iomagain gheur
on torran ghlais
am bràighe ghlinn, aig bun nan stuadh,
fon d' iarr e fois;
ghluais e gu fòil, air bruachan
rèidh an uillt,
a' cnuasachd diùbhail, euceart,
àr nan oillt
a bha casadh ris air tìr
's air muir;
is mheòraich e mar seo
air teinn a chor:

10

20

"Ainneart, foireigneach, lèir-sgrìos,
 eug, is creach
 a' teachd gun stad gar claidh,
 's chan ann mu seach.
 Sè bliadhn' tha armailt fhiat'
 an nàmh
 a' slad mo riogh'chd, 's gun dùil
 ri crìoch, no tàmh
 o chasgradh claidheamh, fòirneart,
 teine 's mort; 30
 tha mìltean marbh, 's na dh'fhuirich beò
 a' dìon mo cheart.
 An iarr mi sìth, 's an toir mi
 Albainn bhuam,
 mo chrùn, 's mo ghaisreadh àrd,
 len trice buadh
 na aon fheachd fo bhratach rìgh
 tha beò,
 's an earbs' mar bha, nach gèill mi chaidh
 gun tuiteam leò? 40
 Thug an nàmhaid fuileach taig
 ar biotailt bhuainn,
 a' mhagh-thìr thorach, bladha ar fuinn,
 is cal' a' chuain;
 ghlac a phlòd gach òb is caolas,
 uig is loch,
 's tha armailt leamh nan sgaoth
 gach taobh a-mach;
 ar sraithean tiorail creacht',
 is beul gach glinn 50
 fo cheannsal bhuidhnean borb, a' toirt
 nan garbh-crìoch dhinn;

an cuan gun cheann rir cùl,
is slògh nan Gall
gar tòrachd feadh nan coilltean dlùth
le gairg' is feall;
mo sheise seòlta, gaisgeil
air mo lorg gun fhois,
an dùil rim chiomachas gun dàil,
no tuiteam leis.

60

"O Charrannaich, a laicich, an d' thug
an t-eug ort buaidh,
thu sint' gun dìog, gun chàil
fo ghlas na h-uaigh?
A chòmhlain rioghail, churrant',
dhàna, ghlic,
cò sheasas leam san àraich dheirg,
's thu balbh fon lic?
Cha chluinn thu osag trombaid
air an fhaich ni 's mò,
no srannail steudan bras, a' leum
am buillsgein slòigh,
no stàirn nan sleagh air mairlich liath
nan sparrag dlùth,
tinnean tàt'ht' bu tric a sgoilt
fod lainn, le lùth
do ridhe treun, len d' fhuair thu
urram gaisge righ -
a-nis fuar' an leaba dhorch nan daol,
fo smachd gun chli.
B'e t' èibhneas, mo leòghann dearg,
air dualadh sròil,

70

80

is gàir nan clann a' rùsgadh cruaidh
gu stri nan spòll.

Chan fhaic thu tuilleadh seòid

nam beann fon airm,

no grunn nan sàr mar aon

a' freagairt gairm

gu faiche Bhraca, far an sgaoilear

cuirn a' bhàis,

90

's am brist na Dèe biotbhuan dhinn

cuing ar càs."

Mar seo, le ceuman mall

is oenaich throm,

thill an t-ànrach rioghail suas

gu sgàil nan tom

on d' imich e, gun fhios do chàch,

san duibhr' a-mach,

's luigh e rithist sìos,

's cha b'eòl do neach.

100

Dh'fhurain samhchair chiùin,

is bhrìodail fois

an sonn gu sealan tàimh

aig sgùrr an eas.

Bha ùrla ghlan fo mheachain fhuair

na h-oiteig bheur,

a' sèideadh air an leitir nochd

à rùchan speur.

Air dus a dhùthchais luigh

a chrè na clò,

110

ged bhrìst neo-bhàsmhoireachd o gheimheal
den spiorad bheò.

Aisling rìgh Alba! Bragh
nach ùraich lochd,
le sriut fil'eachd, caont mar thug
a' Cheòlraidh reachd!
Gun cluinneadh Gàidheil sgeul
nan linn a dh'fhalbh,
's gum biodh iad fhathast mar bu dual
an tìr an seilbh; 120
gun gleidheadh iad an cliù 's an gnè
o linn gu linn
o thnù nam foireigheach fiar',
nach aontaich leinn!

Bhrùadair an rìgh bhith mach
air aonach cas,
air monadh àrd, 's an sealladh
cian gu deas.
Chunnaic e Coirb fad às,
aig cuairt nan speur 130
ag amharc tuath, le fracch,
's i bagradh lèir;
tìr-mòr a' caoidh gun lùth,
le smàig gun iochd,
's deas-thìr Bhreatainn strìochd'
fo cholbh a smachd.
Chunnaic e i sgaoileadh eangach
trast an fhuinn
air oir na h-Alba, sìnt'
o thuinn gu tuinn; 140
lìon iarnaigh dearg, 's a dhreach
mar dhreòs nan càir

à slugan sùirn, a' sputadh dian
 an goil am bàir.
 Chunnaic e athaich lasrach
 aig gach ceann,
 ga dhraghadh thar iosal shrath
 is àirde bheann.
 Gach duine 's beathach, caisteal dìon
 is teach - 150
 sguab e leis gach aon maraon,
 's gach aon mu seach.
 Chunnaic e teachd na dèidh, 's an dath
 mar dhearg-las shion,
 glàmaich-theine shluig a-suas
 na dh'fhàg an lìon.

Dhùisg e le allsa gioraig;
 ghlac e airm,
 's dh'iarr e ghille-caimp, MacSuinn,
 gu grad a ghairm, 160
 's triall chaismeachd a sheirm
 don t-slòigh gun dàil,
 's na maithean a choinneachadh an rìgh
 aig leac an àil.
 Mun d' èirich grian air Tùrleum
 àrd a' cheò,
 is bruchdanaich na maidne glais
 a' sgaradh neòil,
 ghluais laicich na h-Alba o chuilidh
 dhorch Ghlinn Tairbh 170
 air taobh mu dheas an t-slàibh
 gu leac nam marbh.
 Mun gann a thog iad uchdach
 slios nam mac,

thug fuaime na dùdaich òrdugh
stad don fheachd;
gu robh na Ròimhich dlùth
aig bun na frith;
cluinneadh na Gàidheil - "Tàirrnibh
suas gu strì!"

180

Faic a-nis gach ceann-cath
a' ceartachadh rian nan sreath:
Albannaich, a b' uamhar cith,
nan reangan dlùth fo bharrain ghath,
cath-bhuidhnean laochail nan clann
nam miltean a' còmhachadh fuinn,
gaisgich feusagach nam beann
a' dol an òrdugh, nòs nan sonn,
armailt neartmhor nan treubh,
sealladh gairisneach do nàmh,
Gàidheil threun nam buadhan tric,
do-chiosaicht' an strì nan gleachd,
biuthaidh mhòralach nam Mac
a' nochdadh an euchd mar chleachd.
Beinge ghris nan sleaghan glas
a' maomadh gu reubadh chneas -
chit' am briogartaich fad às
mar ghoil chuthaich, greann gaoir theas.
Barraibh nan lann bàsmhor cruaidh
a' frith-chrith le gluasad slòigh
a' teachd a dhìoghladh fòirneadh geur
nach coisgt' ach le streup nan leòn,
far an d' thug gaisge buaidh
air an-seilbh le cruadail chòrr.
Armailt fhineachail nan laoch,

190

200

Gàidheil shaor nan airm fon t-sròil
a dhùbhланаich, gu strì na feirg,
feachd lìonmhor nan Ròimheach garg,
gu folachd nach lasachadh cor
gun aon dhiubh ghéilleadh gu tur.

210

An ùidhe eadar na slòigh
a' boillsgeadh le gleò nan lann,
a ghrab dàn nuair roinn i 'm fonn,
a thoirt dhuinn fa leth gach gnìomh a bh'ann
nuair bhrosnaich i strì nan calg,
iorghaill chreuchd, is bàs, is mairg.

Tòrraibh nam marbh ag at
's na beòthaibh a' dìoghladh na thuit
le fiùbhaidh on iubhar air laight,
a' caitheadh frasan èig is lot.

220

Tharraing an dà fheachd an dlùth's
mar dh'aithris biùthas o chian,
gach taobh air bhoil le confhadh àir,
a' greasadh gu spàirn nam pian.
Suinn gharbh nan earradh breac
le faobhar rùisgte 's gach glaic
a' spealg le gaisge gun gheilt,
cuing do-fhulang, neart thar cheart
an ruathar casgradh nan cràdh.

Bhuail nan dàil na Ròimhich cruaidh,
tuig iarainn uilebheist nam mort
a chiosnaich an domhan le neart,
crioslaicht' an lùirichean teann
gan dìon o bhathais gu bonn.
Chòmhlaich iad sleaghan nan clann,
stiocall trom nam miltean roinn,
a' teachd mar bhàinidh onfhadh thonn.

230

Cò choisgeadh an tuil chreuchdach,
 sruth loinnireach nan gathan reubach
 a sguab na Ròimhich air ais 240
 an spàirneachd deothaich na greis,
 's an fhaiche le smùidrich lot
 mar dheatach o bhrollainn braight,
 le treòir neo-lighte nam fear feachd
 a dh'fhàg mar dhìleab dan slìochd,
 's gun cothrom ach leud am bonn,
 am misneach mhòrach 's fad an lann?
 Sgeul casgradh nan Ròimheach fuileach,
 nuair bhuail an uchd bheartaich am broilleach
 sreathan nan Albannach àrach. 250

Tharraing milidh nan sleagh
 an òrdugh-cath nan riombal tiugh,
 's ged nach d' aidich na Gàidheil èigin,
 b'e siud greim tean achdais an Leòghainn,
 a ghlèidh na làrach, a' gleachd
 gus an d' eug, le àr gun iochd,
 deich mìle fichead don dà fheachd.

Mun do sgaoil na speuran doilleir
 neòil mun cuairt
 a sgar na slòigh, gun aon diubh 260
 dh'fhaotainn buaidh!

English translation

THE BATTLE OF BRACO MOOR

*between the Scottish Gaels and the Roman Army in the
year 85*

When the dark skies had scattered
 clouds around
the host lay down to sleep
 on the bare field,
on the soft grass of a wooded hillock
 close to the rising ground,
while, on each side separately, watchmen
 guarded the army.

Pierced with anxiety, the king rose
 from the green mound 10
at the head of a glen beneath the hills
 where he had sought rest;
he strolled at leisure on the level
 banks of the stream,
pondering on ruin and injustice,
 and dreadful battle
menacing him on land
 and sea
and thus reflected on his
 predicament: 20

"Violence, tyranny, destruction,
 death and plunder
 come to torment us ceaselessly
 all at once.
 For six years now the enemy's
 savage troops
 have sacked my kingdom, with no end
 in sight, no rest
 from slaughtering sword, oppression,
 fire, and murder; 30
 thousands have died, and the survivors
 now defend my right.
 Shall I plead for peace, abandon
 my hold on Scotland,
 my crown, my brave warriors, more
 often victorious
 than any army beneath a living
 king's standard,
 their trust, as ever, that I shall never yield
 unless I fall with them? 40
 Our bloodthirsty foes have robbed us
 of our store of victuals,
 the fertile lowlands, the best of our land,
 and our ocean harbours.
 Their fleet has occupied every bay and strait,
 inlet and loch
 while a harassing army swarms
 on all sides.
 Our sheltered valleys have been plundered,
 and each glen's mouth 50
 is controlled by violent troops who take
 the rough lands from us,

the boundless deep behind us,
a foreign army
pursuing us through dense woodland
with harshness and guile,
while my skilled, heroic compeer
tracks me tirelessly
planning to imprison me without delay
or kill me himself. 60

O Carranach, hero, has death
triumphed over you,
lying wordless and lifeless in the prison
of the grave?
Royal, valorous, bold
and wise companion,
who can stand with me in bloody battle
now you lie dumb in the tomb?
No more will you hear the trumpet
ring over the field 70
or impetuous steeds snorting as they leap
in the midst of the host,
the clangour of spears on close-riveted
grey mail,
soldered links that often split beneath
your blade, with the force
of the strong forearm with which you won
the name of heroic King,
now cold in the worms' dark bed,
enslaved and enfeebled. 80
How you loved, my red lion,
the banner unfurling,

the cry of the tribes baring steel
to struggle and hack!
No more will you see the mountain
heroes in arms
or the host of the free, responding
as one to the summons
to Braco field, where a feast
will be spread for death, 90
and the immortal Gods will break
our oppressive yoke."

Thus heavily pacing, with deep-
drawn sighs,
the royal fugitive returned
to the hillocks' shade;
no-one had noticed him enter
the surrounding gloom,
and he lay down once again,
unbeknownst to all. 100
Peaceful silence welcomed him;
rest allured
the hero to rest for a moment
by a waterfall.
His face was exposed to the cold breath [?]
of a shrill breeze
blowing on the bare slope
from the heavens' throat.
His body lay on his homeland's dust
wrapped in homespun, 110

though immortality broke from the living
spirit's fetters.

A dream, king of Scotland, an outburst
evil cannot renew [?],
swift-woven poetry, private
as the Muses ordained!
Let the Gaels hear the tale
of centuries past
and be true to their heritage
in the land that is theirs; 120
may they preserve their fame and their nature
from age unto age
from the envy of wicked
and unyielding oppressors!

The Dream

The king dreamt he was out
on a steep slope,
on high ground with a view
far to the south.
Far off he saw a harpy
circling the sky, 130
looking angrily northwards,
threatening distress.
Europe mourned, enfeebled
by ruthless despotism,
and south Britain was prostrate under
that sceptre's power;
He saw her spread a drag net
across the country

to where Scotland's border stretches
 from sea to sea; 140
 a red-hot iron net, resembling
 blazing sparks
 from the mouth of a furnace, violently spitting
 in furious battle.
 At either end he could see
 a giant of fire
 dragging it over low valleys
 and mountain tops.
 Every man and beast, defending
 castle and house - 150
 it swept each one with it,
 together or separately.
 He saw coming behind it, in colour like
 a stormy nebula,
 a ravenous fire that consumed
 what the net had left.

Shuddering, panic-stricken, he awoke,
 seized his weapons
 and ordered his aide MacSween
 to be summoned immediately. 160
 The order to move must be sounded
 to the army at once
 and the nobles must meet their king
 at the rocky slab.
 Before the sun rose over high
 Torlum of the mist,
 as the grey morning broke
 and parted the clouds,
 the heroes of Scotland moved from the dark
 hollow of Glentarf 170

over the hill's south side
to the stone of the dead.
They had scarcely begun to ascend
the slope of the sons
when the trumpet ordered the host
to halt:
the Romans were close, at the bottom
of the moor;
let the Gaels take heed - "Draw up
for battle!"

180

Now see how each commander
adjusts the disposition of the ranks:
close-packed lines of grim-minded
Scotsmen beneath a fence of spears,
the tribes in heroic battalions,
covering the ground in their thousands,
bearded champions of the mountains
getting into order, after their valorous custom,
the powerful host of tribesmen,
dreadful for the foe to behold,

190

strong Gaels, often triumphant,
never vanquished in the strife of battles,
the Macs, majestic warriors
displaying their heroism as they were wont.
A fence of trembling grey spears
thrusting on to tear skin -
they could be seen quivering from afar
like seething frenzy, a grim haze of heat [?].
The hard points of their deathly blades
trembled ceaselessly as the host moved,

200

coming to avenge a bitter invasion

only wounding strife could check,
where heroism won a victory
over wrongful possession, with great courage.
The army of heathen champions,
free Gaels armed beneath their banner,
who challenged a numerous host of fierce
Romans to wrathful struggle
and bloodletting, without remission
till one side gave way completely. 210

The ford between the two hosts
glittering with the brilliance of the blades
which fate hindered [?] when she apportioned the ground,
deciding for us each single deed,
when she spurred on the struggle of spears,
wounding strife, death and woe.

The heaps of dead grew higher
and the living avenged the fallen
with arrows from tensed bows of yew,
sending showers of death and wounds. 220

The two armies drew close
as renown from of old relates,
each side boiling with battle frenzy
hurrying on to bitter struggle.
The rugged heroes dressed in plaids,
a bared blade in every grasp,
shattering with fearless bravery
an unbearable yoke, might over right,
in a rush of wounding slaughter.

The harsh Romans burst upon them, 230
a murderous monster whose iron tusks

had subdued the world through force,
 belted in thick coats of mail
 which defended them from head to toe.
 They met the spears of the clans,
 a weighty buttress of myriad parts
 approaching like the fury of stormy waves.
 Who could have checked the flood of wounds,
 a glittering stream from tearing arrows
 sweeping the Romans back 240
 in the fiery [?] strife of battle?
 The field smoked with wounds
 like the misty fumes of a Druid fire.
 Those warriors had untiring strength
 which they left as a legacy to their race
 with no advantage but the ground they stood on,
 their courage, greatness and length of steel.
 A tale of slaughter of the bloodthirsty Romans
 when in their cuirasses they struck the centre
 of the warlike Scottish ranks. 250
 The spearsmen drew into a battle
 formation of tight circles;
 that was the grip that saved the lion,
 which kept the field, struggling
 until thirty thousand of both armies
 met death in pitiless battle

 before the dark skies scattered
 clouds around
 and parted the two hosts, without either 260
 being victorious!

Notes

na Gàidheil Albannach The Caledonians are conceived as the direct ancestors, racially and linguistically, of Gaelic-speaking Scotland.

85 The battle represented the conclusion of Agricola's seventh campaign in Britain. Ogilvie and Richmond date it to 84, Mattingly and Holder to 83.

9 A note in A and C informs us that Calgacus (in modern editions of Tacitus, Calgacus) is intended. By what may be termed a patriotic anachronism he appears as crowned king of a united Scotland. According to Tacitus, the Britons 'had realized at last that common action was needed to meet common danger, and had sent round embassies and drawn up treaties to rally the full force of all their states.' Calgacus was merely 'one of the many leaders... a man of outstanding valour and nobility'. (29)

15-16 It seems best to take *diùbhail* and *euceart* as objects of *cnuasachd* and *àr nan oillt* as both object of *cnuasachd* and subject of *a bha casadh ris*.

17 Before setting out Agricola had 'sent his fleet ahead to plunder at various points and thus spread uncertainty and terror' (29).

25 As mentioned above, this was Agricola's seventh campaign.

41-56 Livingston comes close to the words of Calgacus as related in Tacitus: 'nullae ultra terrae ac ne mare quidem securum imminente nobis classe Romana... nunc terminus Britanniae patet... sed nulla iam altra gens, nihil nisi fluctus et saxa, et infestiores Romani,,, postquam cuncta vastantibus defuere terrae, mare scrutantur... auferre trucidare rapere falsis nominibus imperium... appellant' (30). Mattingly renders: 'There are no lands behind us, and even the sea is mastered by the Roman fleet... to-day the boundary of Britain is exposed, beyond us

lies no nation, nothing but waves and rocks and the Romans... they have exhausted the land by their indiscriminate plunder, and now they ransack the sea... Robbery, butchery, rapine, the liars call Empire'.

41-43 The three phrases from *taisc* to *fuinn* may be taken in apposition, the fertile lowlands being both 'the best part of our country' and 'the treasure house from which we are fed'. Agricola had entered what is now Scotland on his third campaign, consolidating this advance the following year when garrisons were built to secure the Forth-Clyde line (*Agricola* 23).

44-46 Concerning the use of the fleet in the sixth campaign, Tacitus writes that its appearance amazed the Britons: 'The mystery of their seas was divulged, their last refuge in defeat cut off.' (*Agricola* 25).

49-52 During the advance from what is now Stirling across Earn and Tay towards Stonehaven, Agricola constructed a series of forts which blocked the passes from the Grampians and may also have been planned as bases from which to attempt an occupation of the Highlands (Ogilvie and Richmond 1967: 67).

57ff Calgacus' situation is rendered more interesting by the psychological relationship to both Agricola and Carranach suggested by Livingston.

61 'Carranach Rìgh nam Pìocach, a mharbhadh goirid roimhe sin' (note in A and C). For the death of the Pictish king, see Bellenden (1821: 143). Livingston presumably interpreted the name as coming from *carthannach* 'kind, friendly'. Livingston writes in the *Vindication* that 'the... title Pìocich, was a national term of derision inflicted on the inhabitants of the low country by their brethren of the highlands' (11-12).

73-4 Mail was worn by centurions, standard-bearers, cavalry and auxiliaries in the Roman army. It 'could only be manufactured by specialised craftsmen as it was made up of numerous rings each one passing through four others to form a shirt stretching to the upper thigh.' (Holder 1982: 13)

81 An anachronistic reference to the lion rampant on later Scottish standards.

83-88 Livingston's style here is similar to that in which he praises Gaelic fighters in the War of Independence, in clan strife and on the fields of Alma and Balaclava in his own day.

113-124 Appeals to contemporary patriotism recur in a similar spirit in 'Cath Allt a' Bhannaich' 10ff., in 'Cath Thom Ealachaidh' 17-18 and elsewhere. The move to first person in 124 is also characteristic of Livingston's writing at such points.

113 A and C place a comma after *aisling*, which suggests that the poet is here addressing Calgacus: but the effect is contorted, and the punctuation in both editions frequently obscures rather than clarifying the sense.

125 Livingston may have drawn inspiration for the king's vision from a passage in Bellenden (1821: 133): 'Ane armit knicht, was sene fleing in the air; and, quehn he had floin round about all his army, he suddenly evanist out of sicht. The lift apperit dirk, and full of clouddis. Divers fowllis fell out of the air, full of blude, in the place quhare the battallis eftir junit. Galdus, nochtwithstanding thir sorowfull and uncouth prodigies appering sa suddanly in the face of his army, allegit, that thay signifit gret felicite to his pepil...'

129 *Coirb* glossed by Livingston in A as 'harpy'. For other words glossed by him and employed in this passage, see Chapter Eight.

133 The European mainland is intended, and in particular the subjugated Gauls.

139 According to Tacitus the Romans were advancing beyond a fortified Forth-Clyde line. Livingston may however intend the modern frontier established in the eleventh century.

159 The name means literally 'son of a hero'.

170 Glentarf farm stands today on the western slopes of Torlum between that hill and Dalginross. Calgacus' forces would see the sun rise over Torlum's summit, and then proceed down the valley of the River Knaik to Braco where it opens out into Strathallan.

177-8 Livingston attributes Calgacus' sudden advance to his dream-vision, and his army comes on the Romans, as it were, unexpectedly. He thus contradicts Tacitus, according to whom Agricola 'reached the Graupian mountain' and found it 'occupied by the enemy' (*Agricola* 29). The Britons were 'stationed on higher ground in a manner calculated to impress and intimidate [their] enemy.' (36) This recasting of history is suited to the heroic and beleaguered atmosphere of the poem.

179 *Táirrnibh* is abbreviated from *tarraingibh*.

181ff. Livingston does not follow the detailed account of the battle in Tacitus (*Agricola* 35-37). He does, however, draw on Bellenden (Boece) for certain details: the attack with spears, the circle formation, and the close of hostilities at nightfall (see Chapter Eight).

Fate incites the two sides to join battle (215), they draw close (221) and the Gaels meet the force of the Roman charge (230) with their spears (235, then again 248-50). The Gaels form into circles (251-2) and hold their position until dusk. The outcome of the battle is indecisive.

186 The emendation of *na* (A and C) to *nam* is supported by the frequent reduction of *nam* to *na* before initial *m* in A: however, Livingston almost invariably prefixes an apostrophe when preposition plus article is intended. It does preserve the sequence of six couplets, each opening with a noun applied to the Gaelic soldiers.

204 *An-seilbh* from A is interpreted as 'wrongful possession' (of Scottish soil by the Romans). C has no hyphen.

211-215 Blair's emendation (*ghabh* for *ghrab* 'hindered' in A) makes the passage easier to understand, yet the reading in A does not look like a misprint. Further difficulties are *uidhe* (a 'space' can hardly glitter, and *uidh* 'ford' makes better sense) and the feminine pronoun referred to *dàn* (normally masculine) in 213 and 215.

225 Livingston is probably thinking of tartan as the 'clothing of varied colours'.

226-8 The Gaels break a metaphorical yoke with real swords.

230-5 From Tacitus' account it seems that legionaries were not in fact used during the battle, and auxiliaries and cavalry wore lighter armour. Livingston's account is therefore probably hyperbolic, an attempt to transform the Roman soldiers into a metallic 'monster' (231).

257 According to Tacitus 'Of the enemy some 10,000 fell, on our side 360' (37).

Some variants

39 choidhch A

204 an seilbh C

47 'sa AC

213 ghabh C

111 a gheimheal A o' gheimheal C

120 sealbh A

124 h-aontaich A

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