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**Studies in Language Change in Bishop Percy's**  
***Reliques of Ancient English Poetry***

**Danni Lynn Glover**

MPhil dissertation

University of Glasgow

September 2013

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My parents, Michelle and Craig, and my late grandfather Frank, have instilled in me a strong ethic, a pride in my work, and a capacity for questioning since I was very young, and now that I am less young and more personally reflective I realise that every word I write owes something to the endless love, patience, and encouragement of my family. Thank you.

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Abstract of Master's Thesis, Submitted September 2013

Studies in Language Change in Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*

The aim of this thesis is to show the linguistic progression of selected Scottish ballads collected in Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*.

The study primarily involved close reading of Percy's source materials, including his Folio Manuscript (British Library Additional MS. 27879), his letters, and early printed versions of the ballads, mostly provided by his correspondents. This involved the handling of manuscripts and rare books. Close reading of these documents, compared with Percy's first edition, shows that he made significant philological modifications to the ballads in the interest of preserving certain words he deemed to be more ancient or authentic.

Furthermore, the thesis hypothesises the reasons for Percy's editing methodologies, and suggests that Percy edited ballads for the motivation of personal ambition, and that his editing philosophy was to synthesise a British identity from ballads which predate Britain. Here, the thesis draws on biographical information on Percy, and contemporary Enlightenment writers and their national identity politics.

Ultimately, the thesis hopes to open academic dialogue on Percy as a precursor to the Romantic movement. The author's recommendation is that further study is required, particularly on aspects of nation-building in Percy's oeuvre.

# Chapter one.

## Introduction.

### Research Questions

The ballad tradition in Scotland is a major export of the nation's cultural capital, and offers a valuable opportunity for studying the process of literary (re)-evaluation when book history methodologies are applied. The re-appropriation/recuperation of ballad material tells us much about contemporary contexts. Each rendering of the ballads leads us to conclusions about the political, religious or class situation of the circumstances of its production: the shift from orality to literacy; the Reformation; the Union of 1707; the Enlightenment; the American and French Revolutions; the Industrial Revolution; Romantic and Victorian medievalism; and present-day views on 'authenticity'. Study of ballad materials across generations of publication, within their shifting contexts, and from an interdisciplinary perspective, allows us to interrogate current methodologies in book history (including the history of textual editing), and in literary studies more generally. These considerations are comparatively recent, but their implications have a wider significance.

A particular feature of the afterlives of ballads which merits attention is the philological (broadly defined) modifications undergone within these texts' written versions, not only in adding/subtracting substantive content (for example, lexicon and grammar) but also in features often termed 'accidental' (spelling, punctuation and script or font), or 'paratextual' (annotation, commentary, prefatory material, layout, and illustration). Using the first editions of Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) as a chronological anchor, my thesis will trace in detail the philological development of selected Scottish ballads, noting the ways in which Percy's editorial practice reflects contemporary

linguistic understanding and cultural influences. The *Reliques* is an appropriate vehicle for such an investigation because, as I will argue, not only was the eighteenth century a period of dramatic language change in Scotland (contemporary publications frequently demonstrate philological variation from their source material) but also changes undergone in the Scottish ballads reflect Scottish Enlightenment thought. Thomas Percy, for example, was particularly concerned with Augustan and Enlightenment ideas of “improvement” and propriety. This ideological concern had a profound impact on the language and contents of his publications of the ballads. My focus will be on two items in his collection, ‘Edom O’ Gordon’ and ‘Gil Morrice’, both Scottish in origin. What was Percy’s editorial purpose, and what were his standards for production in the *Reliques*? What challenges were present in maintaining his editorial standard? What conclusions can we draw about Percy’s social and political beliefs and intentions from the finished product?

The ballads were, of course, most famously edited between 1882 and 1898 by Francis Child (1825-1896) and had been produced before on widely-circulated broadsides, but the breadth and impact of Thomas Percy’s research is so great that closer study of his activities within their contemporary contexts is necessary to fully understand the canon of ballad literature. His is a very early example of printed ballad collection that can be credited with being a catalyst for the Romantic movement in Britain, being hugely influential on (for example) Wordsworth and Coleridge. Given its impact on British literary tastes, the need for philologically informed research on his collection, to better understand the afterlives of these ballads, is strong. The present project may be regarded as a preliminary ‘proof-of-concept’ study for further research (at a doctoral level) on textual afterlives, with particular reference to the appropriation of class (by editors and writers) in literature.

By consulting the manuscript first-hand, I have been able to obtain a thorough,

source-based understanding of Percy's methodologies. I intend to outline the history of the ballads “Edom O' Gordon”, which tells the story of an evil lord who burns down the castle in a neighbouring land along with the lady of the castle and her three children, and “Gil Morrice”, an equally tragic tale of a handsome young man who arranges a meeting with his mother, only to be killed when his mother's husband mistakes him for a paramour.<sup>1</sup> These ballads are both Scottish and both have roughly contemporary timelines, so they are comparable in terms of their evidence for language change in the eighteenth century and in earlier publications. Percy had a unique vision for each of these poems; for “Edom O' Gordon”, he invented several stanzas and for “Gil Morrice” he changed the name and the language substantially, but he had justification for all the changes he made from other versions of the poetry he sourced from libraries and correspondents. For both poems, he made notes, glossary entries, and references in supplementary essays. The content of these ballads can be fairly generic at times, but in the *Reliques* their application and purpose is far from it. Percy's annotations on the language of these ballads, as seen in the Folio Manuscript, distinguish between antiquity and “perfection” in a telling way. His distribution of punctuation, spelling, and stanzas demonstrates an editor who was preoccupied with making ballads politically unproblematic and suitable for an audience who were sensitive about their own history, rather than authentically representing unbiased historical fact. He was keen for attention, as long as it was beneficial to his professional life and from the correct people, and was careful to remain moderate in his writing as well as his personal life. He deployed glossaries to emphasise the historical inaccessibility – and, therefore, relative foreignness – of ballad materials to elevate the poetry to a level of sophisticated study rather than merely pleasurable reading, all the while maintaining the illusion that the ballads' humble origins should preclude any vicious critical attacks. In so

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These ballads appear under several different names. Unless referring to a specific version, they will be named in this thesis as they are named in the *Reliques*.

doing, Percy successfully writes one of the great works of British literature, encompassing Britain's thriving print culture, impressive manuscript history, and the oral literature of pre-literate Britons from across the country. He reframes the folk literature of Britain as being printed artefacts of the upper-classes in the Gothic style, which also allowed him to design for himself a role as the cultural guardian for the physical history, in manuscript and print, of the upper classes of Britain. His Gothic bardic nationalism was part of a wider trend of Gothic revivalism, which also involved the architect Augustus Pugin,<sup>2</sup> who designed the Houses of Parliament and had a huge influence on Gothic perceptions of Britain, and the novelist Horace Walpole, whose novel *Castle of Otranto* (1765) inspired Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818). Percy had a keen eye for trends and the influx of Neo-Gothic writing after his *Reliques* is a testament to this. His dedication to “the beautiful simplicity of our ancient English poetry” was the inspiration for Francis Grose's *Antiquities of England and Wales*,<sup>3</sup> a favourite of Wordsworth and Scott, and his literary invention of the minstrel formed the basis of James Beattie's poem *The Minstrel* (1771-4). He is, therefore, arguably, one of Britain's most influential editors of poetry in any genre.

## Biography of Thomas Percy

Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore (1729-1811) was born in Shropshire to Arthur Lowe Piercy,<sup>4</sup> a grocer, and his wife Jane (née Nott).<sup>5</sup> He began his education at Bridgnorth Free School (1737-41) and Newport School, Shropshire (1741-6) , and began his undergraduate study at Christ Church, Oxford in 1741 as a Careswell exhibitor,

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2 For an indispensable study of Pugin's influence on the Gothic revival in Britain, see Rosemary Hill (2007) *God's Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain* (London: Allen Lane)

3 Francis Grose (1787) *Antiquities of England and Wales* (London: Hooper and Wigsted) p.87; It may be worth noting that Percy contributed an original poem entitled *The Hermit of Warkworth* to Grose's *Antiquities*.

4 For details on Percy's name change, see Bertram H. Davis (1989) *Thomas Percy: A Scholar-Cleric in the Age of Johnson* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press) p.16

5 Unless otherwise stated, biographical information is from Oxford Dictionary of National Biography online, Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012; Thomas Percy (1729-1811) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21959?docPos=6>>

studying Classics and Hebrew. He obtained his BA in 1750, and in 1753 obtained his MA in Hebrew, French and Italian. 1753 was also the year in which he first took up chaplaincy, having served as deacon for two years previously. By 1756, he had residency at Easton Maudit, Northamptonshire, and rectorship of Wilby. His appointment as Rector was in no small part owed to George Augustus Yelverton, the earl of Sussex, who had also appointed Percy as his personal chaplain, the two having become close friends.

In his free time, Percy cultivated intellectual interests. By the early 1750s he had begun to write poetry, and was also interested in opera, card games, sightseeing, and socialising in fashionable coffee houses and gardens. His literary pursuits included the collecting of manuscripts. In 1753, while visiting his friend Humphrey Pitt, he wrote that he had come across a “very curious old manuscript in its present mutilated state, but unbound and sadly torn... lying dirty on the floor under a bureau in the parlour being used by maids to light the fire.”<sup>6</sup> The manuscript was the formative discovery of his body of work which would become his magnum opus, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*.

He married Anne Gutteridge in 1758 and they had six children, although all but two died in infancy. In 1765, he became Lord Northumberland's chaplain and secretary and often visited Northumberland House in London, where he also undertook the post of tutor to Northumberland's son. Anne became the wet-nurse to Queen Charlotte's son, Edward, who would be the father of Queen Victoria, and was awarded a pension of £100 for life after she was no longer required. In 1769 Percy was further honoured with the post of chaplain-in-ordinary to King George III. In 1770 and 1793 he was awarded Doctor of Divinity degrees from Cambridge and Christ Church Oxford, respectively. Percy and his family therefore enjoyed a lucrative lifestyle thanks to their patrons in the aristocracy; this loyalty is reflected in much of his published work, which was favourably edited towards the

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<sup>6</sup> *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, British Library Additional MS. 27,879. I am much indebted to the manuscript librarians of the British Library for their accommodation in viewing this extremely valuable resource.

Northumberland family in particular.

It is clear that Percy was diligent and ambitious in his professional life, and this impulse extended to his extracurricular activities. His time in London with the Northumberland household allowed him to make many artistically useful friends, including William Shenstone, Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, David Garrick and Joshua Reynolds, who would immortalise the Bishop in a portrait. He began his literary career with two sonnets published in the *Universal Visiter* in 1756, followed by a poem published in a collection by Robert Dodsley in 1758. The verse, which he called "Song", was set to music by Joseph Baidon, and would be described by Robert Burns as "perhaps the most beautiful Ballad in the English language"<sup>7</sup>. He turned his interest to translating Chinese works, and his book *Haoqiu zhuan* became the first full English language publication of a Chinese novel, in spite of the fact that Percy himself could not speak or write Chinese. Biographer Bertram Davis has noted that Percy was talented at spotting and profiting from literary fads and trends, as *Haoqiu zhuan* was:

a pioneering project designed to take advantage of the cult of chinoiserie which had begun in England in the seventeenth century and reached its height in the middle of the eighteenth, with public attention focused largely on such useful and attractive articles as furniture, porcelain and textiles. Chinese literature was virtually unknown, and no Chinese novel had ever been published in England.<sup>8</sup>

His 1763 work *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry*, an "improved" translation from Old Icelandic, was also a wise business interest, as it cashed in on the market for ancient texts made fashionable by James Macpherson's Ossianic poetry.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> J. De Lancey Ferguson, ed. (1931) *The Letters of Robert Burns*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon) vol.2, p.126

<sup>8</sup> Davis (1989) pp.69-71

Percy's interest in Chinese literature has been sparsely commented on in recent critical writings; however, see Eun Kyung Min, 'Thomas Percy's Chinese Miscellanies and the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765)' in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 3, China and the Making of Global Modernity (SPRING 2010), pp. 307-324 for a preliminary discussion.

<sup>9</sup> See James Macpherson ([1760] 1996) *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, ed. Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)

This taste for antiques and curiosities in literature was continued by *Northern Antiquities* (1770) and *Ancient Songs Chiefly on Moorish Subjects* (readied for press in 1775, but not published until 1932). He reconciled his literary interests with his clerical role with the publication of an original work, *A Key to the New Testament* (1766), and a new edition of *The Song of Solomon* (1764). He satisfied his role as a patronised chaplain in 1758 with the publication of his edition of *The Regulations and establishment of the household of Henry Algernon Percy, the fifth earl of Northumberland... begun anno domini MDXII*. His original long poem, *The Hermit of Warkworth*, was published in 1771. His career is characterised by such “hectic literary activity”,<sup>10</sup> never more so than in his production of the *Reliques*, a three-volume anthology comprising his aforementioned “very curious old MS. Collection of ancient Ballads”,<sup>11</sup> other ballad selections, and some shrewdly disguised original work by Percy and his literary friends.

Although Percy discovered the manuscript in 1753, he did not begin work on it until 1757, when he wrote to William Shenstone (1714-1763) describing his plans. He had been encouraged by the eminent lexicographer Samuel Johnson's promise to assist him in editing the material, although this promise never came to fruition, partially because Johnson disapproved of Percy's editorial direction. Shenstone became Percy's consultant on editorial matters, and the pair had an extensive correspondence until Shenstone's death in 1763. He was one of the few people to see the manuscript folio while Percy worked upon it. Percy, however, was not always keen on accepting the advice of his friend, and he sought other collaborators and sources of material, such as David Dalrymple. He worked closely with the broadsides in the Pepys collection at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and with the printer Cluer Dicey (1714-1775), who was able to share

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10 ODNB entry

11 Cleanth Brooks, ed. (1977) *Volume 7: The Correspondence of Thomas Percy and William Shenstone (The Percy Letters)* (9 vols.), series editors David Nicol Smith and Cleanth Brooks series ed. (Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana 1944-57; New Haven: University of Louisiana 1961-88), Cleanth Brooks and A. F. Falconer series ed. (Boston: Yale University 1977-88), p. 1

more than eighty ballads from his father's extensive collection. The collection steered away from political or bawdy ballads, and the ballads which found a place were selectively rewritten. Having been edited to a suitable level of propriety and politeness, the collection was finally dedicated to Elizabeth Percy, countess of Northumberland. The *Reliques* were a commercial hit which also enjoyed much critical support, although the writer Joseph Ritson condemned the collection, implying that “[Percy] has preferred his ingenuity to his fidelity”<sup>12</sup> and that the Folio Manuscript did not exist. Although Ritson was correct in that Percy was a somewhat creative editor, his editorial practice was undeniably carefully considered, with a strong sense of priority – as we shall see.

From the 1770s, Percy wrote less. Editions of the *Reliques* appeared in 1767 and 1775, and a fourth was published in 1794 by his nephew, also Thomas Percy. He was appointed Dean of Carlisle in 1778 and Bishop of Dromore, Northern Ireland in 1782. Anne died in 1806. Five years later, Percy died at his home and was buried next to his wife. His work continued to be reprinted into the twentieth century. He inspired generations of poets and balladeers including William Wordsworth, who wrote of the *Reliques* that “Poetry has been absolutely redeemed by it”<sup>13</sup> and Walter Scott, who credited the *Reliques* with his interest in ballad collection, writing that:

I remember well the spot where I read these volumes for the first time. It was beneath a huge platanus-tree, in the ruins of what had been intended for an old fashioned arbour in the garden I have mentioned. The summer day sped onward so fast, that notwithstanding the sharp appetite of thirteen, I forgot the hour of dinner, was sought for with anxiety, and was still found entranced in my intellectual banquet. To read and to remember was in this instance the same thing, and henceforth I overwhelmed my schoolfellows, and all who would hearken to me, with tragical recitations from the ballads of Bishop Percy. The first time, too, I could scrape a few shillings together, which were not common occurrences with me, I bought unto myself a copy of these beloved

12 Joseph Ritson, ed. (1763) *Ancient Songs and Ballads* (London: Payne and Foss)

13 'Essay Supplementary to the Preface', William Wordsworth (2008) ed. Stephen Gill *The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) pp.640-662;p.656

volumes; nor do I believe I ever read a book half so frequently, or with half the enthusiasm.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Cultural Context for the *Reliques***

During the reign of Elizabeth I, the trend for books as a form of imaginative escapism rather than only instruments for improvement began to spread exponentially; this trend has endured into the present day. The proliferation of ancient vernacular songs in eighteenth-century publishing proves that they were a genre which was particularly sought after by the public.<sup>15</sup> The popularity of ballad literature during this time proves the market for largely non-educational texts. The shift from the pragmatic to the leisurely in literary practices in the Elizabethan era has been characterised thus by book historian Richard Altick:

the demands of the imagination and the feelings are too strong to be consistently denied. At their disposal always is man's inexhaustible talent for rationalization, and the extent to which it was employed is suggested by the popularity of lighter forms of literature – jestbooks, chapbooks, ballads, and the fiction that Thomas Nashe and Thomas Deloney devised expressly for the common reader. Usually the Elizabethan or Jacobean reader could find a plausible reason for dipping into such dubious books. The reading of jestbooks could be, and was, justified on the ground that they were pills to purge melancholy and thus (since the Elizabethans were firm believers in psychosomatic medicine) could improve one's physical health. Similarly, because the reading of history was recommended as perfectly safe and useful, it was possible to take up with a clear conscience any book, however fantastic, that had the word 'history' displayed on its title page. Thus innumerable chapbooks and debased romances found their way into the hands of pious purchasers.<sup>16</sup>

Robert Crawford has shown that the applications of literature were further adapted

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14 John Gibson Lockhart (1845) *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart.*, 2 vols., vol.1, p.30

15 Some notable examples of eighteenth-century collections, aside from Percy's include Thomas d'Urfey's *Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1719-1720), Allan Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany* (1724), and Joseph Ritson's *Select Collection of English Songs* (1783). This list is not exhaustive; for a more full discussion, see Albert B. Friedman (1961) *The Ballad Revival: Studies on the Influence of Popular on Sophisticated Poetry* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press), which also discusses broadsides.

16 Richard Altick, 'The English Common Reader from Caxton to the eighteenth century' in David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, eds. (2006) *The Book History Reader* (London and New York: Routledge) pp.440-449

in the eighteenth century to conform to Enlightenment notions of “improvement”.<sup>17</sup> This meant that authors had an increasingly free rein to publish varied material, so long as it was justifiably tasteful under the new research heading of “Rhetoric and Belles Lettres”, which would evolve into English literature. The eighteenth century was therefore a time of particularly intense advancement for the popular press. By the time the *Reliques* were published in 1765, ballad collections and poetic miscellanies were among the highest selling titles available to the public.<sup>18</sup> Celebrated editions included Allan Ramsay's *The Evergreen, being A Collection of Scots Poems, Wrote by the Ingenious before 1600* (1724); Thomas D'Urfey's *Wit and Mirth; or, Pills to Purge Melancholy* (1719-20); the anonymous *A Collection of Old Ballads* (1723-5); and Thomas Wharton's *The Union* (1753).

Part of the trend for “lighter forms of literature”, which played heavily on contemporary conceptions of history (including the invention of a national literary identity based on ancient textual evidence), was literature from and inspired by ancient British cultures. Percy became involved with publishing (supposedly) historical material in his works *Northern Antiquities* (1700) and *Five Pieces of Runic Poetry* (1763).<sup>19</sup> These were commercially successful books, but nothing could match the esteem and popularity of James Macpherson's (1736-1796) *Ossian* poetry. His first volume of ancient Scottish poems, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, was published in 1760. Extracts of the slight volume, comprising only 15 short pieces of poetry, were published in subsequent issues of *The Scots Magazine* and *The Gentlemen's Magazine*.<sup>20</sup> It received almost universally positive reviews, which were anticipated by Macpherson in his preface, as he promised the hungry

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17 Robert Crawford (1992) *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press)

18 See Michael F. Suarez 'The Production and Consumption of the eighteenth century Poetic Miscellany' in Isabel Rivers, ed. (2001) *Books and their Readers in eighteenth century England: New Essays* (London and New York: Leicester University Press) pp.217-251

19 A further work of antique poetry, *Ancient Songs Chiefly on Moorish Subjects*, was prepared in 1775 but did not reach publication until 1932.

20 For an account of Macpherson's success and influence, see Fiona Stafford's 'Introduction: The Ossianic Poems of James Macpherson' in Macpherson (1996) pp.v-xviii

reading public more:

It is believed that, by a careful inquiry, many more remnants of ancient genius, no less valuable than those now given to the world, might be found in the same country where these have been collected. In particular there is reason to hope that one work of considerable length, and which deserves to be styled an heroic poem, might be recovered and translated.<sup>21</sup>

*Fingal*, the heroic epic in question, appeared in 1761. Its successor, *Temora*, was published in 1763. The two epics were collected in *The Works of Ossian* in 1765. The authenticity of Macpherson's bardic poetry was soon challenged by the Irish historian Charles O'Connor<sup>22</sup> and by Dr Johnson.<sup>23</sup> Macpherson refused to produce his manuscript, and the debate over the origins of the poems continued long after his death. In 1952, Derrick Thomson asserted that Macpherson did a great deal of research on oral Gaelic literature, but that he adapted the characters, plots, and ideas of the stories and poems to produce his own original work.<sup>24</sup> Thomson's claim is now generally accepted by scholars of eighteenth century literature.

Macpherson's books were not pro-Scotland in a nationalistic or Jacobite sense; they prioritised a Celtic history of Scotland, but this was within a British context, in an English translation, and enabled by the increasing influence of Scotland in Anglo-British culture and society. He dedicated *Temora* to John Stuart, the third Earl of Bute (1713-1792), who was Britain's first Scottish Prime Minister, to pay tribute to him as a symbol of Scotland's prosperity in the Union. Percy's interpretations of antique literature were a direct response to the Celtic dimension of Macpherson's work. In a letter to the Welsh antiquary Evan

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21 James Macpherson (1760) *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Hamilton and Balfour) p.vii

22 Charles O'Connor (1766) *Dissertation on the History of Ireland. To which is subjoined, a Dissertation on the Irish Colonies established in Britain. With some Remarks on Mr Mac Pherson's Translation of Fingal and Temora* (Dublin: G Faulkner)

23 See T. M. Curley (2009) *Samuel Johnson, The Ossian Fraud and the Celtic Revival in Great Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

24 Derrick Thomson (1952) *The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's 'Ossian'* (Aberdeen: Oliver and Boyd)

Evans, Percy describes a desire to restore an Anglo-privileged balance to the British book market:

the Scotch [are] everywhere recommending the antiquities of their country to public notice, vindicating it's [sic] history, setting off it's poetry, and by constant attention to their grand national concern as to have the Dialect they speak to be considered as the most proper language for our pastoral poetry. Our most polite Ladies warble Scottish Airs, and in the Senate itself whatever relates to the Scottish Nation is always mentioned with particular respect. – Far from blaming this attention in the Scotch, I think it much to their credit, and am sorry that a large class of our fellow subjects, with whom we were united in the most intimate Union for many ages before Scotland ceased to be our inveterate enemy, have not shewn the same respect to the peculiarities of their own Country, but by their supineness and neglect, have suffered a foolish and inveterate prejudice to root itself in the minds of their *com-patriotes* the English. A Prejudice, which might have been in a good measure prevented had they occasionally given us specimens of the treasures contained in their native language: and which may even yet be in part removed by the same means.<sup>25</sup>

In a later letter to Evans, Percy reveals that he shares Johnson's strong doubts about the legitimacy of Macpherson's claims to antiquity,<sup>26</sup> although he never publicly voiced his concerns. Percy's professional relationship towards Macpherson is therefore frequently interpreted as being reactionary, or standing in rivalry with him, but socially cautious enough not to become involved in the politically charged conflict of scholars which followed the publication of Macpherson's poetry.<sup>27</sup> His engagement with Macpherson's recuperation of ancient literature shows his appreciation for the opportunities that his predecessor's work opened up for him, although he was sceptical of Macpherson's methods. Particularly worrying to Percy was the apparent lack of a material source for *Ossian*. He was therefore anxious to assert the provenance of his Folio

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25 Aneirin Lewis (1957) *Volume 5: The Correspondence of Thomas Percy & Evan Evans (The Percy Letters)*, p.2

26 Lewis (1957) pp.95-98

27 See Robert Rix (May/August 2009) 'Thomas Percy's Antiquarian Alternative to *Ossian*' in *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol.46 No.2, pp.197-229

Manuscript to such an extent that his preface to the fourth edition of the *Reliques* was apologetic for his “great parade of his authorities”.<sup>28</sup>

Having asserted that there was a precedent and a demand for antique literature, and having secured an original source which legitimised his claim to history, Percy was faced with the challenge of making the *Reliques* acceptable to the arbiters of eighteenth-century taste and politeness. Grace Trenary has noted that:

in 1765 public taste was divided against itself; it demanded two things not easily reconcilable, romantic wildness and a smooth, elegant style. The old ballads provided situations picturesque and thrilling enough to gratify the most exacting palate. But their style was rough and unpolished, entirely without ornament and the conventional graces of poetic diction. Percy understood the taste of his time and, only half realising that it was a perverted and jaded taste, he set himself to make his 'parcel of old ballads' as attractive as might be.<sup>29</sup>

Percy achieved an acceptable level of taste by omitting bawdy and political ballads; arranging the ballads into stanzas with modern punctuation; and by either modernising or traditionalising the spellings of words in his ballads, particularly his Scottish ones. Miscellany was an ideal format for his project because, as Suarez has shown, “The miscellany... typically celebrates – and indeed constructs – taste, novelty and contemporaneity in assembling a synchronous body of material.”<sup>30</sup>

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28 Thomas Percy (1765) *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs and Other Pieces of Our Earlier Poets, Together with Some Few of Later Date* (London: J. Dodsley), 3 vols., vol.1, xvi

29 Grace Trenary (July 1915) 'Ballad Collections of the Eighteenth Century' in *The Modern Language Review*, vol.10, no.3, pp.283-303; p.289

30 Suarez (2001) p.219

## The *Reliques*

The *Reliques* are, according to the interpretations of traditional literary criticism, flawed. As a collection, they incompletely represent the spectrum of experience which the ballad tradition vocalised due to the omission of the rude and the political. Percy ignores the oral history of ballads because its non-material existence does not fit with his approach of manipulating textual evidence for the socially motivated purpose of recreating history, which undermines the traditional transmission of ballads and detracts from their intrinsic worth. The publication of controversial material was a contentious issue, fuelled by the contemporary thirst for ballad collection in the long eighteenth century. James Hogg's mother Margaret Hogg (née Laidlaw), who provided material for the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, famously told Scott that:

there war never ane o' my sangs prentit till ye prentit them yoursel', an' ye hae spoilt them awthegither. They were made for singing an' no for reading: but ye hae broken the charm now, an' they'll never be sung mair. An' the worst thing of a', they're nouter right spell'd nor right setten down.<sup>31</sup>

Mrs Laidlaw's strong reaction demonstrates the debate around several key concerns of the ballad editor: how should oral sources be spelled? Were oral sources reliable for publication in the first place? For that matter, ballads themselves had to be justifiable as “polite” (in the eighteenth century sense)<sup>32</sup> material. Anything deemed “improper” or “rude” would simply not have been commercially viable, and with the burgeoning book trade in Britain, this concern had major economical implications.

Percy's editing shows him to be precise on all these issues, although his alterations, omissions, and additions may be considered intrusive. As a patronised cleric to the

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<sup>31</sup> James Hogg (1834) *The Domestic Manners and Private Life of Sir Walter Scott* (Glasgow: John Reid & Co.) p.61

<sup>32</sup> For an in-depth discussion of the intricacies of “politeness” in the eighteenth century, see Paul Langford (2002) “The Uses of Eighteenth Century Politeness” in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Sixth Series, Vol. 12, pp.311-331

aristocracy, his cultural interests had to adhere to certain standards of propriety, hence the notable omission of bawdy and political songs. His spelling of regional<sup>33</sup> words in the *Reliques* is consistent throughout, far more so than the spelling of early printed and manuscript sources he took the verses from. His attempt at authenticity is controlled by his need to regularise how older (or, perhaps, “ruder”, to use an eighteenth century phrasing for parts of culture or society which were not considered genteel or refined) versions of language should be transmitted to his contemporary audience, a debate which is still ongoing in the twenty-first century. This manifests itself in the *Reliques* as a dismissal of oral sources, due to their fleeting nature and inability to be completely stabilised for a mass-produced printed text. In fact, there is no evidence to suggest Percy did any field work at all in collecting his ballads; had he done so, his collection would perhaps be more fondly remembered as one which tried to encompass the whole tradition with genuine intent to preserve and represent the ballads, just as Francis Child's ballads do. This apparent omission of material from oral sources was far from accidental, as Percy was an extremely economical editor. His invention, in the traditional sense of the word, of a literate ballad culture was an effort of nation-building as much as was Macpherson's, though his methods for achieving this, and the nation he aimed to build, were quite different.

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33 For the purposes of this thesis, 'regional' may be read to mean 'Scots'.

## The critical tradition

Ballads have always had currency in English scholarship, but recently Percy has been less fashionable. The most comprehensive biographical study of the editor was Bertram H. Davis's *Thomas Percy: A Scholar-Cleric in the Age of Johnson* (1989), but Albert Friedman's publications in the 1950s and 60s are also indispensable resources for their thoroughness and originality. In the twenty-first century, Percy scholarship enjoyed a revival in the publications of Nick Groom, in particular *The Making of Percy's Reliques* (1999). Although the *Reliques* are not "forged" in the sense that *Fingal* was, they grew out of a culture of feigned authenticity and this context is important for understanding the book's genesis and the reception of it. Ian Haywood's *The Making of History: A Study of the Literary Forgeries of James Macpherson and Thomas Chatterton in Relation to eighteenth century Ideas of History and Fiction* (1986) is an excellent book on the topic. Of the eighteenth century ballad revival in general, too many bright and bold analyses have been written to list, although certain publications that should be foregrounded here provide an especially useful framework for considering the work of Thomas Percy, such as Steve Newman's *Ballad Collection, Lyric, and the Canon: The Call of the Popular from the Restoration to the New Criticism* (2007). Furthermore, Percy's correspondence was published between 1944-88 as *The Percy Letters* in nine volumes by series editors David Nichol Smith and Cleanth Brooks.

Bertram H. Davis's *Thomas Percy: A Scholar-Cleric in the Age of Johnson* has little to say in terms of criticism of Percy's literary practices, but it leaves no stone unturned in terms of providing a complete account of his life and work. Davis shows a fastidious attention to detail, and a comprehensive range of research libraries, individual collections, and other sources of knowledge in his acknowledgements and bibliography. He describes Percy's life in terms of the major discernible eras: his early years at Bridgnorth and Christ

Church; his first years as a vicar; Easton Maudit; his research and quest for publication in London; his scholarship practices during the time of the *Reliques*; his years as the King's Chaplain; his promotions to Dean of Carlisle and, later, Bishop of Dromore; his time in Dublin during the Irish rebellion; and finally, his later years.

Davis's book is not intended to be a critical account of Percy's work, but it nevertheless offers solid biographical context for critical conclusions Percy scholars may draw. For example, Davis gives a full account of the correspondence between Percy and the various contributors and counsellors who helped the *Reliques* into fruition, with ample textual support from the nine-volume selection of his letters published by David Nichol Smith and Cleanth Brooks. This attention to his skills as a networker provides a context for the culture of letters in the eighteenth century which Percy keenly desired to participate in. Davis characterises the close relationship between Percy and Shenstone, which provides evidence for the nature and extent of Shenstone's involvement. Most importantly, in his meticulous chronicling of Percy's entire career, Davis gives an overview of his ambition, which was the driving force in his intensive literary output. Biographical interpretations of literature have not been fashionable for some time and with good reason – they are often two-dimensional and detract from the complexity of literary works (imagine reading *Finnegan's Wake* with only a biography of Joyce for reference). However, especially in eighteenth century Britain, when a strong identity was imperative, it is undoubtedly useful to have biography as a frame of reference (*Mrs Dalloway* would be less engaging with no comprehension of Woolf's bluestocking politics, for example).

Albert Friedman's 1954 paper, 'The First Draft of Percy's *Reliques*', provides a fully annotated list of the editor's selections for the first draft of his great collection, citing the sources where available for his transcripts and amalgams. The "Pre-*Reliques*", as Friedman describes them, are shown to be "the starting point for any detailed study of the

compilation of the greatest ballad books.”<sup>34</sup>

Friedman notes that all but one of the seventeen traditional Scottish ballads in the *Reliques* are missing from the draft list, and proposes a few reasons why this may be. Firstly – perhaps most likely given Percy's work ambitious programme of scholarship – Friedman suggests that “even in the earliest stages of putting together the *Reliques*, Percy was holding back material for the multitude of future projects teeming in his brain.”<sup>35</sup> Alternatively, Friedman notes some textual evidence in the form of a letter to Shenstone which implied that he was concerned that the Scottish poems required their own volume with an explanatory glossary.<sup>36</sup> This theory is supported further by a “hectic” letter announcing his decision to integrate the Scottish ballads in the completed three volumes, with any necessary additions being made to the glossary.<sup>37</sup> Also missing from the first draft are the eighteen “Ballads that illustrate Shakespeare” from the first edition; Friedman suggests that Percy “was planning an independent essay on Shakespeare... [but] time was against him.”<sup>38</sup> As for the Scottish ballads, they were ultimately included because, Friedman suspects, “Several of the Scottish ballads were already in print, though only as broadsides or pamphlets distributed locally in Scotland... If Percy did not use the Scottish ballads in the *Reliques*, therefore, he might well be anticipated by Dalrymple or some other Scottish editor.”<sup>39</sup> Friedman takes a cynical view of Percy's broad but specific editorial method, but he is consistently able to substantiate his claims with textual evidence. It seems particularly likely that Percy would include material in the *Reliques* which was originally intended for separate publication because his work turnover was swift, and a vast masterpiece was more valuable to his career aspirations than several shorter texts.

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34 Albert B. Friedman (1954), 'The First Draft of Percy's *Reliques*' in *PMLA*, vol. 69, no. 5, pp.1233-1249, p.1249

35 Friedman (1954) p.1245

36 See Cleanth Brooks (1977) *Volume 7: The Correspondence of Thomas Percy & William Shenstone (The Percy Letters)*, pp.94-95

37 Brooks (1977) pp.140-142

38 Friedman (1954) p.1246

39 Friedman (1954) p.1246

Furthermore, the length of the *Reliques* demands greater forgiveness for sweeping editorial decisions than do several short texts. Percy's motivations for the inclusion of Scottish and Shakespearean texts compared to his original plan in the first draft warrant closer attention, and Friedman's research aims at becoming the "starting point" for such "detailed study".

Friedman's later book *The Ballad Revival: Studies in the Influence of Popular on Sophisticated Poetry* (1960) had a wider range of interest, encompassing analyses of classical collectors such as Tacitus as well as modern collectors like Addison, Scott, and Burns. *The Ballad Revival* shows the ways in which popular ballad poetry came to be perceived as worthy of critical attention, and pinpoints *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* as the "pivotal document of the ballad revival"<sup>40</sup>. Friedman's discussion of ballad revivalism is organised chronologically and with a refreshingly literary perspective. Although he recognises that antiquarianism is a relevant entry-point for ballad criticism, it is not the only valid interpretation of the movement. Friedman engages with the antiquarian aspect of this genre of poetry only when describing the practicalities of collecting poetry (such as in his description of Joseph Addison's 'Chevy Chase' papers in chapter four)<sup>41</sup> but, acknowledging the conclusion suggested by the book's title, ultimately treats ballads as sophisticated pieces of poetry which warrant discussion outwith their insular context. Indeed Friedman's book is practically unique in allowing ballads to be treated as the inspiration for more modern pieces of poetry, such as that of John Keats, without suggesting that modern poetry with similar features is a mere imitation.

Friedman's chapter on Percy and the *Reliques* is particularly perceptive. This may be due to the fact that he credits Percy as the catalyst for the entire ballad revival (perhaps unfairly: Allan Ramsay's *Tea-Table Miscellany* and *The Evergreen* were comparable

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40 Friedman (1961), p.185

41 Friedman (1961) p.110

commercial successes, were consulted by Percy in his own research, and are fine examples of ballad collection). The chapter is most insightful in its discussion of the two men who perhaps shaped public opinion of the *Reliques* more than any others, albeit for different reasons: Samuel Johnson and Joseph Ritson. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was a great champion of Percy's ballad projects. This may seem surprising, as Boswell's *Life of the doctor* notes that he "always displayed ridicule" when discussing ballads and their imitations,<sup>42</sup> but as Friedman points out, Johnson "knew a great number of ballads, good and bad, and was genuinely delighted by them, but that he opposed giving ballads the dignity of book print or elaborate annotation and thought the ballad an absolutely unsuitable model for correct poets."<sup>43</sup> Given that Johnson had in fact encouraged the publication of Percy's Folio Manuscript and not the eventual *Reliques* with its plethora of paratexts, and Johnson's unpredictable predilection for Gothic romance poetry, his endorsement is less of a surprise. It was not until Shenstone became involved later that the manuscript began to be edited into a contemporary collection.

Joseph Ritson (1752-1803), on the other hand, was Percy's greatest detractor. He implied in his *Ancient Songs and Ballads* that Percy's closely guarded manuscript was too "multifarious" to exist, and that it was a forgery in the vein of Macpherson or Chatterton. If Percy could successfully defend himself against these accusations, he would find it more difficult to answer to the crime of doctoring the verses. In defence of Percy's edits, rewrites, and fabrications, Friedman argues that the artificiality of the collection is justified in that his edits were made in the spirit of editing conventions and standards of the day. Even the ballads which were grossly extended are defended successfully, as Friedman gives an account of the gaps in their individual manuscript editions which made them in

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42 George Birbeck Norman Hill and Lawrence Fitzroy Powell, eds. (1934) *Boswell's Life of Johnson, Together with Boswell's Journal of a tour of the Hebrides and Johnson's Diary of a journey into North Wales*, 6 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press), Vol II, p.212

43 Friedman (1961) p.190

many cases indecipherable. The notable example 'Child Elle', which Percy took from a fragmentary 39 lines to a 200 line miniature-epic is excused, as Friedman argues that the eventual critical reach of this ballad meant that the doctoring was worthwhile. His suggestion that "what are we to say [of this intrusion] when we find Scott concurring in the public's high opinion of the ballad?"<sup>44</sup> may seem facetious, but it is difficult to argue with his defence of inauthenticity.

If anything, Friedman is too complimentary concerning Percy. He notes that Ritson was concerned that no distinction was drawn between courtly minstrels, who would have been well-suited to 'Northumberland Betrayed by Douglas' and other ballads of nobility, and provincial, popular minstrels, from whom one might expect a Robin Hood ballad or 'John Anderson my Jo', but Friedman can offer no defence of this oversight. Perhaps no defence is possible; if this is the case, it should factor into any and all criticisms of the work, as it is impossible for Percy to contextualise the minstrel in Britain without fully understanding what a minstrel may represent. Friedman can also be a little personally dismissive of Ritson, noting that "his taste was dictated simply by a perverse desire to contradict Percy"<sup>45</sup> which is an unfounded and unhelpful statement, and detracts from the more eloquent areas of argument.

Friedman's views on Percy dominated discussion until the recent work of Nick Groom. Groom's work has a much broader range than that of his predecessors. His book, *The Making of Percy's Reliques* (1999), is not only about the creative editorial process behind the *Reliques* but also a very general introduction to eighteenth-century publishing and editing practices combined with a history of Percy's other literary pursuits. His later essay, "'The purest english": Ballads and the English Literary Dialect', uses the *Reliques* as an anchor to his argument that "noise defined the aesthetics of Englishness"<sup>46</sup>, and

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44 Friedman (1961) p.209

45 Friedman (1961) p.219

46 Nick Groom (2006) "'The purest english": Ballads and the English Literary Dialect' in *The eighteenth century*, vol. 47,

shows how Percy manipulated noises, voices, and song to build a neo-Gothic England in an early Britain.

Groom's book is a comprehensive study of Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* from a book-historical perspective, focusing on the editorial process of selection of materials to produce the finished volume. It shows how the *Reliques* may be said to be an intertextual project by describing the literary and cultural network in which Percy worked, including letters by those who assisted him on his project, such as William Shenstone and Evan Evans, but argues that Percy ultimately made his own editorial decisions, often disregarding the advice of his friends and colleagues. Groom engages with relevant literary theories, although his approach is not so strictly rooted in theoretical perspectives as to become abstracted from the text.

From the outset, Groom claims that the purpose of Percy's *Reliques* was the “establishment of the ballad as a valid literary form”,<sup>47</sup> an argument which is well sustained in his depiction of Percy's painstaking research, sending of ballads to the literati of the time, and assumed quest for a national literature. Robert Crawford has argued that the study of English literature is an Enlightenment invention, meaning that Enlightenment scholars in European universities, notably in Scotland, were the first to study non-classical literature, affirming the status of contemporary novels and poetry as literature rather than mere play<sup>48</sup>; Groom revisits this idea, using Percy's editorial intentions as an example to solidify the point. Given that many valid criticisms can be made about the actual contents of the *Reliques*, exploring its *raison d'être* rather than intrinsic merit is a refreshing approach. Groom theorises the *Reliques* further in his frequent references to Jacques Derrida's question of literary origin<sup>49</sup> (in reference to the question of national literary

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no. 2/3, pp.179-202

47 Nick Groom (1999) *The Making of Percy's Reliques* (Oxford: Clarendon Press) p.3

48 Crawford (1992)

49 Jacques Derrida (1992) *Acts of Literature* ed. Derek Altridge (London and New York: Routledge)

identity) and Michel de Certeau's discourse on how the transmission of culture affects understanding.<sup>50</sup> Given the highly bibliographical nature of Groom's argument, however, it is possible that better links could be established between book history and literary theory; clearly the two elements of book production and consumption have a relationship which deserves further exploration.

The sections of the book about the ballad libraries visited and borrowed from by Percy are particularly thoroughly researched. Groom shows a clear affinity between the Pepys library and the completed *Reliques*, for example, and goes into great detail listing books loaned by various collectors and institutions. In addition to the various lists of benefactors, Groom also provides ten extremely detailed appendices, detailing Percy's transcriptions from the folio and from private collections, the order of contents of the various drafts of the *Reliques*, a special focus on Robin Hood ballads, and the ballads which were rejected for the collection. The broadside ballads Percy collected are lacking in these lists. Given that book history, early print culture and the Scottish broadside tradition are current research topics, one might hope that a comprehensive study of a prolific eighteenth century editor might discuss the contemporary print culture at length, and it is perhaps an oversight on Groom's part to miss the opportunity to do so; this project intends to address this gap in scholarship in relation to the *Reliques*. Nevertheless, the appendices which are present are informative to the point of being indispensable for new studies of the *Reliques*.

Groom makes much of the fact that Percy was interested in print copies of the ballads rather than oral transmissions. He does not explore the reasons for this dismissal of oral sources as much as one might hope, but his argument provides a focus for the cultural context of antiquarianism. The revealing third chapter discusses the contrast

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<sup>50</sup> Michael de Certeau (1986) 'The Beauty of the Dead: Nisard', *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, trans. Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press) pp.119-136

between the methodologies of Percy and the more enduringly famous James Macpherson, author and editor of the *Ossian* poems. Both were giants of the antiquarian world; comparing them provides a context for contemporary arguments of authenticity and the invention of national identity. Groom pits Macpherson's Celt against Percy's Goth and ultimately reveals the artificiality of both. This dichotomy also engages with the competitiveness of the antiquarian market in eighteenth century Britain. Groom suggests that Percy felt a rivalry between himself and Macpherson in the nation-building content of their respective texts, and Percy made several comments in letters about the artificiality of the *Ossian* publications. It is worth noting, however, that although Macpherson may have silently entirely fabricated some of his poems, they appear to have worked incredibly similarly as antiquarians; both are noted to have been jealously defensive of and private with their "manuscripts", and, certainly in Macpherson's case, for good reason. Groom dedicates an entire chapter to the relationship between Percy and Macpherson.

"The purest english": Ballads and the English Literary Dialect' is an essay on the presence of noise in ballad literature and how this shapes readings of the poems in the context of the newly formed British union in the eighteenth century. Groom uses the *Reliques* as the example in his discussion, as in the *Reliques*, "textual sound effects are deployed in order to exemplify an emerging English identity, and that this subsequently influenced the antiquarian editing of later ballad collections and the composition of verse. These activities also attempted to distance the English tradition from political balladeering and the rude sounds of rioting."<sup>51</sup> He identifies his sound theory as being "underpinned by the "neo-pragmatist" poetics of Richard Shusterman, as elaborated for literary criticism by Ralph Pordzik". According to Groom, such readings:

should be seen as a literary practice that tries to be more

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51 Groom (2006) p.180

adequate, more true, to the text's sensual import, one that brings us closer to achieving an internally more integrative experience of reading as 'collaboration' with the text... Neo-pragmatist reading stresses the harmonic expectations of eighteenth century readers confronted with a ballad or song text, and argues that acoustic references in verse should not simply be considered as metaphorical, but as the traces of a lost (and irrecoverable) physical reality. Literature is, in other words, a secret history of noise.<sup>52</sup>

Groom makes the convincing point that neo-pragmatist theory can be applied to what may be loosely described as “musical” literature of the eighteenth century to understand literary ideologies of nation-building which were prominent at the time. Percy used his *Reliques* to write a Gothic Anglo-British identity, distinct from the Celts favoured by Macpherson, distinguished by the Gothic nations' supposedly advanced print culture. In the *Reliques*, the focus on the cultural importance of print stands in opposition to the persistently oral vein of noise running through the text. “Sounds pervade the collection,” argues Groom. “Like Prospero's isle, it is full of noises,”<sup>53</sup> These sounds include direct speech, the lamentations of ghosts (few heroes and heroines of ballads succeed in making it to the end without experiencing the noise of spectres, or becoming spectres themselves), battle horns, birdsong, and peasant musical refrains. Most interestingly in terms of his editorial technique, Percy also deploys noisy spellings, with redundant letters and Scottish and West Country accents throughout. As Groom notes:

For a book that at one level asserts the primacy of print over oral culture, it is strange that so much of its language needs to be physically voiced either to be understood or to replicate accents from the North or from Somerset. If the *Reliques* draws attention to the visual quality of outlandish and obsolete spellings that are lost when the word is spoken, the word must still be understood as it is spoken rather than written.<sup>54</sup>

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52 Groom (2006) pp.179-80

53 Groom (2006) p.184

54 Groom (2006) p.189

The *Reliques* are notable for their extensive appendices and paratextual elements, but little attention is given to the essentially musical background of balladry. Groom thinks this omission curious, as Percy gives much attention to musicality, instruments, and song in his collection – the frontispiece and title page of the first edition of the *Reliques* feature a harp, and drone instruments are described in several of the poems – but Groom believes this omission to be an act of de-politicisation, in order to present his work to polite society. Percy wanted to “[make] the ballad tradition less immediate, less contemporary, less tangible, less active, less irreverent, and less political.”<sup>55</sup> There would be no need for an appendix of musical notation, as – Groom argues - the music is most functional in the background and does not, according to Percy, necessarily demand academic interest.

Groom's essay is a highly original piece of scholarship on Percy's ballads, as it acknowledges the awkward juxtaposition of printed ballad works and their inherent orality, but ultimately justifies it. Percy re-frames ballads as a printed resource, but cannot deny their orality, as it runs a vein through the whole book in the form of popular refrains and urban and rural background hums. The kind of intelligent re-evaluation offered by Groom offers fresh outlooks on ballad criticism. This essay in particular is useful because it raises questions about Percy's editing techniques, especially questions about why he would decide to include – or not include – extra-textual or paratextual elements to allow for the movement of sound throughout the poetry. As Groom has shown, the use of noise in the *Reliques* is utterly political, even if only because it has been politically de-clawed, and Percy's relationship with it reveals much about his intentions for the *Reliques* and his further publishing career.

Ian Haywood's book *The Making of History* addresses the supposed critical neglect of the literary forgeries of the eighteenth century and proposes that an antidote to this is to discuss them within the context of the contemporary fashion for historical writing. He uses

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<sup>55</sup> Groom (2006) p.194

James Macpherson (the writer of *Ossian*) and Thomas Chatterton (the Rowley poet) as contextual examples: these writers are certainly widely read and discussed, and therefore add a critical relevance to the argument. His research hypothesis is that:

Ancient literature was afforded a greater historical value than were modern reconstructions of the past. The whole concept of historical fiction was in its infancy. Hence Macpherson and Chatterton transplanted their visions of the past and made history from the inside. In doing so, they gave a boost to the very genre they were disguising.<sup>56</sup>

Although the book over-simplifies the history of historical fiction in the pre-Enlightenment era (writers from Herodotus to Barbour had been writing fiction based on history for centuries), it successfully encourages dialogue on the cultural worth of forged bardic poetry.

*The Making of History* is strictly historiographical. This focus on the task allows Haywood to make his argument extremely in-depth: he shows convincingly that what he describes as “literary archaeology”<sup>57</sup> was a driving force in nation-building, which is characteristic of eighteenth century British (and especially in Haywood's examples, Scottish) literature. He does so by use of plenty of epistolary evidence: for example, letters by the Welsh ballad editor Evan Evans, Sir Walter Scott and Samuel Johnson, who was famously sceptical of *Ossian*: when asked by Dr Blair if he thought any man alive could have written the poetry he notoriously replied “Yes, Sir, many men, many women, and many children.”<sup>58</sup> The evidence from Johnson is the most compelling – certainly the most dramatic – and warrants expansion. This gap in the material has since been answered by Thomas Curley.<sup>59</sup>

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56 Ian Haywood (1986) *The Making of History: A Study of the Literary Forgeries of James Macpherson and Thomas Chatterton in Relation to eighteenth century Ideas of History and Fiction* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press) p.11

57 Haywood (1986) Chapter 4, 'Literary Archaeology: Macpherson, Percy and the Anthologists'

58 Quoted in T. M. Curley (December 2009) 'The Great Samuel Johnson and His Opposition to Literary Liars' in *Bridgewater Review*, Vol.28, Issue 2, pp. 7-10

59 Curley (2009)

Haywood treats Macpherson and Chatterton, as well as less prominent “forgers” (among whom he includes Percy) as translators and editors rather than writers, which is in-keeping with his historiographical approach, but is a little limiting. In contemporary Scottish studies especially, modern readers have come to appreciate Ossian as being representative of literary interests as well as historical, and therefore Macpherson must be appraised as a writer. It would be churlish to suggest that he does not perform a translating or editing role, but in modern readings of the Ossian poet, he is more than a collage-maker of faux-medieval fragments. After all, the poems themselves were of sufficient quality to fool most readers until Macpherson's unusual behaviour about his mysterious manuscripts became apparent. The same is true of Percy. It is in outlining curiosities in the behaviours and editorial practices of his textual examples that Haywood's argument is strongest. Much concrete evidence exists to suggest that Macpherson jealously held that he had the Fingal manuscript, but was compelled to keep it private, long after counter-arguments by Johnson and other critics went public suggesting that there was no manuscript at all and that it was extremely unlikely that evidence of written literacy in the community of Fingal would be extant. Haywood documents this evidence thoroughly, which makes his argument for the case of Macpherson (and his contemporaries) as editor or translator performing a key role in understanding the cultures of forgery and antiquarianism in the eighteenth century strong.

The historical argument is also strong when removed from the specifically literary examples. Haywood discusses the mythological history of Britain, and what that meant for historiographical writers. He then considers the ways in which Enlightenment thought changed writers' methods for considering the narrative of national history. He shows that when historical writers and philosophers – notably David Hume, although the idea existed earlier than this – began to reject the Brutus narrative, this began to be reflected in the

literary culture, and this is why much of the antiquarian literature of the eighteenth century was driven by a bard or minstrel character, and in later examples, a noble savage; an indigenous historical impetus was installed, meaning antiquarian narratives no longer had any need for a driving force from Rome. The supposedly indigenous people of the British Isles began to be seen as a character in nation-building poetry (although it would be some time before a comprehensively “British” racial heritage would be fully understood and depicted in art). Haywood points out that “The status of the text as history or romance now resided entirely in the reader's expectations: fact or fiction was, basically, the reader's invention.”<sup>60</sup> Although this idea begins to engage with contemporary theoretical practices and is reminiscent of Roland Barthes' *Death of the Author*,<sup>61</sup> he fails to illustrate the important role of the reader in eighteenth century literary practices, so it is ultimately unconvincing. A discussion on the relationship between the reader and the forger therefore seems necessary to build on Haywood's excellent foundation. *The Making of History* can be credited with reopening debate on this subject, even if the debate seems unfinished in places, and certainly proves its central point: that the literary forgeries of Macpherson and Chatterton deserve greater critical attention, from a literary, historiographical, and theoretical point of view.

As previously stated, so much has been written on the ballad revival that it would be impossible to include the whole canon in any review of the critical tradition. An excellent single-volume overview of the subject comes in Steve Newman's *Ballad Collection, Lyric, and the Canon: The Call of the Popular from the Restoration to the New Criticism*.<sup>62</sup>

The research question addressed by Newman's book is: how did “the lesser lyric of the ballad [change] lyric poetry as a whole and, in so doing, [help] to transform “literature”

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60 Haywood (1986) p.33

61 Roland Barthes 'Death of the Author', in V.B. Leitch et al. (ed.) *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism: Second Edition*. (New York: Norton) pp. 1322-1326.

62 Steve Newman (2007) *Ballad Collection, Lyric, and the Canon: The Call of the Popular from the Restoration to the New Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press)

from polite writing in general into the body of imaginative writing that becomes known as the English literary canon”?<sup>63</sup> Newman takes a chronological approach in answering this question. He begins with an analysis of the influence of the ballad in *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), through to the Augustan figures of the Scottish Enlightenment (in particular Allan Ramsay), to Thomas Percy's treatment of his “Shakespeare” ballads, then Blake and Wordsworth, and finally finishing with the seminal ballad collections of Scott and Child, in so showing that by the late nineteenth century traditional ballads were not only popular lyric, but an accepted literary medium which may be considered “high art”. The chronological narrative of how ballads were perceived and published in Britain works extremely well. Newman is attempting to demonstrate a growth in the cultural value of so-called “popular” literature, and by showing the gradual improvement of the standards and reception of ballad literature through time, he succeeds. *The Beggar's Opera* is somewhat of an overlooked text with regards to the textual afterlives of ballads, but Newman selects it as an example because of the way in which it is performed and its moral core demonstrate the “lyric doubleness” of ballads – that is, that they represent both the individual singer and the communal song – which can be used “to undermine the ruling classes' presumptuous monopoly on subjectivity.”<sup>64</sup> Newman shows that by moralising the ballads beyond folk fable and into a more richly informed philosophical ethic, John Gay was an early driving force in the literary community's reassessment of the ballads. Simply put, he legitimised them.

The range of examples offered by Newman also helps to make his chronology convincing. He shows that Burns used balladry to redefine the pastoral - “[Burns] is willing to allow that good songs come from a variety of sources, which makes an implicit claim for the value of the everyday, stretching the boundaries of what is fit to enter the formed world

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63 Newman (2007) p.1

64 Newman (2007) p.18

of art.”<sup>65</sup> - and also to make history relatable and tangible. Shakespeare's literary range is well-documented, and Newman's chapter 'Addressing the Problem of a Lyric History'<sup>66</sup> demonstrates that collectors of ballads such as Percy have contributed to that reputation by paying attention to the ways in which Shakespeare utilised ballads for effect. The chapter on Shakespeare is particularly in-depth; Newman creates an intertextual web with Shakespeare at its centre, showing where the Bard borrowed from, who borrowed from the Bard (if it's not too obvious to say “everyone”) and how collectors and editors shaped our readings of his work.

The chapter on Blake and Wordsworth ('The Problem of Lyric Violence') is the most limited: the book is strictly literary and its linguistic suppositions on the “simple” language of the ballad are lacking the confident scholarship of the literary sections. This lacuna leaves the reader a little unclear as to why the later Romantic poets' contributions to modern ballad criticism should be considered at all. Of course, the contributions of Wordsworth and Blake are extremely valuable, as the work of Maureen McLane<sup>67</sup> among others has shown from both a literary and a linguistic point-of-view. As this book deals primarily and most effectively with literary applications of English, this chapter would have been much improved by sticking to the focus of the rest of the book. It also makes a glaring oversight in the case of Wordsworth's “The Solitary Reaper”, which it mentions in passing, but fails to recognise the absurdity of Wordsworth analysing a ballad (in Gaelic) which he admits he has no connection to and no way of understanding. Wordsworth's involvement with oral literature provides a useful framework for understanding how Romantic poets approached the oral tradition – often without much care or racial/cultural sensitivity – and would have been a good point of reference for the linguistic argument

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65 Newman (2007) p.87

66 Newman (2007) pp.97-135

67 See Maureen. N. McLane (2008) *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

against “simple” language and Romantic poetry.

Newman attaches significant ballad publications to historical events – although his links are limited to the Enlightenment and the 1707 Act of Union – which further adds weight to his chronological argument. He identifies a “national struggle” for regional literature: “How to preserve social virtue and unity in a modern world increasingly dominated by the atomizing force of commerce?”<sup>68</sup> His suggestion is that Scotland's response to industrialisation and capitalism was the Enlightenment, which welcomed the publication of ballads and the re-evaluation of history with open arms.

Newman's book demonstrates the strong and persistent influence of ballads on the British literary tradition in English and Scots. The extent of the research is reflected in the huge bibliography at the end of the book. In any book which deals with such a broad subject matter, it would be impossible to cover every aspect to the satisfaction of every reader, but Newman overcomes that problem by being more wide-ranging than many other critics in his field. The book is a solid evaluation of the influence of the ballad tradition.

A close study of the famous Folio Manuscript, currently held at the British Library, shows that Percy was meticulous in his language research. His personal library contained several dictionaries, and being friends with the country's greatest lexicographer, Johnson, at the time, he certainly did not want for resources when uncovering the roots of obsolete or regional words. It was in his interest as an antiquarian to preserve ancient spellings, words, and phrases, and when he noted such words in his manuscript, he would annotate them with their meanings, some context, or where he had seen them previously, preferring the oldest possible version of the word in most cases, and distinguishing what is “ancient” from what is “correct”.<sup>69</sup> The Folio Manuscript is therefore well furnished for any student who wishes to investigate the philological history of ballads. As Percy often consulted

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<sup>68</sup> Newman, p.45

<sup>69</sup> These annotations are seen in his Folio Manuscript at the British Library. Facsimile editions do not fully reproduce his annotations.

several sources, it is possible to consult various versions of ballads to see how they are transmitted, both in terms of philological aspects, and how they are handled by editors. Percy often comes up against criticism that he is an editor with an overzealous pen, but this makes him an ideal candidate for study in terms of how editorial interference changes the reality of a ballad.

## Chapter two.

### Selective Truths: the problem with Percy's history

The eighteenth century was a volatile time to make a claim for authenticity, although due to the increase in popularity with consumers of literature of collections of ballads and ancient literature, many writers did. This is in part due to the development of the novel. Ian Watt's seminal text *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (1957) identifies the first English novel as being Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719),<sup>70</sup> which Defoe playfully published under the protagonist's own name.<sup>71</sup> *Robinson Crusoe* was an unprecedented success, running through four editions in the year it was published, and in the century following publication, inspiring more translations and adaptations in print than any other piece of literature.<sup>72</sup> Defoe's experimental claims for the narrative of *Robinson Crusoe*, coupled with the fact that the novel was an experimental form in itself, meant that readers were compelled to expand their understanding of what a narrative was. Although the rise of the novel was not the first time that fictional (ie, not factual) literature was being produced, the movement represented a shift in the marketing of narratives. Now that Defoe and his contemporaries had proven that entirely fictional literature could include a claim for authenticity as part of the fiction, it became more urgent within literary antiquarian circles to demonstrate the legitimate truth which their artefacts narrated. Hence the rise of material culture in literature was ensured; fiction books such as Defoe's would prove to be commercially popular, which would inspire those who were anxious to legitimise their historically validated books with material items in order to secure their own commercial popularity in competition with fiction. Percy's characteristic ambition drove him

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70 Ian Watt (1957) *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding* (Berkeley: University of California Press)

71 Daniel Defoe (1998) *Robinson Crusoe* (Oxford: Oxford World Classics)

72 'Robinson Crusoe', *In Our Time*, BBC Radio 4, 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2011. Radio broadcast.

to seek broad appeal and commercial success for the *Reliques* in this context, but the *Reliques* also served a second function; they were a conservative attempt to establish secure nationhood for Britain. Percy was not alone in this effort. Indeed, ballads featured heavily in publications across the political spectrum, due to their ubiquity and the ease with which the reading public could recognise and identify them. With nations being born, unified, and subject to revolution worldwide, the compulsion to legitimise national history was enabled by the technological advancement of comparatively inexpensive print. Newspapers, magazines and broadsides allowed, for the first time, the literate members of the labouring and lower-middle classes cheap access to contemporary intellectual concepts. Under the correct editor, ballads could carry the political message of the newspaper in a subversive but accessible way. The ballad singer could be used to unite a tribe, or to rally an uprising. Furthermore, the relative antiquity of the ballads demonstrated the age and longevity of the people who shared them. If one wants to prove the authenticity of a nation, one need only examine the history of that nation's literature. In the eighteenth century, however, the British<sup>73</sup> literary tradition was being substantiated by texts from inauthentic sources. The case of James Macpherson has been critically laboured – with good reason – but the context of any discussion of authenticity demands a brief discussion of Ossian.

The call for Macpherson to produce his manuscript evidence began almost immediately. Among the most vocal sceptics was Dr Johnson, who called Macpherson “a mountebank, a liar, and a fraud”.<sup>74</sup> When Irish scholars such as Charles O'Connor began to claim that the poetry's inauthenticity was that Macpherson was appropriating Irish history into Scottish culture, the Highland Society embarked upon a lengthy investigation.<sup>75</sup> The

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73 British in the sense of “curated in Britain”; as most of the literature that nation-building antiquarians involved themselves with was dated earlier than 1707, Britain did not exist in the sense that we understand it to today.

74 Quoted in Magnus Magnusson (2006), *Fakers, Forgers & Phoneys* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing) p.340

75 Henry Mackenzie (ed.) (1805) *The Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, appointed to Inquire into the Nature and Authenticity of The Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)

report indicated that although evidence existed for the antiquity of certain Ossian poems (for instance, the Glenmasan Manuscript contains the tale *Oided mac n-Uisnig*, which bears a resemblance to Macpherson's "Darthula"), Macpherson's evidence of Scots Gaelic oral traditions was heavily altered by his own composition, not to mention tempered by the commonality of oral cultures which had seen, as O'Connor accused, certain pieces of Fenian literature composed in Scotland and circulated by Scottish bards. In this sense, therefore, Macpherson's Ossian is arguably authentic and inauthentic at the same time; he represented a history which was to some extent shared between two cultures, but attributed it to only one. The case of Macpherson is a good example of the problematised authenticity debate in the eighteenth century. If the literature was as aesthetically pleasing and intellectually stimulating as *Ossian* was received to be, then why should the origin of the literature be so great a concern that its authors misrepresent it? To what extent does literature need to be "true"? If Percy presents his work as being "ancient" poetry, but doesn't use his most ancient available source as his basis for editing, is he deceiving the reader? These concerns have been the subject of discussion in modern cultural theory, particularly in the work of Jacques Derrida, whose deconstruction of the meaning of authenticity in literature is of relevance when considering the eighteenth century obsession with how authenticity affected the value of a text. Derrida supposed that:

The question of [literature's] origin was immediately the question of its end. Its history is *constructed* like the ruin of a monument which basically never existed. It is the history of a ruin, the narrative of a memory which produces the event to be told and which will never have been present.<sup>76</sup>

Given the overtly historical nature of the recovery and collection of ballads, it is certainly true that the *Reliques* is a representation of a carefully selected version of the "authentic", curated by Percy to fit into an historical model which privileged Anglo-British,

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<sup>76</sup> Derrida (1992) p.42

Christian, Hanoverian, Whig rule as its ultimate conclusion. The false memory of Gothicism in the British Isles' early history represents Derrida's monumental but non-existent ruin. Even Ossian, surely the most famous challenge to what it meant for literature to be authentic, preserves an historical narrative which was not present in the origins of Macpherson's literary background. With the intellectual and consumer popularity of Ossian, and of the recovery of antique literature in mind, the question of what it means to be authentic in your literary output is clearly relevant.

For Thomas Percy, authenticity represented several truths within his experience of ballad collection. The full title of the collection:

The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of  
Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and other Pieces of Our Earlier  
Poets (Chiefly of the Lyric Kind) Together with Some Few of  
Later Date

indicates the various cultural identities which are at play here. The work is a mishmash of old and new material, and it is therefore not clear what the document is intended to be a relic of, given that the ballads contained within span several hundred years. Percy creatively rebranded the distinct strands of poetry as being "ancient English" in the title and, being among the first in the British school of literature, he is writing the histories of the four countries within the new state. He invents a united historical document which represents a singular history which doesn't exist. Reader, editor, minstrel, scribe, printer, and collector are united across time, nationhood and class by the identification of the early poet as "our"; the same diverse cast are tribalised as having an "English" collective cultural identity. We are all in this together, Percy says, and we are all English together.

In Percy's situation, the duality of meaning is shown by the fact that the antique ballads he edits are authentic to their original region, existing long before Britain did ('Sir Patrick Spens', for example, being native to the North-East of Scotland and pre-dating the

*Reliques* by around two hundred years), but the poems are reframed in an impossible British context. The ballads are authentic, but perhaps not authentic to the narrative to which Percy was committed.

The obvious problematisation from which Percy's ballads suffered did not deter him from making provenance a foregrounded issue in his work. His extensive library, which is now held at Queens University Belfast, has several books of antiquarian interest, including Milton's unfinished *Complete History of England*. Milton bemoans the fact that England has only mythical histories to rely on, and that nations of antiquity, such as Greece, are able to authenticate their histories with relics:

The beginnings of nations, those excepted of whom Sacred books have spoken, is to this day Unknown... even later deeds [have been] blemished with Fables. That which we have of oldest seeming, hath by the greater part of judicious Antiquarians been rejected for a Modern Fable. Nevertheless, there being others besides the first supposed Author, Men not unlearned in Antiquity, who admit that for Approved Story, which the former explode for fiction; and seeing that oft-times Relations heretofore accounted fabulous have been often found to contain in them many footsteps and Relicks of something true, as what we read in Poets of the flood and Giants little believed, till undoubted witnesses taught us, that all was not feigned.<sup>77</sup>

The compulsion to attach history to antiques – or, as the words of Milton echo in the title of the collection, to relics – clearly made a lasting impression on Percy. He mythologizes his Folio Manuscript, but completely disregards oral sources for his ballads, ignoring the fact that it is an essentially oral tradition. For Percy, the material weight of printed and manuscript sources prove the authenticity of a nation, and as the *Reliques* were essentially an exercise in nation-building, printed and manuscript sources added a weight of truth to his argument. Oral sources were nothing more than folk words; too easily lost to be preserved and too difficult to preserve to be considered culturally valuable. In his

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<sup>77</sup> John Milton (1670) *The History of Britain, that Part especially now called England; from the first traditional Beginning, continued to the Norman Conquest. Collected out of the antientest and best Authours thereof*. Queen's University Belfast, Percy Collection 689, 690, 691; vol.689

introductions to each poem, he names its sources. “The Ancient Ballad of Chevy Chase”, for example:

is printed, from an old manuscript, at the end of Hearne's preface to *Gul. Newbrigiensis Hist.* 1719, 8vo. Vol. i. To the MS. Copy is subjoined the name of the author, Rychard Sheale; whom Hearne had so little judgement as to suppose to be the same with a R. Sheale, who was living in 1588. But whoever examines the gradation of language and idiom in the following volumes, will be convinced that this is the production of an earlier poet. It is indeed expressly mentioned among some very ancient songs in an old book entitled, *The Complaint of Scotland*, (fol. 42), under the title of the *Huntis of Chevet...*<sup>78</sup>

Antiquity and precisely located originality were important factors in his editorial process. If there was no impressive printed provenance, it was not welcome in the *Reliques*.

The Ossianic revival of Celtic literature in the eighteenth century provided British readers with a taste for the exotic in a domestic setting. In many ways, this was rehabilitative for the Scots, as the Jacobite rising of 1745 coupled with a general national paranoia over resources that still exists in immigration discourse meant that Scottish Britons were the target of xenophobia within their own country. The politician and journalist John Wilkes (1725-1797)<sup>79</sup> spearheaded a campaign of harassment and mockery of the Prime Minister in his journal *The North Briton*, a lampooning of Bute's newspaper the *Briton*, the latter of which was started in an attempt to stabilise relations between the Scots and English. The forty-fourth issue of the *North Briton* contains the following description of the Scots::

The restless and turbulent disposition of the Scottish nation before the union, with their constant attachment to France and declared enmity to England, their repeated perfidies and rebellions

<sup>78</sup> 'The Ancient Ballad of Chevy Chase', *Reliques*, vol.1 p.68

<sup>79</sup> Joseph Wilkes (1725-1797) Oxford Dictionary of National Biography online, Accessed 24<sup>th</sup> March 2014 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/62574>>

since that period, with their service behaviour in times of need, and overbearing insolence in power, have justly rendered the very name of Scot hateful to every true Englishman.<sup>80</sup>

These tensions culminated in Wilkes' exile to France, ostensibly because of his publication of libel and pornography, and the now infamous Massacre of St George's Fields in 1768, in which seven of Wilkes' supporters were killed by government troops in a riot. Wilkes was also skeptical of Scottish university culture and the burgeoning Celtic antiquarian impulse represented by Macpherson. Following the publication of *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, and with increasing intensity following the publication of *Fingal* with its dedication to Bute, the *North Briton* published savage satires of Ossianic poetry and caricatures of Macpherson, complete with suspicious bagpipes and effeminate bardic harps. The paper appropriated Macpherson's language of translation to make damaging – probably true – implications about the Prime Minister's alleged affair with the Dowager Princess of Wales. One such Butite caricature in the paper said of the success of Scotland in Britain that:

We are certainly growing into fashion. The most rude of our bards are admired; and I know some choice wits here, who have thrown aside *Shakespeare*, and taken up *Fingal*, charmed with the vanity of character, and richness of imagery.<sup>81</sup>

This culture of suspicion and racism fostered a hostile environment for Percy to publish Scottish poetry in England. His commitment to the project, however, was great, and he recognised as an antiquarian that Scottish ballads were too rich in ancient regional material to ignore completely. His Folio Manuscript contains several well-known Scottish ballads such as 'Sir Patrick Spens' and 'Childe Morris', all in early manuscript editions which were not available to other editors. This opportunity was too great to pass up for the

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80 *The North Briton*, No. 44, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1763. Published in John Wilkes, *The North Briton: From no. 1 to no. XLVI inclusive. With Several Useful and Explanatory Notes. In Two Volumes*, Vol. 2, p.146. Google eBook.

81 *The North Briton*, no. 2, 12<sup>th</sup> June 1762 Published in John Wilkes, *The North Briton: From no. 1 to no. XLVI inclusive. With Several Useful and Explanatory Notes. In Two Volumes*, Vol. 1, p.16. Google eBook.

ambitious Percy, and although the ballads appear substantially altered and in many cases extended in the eventual *Reliques*, a definite and authentic Scottish strand exists in the poetry. His edits to the Scottish ballads, however, are telling to his attitude towards the supposed problem of Scotland in Great Britain. His linguistic changes to make them more “correct” are significantly broader than those of his English ballads, even the regional ones; Scottish ballads need to be more ancient, and more authentically regional, to prove their worth. This often resulted in confused selections, as Percy struggled with whether correction or antiquity was the more important priority. Furthermore, his decision to select the ballads that he does betrays a selective racism which demands that Scottish ballad protagonists be portrayed in a weaker, more cowardly, more rebellious light than their English counterparts, as demonstrated in the brutish titular antagonist of 'Edom O'Gordon' and the feminised protagonist of 'Gil Morrice', whose coding as a queer character is his ultimate downfall. One might compare these characters, a military man and a lover, to the hero of the English ballad 'The Spanish Lady's Love',<sup>82</sup> in which the English prison guard nobly rejects the advances of a beautiful Spanish woman in his gaol for the love of England and his wife. The response of the Spanish lady is not to bemoan the lack of justice in the world which separates them, but to accept her place and become a nun in penance. She is subdued and civilised by the English in a way that, Percy implies, the Scots – coded in ballads such as 'Gil Morrice' as being queer or feminised – should submit to in the name of achieving a purer destiny. The hero of 'The Spanish Lady's Love' represents both the militaristic role of Edom O'Gordon and the romantic role of 'Gil Morrice', and he handles both of these roles with a nobility and dignity unavailable to Percy's Scottish heroes. Although the quality of the Scottish ballads in the *Reliques* is very beautiful, when viewed in comparison with other entries in the collection, the *Reliques* shows a portrait of a newly formed nation in turmoil, and responding by scapegoating and

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82 'The Spanish Lady's Love', *Reliques*, vol.2, pp.434-436

racially profiling. It is worth noting, also, that because Percy used no oral sources, the musical and spoken elements of his ballads are almost entirely ignored, thus removing the accessibility of the ballads from the oral culture which cultivated them.

There is also an inherent artificiality in the narrative of how the *Reliques* came to be. Percy names the Folio Manuscript as being the genesis of the *Reliques*, and in the sense that his correspondents encouraged him to have the manuscript published, this is true. However, the significance of the manuscript to the finished product is massively overstated. Walter Jackson Bate identifies that Percy “drew upon his folio manuscript for less than a fourth of the songs and ballads of the *Reliques*”,<sup>83</sup> and that “Of the 46 ballads in the *Reliques* which are found also in the manuscript, the folio text of 11 was not used as the basis... Of the remaining 35 ballads, 9 were substantially altered”.<sup>84</sup> Given that Percy is apparently disinterested in the *Reliques* as a preservation of the Folio Manuscript as an historical document, the real purpose of the Folio Manuscript is an attempt by Percy to self-fashion as a man of letters with a material attachment to British history.

In the National Portrait Gallery in London hangs a print of a Joshua Reynolds painting of Percy.<sup>85</sup> The original is said to have burnt to nothing in 1780,<sup>86</sup> but contemporary copies preserve Percy's likeness in the garb of a clergyman, clutching a large but tattered volume labeled “MSS” under his left arm. This is believed to be the first public presentation of the manuscript which Percy claimed was the basis of the *Reliques*. In posing with the Folio Manuscript, Percy reveals that it is as inextricable a part of his legacy as his role as a cleric is. His attachment to the manuscript is further explained in an explanatory note attached to it:

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83 Walter Jackson Bate (July 1994) 'Percy's Use of His Folio-Manuscript' in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol.43, no.3, pp.337-348, p.337

84 Jackson Bate, p.338

85 'Thomas Percy', National Portrait Gallery online; accessed 16<sup>th</sup> May 2013  
<<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw200557/Thomas-Percy?LinkID=mp63589&search=sas&sText=thomas+percy&role=sit&rNo=0>>

86 Bertram H. Davis (1982) 'Thomas Percy, the Reynolds Portrait, and the Northumberland House Fire', *The Review of English Studies*, vol.33, issue 129, pp.23-33

This very curious Old Manuscript in its present mutilated state, but unbound and sadly torn, I rescued from destruction and begged at the hands of my worthy friend Humphrey Pitt, Esq., then living at Shiffnal in Shropshire, afterwards of Prior Lee, near that town: who died very lately in Bath... I saw it lying dirty on the floor under a Bureau in ye Parlour being used by maids to light the fire. It was afterwards sent, most unfortunately, to an ignorant Bookbinder, who pared the margins when I put it into Boards in order to send it to Dr Johnson.

Mr Pitt has since told me that he believes the transcripts in this volume &c. were made by that Blount, who was author of Jocular Tenures...<sup>87</sup>

His recollection of the rescue of the Folio Manuscript not only presents Percy in a heroic light as the rescuer and guardian of the past, it also associates the manuscript with the lexicographer Thomas Blount, thus asserting its literary worth and historical importance. Percy saves a tattered curiosity which is then revealed to be a material link to the cultural past. The symbolism of this is advanced in his dedication of the *Reliques* to Elizabeth of the Northumberland Percys:

These poems are presented to your LADYSHIP, not as labours of art, but as effusions of nature, shewing the first efforts of ancient genius and exhibiting the customs and opinions of remote ages; of ages that had been almost lost to memory, had not the gallant deeds of your illustrious ancestors preserved them from oblivion... No active or comprehensive mind can forbear some attention to the reliques of antiquity: It is prompted by natural curiosity to survey the progress of life and manners, and to inquire by what gradations barbarity was civilised, grossness refined and ignorance instructed: but this curiosity MADAM, must be stronger in those, who, like your LADYSHIP, can remark in every period the influence of some great progenitor, and who still feel in their effects the transactions and events of distant centuries.<sup>88</sup>

In addition to a dedication to Elizabeth, Percy also brought volume three of his first draft, which contained several Northumberland ballads, forward to volume one in time for publication.<sup>89</sup> In doing this, the *Reliques* are framed as the cultural history not only of

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<sup>87</sup> *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, British Library Additional MS 27879

<sup>88</sup> *Reliques*, dedication page

<sup>89</sup> See Friedman (December 1954), pp.1233-1249

Britain, but specifically of the Northumberland Percys, and the closely guarded Folio Manuscript is Percy's concrete link to this tradition, thus making him an indispensable curator. Percy also suggests that, due to Elizabeth's genteel ancestry, her connection to the *Reliques* is greater than that of common people. The wealthy are more curious about antiques as it is their relatives who are usually immortalised in them. They represent a tangible reality in the history of nobility.<sup>90</sup> By tying the Folio Manuscript up with his legacy in portraiture, and by associating himself with the history of British nobility using the manuscript as a link, Percy asserts his right as a scholar and a gentleman to embark on the project of preserving ballads, even though the Folio Manuscript would, in fact, ultimately play quite a small role in this project.

The Folio Manuscript is not only Percy's key to involving himself with a tradition of noble heritage, it is also a mythology which aligns himself with the burgeoning trends in contemporary literature. His invention of a Gothic Britain, substantiated by his distancing from the popular Celtic culture and creation of a Bardic voice, is further realised in his narrative of how he came to find the manuscript. Found manuscripts are a common trope in the Gothic tradition: De Cervantes claimed that *Don Quixote* was translated from an Arabic manuscript, Defoe masqueraded as merely the editor of *Robinson Crusoe*, and in Gothic revivalism, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is related through several letters, journals and newspaper articles and H.P. Lovecraft's *Necronomicon* features heavily as a plot device in his books. As demonstrated in his translation of *Haoqiu zhuan*, Percy had a keen eye for spotting trends and his ambitious working style gave him a predilection for adapting to them. This was not an unconscious decision; there is a recognisable connection in Percy's work between the Gothic voice and the Gothic book. Nick Groom has considered this

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<sup>90</sup> The politics of ownership of the *Reliques* were first brought to my attention in the PhD thesis of Dr Frank Ferguson, and I am grateful to him for furnishing me with a copy of his work for reference.  
Frank Fergusson (2002) *Thomas Percy: Literary Antiquarianism as National Aesthetic* (Unpublished PhD thesis: Queens University Belfast)

connection in detail, noting that “Percy's own antiquarian theory, briefly stated, was that letters and later printing distinguished the Gothic nations... from the Celtic... But despite initially presenting the minstrels as oral poets, singers, and musicians who performed their ballads accompanied by a harp, Percy insisted on treating their works as a written legacy. This needs to be stressed: for Percy, the Goths were defined by literacy and all that entailed. In attempting to “literate” the Goths, Percy gave written sources authority over oral sources, and printed texts authority over manuscripts.”<sup>91</sup>

The story about Percy rescuing the manuscript is often recounted in Percy scholarship, but an examination of the manuscript (which was rebound in the 1960s)<sup>92</sup> isn't wholly consistent with Percy's claims. The pages look reasonably well maintained for a book of manuscript pages which were unbound and apparently mistreated for a hundred years. Coming into contact with the manuscript, it is hard to believe that Humphery Pitt would have been so careless with his possessions, particularly a book which he associated with a reasonably well respected writer, as to leave it under a bureau. It is also hard to believe that the serving staff of the Pitt household would make any kind of habit of using books as fuel, given the value of books in the eighteenth century. That Percy found the manuscript while visiting Pitt is not in question; however, it is time to interrogate how much of his relation of its discovery is truth, and how much is creating a fashionably exciting backstory, particularly given that Percy's interpolations in the ballads themselves in the name of a more fitting narrative are evident.<sup>93</sup> Percy claimed that his discovery was

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91 Groom (2006) p.182

92 I am grateful to the expertise of the British Library's manuscript librarians for assisting me in dating the re-binding of the Folio Manuscript.

93 Percy's discovery of the manuscript echoes that of *The Confession of Faith* (1585), which is said to have been found by a Protestant reformer, Henry Balnaues, in the hands of a child. The suggestion in both stories is that the discovery was in some way divine; that the finders were living out their providential purpose by discovering something so precious. In the case of Balnaues, this purpose is to bring Religious order to Scotland; in the case of Percy, it is to bring social order to Britain. An excerpt from this text, along with a citation, is appended to this thesis after the bibliography. I am grateful to my colleague and thesis supervisor Dr Theo van Heijnsbergen for bringing this similarity to my attention, and for supplying me with the text. The comparison of tradition of recovery of manuscripts in the Gothic, including the claims made by Percy, and the tradition of the discovery of confessional writing, warrant significant further investigation.

dramatic because he wanted the *Reliques* to have a dramatic impact. Clearly this worked, as the collection is still regarded as a foundational document in English literature, and the Folio Manuscript is regarded as testament to this.

The prominence of the maids in the story of the manuscript's discovery is consistent with Romantic ideas surrounding voice, class, and art. Percy claims to rescue the manuscript from the maids' hands, and was delighted to examine its contents. The gentlemen of Romantic literature are well known for their appropriation of the voices of the labouring class. Perhaps the most egregious example of this is William Wordsworth's poem 'The Solitary Reaper':

Behold her, single in the field,  
Yon solitary Highland Lass!  
Reaping and singing by herself;  
Stop here, or gently pass!  
Alone she cuts, and binds the grain,  
And sings a melancholy strain;  
O listen! for the Vale profound  
Is overflowing with the sound...

Will no one tell me what she sings?  
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
And battles long ago...

I listened till I had my fill:  
And, as I mounted up the hill,  
The music in my heart I bore,  
Long after it was heard no more.<sup>94</sup>

Although Wordsworth has no linguistic access to the song of the Gaelic singer, he still presumes to narrate her song, assuming her experience, and assuming it is his right as a person of greater privilege to do so. Wordsworth assumes that his audience, who have a refined intellectual appreciation of art, will find his musings on the Gaelic song more engaging than would the Gaelic singer; so too does Percy assume that Elizabeth

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94 'The Solitary Reaper', in Gill (ed.) (2008) l.1-8;17-20;29-32

Percy, a model of good breeding and culture, will appreciate the balladry of the labouring class more than those who have produced the ballads historically. Even Robert Burns, who has a personal history not only with the cultural elite but also with labourers, is seen to use this trope, as he styles himself as a working-class savant whose pretty musings may entertain those of higher birth when he cannot hope to artistically evaluate them himself (of course, Burns was more than aware that his poetry was of a high calibre, but it was beneficial for him to hand that evaluation to those with the financial power). Percy literally takes ownership of labouring class literature which had been in the hands of members of the labouring class, and presents it to the nobility. Wordsworth appropriates a moment of art that a Gaelic singer experiences during her labouring, and uses it as a vehicle for Romantic ideas about labour, art and emotion. Burns gives the illusion of relinquishing control of his own labouring experience by claiming that his artistic expression thereof is an accident of inspiration that he hasn't intellectualised. The reasons for these three artistic decisions are the same. The marketing of literature was to the upper classes, but the Romantics valued organic writing, and supposed that such writing might be mined from labouring class people who would not necessarily need to be involved in the transaction. In the case of Burns, this was an illusion predicated on the fact that the “heaven taught ploughman” was probably a better seller than an uppity peasant. Ultimately, materialism was important to writers such as Percy. This is why he valued his manuscript and other material sources over oral literature which was less reliable and concrete. Percy's interpolations of Scottish ballads show the extent to which he is willing to take ownership of this literature in order to present it to a marketable audience. One example of a heavily interfered-with ballad in the *Reliques* is 'Edom O' Gordon'.

## Edom O' Gordon

'Edom O' Gordon' was first brought to Percy's attention as a fragment in his Folio Manuscript, entitled 'Captaine Carre'. The fragment is short, at seventy-nine lines, but Percy's interest in it was sufficiently great that he expanded it, conflated with a version from Dalrymple printed by Glasgow's Foulis Press, to a 144-line melodrama, cherry-picking the most Romantic images, and the most ancient and obscure words from each version, as well as hyper-correcting Scottish features of the ballad and inventing sections according to his linguistic and dramatic demands of the poem. He writes in his introduction that his Folio Manuscript copy:

... is entitled Captain Adam Carre, and is in the English idiom. But whether the author was English or Scotch, the difference originally was not great. The English Ballads are generally of the North of England, the Scottish are of the South of Scotland, and of consequence the country of Ballad-singers was sometimes subject to one crown, and sometimes to the other, and most frequently to neither.

Although Percy's original version of this ballad is English, the version which makes it to the *Reliques* is set in Scotland, with Scottish characters. 'Edom O' Gordon' is the story of a Scottish baron who rides with an army to his Lord's house and demands the deeds and title to the property. When the absent Lord's wife refuses him, he burns the castle to the ground with the lady and her children and servants inside. Despite his somewhat feeble claim that the location of ballads has little bearing on their merits and authenticity, the location of this ballad mattered very much to Percy, because it was a reflection on the middle-nobility of the area. Edom O' Gordon is a traitor which, according to Wilkite propaganda, was a racial characteristic of the Scots. Percy was more than happy to play along with this stereotype in order to include an exciting but potentially upsetting ballad in his repertoire. He attempts to give the ballad some Scottish provenance by saying that his

secondary version from which he edited was a Scottish poem printed by the Foulis press and edited by his correspondent David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, “who gave it as it was preserved in the memory of a lady, that is now dead.”<sup>95</sup> Given Percy's dismissal of oral sources, it seems unlikely that he would have utilised them here. The anonymous lady balladeer assumes the responsibility for Celticising 'Edom O' Gordon'; after all, it can never be proven that she doesn't exist. By shifting the editorial responsibility to an anonymous figurehead, Percy thus erases the Celtic voice from the heteroglossic chorus. He appropriates their culture, but only as historical evidence for how Anglo-British English and Scottish people have evolved from a previously barbarous state. The anonymous singers are dead, yet Percy's name is printed into permanence, privileging technological advancement and suggesting that race and breeding allowed such advancement to happen. Ballads become less relics of the reality of the past, and more a link to the past which asserts their editor's own agenda. The printed book is the mechanism through which modern authors and editors achieve this. Maureen McLane proposed an alternative class interpretation for Percy's source for 'Edom O' Gordon' in her book *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry*:

We see that Percy's rhetoric of citation traces a series of mediations, from an origin in the deceased lady's “memory,” its preserving power a kind of archival space, through the mediating transcriber-correspondent Sir David Dalrymple, whose name as well as his aristocratic status are remarked, to the correspondent-addressee-editor Percy, who proceeds to collate this traditional Scottish oral material, now textualised, with his own fragmentary English manuscript text.

What we do not know, what does not enter the field of representation – the discursive space of the note – is how the lady acquired the contents of her memory. Lord Hailes “gave it as it was preserved in [her] memory,” but how was that memory mediated? I have been assuming that she recited or sang the ballad to Lord Hailes, but she might well have written it down at his request: such was the prerogative of a noble and presumably literate “lady”... Thus

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95 'Edom O' Gordon', *Reliques*, vol. 1, p.30

“the lady” above rests comfortably and unproblematically in genteel anonymity, whereas the Scottish correspondent – Percy’s co-collector – is named and specified.<sup>96</sup>

Were Percy or Hailes more diligent in recording the lady’s method of transmission, we might be able to speculate more confidently on her status and therefore her likely relationship with ballad culture, but the fact remains that she is anonymous and voiceless; she submits ownership of the ballad ‘Edom of Gordon’<sup>97</sup> to Lord Hailes, who publishes it and shares it with Percy, who dedicates it to the Northumberland Percys. The ballad voice is moved further and further from its source and given to the nobility in an attempt to legitimise it as art. Ironically, this attempt to authenticate aristocratic readers de-authenticates authentic balladry. The art ceases to be an art of the people and becomes homogenised as the culture of enlightened nobility. This cultural homogenisation is achieved by Percy not only through his manipulation of print, but also through subtle language shifts such as hypercorrection, selective vocabulary, grammar, and accentation.

### **Correct Language and Authentic Art**

Particularly convincing evidence for Percy’s Scottish hypercorrections lies in his use of “quh-” spellings when his sources suggest “wh-”, such as substituting “quhat” for “what”. “Quhat” is a spelling which dates as far back as Barbour’s *Brus* (1375), to the complete exclusion of the later English spelling “what”.<sup>98</sup> Its etymological root is from the Old English “hwæt”. “Quhat” was common throughout the sixteenth century, but dropped out of literary prominence around the first half of the seventeenth century, by which time it was primarily used in civic records.<sup>99</sup> By the eighteenth century, the word was exclusively used by the

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96 McLane (2011) pp.53-54

97 As it is entitled in Dalrymple’s Foulis version.

98 “For God wate weill quhat is to do”. John Barbour ([c.1375] 1999) *The Bruce*, ed. A. A. M. Duncan (Edinburgh: Canongate) Book 1: l.586

99 “Sett down quhat the regentis sould haue yeirlie.” ‘Extracts from the records: 1626’, (1914) *Extracts from the Records of the Burgh of Glasgow vol. 1: 1573-1642*, pp. 351-357. <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=47705&strquery=Sett+doun+quhat+the+regentis+sould+haue+yeirlie>> Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2013

publishers of antique Scottish literature. Allan Ramsay does not correct it to “what” in his publication of Dunbar's 'The Goldyn Targe', for example, but he also never uses it in his original verse. The first two stanzas of Percy's version of 'Edom O' Gordon' are not present in 'Captaine Carre', but similar stanzas appear at the beginning of the version provided by Lord Hailes:<sup>100</sup>

IT fell about the Martinmas,  
Quhen the wind blew shril and cauld,  
Said Edom O' Gordon to his men,  
We maun draw till a hauld.

And quhat a hauld sall we draw till,  
My mirry men and me?  
We wul gae to the house o' the Rodes,  
To see that fair ladie.<sup>101</sup>

In the Foulis text, this appears as:

IT fell about the Martinmas  
Quhen the wind blew schrile and cault;  
Said Edom o' Gordon to his men,  
We maun draw to a hald.

And what an hald sall we draw to  
My merry men and me?  
We will gae to the house of the Rhodes,  
To see that fair lady.<sup>102</sup>

In the Foulis representation of this ballad, the “quh-” spellings are inconsistent; “Quhen” in stanza one gives way to the Anglicised “what” in stanza two. Percy maintains this ancient spelling in his version. His selection of “quh-” spellings is sustained throughout his edition. Every other example of a word being spelled “quh-” rather than “wh-” in the rest of the poem is a deviation from his sources.

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<sup>100</sup>David Dalrymple, ed. (1755) *Edom of Gordon; An Ancient Scottish Poem. Never Before Printed* (Glasgow: Foulis Press)

<sup>101</sup>'Edom O' Gordon' *Reliques* 1:12; l.1-8

<sup>102</sup>*Edom of Gordon*, l.1-8

But quhan he see this lady saif,<sup>103</sup>

This line, which is also missing from the Folio Manuscript edition, is printed as:

As soon he saw the lady fair,<sup>104</sup>

in the Foulis text. Also in this pattern are lines 67 and 71 in Percy's edition, both of which see the Foulis text's "why" edited as "quhy" and, as these stanzas are also missing from the Folio Manuscript, Percy has no specific evidence for these spellings. There are two occasions when Percy uses a word with a "quh-" spelling in lines which feature in the Folio Manuscript, but not the Foulis text:

O see ze nat, my mirry men a;?  
O see ze nat quhat I see?  
Methinks I see a host of men:  
I marveil quha they be.<sup>105</sup>

But quhen the ladye see the fire<sup>106</sup>

In spite of the fact that the Folio Manuscript is the oldest evidence Percy has for this ballad, there is still no evidence for "quh-" spellings. The equivalent lines are represented in 'Captaine Carre' as:

See you not my merry men all  
& see you not what I doe see  
Methinks I see a hoast of Men  
I muse who they shold be<sup>107</sup>

But when shee saw the fier<sup>108</sup>

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103'Edom O' Gordon' l.33

104'Edom of Gordon', l.21

105'Edom O' Gordon' l.13-16

106'Edom O' Gordon' l.113

107'Captaine Carre', transcribed from *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, British Library Additional MS 27879

108'Captaine Carre'

The “wh-” spelling of the older version is not surprising, especially given that by Percy's own admission 'Captaine Carre' is English. What is surprising is the fact that Percy uses “quh-” spellings exclusively in place of the more modern “wh-” equivalents which were common in Scotland during the time in which the Folio Manuscript was produced, even though his two pieces of evidence used a “quh-” spelling only once in the second line of the poem, and then promptly abandoned anachronistic orthography. In fact, despite the mythological Folio Manuscript being an important part of Percy's narrative for the *Reliques*, in many cases – the case of 'Edom O' Gordon' included – alternative textual editions are privileged in his editorial practice and are therefore much closer in philological content than the Folio Manuscript is to the completed version. Percy's insistence on “quh-” spellings demonstrates his commitment to the location of 'Edom O' Gordon' in Scotland. In the case of verses in 'Edom O' Gordon' which are not present in the Foulis text but are in the Folio Manuscript, Percy tends to heavily Scotticise the ballad's language. In terms of the “quh-” spellings, this is consistently accurate and appropriate to the age of the ballad, if not the location. However his edits are not always so sophisticated:

The lady stude on her castle wa',  
Beheld baith dale and down:  
There she was ware of a host of men  
Cum ryding towards the toun.

O see ze nat, my mirry men a'?  
O see ze nat quhat I see?  
Methinks I see a host of men:  
I marveil quha they be.

She weend it had been hir luvly lord,  
As he cam ryding hame;  
It was the traitor Edom O' Gordon,  
Quha reckt nae sin nor shame.<sup>109</sup>

The examples of “quh-” spellings evident in these stanzas have already been

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109 'Edom O' Gordon' l.9-20

examined. However, Percy appropriates many other Scots language forms in these stanzas. The apologetic apostrophe of “wa” in line 9, corresponding to “wall” in the Folio Manuscript, was common among eighteenth century writers and editors of Scots to indicate I-vocalisation.<sup>110</sup> However, Percy fails to give paratextual context for the use of the apostrophe here, and the supposedly historical nature of the collection is therefore undermined by the quiet erasure of Older Scots orthography. Furthermore, as Corbett, McClure and Stuart-Smith have noted, the Anglicisation of Scots “had the unfortunate effect of suggesting that Broad Scots was not a separate language system, but rather a divergent and inferior form of English.”<sup>111</sup> Percy and his contemporaries use the apologetic apostrophe as a way of putting Scots under the microscope as a curiosity, while still asserting that there is a superior language in Britain. This control reiterates Percy’s use of “English” as a shorthand for “British” in the full title of the *Reliques*. Once again he makes a subversive statement that Britain is less a union, and more an amalgamation of English interests. As part of these English interests, it was important that non-English Britons were inferiorised and othered; therefore Percy hypercorrects Scottish elements to emphasise the location of the poem. In his introduction to the ballad, he notes part of his editorial process:

in the folio MS. Instead of the “Castle of the Rodes,” it is the “Castle of Britton’s-borrow,” and also “Diactors” or “Draitours-borrow,” (for it is very obscurely written,) and “Capt. Adam Carre” is called the “Lord of Westerton-town.” Uniformity required that the additional stanzas supplied from that copy should be clothed in the Scottish orthography and idiom: this has therefore been attempted, though perhaps imperfectly.<sup>112</sup>

Percy demands a consistency in the Scottish elements of this poem which was

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110 Susan Rennie (2001) “The Electronic Scottish National Dictionary (eSND): Work in Progress”, *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, vol. 16, no.2, pp.153-160, p.159

111 John Corbett, J. Derrick McClure, Jane Stuart-Smith (2003) ‘A Brief History of Scots’ in Corbett, McClure, Stuart-Smith eds. *The Edinburgh Companion to Scots* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press) pp.12-13

112 ‘Edom O’ Gordon’ introduction

missing from both of his sources. This is particularly noticeable in his spelling of pronouns and vocabulary in the aforementioned stanzas. The lines “O see ze nat, my mirry men a’?/ O see ze nat quhat I see?” correspond exactly to the following in the Folio Manuscript:

See you not my merry men all  
& see you not what I doe see<sup>113</sup>

“Ze” was a common way of spelling Ȝe after the introduction of print in Scotland, due to the fact that many printers did not have a yogh in their founts.<sup>114</sup> By the seventeenth century, “you” was the predominant form of the second person pronoun in English, and “thou” in Scots. “Ze” predates the seventeenth century, with examples in fifteenth century Middle English being common, but where in England this was one of many possible forms of the word, in Scotland there were few alternatives to “ze”.<sup>115</sup> “Ze” therefore has the strongest connotations of ancient Scots speech, and Percy's intended audience would have been able to find predominantly Scottish sources for this spelling, even though the source he had for this poem used an English variant. “Ze” is also used in the Foulis text, albeit (erroneously) interchangeably with “zou” and “thee”, so Percy had printed evidence for it. His intended uniformity coincided here with his desire to emphasise Scottish elements. In this instance, his editorial principles, which may be at odds with each other in different sections of the poem, produce stanzas which are both dramatically engaging and philologically close to the supposed historical original.

One particular alteration made by Percy, which shows him at his most subtly editorial, comes in his eighth stanza:

The lady ran up hir towir head  
Sa fast as she could hie...<sup>116</sup>

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113 'Captaine Carre'

114 “z, letter of the alphabet” DSL Online. Scottish Language Dictionaries. 14 May 2013

<<http://www.dsl.ac.uk/getent4.php?plen=3250&startset=48908654&query=Z&fhit=Z&dregion=form&dtext=snd#fhit>>

115 “ye, pron. and n.”. OED Online. Oxford University Press. 14 May 2013 <<http://www.oed.com>>.

116 'Edom O' Gordon' l.29-30

The word “hie”, meaning “to hasten,” is innocuous in this stanza, but the Foulis equivalents of these lines (which are not included in the Folio Manuscript) read:

The lady ran up to her tower head  
As fast as she could drie...<sup>117</sup>

When the etymology of these lines is examined, a complex linguistic discord is revealed. “Hy” is a word which is in literary use in Middle Scots as early as the thirteenth century, though the spelling “hie” is more common to contemporary English literature.<sup>118</sup> The Scottish National Dictionary notes an increase in the usage of the word “hie” in Scottish literature around the eighteenth century, when it began to be used by Allan Ramsay and, later, Walter Scott.<sup>119</sup> This suggests a conscious resurgence of certain Scots phrasings which paid lip service to the Anglicisation which Percy often favoured. Using English and Scots words interchangeably was a common practice in eighteenth-century Scottish (ballad) literature, particularly given the privileging of English in Enlightenment society,<sup>120</sup> and since “hie” had a particular meaning which could not be adequately serviced by modern Scots words, it is the de facto way of expressing haste in the *Reliques*. “Drie”, meaning “to endure”, on the other hand, is common in Scots from the fifteenth century,<sup>121</sup> with alternative spellings dating even further back.<sup>122</sup> Percy preferred the antique “hie” to the more authentic, not to mention more dramatic, “drie” in this stanza. This is not to say he disregards the word altogether; it is used later in the ballad in the same sense as in the Foulis text.<sup>123</sup> Percy's inclusion of a new old word in this line is pure

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117 'Edom of Gordon' l.17-18

118 “hy, v.” DSL Online. Scottish Language Dictionaries. 23 September 2013

“hie | hy, n.”. OED Online. March 2013. Oxford University Press. 13 May 2013 <<http://www.oed.com>>

119 “hie, v.” DSL Online. Scottish Language Dictionaries. 13 May 2013 <<http://www.dsl.ac.uk>>

120 Argued definitively in Crawford (1992).

121 “In sorrow lat me not consome, Nor langer dolour drie.” Craigie, W.A. (ed.) *The Maitland Quarto Manuscript, containing Poems by Sir Richard Maitland, Arbuthnot and others*. (1914–5) (Scottish Text Society: Edinburgh) p.xlviii, l.168

122 “dre, v.” DSL Online. Scottish Language Dictionaries. 13 May 2013 <<http://www.dsl.ac.uk>>

123 “Put on, put on, my wighty men/ Sa fast as ze can drie”, 'Edom O' Gordon', l.129-30

antiquarian showboating. He is familiar enough with the word “drie” to comfortably and correctly use it in a later stanza, but he supposes he knows an alternative, improved word to describe the lady's haste with an older lineage, albeit not as Scottish as he has claimed in his introduction. Thus Percy attempts to secure his reputation as a ballad editor who would make bold suggestions for the preservation of ballads which would ultimately turn out to be worthy.

His selection is symptomatic of an unresolved tension running through the *Reliques* between using modernised (Anglicised) “correct” language and preserving the ancient ballad tradition, which is also reflected in the presentation of balladry as a high art suitable for the nobility, rather than a democratic art of the people. An annotation made by Percy on the Folio Manuscript is indicative of this tension; under the title of the ballad “Captaine Carre”, he wrote:

A Fragment of another Ballad of Capt Carre & his burning of  
a lady and 3 children

In many ways it resembles an Old Scottish Song lately  
published, intituled Edom of Gordon, 1759

Mem: To correct the Scottish ballad by it<sup>124</sup>

Having established the literary worth of 'Captaine Carre', and recalling the recent Foulis edition, Percy makes a note that the Scottish ballad should be “corrected”. It is unclear whether he is erroneously referring to 'Captaine Carre' as “the Scottish ballad” or he is correctly identifying that the print from the Foulis press is Scottish, but given that the finished product is structurally much closer to 'Edom of Gordon' than 'Captaine Carre', the former seems the more likely meaning. Percy believed that 'Edom of Gordon' was closer to the original ballad than 'Captaine Carre', despite the Foulis edition's shaky provenance, and 'Captaine Carre' would be the security for his linguistic claims. The claim that the

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<sup>124</sup> Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript, British Library Additional MS. 27879

Foulis text was Percy's main source is confirmed in his introduction to the poem in the *Reliques*, in which he says that "The reader will here find [the ballad] improved, and enlarged with several fine stanzas, recovered from a fragment of the same ballad, in the Editor's folio MS",<sup>125</sup> but is at odds with his claim in the introduction that most of the ballads "were extracted from an ancient folio manuscript". In this instance, he chooses what he perceives to be the most "correct" version as his primary source, but maintains a link to the "ancient" or "authentic" source in order to legitimise the final product. This is ultimately unsuccessful, as certain of Percy's editorial decisions highlight this tension as still being very much at play.

The phrase "a host of men" also brings 'Edom O' Gordon' away from the Older Scots ancestry Percy is claiming for it. The line in the Folio Manuscript describes "an hoast of men"; spelling was never standardised for this now archaic word, but "hoist" is the most common Scottish variant spelling, whereas "hoast" is more commonly found in English.<sup>126</sup> "Hoast" – the spelling of the Folio Manuscript version – has a strong literary provenance in English and in Scots to a slightly lesser extent. It is used often in Shakespeare, notably in *Macbeth* ("Thereby shall we shadow/ The numbers of our hoast"<sup>127</sup>). The *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* notes some examples of the spelling "host" – which Percy settled on in the *Reliques* – such as in the Cambridge manuscript edition of the *Brus* ("The tothir host ... Presit on the tothir party"<sup>128</sup> although this is inconsistent with other manuscript editions of the *Brus*, such as the Edinburgh manuscript which has "ost".) Although Percy has evidence to choose words which are authentically Scottish, and words which are ancient, he chooses a modern word which is an anachronism in the context of a poem for

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125 *Reliques*

126 "host, n.1". OED Online. March 2013. Oxford University Press. Accessed 7 May 2013 <<http://www.oed.com>>.

The spelling "hoast" is used in Scots around the seventeenth century; however, it can be used homonymously to mean both "An armed company of men, an army" (see DSL, "host, n.1") or "Coughing as an ailment" (DSL, "host, n.2"). When used to denote the former, the spelling "host" or "hoist" is more common, especially in literary examples.

127 *Macbeth*, William Shakespeare ([1623] 1992) *The Illustrated Stratford Shakespeare* (Chancellor Press: London), pp.776-798; Act V; Scene IV, l.6

128 *The Brus* Cambridge MS (1487) vi:532

which he has a seventeenth-century witness.

It is also unclear why he uses the word “weend” to mean “guessed” (line 17), when the Scots word “thocht” may have been more easily recognisable as Scots, and a more appropriate definition. “Ween” and its spelling variants is used in Scots as early as Barbour to describe belief in contrast to wit,<sup>129</sup> and is used in an archaic/historical sense in the eighteenth century,<sup>130</sup> but was not used to describe a belief in the sense of guessing (as opposed to believing, surmising, or knowing) in Scotland until the time of Scott, who seems to have picked it up from English sources, where this meaning for the word was common.<sup>131</sup> “Thocht”, on the other hand, is common in Scots from the genesis of written literature until the nineteenth century.<sup>132</sup> The strength of the voiceless velar fricative [x] in “thocht” would also lend improved metrical scansion to the line. In the Folio Manuscript edition of 'Captaine Carre', the English equivalent “thought” is used in this line, meaning Percy had little evidence for his selection. The only advantage to using “weend” may be that it aurally rhymes with “been” later in the line, but since rhyme rarely is not an interventional editorial priority for Percy elsewhere in this poem, this can be disregarded as incidental. The selection of “weend” over “thocht”, therefore, is an editorial decision which damages the sophistication of the collection. It is this inconsistency in effectiveness which led to detractors such as Ritson suggesting that there was no manuscript to work from. Percy's lapses in judgement are mostly limited to vocabulary.

### **Orality, Literacy, and Conflict**

It was of tantamount importance to Percy that his sources were physical objects. This priority is reflected by the physicality of the *Reliques*. Percy wanted to examine the

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129 “How his purpos suld tak ending/ Wenyt or wist it witterly”, Barbour, Book IV: 771-2

130 “Before I ween'd, but now I wat”, James Kelly (Repr. 2009) *A Complete Collection of Scottish Proverbs* (Montana: Kessinger) p.69

131 “ween, v.”. OED Online. Oxford University Press. 14 May 2013 <<http://www.oed.com>>.

132 “think, v.”. DSL Online. Scottish Language Dictionaries. 14 May 2013 <<http://www.dsl.ac.uk>>.

living ballad tradition, but the problem with this was just that: it was living, in an oral sense. As Neil Rhodes and Chris Jones have examined, “in the eighteenth century, alongside and in contrast with the development of the silent reader, a vibrant song culture existed that was genuinely participatory and not merely constructed as such through the devices of print.”<sup>133</sup> Percy was acutely aware of the contrast between the oral and the printed, and of the need to construct song devices through his print medium. In some senses, he was unsuccessful in this effort. In spite of the inclusion of explanatory essays and glossaries, he neglected to include musical notation, as other ballad collectors did, to suggest the musicality of the ballads, with the only exception being an engraving of the tune to 'For the Victory at Agincourt'. Nick Groom has called this “a 'literation' of popular culture, privileging the printed word and the act of reading over the oral and the heard, transforming popular culture into polite literature by removing it from the public sphere and making it private,”<sup>134</sup> and while it's true that Percy could have done more to preserve ballads as pieces of living music (or, at least, have preserved a version of their contemporary reality), it's fair to say he was aware of the damage the physicality of his work was causing to the literature and made an attempt to mitigate this by ensuring that the ballads were rhythmically preserved. Somewhat ironically, he preserved the rhythm of 'Edom O' Gordon' using accents, a necessarily printed tool. This is first seen in the couplet:

We wul gae to the house o' the Rodes,  
To see that fair ladie.<sup>135</sup>

This roughly corresponds with the line “yonder is in it a fayre lady” in the Folio Manuscript and “To see that fair lady” in the Foulis text. These texts' respective writers, however, were not preparing the ballad in the same way that Percy was. While Percy was

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133 Neil Rhodes and Chris Jones (2009) 'Sound Effects: The Oral/Aural Dimensions of Literature in English: Introduction', *Oral Tradition*, vol.24, no.2 <[http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/oral\\_tradition/v024/24.2.rhodes01.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/oral_tradition/v024/24.2.rhodes01.html)> accessed 5<sup>th</sup> March 2013

134 Groom (2006) p.184

135 'Edom O' Gordon' l.7-8

seeking a kind of academic ideal, the other two editors seem to be more interested in preserving the ballad in an organic state. Thus, the metre of the line would have been immediately and naturally apparent to their supposed audiences. As this was not the case with Percy's audience, who were pretty well removed from the ballad tradition, the stress of the line needed to be pointed out to them. The word "lady", when pronounced in a natural Scottish accent (as unsatisfactorily broad a term though that may be), carries the stress on the first syllable. However, for the line to scan properly, the stress must be on the last syllable of the line, as it does in any other couplet in the poem ("Said Edom O' Gordon to his men,/We maun draw till a hauld.").<sup>136</sup> By placing the grave accent above the <i>, Percy changes the pronunciation of the word "lady" (spelled here as "ladie") to encourage a stress in the appropriate place. He repeats this method later in the poem ("To see if by hir fair speechès/She could wi' him agree").<sup>137</sup> Standardised spelling and written accents are both practices which came into play with the introduction of print, so these elements are not required for a ballad singer to feel out the rhythm of a line. For Percy, however, whose readers may have been unfamiliar with the organic music in ballad poetry, it was necessary to indicate where the stresses in the rhythm were.

Percy's final two stanzas were written as a conclusion to the events by Percy himself:

He wrang his hands, he rent his hair,  
And wept in teenefu' muid:  
O traitors, for this cruel deid  
Ze sall weep teirs o' bluid.

And after the Gordon he is gane,  
Sa fast as he might drie.  
And soon i' the Gordon's foul hartis bluid  
He's wroken his dear ladie.<sup>138</sup>

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136 'Edom O' Gordon' l.3-4

137 'Edom O' Gordon' l.31-32

138 'Edom O' Gordon' l.137-144

Linguistically, the stanzas are fairly typical of the rest of the poem. Percy's use of "ze" is consistent; the apologetic apostrophe is nothing new; "-is" plurals are used throughout the poem. What is surprising here is the content. In Percy's eighteenth-century additions to the ballad, the imagery becomes more consistent with richly Romantic sentimental literature. A copy of this ballad in Joseph Ritson's *Scottish Songs* concludes with the Lord of the castle returning, wreaking vengeance on all of Captain's Car's men, before walking into the flames of his home to die with his wife.<sup>139</sup> Ritson's Lord is more heroic in the traditional sense than Percy's, who has an intense physical reaction to his grief, wringing his hands, tearing his hair out, and making an emotional plea to the heavens for justice to come to Edom O' Gordon – praying for him to "weep teirs o' bluid". Although the gore of this image is extremely appropriate to all versions of 'Edom O' Gordon', the tears are a surprising emotional association. Furthermore, the reinvention of Edom O' Gordon in these stanzas as "the Gordon" frames him as a folk character of such notoriety that nicknames are both appropriate and recognisable, in the vein of "the Bruce". This ballad is by no means obscure, but the antagonist is regionally variable and is named differently in different versions. Percy knows him as Edom O' Gordon, but he also recognises that "the old strolling bards or Minstrels... made no scruple of changing the names of the personages they introduced, to humour their hearers,"<sup>140</sup> so to suggest synonymity between Edom O' Gordon and a canonical folk character is a misrepresentation of ballad culture – or rather, a recalibration of the poem to suit proto-Romantic symbolic tropes. Percy predicts his own popularity by suggesting the ubiquity of the Gordon character, and given that his collection did prove a success after all, and was used as a source in Francis Child's ballads, his prediction may have been accurate. Although the final two stanzas were not authentic (in the sense that Percy wrote them

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139 Quoted in Hales and Furnivall

140 'Edom O' Gordon', introduction

himself), they are functional in concluding the ballad in a satisfying way, which neither of Percy's sources are successful in doing.<sup>141</sup> Percy's own stanzas are informed by eighteenth century trends in sentimental literature and precursors to Romantic tropes such as the prevalence of the anti-hero.

Having written stanzas of his own, however, Percy undermines his own claim for academic interest; that the ballads were selected to “show the gradation of our language, exhibit the progress of popular opinions, display the peculiar manners and customs of former ages, or throw light on our earlier classical poets.”<sup>142</sup> He is hardly transparent about which stanzas he wrote himself, noting only that 'Edom O' Gordon' appears “improved and enlarged with several fine stanzas” and naming his sources, at least one of which is completely inaccessible as it was his closely guarded Folio Manuscript. Jackson Bate has described this editorial principle thus:

Percy's alterations were made for a single purpose: to arrest the attention of the public upon a subject which was rather dear to him- to secure an audience for older popular ballads, not for any historical or antiquarian purpose, but largely for their intrinsic narrative interest. His intention was to some extent shared by Shenstone, who, in laying down principles upon which the editing should proceed, had stated that “Mere *Historical*... Merit is not a sufficient recommendation”. Percy's selection of the ballads he printed is symptomatic of much of the same purpose; to avoid whatever might prove of questionable delicacy, and to include only those ballads by which their narrative might capture the imagination of the reader.<sup>143</sup>

While Jackson Bate's assessment that Percy's main goal was “narrative interest” is fair, to say that there was no “historical or antiquarian purpose” is not. Although he was not consistently successful in his efforts, and although he didn't always seem clear on what he was trying to achieve, Percy's interpolations show at least an enthusiastic interest in Scottish balladry. They also show that he was unsure where Scottish balladry should fit in

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141 'Captaine Carre' in particular is missing half a page in the manuscript version's conclusion.

142 *Reliques*, preface

143 Jackson Bate, p.347

the new British canon. Far from being disinterested in history, Percy was anxious about it. His annotations and edits betray a tension between the selection of older words, geographically correct words, and modern, "improved" words. In certain cases, the history of a ballad is made more accessible to his audience from his introductions of language features. Having established that he believed 'Edom O' Gordon' to be Scottish, his use of "quh-" spellings is always correct, and lends the ballad a consistency which was unavailable to pre-literate cultures and was valued by his contemporary audience, while maintaining the philological integrity of the age of the poem. The inclusion of accents preserved certain oral features of the ballad, suggesting that although he didn't value oral literature as source material, he appreciated the importance of orality to the history of ballad culture. His use of vocabulary is slightly erratic; "weend" shows a misreading, whereas the replacement of "drie" for "hie" shows that he is comfortable with variation. The Romantic narratives of the concluding stanzas jar slightly with the bloodthirsty tone of the rest of the ballad, and are a product of Percy's own context rather than his research into balladry. His apologetic apostrophe use is problematic, as is his narrative of discovering the Folio Manuscript, and the ballad is conveniently relocated to Scotland because the main character is a traitor. Comparatively, the English folk hero Robin Hood is presented in a very positive light indeed. Percy makes it quite clear that the violence in 'Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne' should be considered in the context of the Norman invasion. Robin Hood is therefore not a traitor to his superiors; he is a native defender against foreign insurgents. Furthermore, after Robin Hood kills the Sheriff of Nottingham, he cuts his face beyond recognition with his "Irish kniffe"; his arsenal is Celtic, and the Englishness of his body is not mentioned. It is as though cruelty beyond the supposedly necessary death of the Sheriff has not been perpetrated by Robin, but is because of the Celtic possession of inanimate objects in his inventory. Where the Scots are traitors, cowards and rebels as

befits their racial profile, the English are noble, with rare examples of treason used only to protect their lands from perceived immigration threat: a fear for Englishmen which was as relevant in the time of Robin Hood as in the time of Thomas Percy. Ultimately, Percy's reading of 'Edom O' Gordon' is successful enough in that the ballad is accessible to the literate audience for whom he intended it, but as an exercise in the authentic rendering of Scottish balladry, this prominent example shows Percy to be confused as to his own motivations and misguided in some of his selections. One wonders if the "lady, who is now dead" of the introduction might have had a similar reaction to the *Reliques* as Margaret Laidlaw did to the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, but as Percy was only too aware, she was never to read it. To Percy, her original orality was so far removed from his intentions for the future of balladry that she may as well have not existed, and, perhaps, like Wordsworth's Solitary Reaper, might not have after all.

## Chapter three.

### Scotland, Britain, and taste

The cultural prevalence of Scottish poetry and Celtic ballads in the eighteenth century, shown in the *Reliques* by the high proportion of Scottish song, was no mean feat considering the political suspicion surrounding Scots. The antiquarian movement was in part responsible for the popularity of this poetry. By setting Scotland's admittedly aesthetically valuable poems in a British historical context, writers and editors of Scottish narratives could publish them in a way which would be acceptable to polite society. Walter Scott (1771-1832) deployed this method of highlighting the age of the narrative in his invention of the historical novel, so that the readers of *Waverley* (1814) might enjoy the aesthetic and dramatic contents of the book, while they remained morally distanced from the controversial implications of Jacobite history. In ballad collection, Allan Ramsay, whose editorial collections dealt most prominently with Scottish poetry, presented his collections as a curated museum. Even in his own writing, he hearkened back to the literature of previous ages in his work as a vernacular revivalist.<sup>144</sup> The publication of antique Scottish poetry satisfied several impulses in the contemporary literary tradition: the contained aesthetic of wildness and the sublime; the appreciation of all poetry in Britain as part of a singular, multi-voiced tradition; and the trope of the noble savage. These impulses are all reflected in one of the age's best novels, Tobias Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* (1771), which describes the landscape and the people of the highlands, as well as making an apology for the unification of Britain by way of colonising the northern parts of Scotland, which Smollett

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For a general introduction to vernacular revival poetry with particular reference to Ramsay, see Alexander M. Kinghorn and Alexander Law, 'Allan Ramsay and Literary Life in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century' in Andrew Hook (ed.) (1989) *The History of Scottish Literature Volume 2: 1660-1800*, General Editor Cairns Craig (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press) pp.65-80

acknowledges are “a very distinct species from their fellow-subjects of the Lowlands, against whom they indulge an ancient spirit of animosity.”<sup>145</sup> The philosophy of historical revisionism and appreciating the foreignness of Celtic art was useful to Percy, as his commitment to his project was so great that he could not ignore the plentiful reservoir of Scottish poetry which was available to him. The unique access to the Folio Manuscript which Percy enjoyed meant that he had an excellent reserve of poetry which was predominantly Scottish: access which, due to his jealous guarding of the manuscript, was shared by nobody. Friedman has noted that all seventeen Scottish ballads which made it into the final version of the *Reliques* were missing from Percy's first draft, which may show that:

even in the earliest stages of putting together the *Reliques*, Percy was holding back material for the multitude of future projects teeming in his brain... Our lists would appear to have been made in a moment of indecision about the Scottish ballads: not knowing how to dispose of them, Percy left them out. But the ballads were too good to be passed by, and in a hectic letter of 22 Feb. 1762 Percy broke through his quandary and announced his decision to scatter the Scottish ballads through all three volumes, entailing the incorporation of Scottish words in the general glossary.<sup>146</sup>

Friedman also shows that notable English ballads were omitted from the *Reliques* at the expense of Scottish ones. He hypothesises on Percy's ultimate reasons for these omissions:

It might be thought that Percy preferred the Scottish to the English “minstrel” ballads because of their linguistic picturesqueness or because he wanted to enhance the “British” character of the *Reliques*. His real motive was less pretty... Several of the Scottish ballads were already in print, though only as broadsides or pamphlets distributed locally in Scotland, and most of the others had been sent to Percy by Dalrymple himself, himself a compiler and editor of old poetry. If Percy did not use the Scottish ballads in the *Reliques*, therefore, he might well be anticipated by Dalrymple or some other

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145 Tobias Smollett ([1771] 2008) ed. Regan, Shaun *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (London: Penguin) p.245

146 Friedman (1954) p.1245

Scottish editor. The Folio MS. ballads, on the other hand, were available only to Percy and could safely be held in reserve for some future ballad enterprise.<sup>147</sup>

Friedman's hypothesising on Percy's reasons for publishing Scottish poetry are cynical. It's highly likely that he was using his Scottish ballad resources before anybody else could; after all, he was clearly both ambitious and a prodigious researcher. However, the detail which often went into his editing process would indeed suggest that he appreciated the "linguistic picturesqueness" of the Scottish ballads. Friedman is quick to dismiss what is probably one half of a dual reasoning. Percy himself commented, in a letter dated July 1765 to David Dalrymple, on his future plans for editing poetry:

Among innumerable *other* literary projects which furnish out subjects for my waking dreams, I have often thought of such a selection of the best fugitive pieces of both Nations [England and Scotland], as might make a *Union* upon a more enlarged and extensive plan, than the little elegant miscellany so intitled a few years ago [referring to Thomas Warton's *The Union: or Select Scots and English Poems* (1753)]<sup>148</sup>

Dalrymple (1726-1792) was a great influence on the Scottish poetry of the *Reliques*, contributing twenty ballads and songs which are found in the first edition as well as supplying general advice after the death of Shenstone. Percy would acknowledge him in the Preface to the *Reliques* as:

To Sir David Dalrymple, Bart., of Hailes, near Edinburgh, the Editor is indebted for most of the beautiful Scottish poems, with which this little miscellany is enriched, and for many curious and elegant remarks with which they are illustrated.<sup>149</sup>

Dalrymple was born in Edinburgh to Sir James Dalrymple, second baronet, and Christian Hamilton, the daughter of the sixth earl of Haddington.<sup>150</sup> He was educated at

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147 Friedman (1954) p.1246

148 A. F. Falconer (1954) *Volume 4: The Correspondence of Thomas Percy and David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes (The Percy Letters)* p.108

149 Preface to the *Reliques*

150' Sir David Dalrymple (1726-1792), Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online. Accessed 9<sup>th</sup> August 2013

Eton and later, Utrecht and became Advocate Depute in Stirling in 1755. His keen interest in books led him to a post as keeper of the Advocate's Library in 1752 and senior curator in 1771. He achieved prominence as an historian with the publication of *Examination of the Regiam majestatem* (1769) and *Annals of Scotland* (2 vols. 1776, 1779), having been persuaded to write the latter by the Glasgow publisher Robert Urie (c.1713-1771), who noted that Dalrymple's supporters "named your Lordship as the only person he knew to be equal to the undertaking."<sup>151</sup> He was an enthusiast of early Scottish poetry, subscribing to James Macpherson and publishing a collection entitled *Ancient Scottish Poems* (1770) from the Bannatyne Manuscript. Upon the death of his father in 1751, he was named Lord Hailes, third baronet. Percy became interested in Dalrymple due to his prominence as an historian, his superior knowledge of Scottish poetry, and his noble name. In 1762, Percy began writing to him, saying that:

Sometime ago Mr Tonson shewed me a Letter of Yours, wherein you were pleased to express your approbation of our attempt for reviving the Duke of Buckingham's Works. It gave us pleasure to find the opinion of so acknowledged a judge coincided with our own.<sup>152</sup>

Dalrymple was Percy's correspondent in several matters of editorial integrity, particularly in matters of representing his book well in polite society. In 1764, Percy consulted with him on his dedication to Elizabeth Northumberland, writing to "beg the favour of you to examine and wherever you think requisite to correct and alter."<sup>153</sup> Sadly, many of Dalrymple's letters to Percy were destroyed in the fire at Northumberland house; only five are extant.<sup>154</sup> Amongst the letters which were destroyed was probably Percy's initial introduction to the ballad of 'Gil Morrice'.

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<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7046?docPos=2>

151 NL Scot., Newhailes MS 25301

152 Falconer (1954), p.1

153 Falconer (1954), p.89

154 Falconer (1954), p.xviii

## Gil Morrice

In 1755, Glasgow's Foulis press – who also printed Dalrymple's edition of 'Edom O' Gordon' - printed *Gill Morice*, an “ancient Scottish poem” about a Lord who intercepts a message to his wife from the eponymous Gill Morice, “an Erles son”, imploring her to meet him in the woods. In a jealous rage, the Lord goes to the meeting spot himself and slaughters Gil Morice, only to discover that he was, in fact, his wife's illegitimate son. The printers furnished the book with the following advertisement:

THE following POEM, now first printed, the public owes to a LADY, who favour'd the printers with a copy, as it was carefully collected from the mouths of old women and nurses. It is not to be expected, that a Poem preserv'd only in this manner can either be correct or entire. It is hoped however that the curious will find merit enough in its present form to justify this attempt to preserve it.

If any reader can render it more correct or complete, or can furnish the printers with any other old fragments of the like kind, they will very much oblige them.<sup>155</sup>

Percy took up the mantle of obliging the editors when he correctly identified the ballad to be similar to 'Childe Maurice', a version in his Folio Manuscript. Percy's 'Gil Morrice' is strikingly similar to the Foulis press's earlier book, and his Folio Manuscript edition serves little purpose other than the initial inspiration for the research and to prove that “this poem lays claim to a pretty high antiquity... in the Editor's ancient MS. collection is a very old imperfect copy of the same ballad.”<sup>156</sup> Hales and Furnival, the editors of Percy's manuscript, concurred that “Un-doubtedly the less corrupted is the Folio version; but, un-happily, it is somewhat imperfect,” scathingly noting that the ballad was “the offspring of men who possessed the faculty of Midas with a difference – they turned everything they touched into dross.”<sup>157</sup> Unlike 'Edom O' Gordon', the Folio Manuscript version of this ballad displays many Scottish language features which Percy takes little

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155 Unidentified editor, (1755) *Gill Morice, an Ancient Scottish Poem* (Glasgow: Foulis Press), Mitchell Library Foulis collection, E.G.P. 37; E74035. p.2

156 *Reliques*, p. [?]

157 Hales & Furnival (1868) vol.2, p.500

inspiration from. In fact, he overtly favours the more modern version, saying that “though the leading features of the story are the same, yet the colouring here is so much improved and heightened, and so many additional strokes are thrown in, that it is evident the whole has undergone a revisal,” and recognising that the additional verses, which he claims to have accessed in unnamed manuscripts, “are perhaps, after all, only an ingenious interpolation”<sup>158</sup>. Whereas in 'Edom O' Gordon' Percy was keen to assert the antiquity of the ballad to such an extent that he bolstered it with inauthentic anachronisms, with 'Gil Morrice' he has exclusive access to an extremely antique version of a poem and uses it only as conviction for why a more modern version deserves critical attention. In fact, Percy's preference for printed editions is typical of his editorial habits and is in part the reason for the conflict between authenticity and aesthetic antiquity in this ballad, and others in the collection.

This preference for print versions of ballads is evident in this case even from the name. He notes that “Childe Maurice... is probably the last original title,”<sup>159</sup> yet still titles the poem 'Gil Morrice'. The most likely reason for this is Percy's interpretation of the content. The word “childe” is associated with youth both in English and Scots,<sup>160</sup> and by ageing him, Percy - and the editor of the Foulis edition - are increasing the suggestion of misconstrued eroticism between Morrice and his mother. The *Oxford English Dictionary* also notes that “child” may be defined as “A youth of gentle birth: used in ballads, and the like, as a kind of title,” and “When used by modern writers, commonly archaically spelt *chylde* or *childe*, for distinction's sake.”<sup>161</sup> Percy exhibits this subtle distinction in meaning in his version of the ballad “Child Waters”, noting in the introduction to the poem that “[the title] is repeatedly given to Prince Arthur in the *Faerie Queen*.”<sup>162</sup> By contrast, “Gil” is used from the fifteenth

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158 *Reliques*, p. [?]

159 *Reliques*, p. [?]

160 “child, n.2”. OED Online. Oxford University Press. Accessed 7 June 2013 <<http://www.oed.com>>

“child, n.1”. DSL Online. Scottish Language Dictionaries. Accessed 7 June 2013 <<http://www.dsl.ac.uk>>

161 “child, n.5”. OED Online. Oxford University Press. Accessed 7 June 2013 <<http://www.oed.com>>

162 'Child Waters', *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*

century to denote “A familiar or contemptuous term applied to a woman; a lass; a wench.”<sup>163</sup> This is relevant to discussions of gender politics within Percy's *Reliques* which are discussed later in this chapter. Percy also tells us that Gil Morrice is an “erlès son.”<sup>164</sup> Gil Morrice is therefore a folk hero who serves all of Percy's needs. The mild suggestions of eroticism heighten the sensual pleasure and dramatic effect of the poem while constraining it within the boundaries of propriety. His parentage is a tasteful link with the aristocracy, but his name is stripped of nobility, making him more of a folk hero of the people. The link with the aristocracy was absolutely necessary. Percy's patrons were accustomed to reading narratives which reflected characters who were relatable to their own lifestyles. Scotland had its fair share of heroes in its folk canon, such as Rob Roy or Tam Lin, but for Percy to introduce his British audience to a hero who was not only Scottish but also a member of the ancient rural community would have done nothing to popularise his collection. Marketability was at the forefront of Percy's mind in even the most minute of decisions, as is shown in his detailed correspondence with Shenstone and Dalrymple. It is also worth noting that in his glosses on this poem, Percy guides his readers in the pronunciation of “child”, saying:

Since it was first printed, the Editor has been assured that the foregoing ballad is still current in many parts of Scotland, where the hero is universally known by the name of *Child Maurice*, pronounced by the common people *Cheild* or *Cheeld*.<sup>165</sup>

By obviously distinguishing “the common people” from the readership of the *Reliques*, and by alluding to the living ballad tradition which makes bourgeoisie ballad collections possible, Percy tacitly admits that the middle and upper classes do not have true ownership of the ballads. The title “Child Morrice” not only requires an explanation to be understood by the reader of the *Reliques*, but they will be so unfamiliar with the term

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163 “gil, n.4”. OED Online. Oxford University Press. Accessed 24 September 2013 <<http://www.oed.com>>

164 ‘Gil Morrice’, I.1

165 ‘Gil Morrice’, introduction

that they require a phonetic pronunciation guide in order to understand the rhythmic and rhymed machinations of the poem. In his seemingly innocuous gloss, Percy both others the ballad and attempts to make it an accessible piece of literature. The machinations of the “othering” of art for the benefit of prestige societies was most famously explored in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, a study in postcolonial cultural movements which has never been bettered.<sup>166</sup> When we consider Percy's publication of *Haoqiu zhuan*, an undeniable pattern of his imperial appropriation of other cultures in his literary works appears which has implications for writers throughout the Romantic era who acknowledge Percy as an influence. The question of whether Celtic Scots and Irish writings represent postcolonial literature is a controversial one, but in the Romantic era there are many examples of such appropriation, not only in Percy and Smollett, but in Burns, whose subtle criticisms of the Scots who “bought and sold [the Scots] for English gold”<sup>167</sup> and quietly revolutionary politics are a voice for the oppressed, and Wordsworth, whose 'Solitary Reaper' is cultural appropriation almost to the point of caricature. Berthold Schone has argued this point, saying that “Scottish writers since the early eighteenth and perhaps even the early seventeenth centuries are likely to have much in common with contemporary writers from the former colonised and now independent Commonwealth countries.”<sup>168</sup>

There are a total of twenty previously unpublished lines in the *Reliques* edition of 'Gil Morrice'. These lines, which Percy included himself, are attributed to an unidentified manuscript in circulation. Due to this manuscript being unknown and not mentioned in Percy's extant letters, it is likely that he composed these lines himself. They describe the appearance of Gil Morrice as Lord Barnard discovers him in the wood:

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166 Edward Said (1979), *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage)

167 Robert Burns, 'Such a Parcel of Rogues in a Nation' in James A. Mackay, ed. (2009) *The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Burns, 1759-1796 Bicentenary Edition* (Catrine: Alloway Publishing) pp.460-461

168 Berthold Schone (1995) 'A Passage to Scotland: Scottish Literature and the British Postcolonial Condition', *Scotlands*, vol.2, issue 1, pp.107-22, pl.110

His hair was like the threads of gold,  
Drawne frae Minerva's loome:  
His lipps like roses drapping dew,  
His breath was a' perfume.

His brow was like the mountain snae  
Glit by the morning beam:  
His cheeks like living roses glow:  
His een like azure stream.  
The boy was clad in robes of grene,  
Sweete as the infant spring:  
And like the mavis on the bush,  
He gart the vallies ring.

The baron came to the grene wode,  
Wi' mickle dule and care,  
And there he first spied Gil Morice  
Kameing his zellow hair:  
That sweetly wafd around his face,  
That face beyond compare:  
He sang sae sweet it might dispel  
A' rage but fell despair.<sup>169</sup>

As Lord Barnard himself notes, “The fairest part of my bodie/Is blacker than thy heel”; Gil Morrice appears extremely feminised in this version of the ballad. Both of Percy's source versions feature him “keming his zellow hair”, but in the version which makes it into the *Reliques*, the description is drawn out, romanticised, and related to traditional norms of Western feminine beauty. Minerva, the Roman Goddess of poetry and wisdom is invoked by his delicate hair and his skin, scent, and lips are floral. The line “That face beyond compare:” is an egregious interpolation on Percy's part which is significantly more reminiscent of contemporary Romantic poetry than of balladry. The musicality of his voice is intended to symbolise a calming influence – the ying to Lord Barnard's overpoweringly masculine yang – but it fails, as such a feminine feature is unnatural on a male hero. He is described in terms of his dress, which invokes nature and the “gude grene wode” of the

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169 'Gil Morrice', l.109-128. Lines 121-124 appear in the Foulis version, albeit slightly altered

“And when he cam to guid grene wod  
Wi miekle dule and cair  
And there he first saw Gill Morice  
Kemeing down his zellow hair.” 'Gill Morice', l.109-112

supposed lovers' meeting place. The gendered degradation of his name from the noble, male "Childe" to the contemptuous, female "Gil", although not a change originally orchestrated by Percy, underlines the suspicion of Scottish feminisation which is attached to the protagonist of this ballad. This feminisation demonstrates a specific facet of anti-Scots bias of the contemporary English literary scene: that Scots are to be sexually mistrusted.<sup>170</sup> Their gender is fluid and they use this as a method of deceiving the 'civilised' English. 'Jemmy Dawson', a poem in the *Reliques* by William Shenstone, shares this bias. 'Jemmy Dawson' is about a young Scot's turn to Jacobitism, but his crime is interestingly presented in terms of his clothing and gender performance:

Their colours and their sash he wore,  
And in the fatal dress was found;  
And now he must that death endure,  
Which gives the brave the keenest wound.<sup>171</sup>

Following the '45 rising, many English writers – including John Wilkes – noted with aggression their suspicion of the Scots as betrayers of the Union, unworthy of the positions of power that Scots such as the Earl of Bute enjoyed. One such outlet for these suspicions was to call into question the gender performance of the Scots. This is perhaps a side effect of the now infamous tale of Charles Edward Stuart escaping to Skye disguised as Flora MacDonald's servant, Betty Burke.<sup>172</sup> The image of the saviour of Jacobitism fleeing in drag is a perfect symbol for the failures of the movement and the artifice of his claim and identity, which can be mapped onto the collective identities of the Scots. As Frank Ferguson writes, "Scottish Jacobitism supposedly induces shame, dresses Englishmen as women and warps the fabric of the English family by destroying

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170 For a detailed discussion of the perceived sexuality and gender identities of the Scots in the eighteenth century, see Murray Pittock (1995) *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)

171 'Jemmy Dawson', l.21-24

172 'Charles Edward (Charles Edward Stuart; styled Charles III; known as the Young Pretender, Bonnie Prince Charlie) (1720-1788), Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online. Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

<<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5145?docPos=2>>

the potential of conventional heterosexual relationships.”<sup>173</sup> Not only do Jacobites subvert the natural order by donning skirts, they also do so by refusing to bow to Protestant English rule, and indeed fighting against it. Lord Barnard and Gil Morrice represent the insidious dual face of Scottish warriors according to English writers: the unthinking, violent brute and the potentially homosexual effeminate who is eventually revealed to be a bastard. In his role as a bastard, Gil Morrice is also a source of shame within the community of Scottish nobility. Not only is he a threat to Britain, he is also a threat in an insulated sense. Both the country and the family are threatened by Gil Morrice's presence. The Scots of Percy's 'Gil Morrice' are either feminised, violent, or sexually unrestrained.

Anti-Scots sentiment such as this was involved with the Enlightenment ideal of improvement, championed by scholars such as the writer Henry Home Lord Kames (1696-1782), who claimed in his book *Essays upon Several Subjects Concerning British Antiquities* that “When one dives into the Antiquities of *Scotland and England*, it will appear that we borrowed all our Laws and Customs from the *English*,”<sup>174</sup> and Thomas Sheridan (c.1719-1788), an Irish actor who sold out numerous lectures on English elocution in Edinburgh in 1755. Some Scots in the eighteenth century therefore adopted artificially English mannerisms, modifying their own behaviour to participate in unionised communities, in which Scottish mannerisms and speech were perceived as less genteel and less civilised. As a ballad collector and antiquarian, Percy is uniquely concerned with artifice and disguise, and his inclusion of ballads in which Scots men are disguised as women shows that his concern is not only that the authentic face of his ballads is eluding him, but also that the originators of the ballads may be concealing their true face and intentions.

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173 Ferguson (2002) p.84

174 H. Home (1748) *Essays upon Several Subjects Concerning British Antiquities* (Edinburgh: A. Kincaid) p.4

## Antiquity and Authenticity

Percy's claim that the "poem lays claim to a pretty high antiquity" is true, but perhaps less so for the finished product, as many of his language edits show a bias towards modern Scots and English. This is particularly notable in the stanzas which he may have written himself. The word "frae", for instance ("Drawne frae Minerva's loome", l. 110), is used consistently throughout the *Reliques* version of 'Gil Morrice', and the Foulis Press edition ("If it be cum frae Gill Morice", l. 85). However, the Folio Manuscript typically uses "ffrom" ("I am come ffrom Ch[i]ld Maurice", l. 39). Indeed, the word "frae" is not a popularly used word until the early eighteenth century.<sup>175</sup> Furthermore, in the reasonably extensive glosses to these lines, Percy states that:

It may be proper to mention, that other copies read ver.110 thus:  
Shot frae the golden sun.

Percy's use of "frae", therefore, is consistent with another unidentified copy to which he claims to have access. Since this copy has probably been published since the Foulis editors requested interpolations, it is safe to assume that it is fairly contemporary to both the Foulis copy and the *Reliques*. Percy is correct to claim that the ballad "lays claim to a pretty high antiquity," but he undermines the antiquity of the ballad by modernising the language. The spelling "ffrom" is used throughout the Folio Manuscript, and is common in Scots until the late seventeenth century, so it's highly unlikely that in all of Percy's research, he never comes across it. If his objection is against the "ff-" spelling, then his commitment to removing the supposedly archaic double letter is inconsistent, undermined by his use of the words "shee" (l.90), "hee" (l.91) and "mee" (l.174, 188). In all of these examples, the word falls at the end of the line, and constitutes the rhyme of the stanza, as well as emphasising the stress on the final syllable of the line ("Seek not zour death frae

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<sup>175</sup> "frae, prep.1". DSL Online. Scottish Language Dictionaries. Accessed 7 June 2013 <<http://www.dsl.ac.uk>>

mee”, l.188). Percy is concerned with modernising archaic spellings only when they do not assist the metre of the poem. There is an obvious irony involved in this contrivance that should be pointed out: in an oral literature such as ballads, spelling was never a concern before the advent of print. “She” and “shee” are pronounced exactly the same, and the stress which is orally suggested by rhyme is natural to a well-performed recitation. Percy's perspective being either that his versions of the ballads were never designed for recitation, or that his patrons would not know how to perform ballads well, underlines his reasoning for accepting double letters – a common feature in Scots orthography – for some words, but not for others. Standardisation is, of course, necessary for print culture, and Percy was far from being a lone voice in this respect, but the contrivances of language made necessary for print compared to the less deliberate formations of language orally are worth noting.

Although he preserves many of the spellings and word choices of the Foulis editors, Percy evidently thought that the apologetic apostrophe to signify l-vocalisation was conspicuously absent from their selections. Thus:

That will gae to Lord Barnard's ha,<sup>176</sup>

in the Foulis edition becomes

That will gae to Lord Barnard's ha',<sup>177</sup>

in the *Reliques*. L-vocalisation, the process by which [l] sounds (such as in “hall”) were replaced by vowels, occurred in Scots in the late fourteenth to fifteenth century and began to be represented by the apologetic apostrophe in the eighteenth century by vernacular revivalists such as Ramsay. Percy's use of the apostrophe to indicate l-vocalisation is

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176 'Gill Morrice' l.9

177 'Gil Morrice' l.9

ironic, as he is printing a representation of oral literature. Oral literature has never been concerned with spelling until the advent of print made this a necessity. A major criticism of literary ballad collections has been that the necessities of print undermine the character and natural flow of the poems. This attitude was epitomised in the above quotation by Margaret Laidlaw when Walter Scott presented her with a copy of his *Minstrelsy*, based largely on ballads she had recited for him (see chapter one).<sup>178</sup>

In the use of the apostrophe to denote l-vocalisation, Percy is merely following a trend. However, it is a trend which tells us much about the cultural makeup of Britain's eighteenth century readers. A labouring-class literate adult Scot in the middle of the eighteenth century (admittedly a rare occurrence, but certainly not inconceivable) might read the English word "hall" aloud and understand the pronunciation of phonemes in the word. The same hypothetical consumer of ballads has an instinctive understanding that in her own language the word which is represented by Percy as "ha" is pronounced, roughly, <hɑ>. The majority of Percy's readers, however, were not labouring-class. They were affluent, and the prestige accent of the day was similar to modern Received Pronunciation.<sup>179</sup> Without the apostrophe, Percy's typical reader would have no notion that there were letters "missing" as it would not be a feature of language which was reflected in their own.

Percy's use of accents to determine metre are another example of how printed English is used to suggest orality, and 'Gil Morrice' is the poem which utilises this technique the most in the *Reliques*. The practice of using wrenched accents to extend the number of syllables in a line began to be consciously practiced with the rise of print, although it is a common natural feature of ballads as the stress of a line will fall where the

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178 Hogg (1834) p.61. When Hogg would print this anecdote, he would of course miss the irony of showing that letters were supposedly "missing" by printing apostrophes in his grandmother's speech.

179 David Crystal "Language and Time". *BBC Voices*. <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/yourvoice/feature2\\_4.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/yourvoice/feature2_4.shtml)> accessed 9<sup>th</sup> July 2013

musical stresses are. In Percy's edition of 'Gil Morrice', he uses the wrenched accent technique several times, such as in the first verse:

GIL MORRICE was an erlès son.  
His name it waxed wide;  
It was nae for his great richès,  
Nor zet his mickle pride;<sup>180</sup>

Foulis version uses no accents:

GILL MORICE was an Erles son.  
His name it waxed wide;  
It was nae for his great riches,  
Nor zet his mickle pride;<sup>181</sup>

The much older version in the Folio Manuscript is far more irregular in its metre, in which respect, the later versions by Foulis and Percy are, as Hales and Furnivall suspected, an improvement:

& he tooke his siluer combe in his hand  
to kembe his yellow lockes  
he sayes come hither thou litle ffoot page  
*that* runneth lowlye by my knee  
ffor thou shalt goe to lohn stewards wiffe  
& pray her speake *with* mee<sup>182</sup>

Percy's application of wrenched accents, as well as his spelling and use of apostrophe, underline the inherent artificiality of print versions of traditionally oral pieces of literature by showing that the ballad cannot be fully appreciated on the page without editorial intervention. The need for editorial intervention further removes ballad literature from its progenitors, who were, for the most part, not likely to be literate or affluent enough to participate in transactions of manufacturing or purchasing literature.

There are various alterations made to the spellings of Scots words in Percy's version compared to the Foulis version and other contemporary examples of literature. For

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180 'Gil Morrice', l.1-4

181 'Gill Morice', l.1-4

182 'Childe Maurice', Hales and Furnivall eds., pp [?]

the most part, these alterations are minor, concerned with standardising and rendering the ballad accessible. However, occasionally seemingly unimportant changes show a refined skill in research and editing. The most prominent example of this is in the repeated refrain which first appears in the *Reliques* as:

Dame, ze maun to the gude grene wod.<sup>183</sup>

However, in its five other appearances in the poem, the refrain becomes “gude grene wode”. In contrast to this, all examples of the phrase in the Foulis text read “guid grene wod.” The replication of “wod” from the Foulis edition, only to become “wode” in later uses, is perhaps a further example of Percy's priority focus on the new lines of this ballad making him careless. The inconsistency is gone by the fourth edition, co-edited by his nephew. According to the DSL, “grene wod” is a slightly more common way of referring to woodland in poetry, whereas “grene wode” is typically used in formal national documents such as Sir John Skene's *Regiam Majestatem: The Avld Lawes and Constitvtions of Scotland* (1609).<sup>184</sup> As Jackson Bate has noted, “Percy's frequent unacquaintance with archaic words occasionally led him to regard a line as obscure which was not.”<sup>185</sup>

The variation in spelling of “gude” and “guid”, however, is more interesting. The earliest noted variant of this word in Scots is “gud”, in Barbour's *Brus*. In the Bannatyne MS, several examples of “gude” are noted. “Gude” was used not only in poetry, but also in religious texts such as the *Legends of the Saints* (1380) and documents such as the *Chartulary of the Abbey of Lindores* (1195-1479; published by Edinburgh University Press 1903).<sup>186</sup> Later, Dunbar's copyists use “guid” and “gude” interchangeably, as would most writers from this time until the end of the sixteenth century. “Guid” became the prominent

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183 'Gil Morrice' l.65

184 'Grene wod, n.1' DSL Online. Scottish Language Dictionaries. Accessed 7 June 2013 <<http://www.dsl.ac.uk>> (“And gif that man be found thereafter with grene wode, he sall attach him”)

185 Jackson Bate, p.339

186 See 'Gud, a.1' DSL Online. Scottish Language Dictionaries. Accessed 7 June 2013 <<http://www.dsl.ac.uk>>

form when the usage had moral or skilful associations.<sup>187</sup> “Gude” tended to denote aesthetic pleasingness.<sup>188</sup> In the case of 'Gill Morice' and 'Gil Morrice', the two spellings in both versions respectively reflect either an ironic foreshadowing that the moral sanctity of the spiritual space in the woods is about to be violated (in the Foulis “guid” version) or that the lyrical beauty of the woods is worth specific representation in the ballad. Percy falls on the side of romantic picturesqueness, which is typical of his preference as a reader and, therefore, an editor. What is especially fascinating about Percy's attention to spelling in this case is that in the Older Scots versions of the word “blood”, the pattern is continued. When Lord Barnard presents the corpse of Gil Morrice to his wife, the Foulis version describes “His heart's bluid on the ground,”<sup>189</sup> whereas Percy's version describes “His heart's blude.”<sup>190</sup> According to the DSL, “blude” is by far the more frequently used variant of the word until the Anglicised standard “blood”. In Percy's adaptation of the refrain of the ballad, not only does he choose a spelling of “gude” which was aesthetically appropriate to his overall proto-romantic vision for the *Reliques*, he also chooses a word which, when set as part of a consistent spelling scheme (something which, as a champion of print media over manuscript and oral, he valued) predicts the most common pre-standardised spelling of “blude.”

As with 'Edom O' Gordon', Percy uses the ancient Scottish “quh-” spelling in words which in English use “wh-” (“Quhair sall I get a bonny boy,” l.7). Unlike, 'Edom O' Gordon', however, his usage is inconsistent. As has been shown in this thesis, the Folio Manuscript is too recent a document to use “quh-” spellings authentically, and this is reflected in 'Childe Maurice', which never uses them. The inconsistencies of Percy's published version

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187 “Sum callis me guid, sum sayis thai lie” Dunbar, William 'Musing Allone this Hinter Nicht' in Tasioulas, J.A. (1999) *The Makars: The Poems of Henryson, Dunbar and Douglas* (Edinburgh: Canongate), pp.298-300, l.8

188 “All fude is gude, the quhilk God creat hes” 'Certane Graces to be sung or said befor meit, or efter' in Mitchell, A. F. ed. (1897) *The Gude and Godlie Ballatis. Reprinted from the original of 1567* (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society) pp.18-19, l.5

189 'Gill Morice' l.184

190 'Gil Morrice' l.198

mirror those in the 1755 Foulis text, in which line 107 forgoes its typical “quh-” spelling, and reads:

O what means a these folks coming<sup>191</sup>

Duplicated in the *Reliques* as:

O what mean a' the folk coming<sup>192</sup>

This apparent lapse of attention compared to the stringent consistency of 'Edom O' Gordon' is indicative of Percy's confused priorities. When confronted with a few similar versions of 'Edom O' Gordon', he tasks himself with producing a critical edition. With 'Gil Morrice', he has two versions which are extremely different. Rather than amalgamating the most prominent linguistic curiosities or aesthetically pleasing elements of both poems, he produces a diplomatic edition of the Foulis Press book. He is clearly capable of highly considered language research, as demonstrated in his appropriate handling of “quh-” spellings in 'Edom O' Gordon', but this ability is imperceptible in 'Gil Morrice', in which he replicates the errors of former editors. It is unlikely that Percy would allow inconsistencies, linguistic errors, and illogical word selections to accidentally escape his notice; indeed he was not averse to amending such errors, where noted, in subsequent editions of the *Reliques*. If, then, his oversights are more deliberate, it is important to consider his reasons for them.

One likely reason is a cynical one. Percy claims in his introduction to 'Gil Morrice' that the inclusion of this ballad in his collection was inspired in part by a desire to improve upon the Foulis version, as was duly requested by its editors, who recognised the incompleteness of the text. He claims that the additional lines were circulated in

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191 'Gil Morrice' l.107

192 'Gill Morrice' l.107

manuscript form, but no such manuscripts survive, if indeed they existed at all. Given that Percy was coy about the real reasons for his interest in ballad publication – namely professional attainment and the potential for permanent standing in British literature – and given also his established tendency to mythologise his source materials, particularly those which are not publicly verified in existing libraries, it is possible that 'Gil Morrice' was nothing more to Percy than an invitation to demonstrate his prowess as a poet. Assuming that the manuscripts of the missing lines never existed – the only evidence to the contrary being Percy's word – he may have written these lines himself, catalysed by the request of the editor of the Foulis edition, and using dubious manuscript evidence as justification for the lines' inclusion which he knew they didn't deserve as a purely eighteenth-century invention (the modern language of the lines in question would certainly indicate that they aren't older). Furthermore, just as Percy valued the Folio Manuscript highly as he was the only person with access to it, so too did he value any other sources to which he had exclusive access. Even if Percy did not write these lines, they were the only lines which were important to him, because they were the only lines to which he had exclusive access. They certainly present enough sentimental and romantic description to be consistent with poetry of the mid-eighteenth century, so they are almost certainly not authentic, but this was not the issue at the forefront of Percy's mind. The advertisement to the Foulis edition requested verses which might "render [the poem] more correct or complete"; Percy obliges the latter request at the expense of the former. Hales and Furnival are correct in their assumption that the Folio Manuscript version is the most correct in terms of authentic language and proximity to the earliest recorded memory of the approximate wording of the ballad but, at least in this instance, authenticity matters less to Percy than access to original material does.

Percy's attention to detail is a strange balance. Often, his editorial eye is intricate to the point of obsession, but likewise, his omissions and errors are obvious to the point of being obnoxious. It is unfortunate that his reputation for lax editorial practice overshadows his practice of highly considered philological research, but it is not a wholly unfair assessment.

## Chapter four.

### Conclusion

The Latin inscription on the frontispiece of the first edition of the *Reliques* reads:

non omis moriar  
durat opus vatum

The first line is a quotation from Horace's *Carmina*. In English, it reads "I shall not wholly die." The second, "The work of the poets endures," is from Ovid's *Amores*. If Percy's intention is to ensure the endurance of the work of the poets, it certainly isn't to ensure the endurance of their names. In this sense, Percy himself is the true success story of the *Reliques*. Until Child's project, Percy's was the name in ballad collection. All major balladeers after him cite him as inspiration and cite his work as a research material. The scale of the *Reliques* and the ambition of its editor permeate each page, even the ones which are littered with errors, inconsistencies, and oversights. The evocation of Rome in this frontispiece also calls to mind the Milton text in Percy's library. To a great extent, Percy has been successful in attaching his *Reliques* to a mythical history of Britain. His conservative politics, links with the aristocracy, and desire to succeed professionally manifested in his literary pursuits with the invention of a shared heritage between the individual nations within Britain, but this heritage was technically untrue. Percy's myth was that Britain had existed historically, although really, his myth was that the Celtic nations in what is now Britain had spiritually been part of England all along. Susan Stewart has written that "In order to awaken the dead, the antiquarian must first kill them."<sup>193</sup> Percy's use of this historical frame achieves this end. Paratexts, glosses, and additional content (in

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<sup>193</sup> Susan Stewart (1993) *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (North Carolina: Duke University Press) p.143

terms of stanzas, modern poems and so on) are notable methods for Percy's historical frame, but by far the most significant method is philological modification. The most minute, seemingly accidental change in spelling shows Percy at his most cunning editorial wit. These changes are also reflective of contemporary social and political contexts, including national unrest following the Union and subsequent rebellions which threatened traditional class structures in affluent parts of Scotland and England.

Percy's appropriation of the Scottish voice – particularly the voice of ballad singers – was the inspiration for many Romanticists who followed him. Wordsworth's foray into cultural appropriation has already been mentioned in this thesis, but the democratic language impulse of his poetry in a general sense warrants further investigation in terms of this concept. In particular, his 'Character of the Happy Warrior', 'Rob Roy's Grave' and 'Address to the Sons of Burns' evoke the Scottish character, but framed in a foreign, English way. An interesting perspective on the appropriation of Scots is in the case of Robert Burns, a native Scots speaker, who was famously dubbed a “heaven taught ploughman”<sup>194</sup> by his reviewer, Henry Mackenzie, the author of *The Man of Feeling*. Burns adopted this uneducated, rural character, although he was extremely intelligent (certainly intelligent enough to manipulate the interpretation of his poetry by the press for his audience) and well-read. Burns allowed the trope of the heaven-taught ploughman to permeate his work. He made numerous assertions that his poetry was humble and that he was merely hopeful it would be received well by readers of good taste, but upon textual inspection, poems such as 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' and 'To A Mouse', both written in Scots and concerned with rural Scottish issues, are highly sophisticated, self-aware, confident pieces of writing. Wordsworth and Burns in particular were both fascinated by how the Scottish voice could be used to evoke certain Romantic tropes (such as common

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<sup>194</sup> Henry Mackenzie, *The Lounger* (9<sup>th</sup> December 1786), reproduced in Donald A. Low (ed.) (1974) *Burns: The Critical Tradition* (London: Routledge)

language, sublime beauty, and antique histories) and both were inspired by Percy's *Reliques* as a document which wrote sublimely beautiful, Romantically described histories of Britain, often using a Scottish voice to emphasise or de-emphasise certain elements of these histories. This aspect of the work of these poets has never been studied in detail, and the intertextual elements of the aftermath of the *Reliques* also warrant close attention at a doctoral level. The cultural significance of both Burns and Wordsworth can hardly be overstated, but their significance in these terms – and in particular, the significance of Percy to this area of British literature – has been sadly neglected.

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## Appendix

M. Henry Balnaues (1584), *The Confession of Faith, conteining how the troubled man should seeke refuge at his God, Thereto led by faith: with the declaration of the aratical of iustification at length. The Order of good workes, which are the fruites of faith: And how the faithful, and iustified man, should walke and liue, in the perfite, and true Christian religion, according to his vocation.* (Edinburgh: Thomas Vautrollier)

TO THE RIGHT Honourable, and Vertuous Ladie, ALISON SANDILANDS, Lady of Hormistoun: Thomas Vautrollier, her humble Seruitour; wisheth grace, and peace, in Christ Iesus.

WHile I consider, (Noble Lady) how that after the miserable saccage of IERUSALEM, vtter wrake and ouerthrow of the cietie and temple thereof, lamentable leading till, and being in captiuitie of the lewes, and to the eyes of man, the vnrecoerable desolation of that whole common weale, hauing nowe as it were, lying so many years deadly buried: yet at the last, besides their deliuerance, which was most wo~derful, how I say that wherin their greatest beautie, and highest felicitie euer did stand: yea, the onely glorie wherein any people could excell, that is, the lawe of God giuen by MOYSES, was found out amongst the old & desperate ruines, vndestroyed, vnuiolated, and safely preserued, as is to bee seene by the holy historie 2. Chro. 34. 2. King. 22. I ca~ not but acknowledge the wonderful prouide~ce & exceeding great mercy of our god, in preseruing from tyme to tyme, his blessed law and word, wherein onely consisteth the glorie & felicitie of his church vpon the face of this earth, fro~ deprauation, corruption, and destruction, in whatsoever extreame da~gers: howsoever the blinde papistes cannot see this without a visible & glistering successio~ of a Church, to do the same. The like perswasion, whereof now in the whole body of the scripture, now in some parts or portions of the same: the histories of tymes and memories of men do recorde: so that Gods carefull prouide~ce: & merciful preservation hath alwayes beene bent hereaway. And if it be lesome to compare small, base, and litle thinges, vnto such as are great, highe, and mightie: surely there was a certein prettie, learned, and godly treatise, compyled by a diuine lawier, and honourable sessioner of the kings maiestie, his session and publicke Counsell, which through the iniuries of time, neglige~ce of keepers, great and carefull distractions of the author, was so lost, and to the opinion of

all perished, that being earnestly coueted, greatly desired, and carefully sought for, and searched out by some good, godly, and learned, as hauing some intelligence of the authors trauels in that part: yet it could neuer bee had, as desperate at any tyme to haue beene able to bee recouered: vntill to mans appearance of mere chance, but most assuredly by the mercyfull prouidence of our God, a certeine godly, and zealous gentleman, priuy to the desires of some that so earnestly coueted it, being in the towne of Hormistou~ in Lothiane, findeth the same in the handes of a child, as it were seruing to the childe to playe him with, and so receaued and recouered the the same. And as this treatise was a prettie, & gentill strand of the abundant fountaine of the scriptures: why might it not in this point sauour of the own source, spring, & beginning? why might not the birth in such a case follow the nature and conditio~ of the womb? & why might not the daughter this farre euen rese~ble the mother, or be of the same fortune, & as it were subiect, to the same fatalitie with her. Wherefore, this treatise comming to my handes, as a singuler token of the finders louing kindnes, and liberall will, and affection towards mee, considering the worthines, vtilitie, compendious learning, and singuler godlines thereof: I could not, either bee so inique to the honourable fame of the godly author: either so ingrate to the louing propiner, and offerer vnto mee, either enuious to the common wealth of christianitie, or sacrilegious towards God, in suppressing his glorie in this point, as not to commit the same by my trauell, to a longer and more lastie memorie: that so in this raritie of trustie and faithfull handmaides, and great store of treasonable dealing of vile hyrelings: This lawful & louing daughter might after a maner and some what ancillat or famulat (so to speake it after the latines) to the owne mother, that is, to the scriptures, whereof shee floweth and proceedeth. And surely not a fewe, nor small reasons moued mee to vtter the same (worshipful Lady) vnder the shadow of your name, and as it were dedicat it, at least my paines and trauels in setting it out, vnto your honour. For, it being found and recouered in your ground and holding, and after a maner being the birth thereof: who can so iustly as yee nowe and yours challenge the right of the same, after Gods calling to his mercies, the Author: It is also a work bredd & broght forth in that affliction, and banishme~t for Christs sake, in the which yee did breede and bring forth your dearest children. It is the worke of a faithfull brother and most trustie Consellour participant of all the afflictio~s, & continuing constant to the end, and in the end. It is such, that when as it was (I wot not howe) negligently letten bee, amongst the handes of babes to playe them with, it was through gods prouidence recouered by that godly gen|tleman, your Ladyships secretarie. It was by that

notable seruant of God, whome the Larde, your Husband of godly memorie, and yee did euer so duetifully reuerence, and he so fatherly & christianely loue you, so earnestly cared for, & so diligently sought out, & inquired of, that it might be preserued from perishing as almost nothing more. And as the booke of the law found in the temple by Gods prouidence, was presented to IOSIAS, to renew again the couenant betwixt God, and his people, & to bring them againe vnder his right obedience, and found them in his true knowledge and worshipping, which all now a long time had beene put in obliuion: who wot, but the like is resembled and shadowed to you, and giuen you to vnderstande and learne in finding this pendicle of Gods lawe, and word in your dwelling, that yee and yours maybe put in mind of your duety towards God, constantly to abyde by his trueth, and to see that hee bee truly serued in your dominion, that yee and yours thus first seeking the kingdome of god, & righteousnes thereof, then all other things may bee cast vnto you: in case yee or they faile in so doing, it may be a testimonie against you or them, that God hath offered him selfe to be found by you, & in your ground, and yet ye haue not rightly regarded him. Surely, these with other reasons, besides my duetie towards your honour, moued me to set out this small worke chiefly vnder your name. The vtilitie whereof (I doubt not) shall be found so profitable, the delite so pleasant, the dignitie so excellent, that whosoever readeth it, shall find them greatly commodat, by the goodnes of god the fountain thereof, ioyfully delited by the author or writer, & honorablie decored through your meane, whereby they inioye the vse of it. Now as to that, that rests, god euer preserue your Ladyship, & yours in his true feare, graunt you good dayes, and long life, to the furtherance and aduancement of his glory, the helping to the building vp of the worke of his Church, and your eternall confort.