


Scottish History in the Eyes of Sixteenth-Century France

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Scotland's mythical and medieval history has long been acknowledged as of critical importance in its sixteenth-century present. This article tracks these discourses across the channel, showing for the first time the limited circulation of Scottish histories in France and the dominance of English versions of the past in French texts, ranging from short, printed books to royal presentation manuscripts. This Anglocentric view not only helps to explain the discordant French views of the Scots (as loyal yet uncivil, and above all warlike) but also contributes to the ongoing reassessment that the auld alliance was not permanently binding but, rather, intermittently activated when political or economic interests required.

INTRODUCTION

FOR SIXTEENTH-CENTURY SCOTS, the past was inherently political. Events in distant history could be deployed to serve a number of present-minded turns, preeminent among which was the crucial case that Scotland was now and always had been an empire (in the early modern sense) unto herself—free and unfettered of constraints from foreign princes, especially and most particularly those who dwelt in the lands immediately south of the Solway Firth and the Tweed. In order to ensure these historic claims continued to ring true, however, the practicalities of either avoiding warfare with a larger kingdom or, in such an eventuality, securing additional resources to bolster those available at home needed to be addressed. History had an answer for this too: the mythical auld alliance, signed by Charlemagne (747–814) and his legendary Scottish counterpart, Achaius, promised mutual defensive support

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and was, according to Scottish versions of the past, loyally and lovingly upheld by each of their successors.

Recent scholarship has done much to uncover the sophistication of sixteenth-century Scottish engagement with the past and the importance it held in political life.¹ However, modern authors would fundamentally disagree with the claims made by their sixteenth-century predecessors regarding the auld alliance. There is now a significant scholarly consensus that the mythical alliance between France and Scotland was of only variable importance before 1560 (the date traditionally seen as its terminus point due to Scotland's embracing of Protestantism) and that this variable importance meant significant continuity existed with the years after 1560, when trade and diplomatic links endured.² Given the importance of history in how early modern people understood the auld alliance, however, and the strength of consensus among historians that history had a real political value to the Scots, as well as to the French and to the English, it is somewhat surprising that until now no one has asked an obvious question: what did the sixteenth-century French reader understand about Scottish history?

For those who read Latin, the first two printed histories of Scotland appeared in Paris in the 1520s. In 1579, the first printed French-language history of Scotland penned by a Scot joined these lengthier tomes. The significance of these publications in offering French readers relatively easy access to the Scottish past, as it was understood by Scots, makes them helpful boundary markers for this study. The 1520s publications will be discussed in more detail below. That from 1579, by contrast, will not; it was penned by David Chalmers of Ormond (c. 1533–92), a supporter of Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–87), in the context of debates surrounding her deposition. Like his better-known opponents, Chalmers identified history as a key medium through which he could talk about Mary and the political present.³ Although Chalmers's historical thought is worthy of greater consideration, it emerged in such distinct circumstances that this article is not the place to pay it the attention it deserves.

Despite the availability of two Latin histories of Scotland in Parisian bookshops from the 1520s onward, the first section of this article suggests that, alack,

¹ Mason, 1994; Mason, 1991; Royan, 2002; Mason, 2004; Mason, 2002; Mason and Smith, 2004; Erskine and Mason, 2012.

² Bonner, 2013; Talbott; Bonner, 2010; Bonner, 1999.

³ For Chalmers, see Goodare; Simpson; Wilkinson, 69–70; Jansen, 49–50, 157; Bonner, 2010, 22; Coutts, Goodare, and Simpson. I situate Chalmers's work in its Franco-Scottish context in the forthcoming "Sovereignty, Suzerainty and Succession: David Chalmers' *Histoire* and the Case for Mary, Queen of Scots," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 55.3/4 (2024). For his opponents' use of history in debates surrounding Mary, see Mason, 2002; Mason and Smith; Erskine and Mason.

their reach was limited. Hector Boece's *Scotorum Historia* (1527) enjoyed some limited influence, usually confined to moments when rejuvenated Franco-Scottish dynastic alliances piqued interest in Scotland's past. These, however, were only moments. Throughout this period, by contrast, the French were exposed to English narratives about Scotland, and, by and large, these were what influenced their own works. Appreciating this dynamic suggests that discordant French thinking about the Scots as loyal yet uncivil and unsophisticated cannot simply be attributed to tropes surrounding the wild savagery of the north—prevalent though these were in France, as well as in wider European thought.⁴ Despite cultural connections between France and Scotland, English ideas and texts dominated French understandings of the histories of the British Isles.

Having explored a range of shorter materials in the first section, the second takes as a case study the works of Jean Benard, sometimes known as Bernard (fl. 1560–78). Now little known, Benard was respected throughout the 1560s and 1570s as an authority on the British Isles and was employed as such at the French court. His calling card for this job was a lengthy history of England. His history is especially interesting for our purposes, since it reveals what the French Crown's self-styled expert on the British Isles had to say about their histories. Benard's reliance on English source material meant that one of the morals easily drawn from his history, like those shorter texts encountered in the first section, was that Scotland was historically subject to England. The English mythical founder-king, Brutus, could count among his alleged conquests not only Scotland but also French understandings of Scotland's past.

GATHELUS AND SCOTA IN FRANCE, CA. 1520–CA. 1560

Despite political dillydallying, the intellectual and cultural contacts that prevailed between sixteenth-century France and Scotland were strong. This contact was epitomized by the fact that the first two full-scale printed histories of Scotland were printed in Paris, both by Jodocus Badius Ascensius (1462–1535). These were the 1521 *Historia Majoris Britanniae* (History of Greater Britain) by John Mair (ca. 1467–1550) and the 1527 *Scotorum historiae a prima gentis origine libri XVII* (History of the Scottish people from their first origins in seventeen books, henceforth *Scotorum Historia*) by Hector Boece (c.1465–1536). Keen readers could also peruse the latter's *Episcoporum Murthlacensium et Aberdonensium vitae* (Lives of the bishops of Murthlack and Aberdeen, 1522). Although both penned by Scots who worked or studied in the University of Paris's intellectual milieu, these works drew conclusions

⁴ Embree, Kennedy, and Daly, 7–8; Armstrong, 6.

about their country's past that could not have been farther apart. Mair's rejection of both English and Scottish origin myths as the basis of his case for a union of equals circumscribed his influence on the mainstream of Scottish historiography: the Scottish Crown had no need for a text that made such arguments.⁵ However, Boece's work, with its forthright exposition that Brutus had not conquered the whole of Britain and that the house of Stewart, who now reigned, was heir to an unbroken line of kings and an unconquered realm, found favor with its dedicatee, James V (r. 1513–42). The courtier William Stewart (fl. 1499–1541) produced a Scots summary of the chronicle in vernacular verse, and during the 1530s, James commissioned John Bellenden (ca. 1495–ca. 1548) to translate Boece's Latin into Scots.⁶ This was in due course printed, and, alongside an edition of the Acts of James's Parliaments (1542), it formed part of a broader assertion of royal authority.⁷ The greater influence enjoyed by Boece at home was echoed in his more wide-ranging reception in France.

These publications must have marked a considerable improvement in the availability of information about Scotland in France, since there is little evidence that the previous generation of Latin histories of Scotland crossed the Channel. Boece drew in part on the *Scotichronicon*, penned in the 1440s by Walter Bower, abbot of Inchcolm (ca. 1385–1449).⁸ Leaning in turn on older texts, notably that by John Fordun (d. 1384), Bower sketched out in great detail the arguments for the antiquity of an independent Scottish kingdom, on which Boece would expand, but his known audience was domestic. The five extant copies of Bower produced in the sixty years after his death were all for Scottish patrons.⁹ It is possible that a copy of another of Boece's sources, the mysterious chronicle by Veremundus the Spaniard (probably a St. Andrews cleric named Richard Vairement, fl. 1239–68), was in Paris, since the three writers who claimed to have seen this text—Boece, Chalmers, and the French author Jean Le Feron (fl. 1555), who will be discussed below—were all working in and around the French capital.¹⁰ Since Boece drew on this text, it is likely to have been broadly supportive of the case for Scotland's historic self-sovereignty. However, no copy of Veremundus is known to have survived in Scotland or elsewhere, so ascertaining whether Le Feron and Chalmers were simply copying references from Boece, let alone spotting a

⁵ Mason, 1990.

⁶ Summerfield; Mason, 2008, 259–60; Mann, 186; Harikae, 2013; Harikae, 2017.

⁷ Dickson and Emond, 1:109–17; Blakeway, 2021, 417–22.

⁸ Watt, 1992; Watt, 1997; Royan, 1999.

⁹ Watt, 1997, 45; Watt, 2004.

¹⁰ Royan, 2001, 59–61; Broun, 236, 252–68. For Le Feron, see Le Feron, 5, 13.

broader influence, is impossible. If any circulation existed, the lack of evidence suggests it was only small scale.

Indeed, the sole extant fifteenth-century French-language history of Scotland departed significantly from the Fordun-Bower version of the Scottish past, which Boece would inherit. This was *La Vraie Cronique d'Escose*. Its exact origins are unclear, but it was probably produced in the context of Franco-Scottish diplomatic negotiations and may have been penned by the scholar John Ireland (ca. 1440–95). Kathleen Daly has argued that unlike the Fordun-Bower tradition, the *Vraie Cronique* was characterized by “ambivalence” in its attitude toward the Scottish past.¹¹ Scottish claims appear alongside English assertions, and the text as a whole thus provides material that could be marshalled to defend or decry claims of southern suzerainty.

One example suffices. Geoffrey of Monmouth’s (d. 1155) English mythical history had the Trojan Brutus conquer the whole island, from which event English claims of suzerainty derived. Brutus and his exploits, it is worth recalling, enjoyed a widespread audience in late medieval Europe.¹² In contrast, Fordun had confined Brutus to the land now called England, since, as Fordun explained, Scotland was already occupied by the descendants of the Greek prince Gathelus and his wife, the pharaoh’s daughter Scota, thus establishing the independence of Scotland and the antiquity of its royal line.¹³ The *Vraie Cronique* trod a path between the two and claimed that Brutus did indeed conquer the lands now comprising Fife and Menteith, which were then gifted to his son, Albanactus. This provided a degree of support for English assertions of suzerainty, but the *Vraie Cronique* continued by showing that Brutus’s descendants were forced out when Kenneth MacAlpin (d. 858) conquered the lands, at the same time as he ejected the Picts from the rest of Scotland.¹⁴ Depending on which event was privileged, this could provide the raw materials for one of two possible narratives.

The first clear evidence for the Fordun-Bower version of Scotland’s history in the French language dates to 1519. In that year, John Stewart, Duke of Albany (ca. 1482–1536)—a French-born-and-raised member of the Scottish royal family, who acted as Governor of Scotland during James V’s minority—commissioned “the only known” French translation of the Latin *Liber Pluscardensis*: a slightly later adaptation of the *Scottichronicon* that repeated its main arguments.¹⁵ This was one of several texts produced in Albany’s circles to celebrate

¹¹ Daly, 124; Coombs, 2019, 206–07.

¹² Tétrel and Veyssseyre, 1:5–37.

¹³ For Fordun, see Mason, 1987, 63.

¹⁴ For the *Vraie Cronique*, see Daly, 114.

¹⁵ Coombs, 2014, 281–82.

his genealogy and engage in current politics.¹⁶ The fact that Albany was constrained to commission copies of works physically located in Scotland to learn about the history of his ancestral home suggests a paucity of materials in France. This, in turn, permits the inference that while intellectual interest and a concern for events in Scotland undoubtedly underpinned the histories of Mair and Boece, their appearance in France also marked a significant development there in terms of the availability of information about the ancient Scottish past. Albeit from very different approaches, each author's work posed a serious challenge to the popular Brutus myth.

Both Albany's translation and *La Vraie Cronique* emerged in a specific diplomatic context; moreover, Albany commissioned his translation as a result of personal dynastic interest. A dynastic moment, as explored in more detail below, also underpinned Le Feron's work and a number of other texts alongside which it appeared. Dynastic alliance likewise prompted the production of a French summary of Boece, a short book entitled *La Sommaire de l'origine et merveilles d'Escosse* (1538). Along with a description of the country, the author, Jean des Monstiers, bishop of Bayonne (1514–69), provided a highly abridged account of Scottish history from Scota to the present. This was especially true of the recent past—monarchs from James II (1430–60) onward were covered on two sides of an octavo page. The edition of 1538 appeared both on paper and velum.

Presumably a velum copy would have been presented to the dedicatee, the dauphine, Catherine de Medici (1519–89). This constituted an appropriate gift, since Catherine was the daughter of Albany's in-laws: his wife's sister, Madeline de la Tour d'Auvergne, and Lorenzo de Medici, Duke of Urbino. Following their deaths, Albany, from 1521 on, acted as her tutor. Given her uncle's Franco-Scottish career, Catherine might have been expected to show interest in Scotland. Indeed, his favorable comments in the text suggest des Monstiers knew and admired Albany.¹⁷ The project, however, had its roots in matrimonial diplomacy, since des Monstiers had travelled to Scotland with Madeleine de Valois (1520–37) and may have conceived the idea for the text while on his travels. The fact that the work includes a set of poems lamenting Madeleine's death in 1537 certainly suggests it was connected to her, but when Albany was mentioned, he was not described as in any way related to the dedicatee—a surprising omission if it had always been intended for Catherine.¹⁸

¹⁶ Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, MS 936; Coombs, 2014; Coombs, 2021. For Albany and James's minority, see Stuart; Emond.

¹⁷ Des Monstiers, fol. 15^v. The Universal Short Title Catalog lists three variants of this title produced by the same printer (USTC numbers 43782, 60847, and 13247). References here are to the last of these.

¹⁸ Millar; Young.

After having explained that the Stewarts in Scotland were descended from Walter the Steward (1296–1327), and thus Robert the Bruce (1274–1328), and so back in time to Fergus, Gathelus, and Scota, des Monstiers grumbled that establishing royal genealogies was not always so easy. In England, for example, he noted that although the first line of kings had come from Brutus, the present monarchs, descended from Henry VII (1457–1509), inherited their claim from William the Conqueror (ca. 1028–87).¹⁹ Scholars of seventeenth-century English political and legal thought have shown the difficulties that the Norman Conquest posed to lawyers seeking to demonstrate an ancient, in essence a Saxon, basis for their laws, customs, and parliament.²⁰ From a Scottish perspective, however, changes to the English royal house served as further evidence on which to reject arguments of suzerainty based on Brutus's conquest. Such emphasis on discontinuity in the English royal line dated at least as far back as the 1301 Scottish mission to the papal curia, which was dispatched to reject the claims of Edward I (1239–1307).²¹ More recently, propaganda produced in the context of the Anglo-Scottish wars of the 1540s had argued that the subsequent arrivals of the Saxons, Danes, and Normans meant that even if Brutus had conquered Scotland (which, of course, he had not), the current kings of England had no inherited rights from him.²² Since they were descended from the “false blude” of usurpers, “none of them had ryt to the crone of ingland ergo thai hef na titil to the crone of Scotland.” Such arguments might have been familiar to a French audience, since the Scottish text in which they were rehearsed, the *Complaynt of Scotland* (ca. 1550), was at this point closely following earlier arguments made in its French source text, produced as propaganda against the English during the Hundred Years' War.²³

Unfortunately for these authors, the historical ground they fought over had been captured by Brutus.²⁴ He not only circulated in his own tales but (since the French also claimed Trojan ancestry) may have also appeared in French histories alongside their mythical founder Francus—like Brutus, a son of Hector.²⁵ It is possible that an awareness of Brutus's familial relationship with Francus and his place within a broader mythical past explains why Scottish authors did not reject his existence outright but simply reduced the extent of his conquests. Turning back to English history, even doubters, such as Polydore Vergil

¹⁹ Des Monstiers, fols. 32^r–34^r.

²⁰ Pocock, 270–73, 30–69, 91–123; Burgess, 48–57; Van Houts; Lurbe; Kanemura.

²¹ Goldstein, 10.

²² Wedderburn, 67–68.

²³ Mason, 2020, 136n25.

²⁴ Tétrel and Veyseyre, 1:5–37.

²⁵ Asher, 3–16.

(ca. 1470–1555), repeated the Brutus myth, and accordingly, Vergil’s hugely popular *Anglica Historia* (English history), whether through the Latin original (Basel, 1534) or the 1544 French translation, became another source through which the mythical Brutus gained an audience—indeed, Vergil was explicitly cited by many of the authors considered here as an authority on English history.²⁶

In this context, it is unsurprising that when Scottish history was mentioned in passing—for instance, in the 1531 history of England and Brittany by Alan Bouchart (fl. 1440–1514)—an English-inflected understanding of the past was exposed. Bouchart’s main purpose was to explore the history of Brittany; consequently, Scotland’s origins did not occupy much of his time. Nevertheless, he provides a typical example of how the Brutus myth pervaded French understandings of British history: he repeated the tale of the three sons of Brutus, including the death of Albanactus—Brutus’s third son, whose territory is today called Scotland—and the revenge of his two brothers.²⁷ Even so, Bouchart’s explanation for the relationship between these places resulted in terminological muddles. For instance, Bouchart explained that England was a name later applied to the country of Great Britain, a place he described as “the island”—presumably, therefore, encompassing the places that his contemporaries regarded as England, Scotland, and Wales and that elsewhere he appeared to distinguish from each other.²⁸ These two terminologically muddled suggestions—that England and Britain were both used to describe the whole island, and that England was one of several countries now carved out of the cohesive territory formerly held by Brutus—nevertheless suggested that the English enjoyed at least historic control over the whole island.

Something similar is evident in Antoine du Pinet’s (fl. 1510–84) general history of the world (1564), which explained that while the ancients described the whole island as Britain or Albion, it was divided into four parts—Cornwall, Wales, England, and Scotland. Of the latter two, he remarked, “These two countries usually hold grudges, the one against the other.”²⁹ His sole forays into ancient history were a claim that Northumberland and Berwick had at one time been part of Scotland, which could have come from any number of places, and an understanding that York and Edinburgh were both founded by Prince Ebranc, which was almost certainly drawn from Polydore Vergil.³⁰ Beyond this, du Pinet praised the excellence of St Andrews as a university and drew a

²⁶ Hay, xxix. For an overview of its Latin publication history, see xv–xvii.

²⁷ Bouchart, 4.

²⁸ Bouchart, 36, 55.

²⁹ Pinet, 68–69: “Ces deux pays ont ordonnairrement la pique l’un contre l’autre.”

³⁰ Pinet, 72–73; Vergil.

distinction between the Highland and Lowland Scots, both of whom were regularly noted by French authors. For further information, however, he suggested the reader peruse Vergil's *Anglica Historia*, on which his own work leaned so heavily.³¹ Directing the reader to Vergil rather than to a Scottish source, combined with the mention of an ancient past in which the whole island had been one and a mythical prince operated across what was now the Anglo-Scottish border, again reveals a preponderance of information drawn from, and thus promulgating the message of, English sources.

Perhaps more surprisingly, the influence of the Brutus legend is also evident on texts penned from an Anglophobic perspective. In 1558, for example, the doctor Étienne Perlin (fl. 1553–58) published a short description of the realms of England and Scotland based on his travels there. Despite his distaste for the seditious English and his awareness that Scotland was then ruled by “Madame de Longueville,” a member of the house of Guise-Lorraine, Perlin claimed that the two countries had once been one but were divided by a war between two brothers.³² While not a carbon copy of the Brutus myth, the claim that the two countries were once one is a fundamental departure from Scottish claims that Brutus's kingdom of Britain had comprised only part of the island of Albion.³³ Elsewhere, however, Perlin acknowledged the antiquity of the Scottish royal house and the ancient nature of its alliance with the French.³⁴ Further evidence of his contradictory attitude toward the Scots can be found in the tension between, on the one hand, his praise for their bravery and condemnation of English aggression shown toward them and, on the other, his claims that Scotland was “the worse” part of the island of Great Britain.³⁵ Finally, Perlin compared the relationship between England and Scotland to that between Paris and the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, then just outside Paris, which occupied an area on the left bank leading from the city toward the Gobelins tapestry factory.³⁶ England and Scotland, too, were separated by a river, and the Faubourg Saint-Marceau, while near Paris, was poorer and less pleasant than its neighbor.

These examples—particularly those of Bouchart and Perlin—reveal an understanding of the historic relationship between Scotland and England that struggled to reconcile two opposing viewpoints. These authors seemed to accept claims that England and Scotland had once been a single country and that Scotland was poor and historically subjected to England. Yet this

³¹ Du Pinet, 72–73.

³² Perlin, 26.

³³ Boece, 1.20–21.

³⁴ Perlin, 5, 28–29, 30.

³⁵ Perlin, 26–28: “la pire.”

³⁶ Perlin, 27–28; Gagneux and Prouvost, 226–27.

was hard to balance against an awareness of both the current diplomatic relationship between France and Scotland and the alleged antiquity of their bond. The fact that this dilemma was still evident for Perlin in 1558 is worth pausing over, since his book was published in the year that perhaps marked the apogee of the auld alliance in dynastic terms, when Mary, Queen of Scots, married the future François II, then the dauphin (1544–60).³⁷ Buchanan celebrated the marriage in verse with reference to Scottish achievements in keeping their realm unconquered and the antiquity of the French alliance.³⁸ Even as he lauded the dauphin as a descendant of Hector and recalled the “one hundred royal descendants from one stock” who constituted his bride’s forebears, Buchanan remained silent on the subject of Mary’s Graeco-Egyptian ancestry.³⁹ Perhaps this uncharacteristic coyness was born of an awareness of his audience’s previous exposure to the Brutus tale.

Even when Scottish sources were available, their contents might have been ignored. For example, an explanation of the heraldry of France, Scotland, and Lorraine penned by Jean Le Feron and dedicated to the Duke of Guise (1519–63) cited Boece, Mair, “Veremond,” “Capton” (this seems to be a misspelling of the English printer Caxton, who published a version of the *Brut* in 1486), and the unidentified “Jean de Beauchamp.”⁴⁰ Corroboration for their claims, however, was sought in Polydore Vergil. In this context, Le Feron’s suggestion that Charlemagne had “permitted” Achaius to use the fleur de lis in his heraldry requires comment.⁴¹ The notion of a superior-inferior relationship evoked by the idea of permission came from neither Mair nor Boece, whose divergent views on Scotland’s current relations with England and the future course they might take also had implications for their accounts of Scotland’s alliance with France. Both agreed that a treaty was signed between Achaius and Charlemagne in the context of a broader intellectual exchange, including the arrival of learned Scots in France, in response to Charlemagne’s request. These men, Boece averred, were instrumental in founding the University of Paris. He was more loquacious about the nature of the alliance, explaining it was a league of mutual defense against the English and detailing the arguments made by leading nobles against it and those in favor, who, in the end, won out. On the subject of Scottish heraldry, Boece outlined how Achaius had added the fleur du lis to his arms on the advice of his heralds, who suggested it would serve

³⁷ Carpenter and Runnals.

³⁸ McGinnis and Williamson, 134–38. I am grateful to Roger Mason for this reference.

³⁹ Asher, 12.

⁴⁰ Le Feron, 5. It is possible he had seen only the first two texts, and the later three were references lifted from Boece. I am grateful to Nicola Royan for this suggestion.

⁴¹ Le Feron, 13: “permit aux Escoçoiz.”

as a reminder of the alliance to his nobility. More taciturn, Mair simply claimed the agreement was for a peace treaty.⁴² Both of these accounts, however, stood at a considerable distance from those a French audience might have recognized from the various versions of the life of Charlemagne, which represent a more likely source for Le Feron. Charlemagne's biographer Einhard (775–840), for instance, claimed that the emperor's "munificence won the kings of the Scots also to pay such deference to his wishes that they never gave him any other title than lord, or themselves than subjects and slaves."⁴³

This idea of Scottish subjection in its relationship with France fitted easily with broader Guise (and, indeed, French) attitudes toward the need to civilize the Scots. Marie de Guise (1515–60), for example, was reported to have been erroneously informed that Scotland was "ane barbarous contrie" before her arrival there as queen consort and, later, during her regency, to have complained of the tiring work involved in bringing the "peuple nouveau," over whom she was delegated to rule, to a state of "parfection."⁴⁴ While Guise's biographer, Marshall, translated "peuple nouveau" as "young nation," in a sixteenth-century context *nouveau* might be better translated as *strange* or *uncouth* (which could suggest either unfamiliarity or unpleasantness)—sentiments closer to those expressed about the Scots elsewhere.⁴⁵ Guise's efforts in this area were praised in a defense of women dedicated to Marie's sister-in-law, Anne d'Este de Ferrara, Duchess of Guise (1531–1607).⁴⁶ Meanwhile, as Arthur Williamson argued, in French courtly entertainments and visual representations alike, the wild Scot might feature alongside other savage races, an association partly grounded in the broader topos of an uncivil north.⁴⁷ Such ideas—combined with the apparent subjection of the Scots to Charlemagne—perhaps facilitated and certainly sat alongside the portrayal of Scotland during Henri II's 1550 entry into Rouen, accompanied by Marie de Guise. Immortalized in print after the event, Franco-Scottish victories in Scotland against the English were celebrated as conquests, while Henri wrote to foreign rulers claiming he now ruled Scotland as though it were his own kingdom.⁴⁸ The pageants neatly linked Henri's imperial success in the present to his mythic Trojan ancestry in the past, with a larger-than-life-sized statue of Hector greeting Henri on his walkabout.⁴⁹

⁴² Mair, 100–02; Boece, 10:3–20.

⁴³ Einhard.

⁴⁴ Lindsay, 1:380; Marshall, 211; Pollen, 425.

⁴⁵ Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*, s.v. "nouveau."

⁴⁶ Billon, 50.

⁴⁷ Williamson, 49–53.

⁴⁸ McGowan, 213; Merriman, 25–39.

⁴⁹ Kociszewska, 119.

Ironically, the most significant engagement with the Scottish past produced for Guise circles emerged after the apogee of their power in Scotland: the *Oraison* delivered during Marie de Guise's 1560 memorial service in Paris included a digression on Scottish history.⁵⁰ Its author, the preacher Claude d'Espence (1511–71)—a chaplain to Guise's brother Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine (1524–74)—prepared for this work by reading the works of Hector, Boece, John Mair, and the collaborators P. Iouvious (Paulo Giovi [1483–1552]) and G. Lillius (George Lilly [d. 1559]).⁵¹ Again, even when Scottish authors were available, they were consulted alongside English texts. On this occasion, however, it was Boece's history which proved the most influential—informing, for example, the account of the ancient alliance as one of equals, which led to Achaius's incorporation of the fleur de lis into the royal arms.⁵² D'Espence also appears to have been drawing more heavily on Boece's fulsome recounting of the occasions when the alliance against the English had resulted in French support for Scottish offensive military activities and direct Scottish involvement in the University of Paris. Throughout this account of the equal nature of the auld alliance can be traced the foundations for a second, from a French perspective far more familiar, point: the untrustworthy nature of the English and their antipathy toward the Scots, underscored by examples such as the capture of James I (1394–1437). The fast-paced history lesson concluded with an explanation that in Scotland women were perfectly able to succeed to the throne, reassuring listeners and, later, readers that Mary, Queen of Scots, was indeed a legitimate queen.⁵³

Before moving on to the second section, it is helpful to reemphasize some of the key points that emerged in this first section. Information about Scotland could be gleaned by French readers from a range of sources, and significant dynastic moments (such as Albany's governorship, James V's French marriages, or, to some degree, Marie de Guise's funeral sermon) prompted the search for materials on Scotland, occasionally encouraging their translation. However, these occasional translations coexisted with an understanding of the Scottish past founded on the Brutus myth and English histories or, alternatively, on a distinct interpretation of the auld alliance as being founded on the idea that the Scots presented themselves as subject to Charlemagne. For many authors engaging with Scottish history in passing (such as Perlin or Le Feron), this led to muddled or confused accounts of historic Anglo-Scottish relations. On other occasions (such as Buchanan's poetry in praise of the marriage between Mary, Queen of Scots, and the Dauphin), material about the Scottish past

⁵⁰ D'Espence, 41; Blakeway, 2020, 17.

⁵¹ D'Espence, 41; Giovi. For Lily and Giovi, see Mayer.

⁵² D'Espence, 45–49. For Boece's relevant comments, see Boece, 10:3–20.

⁵³ D'Espence, 52–53.

was omitted or glossed over. Although it is unclear why, this nevertheless exposes the difficulties faced by authors in reconciling competing histories. Neither strong intellectual connections at the University of Paris nor dynastic and personal networks among monarchs and merchants were sufficient to help the Scottish Crown's cherished version of its own past reach a widespread audience of its auld—and still important—allies.

JEAN BENARD AND HIS HISTORY OF ENGLAND AND THE SEPTENTRIONAL REALMS

By the time d'Espence's sermon was published, François II had died, and Mary had been transfigured from queen consort to queen dowager. The new regime of Charles IX (1550–74) and his mother, Catherine de Medici, had no room for another dowager queen (and a childless one at that) and little space for her maternal relatives and their political ambitions. Accordingly, French dynastic interests shifted away from Mary toward her cousin, Elizabeth I of England. While the pendulum of scholarly debate has swung back and forth on the question of how committed either side might have been to such a match, it is clear that the possibility of a Tudor-Valois marriage contributed to the uptick in interest toward all things English, which Charles Giry-Deloison has shown was a feature of the French court during the 1560s and 1570s.⁵⁴ One of the key purveyors of such information was a now obscure figure named Jean Benard, who described himself as the king's "secretary and Historiographer in the English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish languages."⁵⁵ Benard's work offers a compelling example of the disparities between the levels of information, sourced from English and Scottish authors, available in France, and of the extent to which information about the Scottish past in circulation was often drawn from English materials.

Since Benard is not well known, despite being self-styled as a leading authority on matters English and Scottish in this period, it is worth spending a few moments reviewing what can be established about his life. Benard's first recorded activities date from 1564, when he acted alongside the bookseller Hercules François (d.1603) to facilitate a contract between the English printer Richard Tottell (1528–93) and the French printer Fleury Prevost (fl.1564–88) for the latter to print a book of the common laws of England.⁵⁶ The

⁵⁴ Holt; Doran; Younger; Giry-Deloison.

⁵⁵ Bibliothèque Nationale de France (hereafter BNF), Fonds Français 6066, fol. 4^v: "secretaire & Hystoriographe és Langues Angloise, Galloise, Irelandoise & Escossoise."

⁵⁶ Baydova, 5–6. Baydova considers this man to be the Parisian stationer active in the 1580s: this cannot be our Jean Benard, who was dead by 1579. However, the fact that our Jean Benard was translating the type of materials that the contract stipulated to be published shortly after it was signed, strongly suggests the two were one and the same.

project never eventuated, but during the same year Benard produced a translation of some recent acts of the English Parliament, and it is tempting to suggest that he acquired these materials through this connection.⁵⁷ This book must have been one of several about the British Isles that came into his hands, since in March 1568, he presented Charles IX with a beautifully illuminated manuscript that he hoped would prove acceptable to the monarch not only because of its value but also because for the first time, he averred, the book translated into French an ancient history largely unknown in France.⁵⁸ His *Sommaire des Grandes Annales et Croniques*, Benard boldly claimed, would cover all of the events of English history from the arrival of Brutus until the year 1566; major events in Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Denmark, and all the other northern countries; and a range of ordinances made by the popes. This was feverishly over-optimistic: Benard's coverage of all the countries he mentioned other than England was patchy, to say the least. It is unclear what dictated this timing. The scale of the work means it was unlikely to have been prepared entirely subsequent to Mary's deposition (which is studiously not mentioned), and its production must have fallen between rounds of Anglo-French marriage negotiations.⁵⁹ It is possible that Benard anticipated updating the work at a future date, since the draft contains (on an otherwise blank sheet after the original conclusion) a note of the completion of a building project in 1569.⁶⁰ A second fair copy, apparently with a 1567 dedication to a French finance minister—Jacques Bourdin, Seigneur de Villeines—was sold at auction in 2022.⁶¹

Regardless of why Benard chose to produce it, the present was appreciated. On 1 January 1569, Benard dedicated a second work to his monarch, this time as a New Year's gift. In his dedication, Benard explained that "after having understood and marked the favorable reception" that Charles IX had given to his translated history, he had been emboldened to prepare a second offering, this time an account of all the nobles who had entered England with William the Conqueror, together with a discussion of the newer families who now held

⁵⁷ BNF, Fonds Français 6070.

⁵⁸ BNF, Fonds Français 5575. March 1567 is given throughout, but this probably refers to March 1568. The French at this stage still adopted the *mos gallicanus*—French style—with the year beginning on Easter day, in official documents, although practice in unofficial materials was not consistent. In 1568, Easter fell on April 30, so it is most likely that Benard was finishing up his work in 1567/68.

⁵⁹ Doran, 99–100.

⁶⁰ British Library (hereafter BL), Galba MS E V, fol. 299^r.

⁶¹ Benard. I have been unable to secure access to this copy, which was auctioned at Christie's in 2022.

positions of influence within the English court.⁶² A second version of this manuscript, dated 1 January 1572 and bearing an identical dedication, was prepared, apparently also for the king. Both were based on an earlier copy, dated 1 January 1568 and bearing the signature of Nicholas Moreau, Sieur d'Auteuil (1544–1619), a royal financial official.⁶³ Although it survives in multiple copies, Benard's genealogical account might have been too unwieldy to be useful, since later in 1572 Charles IX requested a document providing background on the family history and familial connections of the individuals sent to France on embassy from Elizabeth.⁶⁴

This commission reveals that the French court considered some grasp of the English past to be important in conducting diplomacy. Benard's work also extended to translating information on more recent events. These included a short book outlining English revenues, naval capacity, and forts on the border with Scotland.⁶⁵ Moreau's signature also appeared on a 1562 translation of some English ordonnances.⁶⁶ Benard later provided an account of the troubles in England from October to December 1569, encompassing the doomed Northern Rebellion and subsequent removal of the captive Mary, Queen of Scots, to Coventry. From 1572 to 1573, he translated a number of English propaganda pieces in favor of Elizabeth alongside Scottish tracts related to the Mary-Norfolk marriage plot and final stages of the Scottish civil war that promoted the King's Party.⁶⁷ It is unclear whether the disparity in English and Scottish materials that he translated reflects a greater availability of English sources or a process of selection that favored them. Either way, the difference is striking. Benard remained in favor following the death of Charles IX in May 1574, and later that year produced another summary of recent events in England. Copies were made for Catherine de Medici and Henri III.⁶⁸ In 1579, his short *Discours des plus memorables faicts des rois et grands seigneurs d'Angleterre depuis cinc cens ans: Avec les genealogies des roynes d'Angleterre, et d'Ecosse* was

⁶² BL, Egerton MS 2388, fol. 2^r: "apres auoir congneu & remarqué la benigne reception."

⁶³ BNF, Fonds Français 19000. This third copy is described in a typed note dated 1950, pasted in BL Egerton 2388, and is now MS Typ 549 at Harvard University's Houghton Library. I have not consulted it, but a sample of the manuscript is available at <https://nrs.lib.harvard.edu/urn-3:fhcl.hough:874143>. For Moreau, see Vidier.

⁶⁴ BNF, Fonds Français 32881; BNF, Fonds Français 5785.

⁶⁵ BNF, Fonds Français 6064, 1. This work has no date but must have been penned after the history (since Benard says Charles had received it) and was probably before the work on the nobility (which was not mentioned).

⁶⁶ BNF, Fonds Français 6070.

⁶⁷ BNF, Fonds Français 19005; BNF, Fonds Français 6067; BNF, Fonds Français 6068.

⁶⁸ BNF, Fonds Français 5840; BNF, Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises 1558.

published posthumously under the alternative spelling of Bernard, alongside his *Guide des chemins d'Angleterre*.

Beyond what can be gleaned in the prefatory matter to his works, information about Benard is difficult to come by. The 1564 contract stated he lived on the Rue de Tournon in Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and some subsequent works were signed from this area. The use of the title “master” suggests he obtained a degree, and the fact that no further description of his occupation was given in the contract (unlike Prevost) may suggest he was a scholar. The known recipients of his work confirm he was well known in court circles. It is unclear how he learned English—his claim to proficiency in Welsh and Irish is not obviously backed up by translations from these languages. However, he did translate from Scots, including Buchanan’s 1571 *Ane admonitioun direct to the trew Lordis mantenaris of the Kingis grace autoritie*.⁶⁹ Since he did not offer any firsthand accounts of the British Isles, it can only remain speculation whether he visited the places he spent so long describing for the French Crown.

The 1568 history thus commands our attention as a work that pushed open the door to Benard’s career at court and as the only one of his historical writings to have explicitly addressed Scotland. This work comprises four main parts. First is a history of the British Isles largely written as a history of England with intermittent parallel sections on Scotland. Next is a list of the monarchs of England from Brutus to Elizabeth I, followed by a list of the monarchs of Scotland from Fergus I to Mary. After this is a glossary explaining the meaning of English terms. The structure immediately demonstrates that Benard’s priority was to write a history of England, with Scotland as a secondary concern. This was reflected in his source material.

Benard acknowledged only a small portion of the sources he consulted, so it is certain that further study of this text would reveal additional source material. Even the incomplete list provided here, however, suggests that while he was indeed translating from a number of different English texts, his materials on Scotland were far fewer. He quoted verbatim a number of items of correspondence, including letters between Mary Tudor and Jane Grey’s council and harangues, correspondence, and confessions of the reformers and supporters of Jane Grey executed under Mary.⁷⁰ The only modern authors he cited were Leonard Fuchs (1501–66), who wrote the *Tresor de Sante*, and Thomas Cooper (ca. 1517–94).⁷¹ Cooper had edited and expanded an earlier chronicle written by Thomas Lanquet (1520–45). Lanquet died having only reached 17 CE, Cooper concluded in 1558,

⁶⁹ BNF, Fonds Français 6065; BNF, Fonds Français 6067; BNF, Fonds Français 6068.

⁷⁰ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 921–26, 932–37, 939–47.

⁷¹ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 1–2.

and Cooper's expansion of his work ran to a number of editions as Cooper himself rose through the ranks of the Elizabethan ecclesiastical establishment.⁷² Sources were left partly identified—he referred on one occasion to “some books of genealogies of the Kings of Great Britain,” for instance.⁷³ Beyond this, however, Benard was using a range of sources that he failed to acknowledge. His history includes passages that are direct translations or very closely drawn from a range of English chronicles. Identifying which source Benard employed on a given occasion is challenging, since the texts he was using drew on and adapted each other and themselves had complex publication histories. Edward Hall's *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and Yorke* (1548), passages of which bear close similarities to Benard's translations, is a good example.⁷⁴ Covering the period from the accession of Henry IV (1367–1413) until the death of Henry VIII (1491–1547), his book ran to three editions—1548, 1550, and 1560—and the text itself was Hall's work only as far as 1532: the publisher, Richard Grafton (1507–73), worked with Hall's notes to complete the text. Hall, in turn, had drawn on a range of sources, including chronicles by Robert Fabyan (d. 1513) and John Hardyng (ca. 1378–1464), and when passages from these were translated by Benard, it is not possible to tell whether he encountered these works via Hall.⁷⁵

This article is not the place to enter into debates on mid-sixteenth-century English history writing. What matters for the present purposes is that by sticking closely to English source texts, Benard produced an account of events in Scotland and Anglo-Scottish relations that told an English version of the medieval past and, alongside this, incorporated late medieval English commentary on the ancient British past. This is evident, for instance, in Hall/Benard's accounts of the deliberations of Henry V's (1386–1422) council on whether to begin campaigning against France or Scotland first. These encompassed a rehearsal of the Brutus myth, a reminder that Saint Jerome claimed the Scots ate human flesh, and a rundown of the deeds of Edward I, which all concluded in a resounding statement that Scotland was the proper patrimony of Henry V.⁷⁶ The account of James I's release from English captivity reiterated claims, copied verbatim from Hall, that he had given homage at Windsor and that he held his realm only by

⁷² Bowker; Summerson.

⁷³ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 37: “aucuns livres de Genealogies a les Roys de Grande Bretagne.”

⁷⁴ Hall.

⁷⁵ Herman. Hardyng's work originated in a mission to prove English sovereignty over Scotland: Terrell, 20–25.

⁷⁶ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 418–30; Hall, 37–41.

“the will” of the English Crown.⁷⁷ Benard’s use of Hall thus ensured that points articulating English suzerainty were not simply told in their chronological place but were reiterated at subsequent junctures when those arguments had been employed to justify another set of political actions.

While Hall was an important source alongside Cooper/Lanquet, these were not the only two books Benard had on his desk. From 1558 until 1565, it is plausible he was drawing on John Stow’s *Summarie of English Chronicles* (1565)—for example, his account of the escape of an Irish archbishop from the Tower was very close to Stow’s.⁷⁸ The connection with Tottell may have borne fruit, since some material, such as the date Muhammed began to preach (625) and the foundation of the University of Cambridge (627, 200 years before Oxford), could have been lifted from a chronicle published by Tottell in 1563 and penned by his father-in-law, Richard Grafton.⁷⁹ This already suggests a wide range of materials was available but is absolutely not an exhaustive list of Benard’s sources: his information on religious visitations during the reign of Edward VI (1537–53) was more extensive than that provided by Stow or Cooper, and while Stow noted the bare bones of events in 1565, such as the imprisonment of Margaret Douglas, Countess of Lennox (1515–78), and Cecily of Sweden’s (1540–1627) delivery of a child, Benard fleshed these out with additional details, the sources of which are so far unidentified.⁸⁰ Evidently, Benard had a great number of English books at his disposal.

By contrast, his material on Scotland was drawn from a far more restricted range of sources. Analyzing his draft manuscript, moreover, shows that much of this material was added after the history of England had reached a fairly advanced stage of preparation.⁸¹ Throughout the volume, Scottish material appears either squashed into margins or on short slips of paper pasted in as flaps at the appropriate point in the text. The status of the Scottish material as a late addition was reflected in the format of the finished book. Unlike the kings of England, monarchs of Scotland were not afforded a page break to mark the beginning of their reign—rather, their accessions were introduced as subsections of the reigning English monarch. Indeed, in the case of James I, Benard offered this distinction only when he escaped from English captivity—in other words, at the point of his alleged acts of homage—not on the death of his father.⁸²

⁷⁷ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 444–45: “la volonte”; Hall, 86.

⁷⁸ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 1013–14; Stow, fol. 247^v.

⁷⁹ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 154; Grafton, fol. 23^v.

⁸⁰ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 909–10, 1014–15; Cooper and Lanquet, fol. 338^{r-v}; Stow, 208^r–210^v, 248^{r-v}.

⁸¹ BL, Galba MS E V.

⁸² BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 407, 444.

Inserting the Scottish material into the text on slips, which developed into separate sections, rather than attempting to reconcile the two versions of the past, meant that Benard did not offer a single, coherent account of ancient British history. Instead, he penned two parallel narratives, whose contradictions remained unreconciled but which privileged an English perspective. The history begins with Brutus's arrival in the year of the world 2855, and the first mention of the Scots occurs during the reign of Gurgustus of Britain, a little over four centuries later.⁸³ At this juncture, Benard offers a précis of their activities, from Gathelus's arrival in Egypt in the year of the world 3271 (the only dated event in this section) to his departure with Scota from Africa for Iberia, that concludes with the arrival of their descendant, Fergus, in Scotland.⁸⁴ The text then moves seamlessly back to "British" kings, eventually proceeding to Gorbuduc, whose reign began in the year of the world 3404 and whose death marked the end of Brutus's line, precipitating the division of the island between five governors.⁸⁵ At some undated point during the reign of Morindus (which endured from the years of the world 3652 to 3660) Fergus reappeared, now introduced as the son of the King of Ireland who, having removed the Picts, settled in Scotland.⁸⁶ This suggests that a period of approximately 272 years elapsed between Gathelus's arrival in Egypt and Fergus setting foot on Scottish soil, and that Fergus arrived on the island of Britain about eight centuries after Brutus. Not quite content to leave the Scots established, however, Benard later noted that Bede (673/74–735) and Gildas (fl. fifth to sixth centuries) believed the Scots only arrived in 423 CE (i.e., the year of the world 4,370—a millennia and a half after Brutus's arrival).⁸⁷ Cumulatively, this chronology suggested that the Scots arrived on the island of Britain only after Brutus and his progeny were established over the whole island. Presenting the reader with 400 years of wandering while Brutus was already settled, followed by two competing arrival dates—one ca. 3652–60 and the other in the year of the world 4370—served only to sow further uncertainty. This confusion about the arrival of the Scots underscored the crucial lesson: the Scots came to Britain well after Brutus had conquered the whole island.

⁸³ Benard employed years since the beginning of the world (*l'an du monde*); BC (BCE); before Christ's birth (*devant l'incarnation*); and AD (CE). Thereafter, he also occasionally calculated in years since Brutus arrived in Britain, and with reference to the fall of Troy or reign of Pharamond in France. For some examples, see BNF, Fonds Français 5575, title page, 7, 28, 233.

⁸⁴ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 29–34.

⁸⁵ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 36–38.

⁸⁶ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 48–52.

⁸⁷ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 119.

The draft version of the chronicle reveals that this confused final product arose from conflicting sources and that those appertaining to Scotland were added only as afterthoughts. When drawing from a source providing a Scottish account of the past, Benard struggled to fit the Scots and their history alongside his account of the British/English descendants of Brutus—and the final version thus reflected English sensibilities. The Scots first appeared in the year of the world 3271 as the descendants of Simon Brechin, a Spaniard who brought a marble chair to Ireland—on which island his people stayed for a long time.⁸⁸ This information was inserted into the lower margin below the introduction to the British/English ruler Gurgustus and was written in a smaller hand with much closer spacing than the surrounding text. Clearly, then, this was an addition and a highly truncated version of Scottish origins. The whole of this page, however, was scored through and covered by an insert offering fuller information on the English kings it featured, in due course progressing to Gurgustus. After the account of his death, a new subsection began introducing Gathelus in Egypt in the year of the world 3271, and ran through a fuller account of Simon Brechin and his marble chair before concluding with Ferquhard sending his son, Fergus, to Scotland to be its king. Here, Benard was copying information from the *Sommaire de l'origine* almost verbatim. Crucially, however, he rejected des Monstiers's dating in favor of a chronology that subsumed the Scots into the English arc of the past.⁸⁹

Following this, the draft returned to the reigns of Gurgustus's successors, pausing after the third of these—namely, Gurgustus's cousin, Kynnmachus—to note that Fergus began to rule in Scotland in the year 3383, and then provided a brief account of Fergus's reign, including which of his captains obtained their names from and lent them to particular regions.⁹⁰ This, too, was lifted from des Monstiers, yet all of this was deleted and covered by an insert explaining the origins of chess and then restarting the story of Kynnmachus.⁹¹ The second attempt comprised a précis of Kynnmachus, his two predecessors since Gurgustus, and, as an insert in a smaller hand in the bottom margin, a short note introducing the arrival of the Scots in Scotland under Fergus. It is a hint of the extent to which chronology was causing problems that the length of Fergus's reign, twenty-five years (a detail sourced from Boece), was

⁸⁸ BL, Galba MS E V, fol. 8^v. It must be noted that the pagination in this manuscript is confusing; there are multiple sets of page numbers, which take account of the inserts in a variable manner. References here are to the black ink arabic numbers, with inserts noted as opposite (opp.) the nearest numbered page.

⁸⁹ Des Monstiers, fols. iv^r–x^v.

⁹⁰ BL, Galba MS E V, fols. 10^v, 11^r.

⁹¹ BL, Galba MS E V, opp. fol. 11^r; Des Monstiers, fol. xix^{r-v}.

deleted. Alack, even this was unsatisfactory, and the whole page was scored through.⁹²

A few pages later, space between paragraphs describing the reign of Morindus was filled with a short text in a squashed hand explaining Fergus's arrival from Ireland during his reign.⁹³ Following this text appears a sheet—clearly inserted after the two on either side of it had been drafted; this insert contained a far more detailed account of Fergus's arrival. In due course, this formed the basis of the presentation manuscript.⁹⁴ Here, Benard must have sourced his details from Boece or Bellenden, both of whom gave a fuller account of the territories distributed by Fergus and those that remained in Pictish hands, than had des Monstiers (who had formed the basis of the initial draft).⁹⁵ Even so, the timing was dictated by English sources: Fergus's arrival during the reign of Morindus was drawn from Lanquet/Cooper, from whom the claim that this was when the Scots began their chronicles also emerged.⁹⁶ This claim that Scottish chronicles began so late again served to reinforce the point that they were latecomers to the British Isles. Similarly to the previous example, Scottish sources were mined for information on events, while their overall chronological program was ignored. The cumulative effect of the different editorial stages was to reduce the time the Scots had been established in Scotland and, thus, bolster an English interpretation of the ancient past.

Not only was Scottish chronology jettisoned in favor of an English version, but additional information from English chronicles was interpolated into Scottish source texts. This is notable in Benard's discussion of Fergus's distribution of lands, which included one character—a Pictish captain named Berenger, who was responsible for the building of Berwick—not found in the Scottish chronicles that constituted his main sources.⁹⁷ The idea that Berenger the Pict, closely allied or related to the Britons, was the founder of Berwick occurred throughout various English chronicles and even found its way into Edward VI's 1548 assertion of suzerainty to justify the invasion of Scotland (indeed, this assertion also features all the material on land distribution contained in Benard's account).⁹⁸ This example extended beyond adopting an English timeline but reveals the same basic principle: English accounts tending

⁹² BL, Galba MS E V, opp. fol. 11^v; Boece, 1:36.

⁹³ BL, Galba MS E V, fol. 15^v.

⁹⁴ BL, Galba MS E V, fol. 16^v.

⁹⁵ Bellenden, x; Boece, 1:32–35; Des Monstiers, fol. xix^{r-v}; BL, Galba MS E V, fols. 10^v, 11^r.

⁹⁶ Cooper and Lanquet, fol. 65^r.

⁹⁷ Benard does not seem to have employed *La Vraie Cronique* here or in his other works. Embree, Kennedy, and Daly, 88–91.

⁹⁸ Higden, 30; Bodrugan, sig. b^v.

toward arguments for suzerainty were preferred over Scottish materials that challenged them.

Before moving on from Benard, it is worth observing that these practices were not confined to the first portion of the draft. While some sections showed Scottish materials drafted at the same time as their English counterparts, crucial events were added later in a truncated form. Benard's account of the foundation of the auld alliance, for instance, drew on Boece but eschewed most of his details.⁹⁹ Other important late additions included Fergus's death and its aftermath in the year of the world 3678 as well as the accession of James V in 1513.¹⁰⁰ This was endemic to the entire text and resulted in a consistently English-inflected understanding of Scottish history.

Beyond the text itself, the apparatus that surrounded it in the presentation manuscript supported an English interpretation of the past. Unsurprisingly, given the importance of chronology in the text, one facet of this was dating. Key events such as the Norman Conquest were calculated both in years of our Lord or of the world and in years since Brutus's arrival. The running titles for each reign changed only from "Kings of Britain" to "Kings of England," when Achaius signed the old alliance with Charlemagne.¹⁰¹ Building on an imbalanced research process, even the layout of the text subsumed Scotland into an English narrative. The final section was entitled "annotations containing the meaning of certain words and sayings both in English and other [languages] which might be found difficult to understand in the present chronicle." Although this had been "extracted from many books, both ancient and modern," its focus reaffirms the extent to which this work constituted a guide to England and English affairs.¹⁰² While Benard explained some terms relating to places and people not in England (such as "the Picts" and "Wales"), the detailed descriptions of institutions and legal customs were reserved for English practices and places, from the court of Star Chamber to the peculiar Kentish custom of gavelkind.¹⁰³ The work's title page, which explained the book, constituting a "summary of the great annals and chronicles

⁹⁹ Boece, 10:13; BL, Galba MS E V, fol. 53^r, opp. fol. 53^v; BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 175–77. Boece is the most likely source, since his version is much fuller than des Monstiers, fol. 29^v.

¹⁰⁰ BL, Galba MS E V, fol. 17^r, opp. fol. 17^r. The mention of Fertharius being "elected" suggests Boece, 2:1–52, rather than des Monstiers, fol. xix^{r–v}. For James V, see BL, Galba MS E V, opp. fols. 222^v, 223^r.

¹⁰¹ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 175.

¹⁰² BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 1033: "annotations contenant l'exposition de certains mots & diction, tant Angloises que autres, qui se peuuent trouuer de difficile entente en la presente Chronique: extraites de plusieurs livres, tant anciens, que modernes."

¹⁰³ BNF, Fonds Français 5575, 1037–39, 1084, 1092.

of England from the reign of Brutus” and enhanced by “the most famous and memorable occurrences which occurred in the same times in the kingdoms of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Denmark and other northern regions,” if anything overstated the extent of its coverage beyond England.

Benard’s work might have been unusual in terms of its scale, detail, and production values. However, the balance of the sources he employed reflected the wider availability of English materials and, indeed, the scale of influence these enjoyed. Scottish expatriate communities and accounts of the Scottish past available in France faced stiff competition from English versions of events, and French understandings of their auld allies. Phillipe Contamine’s assessment that Froissart remained “non-committal” on the topic of the auld alliance was equally true of his compatriot historians a century later.¹⁰⁴ Des Monstiers’s translation and summary and d’Espence’s oration for Marie de Guise’s funeral show that Boece’s history was read, especially in particular dynastic contexts. Yet, even at the apogee of Guise-Stewart power, this understanding of the Scottish past appeared alongside or surrounded by competing versions—these were often English but could, on occasion, be French. In some instances, this provided a range of raw materials from which conflicting narratives might be selected. In Benard’s case, though, finding an alternative narrative would have been tricky. Although Scottish material was present, the fact that it was subsumed into a chronology dictated by English authors, was so much briefer than the commentary on English affairs, was unsupported by structural repetition, and was not highlighted in the physical presentation of the book rendered it harder to identify or recall.

We saw in the first part of this article that dynastic alliances prompted interest in Scottish history. Despite the fundamentally different account of the British past offered by Benard, his work, too, was prompted by the prospect of a dynastic moment—albeit one that passed without a marriage. Charles Giry Deloison has argued that the 1560s witnessed a degree of Anglophilia in the French court as a consequence of the potential marriage negotiations between Elizabeth and the younger Valois princes.¹⁰⁵ Tantalizingly, Benard’s career offers two flashes of evidence that suggest the French at least hoped to approach these negotiations in a historically informed manner. Benard’s 1572 guide to the members of an English embassy was produced as a briefing document in the context of such negotiations.¹⁰⁶ More directly still, in 1571 Benard wrote to Catherine de Medici offering an argument in favor of Anjou’s eventual coronation, should the ongoing matrimonial negotiations bear fruit, by drawing on the example of Geoffrey

¹⁰⁴ Contamine, 57.

¹⁰⁵ Giry-Deloison.

¹⁰⁶ BNF, Fonds Français 5785; Doran, 130–40.

Plantagenet, Count of Anjou (1113–51), husband of the Empress Matilda (1102–67), and father of Henry II (1133–89).¹⁰⁷

If the French Crown found history useful in negotiations with the English, the French public found that such diplomacy whetted its appetite for the English past. It was probably for this reason that a printed edition of Benard's 1568 *Sommaire des Grandes Annales et Croniques* posthumously appeared in 1579—ironically, in the same year as David Chalmers of Ormond saw his French-language history of Scotland through the press.¹⁰⁸ The printed edition of Benard was so heavily abbreviated that it was shorn of much of the material surrounding relations between England and Scotland. It covered a much shorter time span, beginning with the reign of Henry I of England, and subsequent sections were heavily edited.¹⁰⁹ Marketed as a history of England, the book did what it said on the tin and removed every section on Scottish history. Both Fergus and Brutus were, however, mentioned in passing in the guide to the roads of England, which was published alongside the summary of Benard's *Sommaire des Grandes Annales et Croniques*. The mythical patriarchs were referenced in explanations of how particular places were founded and named. Lacking their fuller narratives, the implications of these figures for Anglo-Scottish relations were not drawn out.¹¹⁰ Consequently, many of the arguments for English suzerainty were lost, but even so, what remained was based on English sources and favored English interpretations. For instance, explanations of the causes of the 1540s Anglo-Scottish wars known as the "Rough Wooings" exculpated the English from responsibility for a conflict that they had initiated.¹¹¹

Updating the text beyond 1568, when Benard had finished, required Benard's editor to navigate the career of Mary, Queen of Scots, a contested subject in this period. Here, controversy was avoided through a less-is-more approach. As in Benard's original, Mary was still described as the reigning Queen of Scots, and her genealogy was explained alongside that of Elizabeth.¹¹² While the eagle-eyed reader might have questioned Elizabeth's legitimacy after reading the account of her father's marriages, no explicit authorial guidance on how to interpret these events (let alone any alternative

¹⁰⁷ BNF, Fonds Français 5140, fols. 150^r–151^r.

¹⁰⁸ Bernard, 1579a; Chalmers, 1579a; Chalmers, 1579b; Chalmers, 1579c. The spelling of Benard's surname included a second *r*—this spelling is needed to find copies of the book.

¹⁰⁹ Bernard, 1579a, fols. 9^v–10^v.

¹¹⁰ Bernard, 1579b, sigs. Kiiiij [b^v], Lij [a^v], 75^r–^v.

¹¹¹ Bernard, 1579a, fols. 46^r–47^v. One possible exception to this reliance on English material was a claim that the invading English army of 1559 took with them debased coinage, which caused great damage to the Scottish economy. Bernard, 1579a, fol. 63^r.

¹¹² Bernard, 1579a, fols. 32^v–35^v.

candidates, such as the Queen of Scots) was offered.¹¹³ Mary's deposition, the resulting civil war, and her role in the schemes that led to the execution of Thomas Howard (1538–72), Duke of Norfolk, were studiously ignored.¹¹⁴ Apparently the desire to avoid comment on Mary's present situation, which Alexander Wilkinson has shown was common across the French press at this time, also discouraged discussion of her realm's past.¹¹⁵

CONCLUSION

In 1579, Benard's editor justified his publication of a summary of Benard's *Sommaire des Grandes Annales et Croniques* on the grounds that "very few" books had appeared offering information on "our neighbors the English and Scots"—a situation made worse by the fact that their authors wrote mainly in "their mother tongues."¹¹⁶ The texts explored in this article suggest this claim was disingenuous at best. The impact of John Mair's and, especially, Hector Boece's Latin histories of Scotland in the 1520s has long been established as key in the development of Scottish history, shaping how the Scots understood their past and, crucially, offering lessons on how present-day relationships with their neighbors ought to be conducted. Boece's influence, at least, was also felt in France. In 1537, des Monstiers had summarized Boece in French, and many of the texts examined throughout this article reveal some awareness of either Boece or this summary. This was especially true at moments of particular dynastic potential in Franco-Scottish relations.

However, the claim was misleading in another way—namely, in its suggestion that the situation regarding the availability of information between England and Scotland was broadly comparable. Indeed, the fact that this summary of Benard systematically stripped out materials on Scotland typifies the difficulties that Scottish versions of the past faced in securing the attention of a reading public already familiar with the Brutus myth, including from their own origin stories. In this context, even authors sympathetic to Scotland often provided muddled accounts suggesting that in the ancient past the island of Britain had been one. This was especially so when Scottish history was mentioned in passing, as one part of a text dealing with a range of topics: in other words, in the type of places where it might be encountered by someone not particularly seeking to research the subject. Even when an individual ended up with both Scottish and English books on their desk, the Scottish books,

¹¹³ Bernard, 1579a, fols. 36^r–41^v.

¹¹⁴ Bernard, 1579a, fol. 64^{r-v}.

¹¹⁵ Wilkinson, 61–65.

¹¹⁶ Benard, 1579, sig. Aij^{r-v}.

as Benard's draft shows, may have arrived later, were certainly fewer in number, and, when crunch time came on deciding between conflicting interpretations, were the ones that lost out.

Finding that interest in Scottish history in France ebbed and flowed with variable political concerns fits neatly with the broader historiographical consensus that political and economic relations between the two auld allies were dictated largely by self-interest. It also provides helpful context in understanding why the French were so readily able to incorporate the Scots alongside other "wild" people in their mid-sixteenth-century imperial visions: the Scottish version of their own past had failed to gain significant traction against tales of their inherent incivility and subservience to the heirs of Brutus. At the same time, the relative paucity of Scottish history in French texts, as well as its further adaption, adds a new dimension to our appreciation of the importance of history to sixteenth-century Scots. Promulgating a coherent and cogent account of the ancient Scottish past was not simply important for domestic consumption, whether to bolster the Stewart monarchy or offer potential for its correction. It was more, too, than simply a tit-for-tat academic battle confined to the British Isles. Scotland's antiquity and independence also needed to be articulated for audiences to whom the Scots might turn for aid, when academic disputes transformed into military conflicts. The battles fought by Gathelus and Scota to capture ground long colonized by Brutus took place not just in the island formerly known as Albion but in France: at once the home of Charlemagne who signed the auld alliance, and Francus, their old enemy Brutus's own brother.

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