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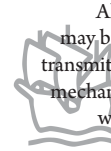

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Review

MARK P. BRUCE

The Historiography of Disruption

The Chronicon de Lanercost *and the Pressures of the Marches*

▼ **ABSTRACT** At the end of the account of the 1314 Battle of Bannockburn in the mid-fourteenth century Latin text known as the *Chronicon de Lanercost*, there appears a long hexameter poem on the battle. Its relationship to a much better known version in Walter Bower's fifteenth-century *Scotichronicon* has gone unremarked hitherto, despite sharing over thirty lines with it. Perhaps more striking are the differences between the two versions. These shift the focus away from the triumphant Scottish nationalism of Bower's version, or the attempts to explain away the defeat common to English accounts, to concentrate instead on the disruption and violence of the conflict. Compiled in its final form near Carlisle in the mid-fourteenth century, *Lanercost* provides a unique opportunity to witness history as narrated from within the contested space of the Anglo-Scottish Marches. An edition and a translation of the poem are included.

Keywords *Chronicon de Lanercost*, Latin, chronicle, *Scotichronicon*, Walter Bower, Anglo-Scottish borders, Marches, Bannockburn

Just after the narrative of the 1314 Battle of Bannockburn in the northern English Latin chronicle known as the *Chronicon de Lanercost,* there appears a poem about the battle in tightly composed, rhymed dactylic hexameters. Herbert Maxwell, the early twentieth-century translator of that chronicle, found the poem so unremarkable as to forego including it in his translation, quipping — rather grumpily — in a bracketed comment where the poem would otherwise appear, 'Here follows a long dirge in Latin hexameters, which

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will not repay translation'.[1] *Pace* Sir Herbert, there are several ways in which the poem — edited and translated below — repays not only translation, but several other forms of critical attention as well. One of these involves an intriguing discovery: the poem in question shares most of its lines, redacted and in rearranged order, with a better-known poem recorded in Walter Bower's mid-fifteenth-century prose Latin *Scotichronicon*.[2] The presence of the poem in both chronicles provides a tantalizing indication of the circulation of Latin poetic material between Scotland and England similar to the circulation Andrew Galloway has noticed in the vernacular.[3] Even more interesting are the ways the two versions resonate within the two very different textual and rhetorical spaces from which they speak. What follows contrasts this shared poetic material as it functions, first, in a mid-fourteenth-century chronicle written on the Anglo-Scottish borders, within the very geographic and temporal zone of greatest disruption during the height of Anglo-Scottish conflict, and second, in Bower's pro-Scottish work produced a century later in much closer affinity to centres of Scottish royal power.

Scotichronicon and its 'Brucean' Context

The *Scotichronicon* is Walter Bower's expansion and continuation of John of Fordun's late fourteenth-century *Chronica Gentis Scottorum*. Both historians react to threats to a specifically 'Brucean' brand of Scottish national identity. James Goldstein has discussed how the Scots, and especially the government of Robert I, deliberately constructed legitimizing versions of Scottish history favourable to Scottish claims of independence.[4] The monarchs under whom both Fordun and Bower laboured, and whom they both supported, were dependent on that 'Brucean' version of Scottish identity for their legitimacy. Fordun's work is in many ways a response to the threat to the Bruce dynasty (at that point represented by David II) posed by Edward Balliol during the 1340–50s (often referred to as the 'Second Scottish War of Independence').[5] When Fordun began composing his chronicle in the 1360s, there was much to threaten the legitimacy of the reigning Bruce dynasty. David II, the son of Robert I, had only recently returned from captivity, having been captured by

1 *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, ed. by Maxwell, p. 208.

2 Michael Brown notices both poems and remarks on them separately but does not comment on the similarity between the two. Robert Crawford comments on the version in Bower but not on its cousin in *Lanercost*. See Brown, *Bannockburn*, pp. 6–8; Crawford, *Bannockburns*, chap. 1.

3 Galloway, 'The Borderlands of Satire', pp. 15–31.

4 Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland*; the term 'Brucean' is borrowed from Goldstein's work.

5 There is some debate as to the extent of Fordun's authorship, though this is beyond the scope of the present discussion: see Broun, 'A New Look at *Gesta Annalia* Attributed to John of Fordun', pp. 9–30.

the English at the Battle of Neville's Cross in 1346, and was only released in 1357 in exchange for a massive ransom that was to affect the Scottish economy for years to come. The conflict of which Neville's Cross was a part involved a direct threat to the legitimacy of the Bruce claims to the Scottish throne in the person of Edward Balliol, the son of John Balliol, Edward I's vassal king who reigned between 1292 and 1296, whose rival claim to the throne was revived by Robert's death in 1329 and the succession of David as a five-year-old infant. Edward Balliol, backed by Edward III, had won the support of those who had opposed Robert I and been disinherited as a result. Balliol was crowned king at Scone in 1332, but formally resigned his claim in 1356 as part of the peace settlement that paved the way for David II's return to Scotland the following year. Despite this, however, the idea of Scotland as an English dependency continued to be a live issue, while the memory of two competing kings in Scotland, reigning under two competing definitions of Scottish identity, remained powerful.[6] David himself had not yet produced a direct male heir, leading him to consider, in 1363, a proposal by which he would have been succeeded by a 'younger son' of Edward III were he to die childless, in return for remission of the ransom. Ranald Nicholson notes that such an agreement would have forced the Scots to 'disinherit a native-born Scot whose right of succession had been formally recognized in parliament, and to put in his place an English king whose depredations had brought misery to land and people'.[7] Such a policy might have solved a potential succession crisis and fostered less volatile Anglo-Scottish relations, but the Scottish parliament chose instead to uphold the right of succession of Robert the Steward, Robert Bruce's grandson, who eventually succeeded David II in 1371. Against this background, the 1360s must have seemed an unstable time for supporters of the Bruce dynasty and the cause of Scottish independence, for there was a distinct possibility that Scotland would wind up as an English vassal state, not through conquest, but through diplomatic expediency.[8]

The stability of the successors to the Brucean claims over Scotland, the Stewarts, was equally in jeopardy when Bower set out to revise and expand Fordun's history in the 1440s. The assassination of James I in 1437, leaving his six-year-old son James II as king, gave rise to considerable political unrest as rival factions vied to control the king during his minority.[9] Bower, a loyal servant of James I, explicitly connects the writing of his chronicle with the goal of soothing the unrest and disunity he saw around him: '… libenter huiusmodi opus insolitum ex propriis aggrediendum presumpsi, sed pro utilitate rei publice, pro solacio regis et regni' (I did not undertake the unfamiliar work

6 Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 161.
7 Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, p. 171.
8 For a more complete account of the reign and these circumstances, see Penman, *David II*.
9 Nicholson, *Scotland: The Later Middle Ages*, pp. 327–33.

of this kind very willingly for my own reasons, but I took it on for the good of the public interest, as a comfort for the King and kingdom).[10]

Scotichronicon's Bannockburn Narrative

Between his coronation in 1306 and July 1314, Robert Bruce's kingship had been a difficult and contested one. Bruce did not enjoy universal support within Scotland, had been excommunicated by Pope Clement V (for his murder — at a church altar — of rival John Comyn shortly before the coronation) and had largely been fighting what might be termed a guerrilla campaign against the English. His major victory over a much larger English army in a pitched battle at Bannockburn in 1314 was essential to the solidification and stabilization of his kingship. Bower's account of the battle, of which the poem under discussion is a critical component, exhibits both the possibilities and the dangers of narrating a conflict in which the 'Brucean' — or Bruce-Stewart — ideology that lies at the heart of the *Scotichronicon* might easily have been subverted. Bruce's victory at Bannockburn was what gained him the status of a national hero, but as Robin Frame notes, while Scotland before Bannockburn may have been broadly unified under the desire for an independent state,

> not all Scots accepted the idea that Robert Bruce himself was the embodiment of their cause […] If one part of the story of the period is the growing confidence of a collective political identity, rooted in a shared belief in the free status of the kingdom and hatred of English domination, another is the impudent success of the Bruce and Stewart dynasties in seizing the national past for themselves.[11]

Bannockburn was a key component in that process by which the cause of Bruce became the cause of Scotland. It is important to remember that, in early June 1314, a Scottish victory was by no means assured and that Edward II made serious tactical errors upon which Bruce was able to capitalize.[12] The outcome could have been very different and what the Scots gained at Bannockburn could just as easily have been lost. Such an inconvenient reality confronts a chronicler like Bower with a critical problem: he must narrate, as a victory,

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10 Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. by Watt, vol. 8, pp. 338–39 (XVI.xxxix).

11 Frame, *Political Development of the British Isles*, p. 194.

12 While a tactical analysis is well beyond the scope of this essay, both period chroniclers and modern commentators generally agree that Edward II and his commanders assumed that Robert I would avoid open combat and retreat if challenged; hence, on the final day of the battle, moving their main force into the open in an unfavourable location, flanked on two sides, where it was impossible to bring their numeric superiority to bear. Bruce was a sufficiently canny commander to recognize and exploit that weakness. See Brown, *Bannockburn*, pp. 132–33; Cornell, *Bannockburn*, pp. 196–219.

a moment in which the very brand of Scottish identity he promotes was consciously and dubiously risked by its own central figure.

In the light of this rhetorical problem, it is both interesting and telling that one of the primary features of Bower's narrative of the Battle of Bannockburn is that it does not, in fact, narrate the Battle of Bannockburn. Bower begins the narrative, in chapter 19 of Book XII, with a lengthy description of Edward II's pride and almost mythically excessive preparations for his campaign, making these the reasons for the English downfall: 'Sic confisus est rex Anglie in potencia sua militari; confisus est rex Robertus solum in aduitorio Dei singulari' (Thus the king of England trusted in his military power; King Robert trusted in only in the help of God alone).[13] Chapter 20 frontloads the narrative of the outcome and effects of the battle, and, just when one might expect an account of the combat itself, Bower refers the reader to John Barbour's romanticized verse history *The Bruce* (*c.* 1375), and then immediately backtracks to narrate a favourable portent prior to the battle. Two travelling knights — who turn out to be angels — stop at Glastonbury Abbey. The sacrist treats them well and serves them a meal, then asks if they will stay the night at the abbey:

> Et sibi multiplices pro refeccione gracias reddiderunt, dicentes quod ipsa eadem nocte ante solis ortum oportuit necessario apud Bannokburn cuidam certo bello inter reges Scocie et Anglie committendo interesse, et pro parte Scotorum assistere, ad inferendam vindictam pro injusta morte domini Simonis de Moneforti, Comes Lacestrie, et suorum sequacium a quinquaginta annis transactis advenientis pridie non augusti vigilia scilicet Sancti Oswaldi crudeliter per bellum de Eveshame illata. Et hoc dicto a visu audientis prolapsi sunt nec ultra ibi apparuerunt.
>
> > (They thanked him over and over for the refreshment, saying that on that very same night before sunrise they must of necessity take in a certain battle at Bannockburn [in Scotland] which was to be fought between the kings of Scotland and England, and give help on the side of the Scots, so as to bring revenge for the unjust deaths of Sir Simon de Montfort earl of Leicester and his followers, so cruelly inflicted at the battle of Evesham on his arrival there fifty years earlier on 4 August, that is on the eve of St Oswald. And at these words they glided from the sight of the listener and were seen there no longer).[14]

Chapter 21 contains Bower's version of our poem, which is couched as a before-the-fact celebration of a victory Bower has not yet related. Chapter 22 then backtracks again, even further, to the same timeframe as chapter 19, describing a meeting between Edward II and his magnates in England concerning his intentions in Scotland. Bower here compares Edward's request to take a census

13 Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. by Watt, vol. 6, pp. 350–51 (XII.xix).

14 Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. by Watt, vol. 6, pp. 354–55 (XII.xx). Watt's translation.

of his manpower to King David's 'numbering of the people' in the biblical Book of Chronicles, an act of self-trust, rather than trust in God, for which God punished David by sending a plague that wiped out 70,000 of his men.[15] Bower then describes Edward's advance through England, before skipping to the morning of the battle, with some verses, attributed to Abbot Bernard of Arbroath, that rehearse King Robert's exhortation to his troops. We then see the moments just before the combat, in which the English, seeing the Scots kneel in prayer, mistake their kneeling for a gesture of surrender, only to be scolded by a wiser Ingram de Umfraville. Bower then skates over the entirety of two days of combat in a two-word clause: 'Cum hoc alacres Scoti se erigunt, **inimicos impetunt**, et Scotis, quibus laboriosiora pro justicia sue partis extiterunt certamina, gloriose, ut assolet, cessit victoria' (At this, the Scots rose eagerly, attacked their enemies, and victory (as usually happens) fell gloriously to the Scots, who had endured wearisome struggles for the justice of their cause).[16] Chapter 23 contains a more often-remarked poem, which Bower explains was written by one Robert Baston, an English poet whom Edward brought along to compose verses on the English victory, and who, captured after the battle, was forced to compose verses on the English defeat as the condition of his release.[17] Bower ends the account with two brief verse prophecies about the Scottish victory.

It is unsurprising that Bower goes so far out of his way to avoid any narrative of actual combat. As Homi Bhabha points out, the winning side will ever after look to that victory in combat as evidence of its legitimacy, of the solidity of its identity.[18] But narrating a battle also threatens to reveal that, in order to assert that legitimacy, the solidity of the national identity was consciously thrown into question. A thing that can be gambled, after all, is a thing that can be lost. For a chronicler like Bower, the actual violence of combat represents a dangerous moment in which the very identity he promotes as an immemorial solidity was most obviously in flux. Consequently, Bower suppresses the combat almost entirely in his account, instead privileging the outcome and creating a triumphant prophetic and theological frame that begins with signs and portents, omits the combat, and allows the reader to do nothing other than take pleasure in the victory as the righteous and just fulfilment of prophecy. Taken in this vein, the motto a scribe places at the end of the Corpus manuscript of *Scotichronicon*, 'Non Scotus est Christe cui liber non placet iste' (Christ! He is not a Scot who is not pleased with

15 I Chronicles 21. 1–17.

16 Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. by Watt, vol. 6, pp. 364–65 (XII.xxii). Watt's translation, my boldface.

17 See Rigg, 'Antiquaries and Authors'. For more on Baston himself, see Copsey, 'Baston, Robert (d. in or before 1348), Carmelite Friar and Poet', *ODNB* <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1658> [accessed 14 May 2021]. For the discovery of a potential addition to the poem in another MS, see Macray, ' Robert Baston's Poem', p. 507.

18 Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', pp. 291–322.

this book!) takes on even more pointed significance, with Bower overtly using narrative pleasure to mask the contingency of the national identity he promotes.

Scotichronicon's version of the poem in question supports and enhances Bower's programme of mitigating the violence of the battle with theology and prophecy. *Scotichronicon's* version of the poem is by far the longer — sixty-eight lines to *Lanercost's* forty-three. The battle itself provides an obvious *terminus a quo* for the writing of the poem, but no clear *terminus ad quem* exists in either version. D. E. R. Watt suggests that the verses 'may well date from soon after the battle which they describe', but also observes that, given a line that praises Robert Bruce for 're-establishing' laws, 'the time of composition was probably [at least some months beyond June 1314], rather than immediately after the battle'.[19] Given Watt's suggestions, set alongside the poem's greater length and cohesiveness, it seems reasonable to surmise that *Scotichronicon's* version is the earlier of the two even though *Scotichronicon* post-dates *Lanercost* by nearly a century.[20]

The content of the poem in *Scotichronicon's* version feels entirely celebratory and in keeping with Bower's pro-Bruce programme. Such narrative of the combat as there is in the poem is both preceded and followed by lines that place the violence within its celebratory framework using two complementary rhetorical approaches: first, a number of lines praise Robert Bruce not only for the military victory, but also for his immediate actions, post-battle, to mend what the English had marred in Scotland. For example, early in the poem we have the lines (in Watt's translation):

> Stat rex Scotorum, fervens in amore suorum.
> Hic relevat jura que jam fuerant peritura;
> pervigili cura tollit rex noxia plura. (ll. 17–19)
>
> (The King of Scots stands fast, aglow with the affection of his men. He re-establishes laws which had been in danger of perishing; and with watchful care removes much that is harmful). (ll. 18–20)[21]

19 Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. by Watt, vol. 6, pp. 357–61 (XII.xxi), and note pp. 454–55.

20 The varying manner of circulation of poetic material between Scotland and Northern England (as described by Galloway, above n. 3), which includes both oral and manuscript transmission, may help account for this seemingly non-chronological finding. As the earlier work made its way South, scribes with varying interests in and uses for the material, and/or oral recitations adapted *ex tempore* to various audiences seems a plausible process by which the earlier version was transformed into the version recorded in *Lanercost*. Bower, of course, with the resources of Inchcolm and other Scottish libraries (particularly St Andrews Priory and University as well as those at Hexham, Durham, and Carlisle) at his disposal, could easily have accessed the earlier version despite compiling his chronicle much later.

21 Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. by Watt. The poem and Watt's translation (referred to hereafter by line number only) appear in vol. 6, pp. 356–61 (XII.xxi).

Second, the poet includes a number of lines that cast the victory in triumphant theological terms, praising God's justice in granting victory to the worthier Scottish cause. After describing the scattering of English equipment on the field in the battle's aftermath, the poem has:

> Materiam flendi dat Anglis atque gemendi.
> Sic gens Scotorum laudat Dominum Dominorum.
> Inter saxosum fontem castrumque nodosum
> corruit Anglorum gens perfida, fraude suorum. (ll. 58–61)
>
> (All this gives the English people cause to weep and groan. Thus the Scottish people praise the Lord of Lords. Between the stony stream and the obstruction of their camp the treacherous English people come to grief as a result of their own dishonest conduct). (ll. 71–75)

The poet cleverly dovetails both strands of images in the poem's final moment, beginning with an apostrophe to the Almighty, following that immediately with a reference to Bruce:

> O Deus immense! quam justo percutis ense,
> colla superborum calcans, et vota tuorum
> suplens suplicium precibus placatus eorum.
> Scotorum cetus vigeat, virtute repletus:
> et rex sit letus, vertens in gaudia fletus,
> Anglis prostratis diversis atque fugatis
> et captivatis. (ll. 62–68)
>
> (O infinite, God, how just is the sword with you strike, trampling upon the necks of the proud and fulfilling the prayers of your people, appeased by their entreaties. May the assembly of the Scots flourish, abounding in valour: and may the king rejoice, turning tears into joy, now that the English have been cast down in all directions and routed and made prisoner). (ll. 76–83)

The poet ends with a final, triumphant, 'Sit laus regi pietatis!' (May the king be praised for his goodness), in which, grammatically, the noun *rex* is as applicable to the King of Scots as to the King of Kings. In *Scotichronicon's* version, these lines connect the poem very clearly with the larger prophetic frame in which Bower constructs his entire narrative of the battle. Such lines contain the violence within that mitigating structure, with the effect that the images of violence merely lend their energy to the celebration of the victory and the fulfilment of prophecy.

The *Lanercost* Version

All of the lines referenced above are absent from the version of the poem that appears in *Lanercost*. This effects a profound change in the meaning of the

remaining lines, shifting the poem's focus to the violence, destruction, and confusion of the combat, and to the rout of the English across a muddy river bottom in which many were trampled and drowned during the frantic retreat. The abject confusion of the combat itself becomes the poem's primary focus as the images of violence are left to stand on their own.

Smaller differences deepen the sense of ambivalence in *Lanercost's* version. The most significant of these are several added lines not extant in *Scotichronicon*. Early in the poem, after a (shared) passage describing the English retreat, Edward II, the vanquished prince (*principe victo*, l. 28) is shown fleeing the field having lost his sword (*ense relicto*, l. 27). The *Lanercost* version extends this image with a unique couplet: 'Victus abit propere fertur sibi lapsa corona, | Quod probat absque fere quam sit sua cessio prona', ll. 11–12. (The defeated king retreats in haste, the fallen crown is brought to him, which only proves how much he's bent over in defeat). *Lanercost's* version continues with a description of the rout of the English across the muddy Bannock — again shared by both versions — and follows the *Scotichronicon* version for a half couplet: 'Dum captivatur, prosternitur aut fugiatur', l. 19 (While it is captured, overthrown, or put to flight), but where *Scotichronicon* continues with a line about the Forth burying well-trained horsemen and equipment (*Forth sepelit multos armis et equis bene cultos* l. 37), *Lanercost* finishes the sentence differently, and then adds two lines not attested in *Scotichronicon*, curiously in the first person (found only in *Lanercost*): 'Dum captivatur, prosternitur aut fugiatur, | Turba fugax procerum subit hic direptio rerum. | Curritur in praedam quantam non nitar ut edam. | Singula non credam possim licet addere quedam'. ll. 19–22 (While the fleeing throng of nobles is captured, struck down, or put to flight, it all falls to plundering, So much plundering that I labor to express it. I am not certain about every detail, but some things I can add […]),[22] strengthening the image of the English nobility succumbing to the confusion of the rout. The aggregate effect of these unique lines is to shift the focus from the *Scotichronicon* version, which concentrates on the loss of resources (weapons, horses, and trained knights — the most expensive elements of combat), to the confused scramble of the rout through the mud, the wild plundering, and to the sheer inexpressibility of the sight. The implied first-person 'eyewitness' lends the image additional weight, and where the version in Bower emphasizes narrative pleasure, *Lanercost* highlights horror beyond words.

Many passages in the *Lanercost* version are also rearranged in a manner that steer the poem's meaning in much different directions than *Scotichronicon's*, especially within the context of *Lanercost's* larger narrative frame. For example, very late in the *Scotichronicon* version (ll. 60–61 of sixty-eight lines total) we have the couplet: 'Inter saxosum fontem castrumque nodosum | corruit Anglorum gens perfida, fraude suorum' (By the stony stream and the tangled

22 Or, more literally, it 'falls under the plundering of things'.

encampment, the perfidious people of the English were destroyed by their own deceit). These are the opening lines in *Lanercost*. The couplet resonates quite differently in *Scotichronicon*, since it appears again at the end of Chapter 23 of Book XII, as part of what Bower identifies as a Welsh prophecy concerning the battle.[23] Watt notes that the prophecy is the likely source of the lines in the poem. The connections of these lines with the prophecy in Bower's chronicle sharpen its sense of prophetic inevitability. Moreover, the Corpus manuscript of *Scotichronicon* includes a marginal note, likely added by Bower himself, specifying that the poem be moved to follow chapter 23.[24] This move would have caused our poem to immediately follow the prophecy, making that connection even more apparent to readers. In *Lanercost*, however, the prophetic connection is absent, and the poem simply opens with a sense of the 'perfidious' English people 'destroyed by their own deceit' — an oddly ambivalent expression from a scribe who otherwise identifies as English and expresses no love for the Scots. This sense of ambivalence continues with another relocated couplet, ll. 49–50 in the *Scotichronicon* version, which appears at the end of the *Lanercost* poem: 'Excutit e pannis Anglos lux alma Johannis | Christi Baptiste, pro quo tibi gloria Christe' (One propitious day of John, Christ's baptist, shook the English from their clothes, for which to you, Christ, be the glory). The final image is that of Stirling 'celebrating the muddy collapse of the English' and enjoying the rich spoils of the battle. Although the provenance of the version of the poem that appears in *Lanercost* is unknown, it is intriguing that the English scribe responsible for compiling the poem into the larger chronicle allows it to begin and end with such a strong sense of ambivalence about his fellow Englishmen. Between that beginning and ending, as we have seen, the *Lanercost* version as a whole takes on a much darker cast than its counterpart.

The Manuscript and Sources of *Lanercost*

To make sense of these differences, it is helpful, first, to know something about the chronicle, its manuscript, and its sources. Broadly, the *Chronicon de Lanercost* is a northern English history, covering the years between 1201 and 1346 and likely compiled shortly after the final year it narrates at Lanercost Priory, a small minorite house founded in the twelfth century in northern Cumbria, near Carlisle. While the chronicle makes use of a number of well-known authorities, it is noteworthy for its additions of northern-inflected material and a uniquely northern English perspective on events. Unfortunately, little is known about the exact provenance of Cotton Claudius D.vii itself. The hand used throughout (a boilerplate anglicana) dates to the mid to

23 Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. by Watt, vol. 6, p. 377 (XII.xxiii).
24 Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. by Watt, vol. 6, pp. 454–55 (note to XII.xxi).

late fourteenth century. The earliest notice of the manuscript has it in the library of Henry Savile of Banke as of 1596, when he printed portions of it;[25] it was later acquired by Sir Robert Cotton.[26] The manuscript has two major components: the first twenty-three *folia* consist of a synopsis of several sources of interest to British history in general, and the north in particular, with a clearly pedagogical intent. It contains, for instance, extracts from Henry of Huntingdon's chronicle (regnal summaries in particular), several short 'epitomes' of British history and kingship (drawn largely from Geoffrey of Monmouth), a historical listing of synods, and a lilting mnemonic poem in rhyming hexameters on the succession and deeds of British kings.[27] A. G. Rigg suggests that the first twenty-three *folia* were once a separate booklet.[28] James Wilson, however, writing on the authorship of the chronicle in the introduction to Sir Herbert Maxwell's translation of a portion thereof, treats the scribe of the first twenty-three *folia* as the same as that of the rest of the manuscript.[29] It is worth noting that this 'booklet' itself inserts a number of entries of particularly northern interest, including a fascinating note, at the end of a genealogy of the Kings of Scotland, in support of Edward Balliol's claim to the throne of Scotland (which, the note argues, was by hereditary right, rather than conquest — which it asserts was the only claim made by David II) that is repeated almost verbatim later in the chronicle.[30] The remaining *folia* comprise the more continuous chronicle, compiled into its current form not long after the final year it treats (1346). The compiler makes use of varied source materials, many of them common to just about every late medieval English chronicle (including Geoffrey of Monmouth, Henry of Huntingdon, and William of Malmesbury). A unique quality of this chronicle, however, is that the majority derives from northern sources. Roughly the first half of the chronicle (fols 25–173) is based heavily on the *Annals* of Roger of Hoveden, himself a northerner. The second half, as H. S. Offler has noticed, appears to be based on a work known as the 'Northern Franciscan Chronicle' (now known only as a common source used to varying degrees in several other historical works). The 'Northern Franciscan Chronicle' (henceforth NFC),

25 Watson, *The Manuscripts of Henry Savile*.

26 *Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. by Stevenson.

27 My observations, as well as those of Rigg, *A Book of British Kings*. Rigg's book is a delightful edition of the poem and its glosses.

28 *A Book of British Kings*, ed. by Rigg, pp. 9–10.

29 See James Wilson's introduction to Maxwell's translation of *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, ed. by Maxwell, p. ix. The hand in both cases is certainly very similar, down to what appear to be some characteristic penstrokes, making it less clear whether that booklet was a separate object that was simply placed within the same binding as the rest of the chronicle at some point, or whether the scribe copied a pre-existing booklet as a sort of introductory section to the more continuous text that follows.

30 Given the similarity of the hands and apparent *modus operandi* of the scribe in the rest of the MS. I am attracted to the latter possibility, though reluctant to set aside Professor Rigg's observation.

in turn, bears evidence of composition by two individuals, both minorite friars from around Durham.[31] The first of these is responsible for the section covering 1201–1297 (often identified as Richard of Durham), and the second for the section covering 1298 to 1346, and was, according to Little, 'probably written about that time by an English friar minor on the Scottish border'.[32] The final voice is the one that appears to have compiled all these sources together into a new work, working primarily from Hoveden and the NFC in succession, but also liberally altering, compressing and omitting passages from those sources as he saw fit, as well as adding original material where it became available and relevant. The compiler adds much that would only have been available locally, including material specific to Lanercost Priory itself (and surrounding houses with which it was in constant contact on both sides of the border), and even a series of witty poetic interpolations attributed to Henry de Burgo, a canon who was made prior of Lanercost in 1315. It is worth noting that the scribe of Cotton Claudius D.vii does not differentiate these major sources in the manuscript. The material from Hoveden ends on fol. 173^{v}, with a simple 'valete' — the closing of a papal letter recorded at the end of Hoveden's work. Aside from a slightly larger capital that the scribe uses throughout to mark new paragraphs, there is no scribal indication of the break between Hoveden and later sources. Little notices that there is some evidence that the NFC was once split into books,[33] but the *Lanercost* compiler has made no attempt to preserve that arrangement, though he stops short of intentionally editing out all vestiges. There is not room here to tease out what can be discerned of the *Lanercost* compiler's unique additions to his source material, but it is significant that the scribe makes that as difficult for us as he does. Noting that the scribe is elsewhere careful to mark other kinds of divisions and sources in the text, it seems that he, at least, saw his creation as a more of a single unified work than as a historical miscellany.

Lanercost and the Borders

It is in this borderland context that the differences between the two versions of our poem take on more pointed significance. The priory was situated just northeast of Carlisle, slightly south of Inglewood Forest, on one of the most accessible and heavily travelled routes between England and Scotland. Even before the outbreak of hostilities there is evidence that the house's location was stressing its resources: the Bishop of Carlisle, for instance, granted Lanercost the appropriation of an additional church in 1272 'on account of

31 Offler, 'A Note on the Northern Franciscan Chronicle', pp. 45–59.
32 Little, 'Authorship of the Lanercost Chronicle', pp. 269–77, at p. 276.
33 Little, 'Authorship of the Lanercost Chronicle', p. 276.

their poverty, meagre revenues, and heavy burden of hospitality'.[34] At the outbreak of hostilities in 1296, Lanercost's vulnerable location made it the victim of the first Scottish raids into northern England in 1296 and 1297. The *Lanercost* chronicler adds, with a strong note of personal bitterness that confirms the priory's vulnerable location, that the destruction of the priory in 1296 'can by no means be attributed to the valor of warriors, but to the dastardly conduct of thieves, who attacked a weaker community where they would not be likely to meet with any resistance'.[35] As devastating as these raids were, equally devastating were the multiple royal visits that came on their heels. Edward I's third visit in 1306, in particular, wound up being much longer than expected due to the king's illness, and the house supported a royal retinue upwards of 200 in number — in the manner to which they had become accustomed — from 29 September until at least 4 March of the following year. Although Edward did attempt to defray their costs by granting the priory the advowsons of the churches of Mitford and Carlatton,[36] J. R. H. Moorman suggests that the house never really recovered financially from this visit alone.[37] It appears, too, that the house provided hospitality to many more than just the king and his retinue. In another item, also dated 1307, the Bishop of Durham granted the Priory to appropriate the church of Mitford again both because of the Scots and 'cotidianum adventum regalis exercitus per vos ac frequenter aliorum supervenientium concursum onerosum' ('[…] the regular arrivals of the royal army through your area and the frequent additional arrivals of other burdensome assemblages').[38] The situation only worsened after the Bannockburn defeat. Both the 1314 and 1319 English expeditions into Scotland were costly for the marches, and both ended in defeat and renewed Scottish raids, which would hardly have made the inhabitants of the marches feel confident in royal protection.[39] In fact, many areas ended up taking their security into their own hands, paying off the Scots in a sort of unofficial protection racket. Various areas in the marches purchased exorbitantly expensive truces, financed by heavy taxation of northern subjects, from the Scots between 1311 and 1319.[40] There is much indication that the *Lanercost* chronicler (or, in some cases, perhaps his northern minorite precursor), felt considerable ambivalence toward his own monarch, both because of his lack of protection of the marches and his treatment of religious houses on the way into Scotland. One of the reasons *Lanercost* itself gives for the English defeat at Bannockburn, for instance, is that Edward II 'took on his way [into Scotland] the goods of

34 *The Lanercost Cartulary*, ed. by Todd, p. 253 (no. 211).
35 *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, ed. by Maxwell, p. 136.
36 *The Lanercost Cartulary*, ed. by Todd, p. 298 (no. 248).
37 Moorman, 'Edward I at Lanercost Priory 1306–7', pp. 161–74, 172.
38 *The Lanercost Cartulary*, ed. by. Todd, p. 300.
39 *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, ed. by Maxwell, pp. 129–30.
40 *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, ed. by Maxwell, pp. 131–32.

the monasteries, and in prejudice and injury of the saints'.[41] Edward II, of course, gets more than his share of criticism in many English chronicles, but it is worth noting that this criticism is unique, focusing not on the usual matters of his favouring of Gavestons and Despensers and his frivolous hobbies, but a much more specific indictment of his behaviour toward northern monasteries. The chronicler several times laments that the denizens of Carlisle and its surroundings were 'despairing' of royal assistance. The combination of the northern-focused information from the second NFC author and the material specific to Lanercost and nearby northern houses added by the final compiler create a striking tone of ambivalence — even despair — that begins with the inception of Anglo-Scottish hostilities and only deepens after 1314. The chronicler's litany of Scottish raids, almost always accompanied by expressions of despair of help from those who should be the north's protectors, becomes almost tedious. The chronicler writes, for instance, that in 1311 Robert Bruce laid waste to practically everything, 'nor could the wardens whom the King of England had stationed on the marches oppose so great a force as he brought with them', following that statement with a paragraph on how heavily northerners were taxed in order to pay the Scots for a temporary truce.[42] The same year, after narrating the troubles concerning Edward II's relationship with Piers Gaveston, the chronicler laments that 'while the aforesaid things were getting done with Piers, the march of England had no defender against the Scots, and therefore they rendered tribute to Robert in order to have peace for a while'.[43] When another raid threatens, the people of Durham pay for another truce, 'despairing of help from the king'.[44] In 1313, after another temporary truce had lapsed, the chronicler describes northerners arranging for a further expensive buyoff, 'neither having nor hoping for any defense from their king (seeing that he was engaged in distant parts of England, seeming not to give them a thought)'.[45] The repetition of this kind of narrative (raid, inadequacy of protection, despair of royal help, burdensome tax for a purchased truce, followed by more raiding) makes it difficult to take it as anything but an intentionally structured refrain.

Bannockburn from the Borders: The *Lanercost* Account

Lanercost's Bannockburn narrative is a key iteration of this refrain. Its account of 1314 itself begins with a raid, on the heels of several repetitions, in the

41 *Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. by Stevenson, p. 225: '… bona monasteriorum in itinere accepit, et in praejudicium et injuriam sanctorum, ut narrabatur, aliqua secit et dixit'.
42 *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, ed. by Maxwell, p. 195.
43 *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, ed. by Maxwell, p. 198.
44 *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, ed. by Maxwell, p. 200.
45 *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, ed. by Maxwell, p. 203.

immediately preceding passages, of the Borderers' despair and loss of hope of aid from the king. As the narrative continues, the chronicler seems to treat the English army on its way through the marches as nearly as much of an enemy as the Scots. When the invading English army arrives on the narrative scene in the other English chronicles, it does so directly in Scotland, just as it approaches Stirling. In *Lanercost*, however, the English army is first seen approaching the marches, as though the marches themselves are the object of its invasion. This suspicion is confirmed in the chronicle's description of Edward II's activity in the marches. The chronicler makes a stinging comparison between Edward II and his father concerning their treatment of religious houses:

> Ubi autem nobilis Edwardus pater suus eundo ad bellandum in Scotia solebat sanctos Angliae Thomam Cantuariae, Edmundum, Hugonem, Willelmum, Cuthbertum, in suo itinere visitare, et eis pulchras oblationes offerre et se eorum orationibus commendare, monasteriis etiam et pauperibus largas eleemosinas ministrare, iste nihil horum faciens, cum pompa magna et apparatu curioso veniens, bona monasteriorum in itinere accepit, et in praejudicium et injuriam sanctorum, ut narratabur, aliqua fecit et dixit. propter quae et alia mirandum non est quod ei et exercitu suo contingit confusio et verecundia sempiterna […]
>
> (Whereas when his noble father Edward went on a campaign in Scotland, he used to visit on his march [the shrines of] the English saints, Thomas of Canterbury, Edmund, Hugh, William, and Cuthbert, offering fair oblations, commending himself to their prayers, and also bestowing liberal gifts to monasteries and the poor, this [king] did none of these things; but marching with great pomp and elaborate state, he took goods from the monasteries on his journey, and, as was reported, did and said other things to the prejudice and injury of the saints. In consequence of this and other things it is no wonder that confusion and perpetual shame befell him and his army […])[46]

This observation is unique among the English chronicles: only the *Lanercost* chronicler both criticizes Edward for his mistreatment of northern religious houses and makes that mistreatment a primary reason for his defeat. Strikingly, then, *Lanercost* goes straight for precisely what Bower's account goes to such great lengths to avoid, and not only narrates the combat phase of the battle but does so in a way that highlights its brutality, noise, and confusion. As opposed to Bower's 'The Scots eagerly rose up [and] attacked their enemies', *Lanercost*, after describing the orders of battle on both sides, narrates the first charge thus:

> Quando vero ambo exercitus se mutuo conjuxerunt, et magni equi Anglorum irruerunt in lanceas Scottorum, factus est sonus maximus

46 *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, ed. by Maxwell, p. 206 (Maxwell's translation).

> et horribilis et lanceis fractis et e dextrariis vulneratis ad mortem, et sic steterunt in pace ad tempus.
>
> (When, truly, the two armies had come together, and the great horses of the English rushed into the lances of the Scots, there arose a great and horrible sound from the lances having been fractured and the destriers having been wounded to death, and so they stood in peace for a time).[47]

Lanercost then includes the most graphic description of any period chronicle of the English rout:

> Aluid [*sic*] etiam infortunam accidit Anglicis, quia, cum paulo ante transissent unam foveam magnam, in quam intrat fluxis maris, nomine Bannockburne, it jam confusi vellent redire, multi nobiles et alii prae pressura cum equis in illam ceciderunt, et aliqui cum difficultate magna evaserunt, et multi nunquam; et ideo Bannokeburne in ore Anglicorum erat per multos annos sequentes.
>
> (Another calamity which befell the English was that, whereas they had shortly before crossed a great ditch called Bannockburn, into which the tide flows, and now wanted to recross it in confusion, many nobles fell into it with their horses in the crush, while others escaped with much difficulty, and many were never able to extricate themselves from the ditch; thus, Bannockburn was spoken about for many years in English throats).[48]

Lanercost's version of the poem directly follows this description. Its images of the violence, rout, and literally muddy confusion, unmoored from *Scotichronicon's* prophetic and theological frame, both echo and reemphasize the images of violence in the prose account. Within the broader context of *Lanercost's* narrative of Anglo-Scottish conflict, its Bannockburn narrative thus serves a programme very different from Bower's official Bruce-Stewart agenda. Here, much of the same poetic matter works in the service of an experience of Anglo-Scottish conflict very different not only from Bower's version, but from other Scottish and English accounts as well. English accounts also tend to suppress images of violence, though for different reasons. The *Lanercost* chronicler's narrative is driven not by a sense of nationalist reification, but rather by the chronicler's narrative of constant disruption, a refrain of the 'invasion' of the marches by English as well as Scottish armies. That the *Lanercost* account should exhibit so much difference from the others, then, seems hardly surprising: disruption is often the impetus for attempts to reconstruct or affirm an identity that has come to seem embattled. While Bower's programmatically nationalist agenda

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47 *Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. by Stevenson, p. 225. My translation and emphasis.

48 *Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. by Stevenson, p. 226; *The Chronicle of Lanercost*, ed. by Maxwell, p. 208 (Maxwell's translation).

leads him to suppress any matter that might make it seem as though the Brucean identity he promotes is anything but entirely stable, the beleaguered priors of Lanercost have a much harder time containing — and much less reason to contain — images of the disruption and violence around them. While the *Lanercost* chronicler unambiguously identifies himself as English, his perspective seems less informed by a royally promoted sense of identity (that is, of the particular brand of 'Scottishness' promoted by Bower or that of 'Englishness' promoted by a chronicler like Higden) than by the lived experience of a denizen of the marches. More than the voice of one side or the other in the prolonged Anglo-Scottish conflict of the fourteenth century, his is the voice of the collateral damage.

The 'Bannockburn Poem' in British Library MS Cotton Claudius D.vii, fol. 215^{v}

L: *Chronicon de Lanercost*, in Cotton Claudius D.vii
B: Bower, *Scotichronicon*, based on MS C Corpus Christi College MS 171 (ed. by Watt, vol. 6 pp. 356–61: Bk XII, ch 21).
S: *Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. by Joseph Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1839).

Thirty-five of the total of forty-three lines comprising the *Lanercost*-poem correspond to ll. 20–61 of the sixty-eight-line version in Bower, albeit in a very different order. Variants in Bower (B) are given in the textual notes below. *Lanercost* lines 11–12, 20–22 and 38–41 (underlined below) are unattested elsewhere.

	Lanercost	**Line-numbers in B**
1	Juxta saxosum fontem castrumque nodosum.	60
	Corruit anglorum gens perfida fraude suorum.	61
	Amissos totos quos anglia pluribus annis	20
	Concepit in scottos lux obruit una johannis.	21
5	Nam rex anglorum molitus nomen eorum	22
	Funditus auferre luit in se proelia werre.	23
	Arma mouet, concepta fouet, perit in pariendo	24
	Aggreditur quod non fugitur, docet in fugiendo.	25
	Cum paucis fugit in campo rex ense relicto.	27
10	Nec populis patet ulla fugae via, principe victo.	28
	Victus abit propere fertur sibi lapsa corona,	
	Quod probat absque fere quam sit sua cessio prona.	
	Aspiceres, illuc proceres, aliosque potentes	32
	Dispersos, illos mersos, hos ense ruentes.	33

Lanercost		Line-numbers in B
15	Turba superba ducum morbum perpessa caducum,	30
	Si tamen euadit eques aut pedes modo uadit.	31
	Si forsan vivi fugiunt aliqui fugitivi,	34
	Montibus aut rimis latitant aut uallibus ymis	35
	Dum captivatur, prosternitur aut fugiatur,	36
20	Turba fugax procerum subit hic direptio rerum.	
	Curritur in praedam quantam non nitar ut edam.	
	Singula non credam possim licet addere quedam.	
	Forth sepelit multos armis et equis bene cultos,	37
	Quos probat indultos alienis ulcio stultos.	38
25	Bannoke habet limus quorum nec nomina scimus	51
	Quando domi desunt perpendet gens sua qui sunt.	52
	Quos tibi serviles reputabas anglice miles,	39
	Hiis dum viles opus est fatearis heriles.	40
	Anglia que plenis promebas cantica venis	43
30	Omnibus exosa, dum viribus imperiosa,	45
	Omnibus accitis luis hic incommoda litis.	46
	Expertos scotos metues tibi iam bene notos,	47
	amodo ne temere contempnas disce caveque.	48
	alma triumphalis inimicis exitialis	53
35	Scottis concessit hiis laus celeberima cessit.	54
	Sic levat elisos Dominus dans robora parvis,	41
	Et sibi confisos, altos prosternit in arvis.	42
	Anglorum lima Strevelyn celebrante ruina,	
	Posterior prima longe magis extat opima.	
40	Anno milleno, centum ter, tempore Christi,	
	Cum quartodeno fato ruit anglia tristi.	
	Excutit e pannis anglos lux alma Johannis,	49
	Christi Baptista, pro quo tibi gloria Christo.	50

1 Juxta] Inter B. *Lines 1–2 also appear in B, XII.23, ll. 211–12:* tunc cadet Anglorum gens perfida fraude suorum/inter saxosum castrum vicumque nodosum. *Watt, et. al. identifies these lines, part of what Bower identifies as a Welsh prophecy, placed after the end of the more well-known poem by Robert Baston in c. 23. Watt notes that the source of the prophecy is unknown (n. to c. 23, v. 6, p. 461).* || **3** Amissos] Annisus B. || **4** scottos] Scotos B. || **6** werre] guerre B, werrae S. || **7** pariendo] periendo B. || **8** quod] dum B docet in fugiendo] fugit ipse latendo B13 illuc] illic B. || **10** *Watt notes that this line is deleted in C and interpolates the line from later MSS.* || **16** *Watt notes that C has* euadet*, and amends from later MSS; also notes that* vadit *is a lacuna in C, amends from D (Donibristle MS).* || **18** montibus] rupibus B aut] et B ymis] imis B S. || **23** sepelit] sorpsit S. || **26** qui] qua B. || **28** heriles] aniles S *Possibly eyeskip on Stevenson's part, misreading* miles *at the end of the previous line.* || **31** accitis] esse sitis B. || **32** metues] metuens B. || **33** caveque] cavere B. || **34** exitialis] exicialis B. || **35** concessit] dum cessit B hiis] his S celebrima] saluberima B cessit] crescit B. || 37 sibi] se B. || **42** Excutit] Extitit S.

Translation[49]

By the stony stream and the tangled camp,
The perfidious English fell by their own deceit.
A single day of John buried all the lost
whom England had gathered in Scotland for many years.
Now, the English king, who laboured to wipe out their very name,
pays, in himself, the price for the strife of war.
He arouses arms, nurtures what he's conceived, but perishes in the birthing.
He attacks — for there is no escape — and gives a lesson in fleeing.
The king flees with a few from the field, his sword relinquished.
There is no way out for his people, their prince vanquished.
The defeated king retreats in haste, the fallen crown is brought to him,
Which only proves how much he's bent over in defeat.
You should have seen them: the princes, the powerful,
the scattered, the drowned, those felled by the sword.
The arrogant mob of leaders endure the 'falling sickness',
but if any knight or soldier can escape, he just runs.
If, perchance, any fugitives escape alive,
They hide among mountains, fissures, deep valleys.
While the fleeing throng of nobles is captured,
struck down, or put to flight, it all falls to plundering,
So much plundering that I labour to express it.
I am not certain about every detail, but some things I can add:
The Forth swallows up many well-equipped with arms and horses;
And vengeance makes fools of those lenient toward foreigners.
The Bannock mud entombs those whose names we do not know.
When they don't return their families will wonder where they are.
English soldier! Those whom you thought your servants,
you must acknowledge your masters, even as you revile them.
England! You who pissed out songs from full bladders,
hateful to all while imperious in strength,
summoned from abroad, here you pay the price in conflict.
You fear the proven Scots, now well known to you.
Henceforth, don't disdain them so lightly. Learn! And beware!
The palm of triumph, deadly to its enemies, is yielded to the Scots,
the most abounding praise passes to them.
Thus the Lord lifts up the crushed, granting strength to the abased,
He prostrates the prideful in the mire for those who put their trust in Him.

49 I am most grateful to Peter Maxwell-Stuart, Mark Thakkar, and Kylie Murray for their invaluable guidance and suggestions on drafts of this translation. Any remaining errors are my own.

With Stirling celebrating the muddy collapse of the English,
This ruin stands out as more bountiful by far than the first.[50]
A thousand years, thrice a hundred, plus fourteen from the time of Christ,
England fell to ruin by its own sad fate.
One propitious day of John, Christ's Baptist,
shook the English from their clothes, for which to you, O Christ, be the glory.

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50 The two 'ruins' in question would be the two battles that took place near Stirling: the first the Battle of Stirling Bridge (11 September 1297) was of course a Scottish victory, but at that point Stirling Castle was a near-ruin, and the victory was nowhere near as lucrative in terms of spoils and prisoners.

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