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Variation and variety in written Middle Scots (1971)[1]

Edited by Caroline Macafee, 2015

Editor's Introduction

In this seminal paper, AJA outlined the main dimensions of variability in Older Scots, especially but not only in orthography, and identified what would now be called the variables. As was his wont, he gave an overview of the work done in the subject up to that point in time, and offered the detailed, but unsystematically collected, observations that he had made during his long immersion in the language, often explicitly identifying starting points for future research. The paper is now four decades old, and I will not attempt to list the work that has been done since to fill in many of the gaps that AJA then identified, except to mention *A Linguistic Atlas of Older Scots: Phase I, 1380–1500* and *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (online as 'An electronic version of *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*'). Ongoing research at the University of Edinburgh ('From Inglis to Scots') will analyse the Scots data from the atlases in the context of the shared history with English. Another important body of work is Anneli Meurman-Solin's 'Helsinki Corpus of Older Scots (1450-1700)' and the many publications drawing upon it (from Meurman-Solin, 1993, onwards), and her 'Corpus of Scottish Correspondence' (2007). There are also, of course, many new editions of Older Scots texts with detailed linguistic introductions, many published by the Scottish Text Society (but see also van Buuren ed., 1982); and many detailed linguistic analyses of individual texts and writers (including Farrow, 1997; Jumpertz-Schwab, 1998; Glenn, 2003; Bugaj, 2004), as well as studies of particular linguistic features (including Häcker, 1999; and de Haas, 2011) and genres (Kopaczyk, 2013).

This paper was written before AJA published his numbering system for the Older Scots vowels (in 'How to Pronounce Older Scots', 1977, 2015). It accordingly suffers from the problems of notation that the numbering system seeks to obviate. AJA here uses the traditional philological symbols, sometimes in a hybrid way as phonemic notation within slash brackets, e.g. /ē/. The indicated pronunciations are mostly those of the vowel system as it stood in late Middle Scots, but occasionally reference is made to earlier and later periods, when the same pronunciation might belong to a different vowel. In particular, Middle Scots vowel 4 is (broadly) *ē*, but it is also referred to, at an earlier point in time, as *ā*: "the early fifteenth-century coalescence of the segments /al/, /au/ and certain allophones of /ā/". However, in this paper *ā* is mostly vowel 12, the result of this coalescence. I have accordingly added the vowel numbers to the text, as I did when I incorporated part of this paper into the chapter on 'Orthography' in 'A History of Scots to 1700' (Macafee and †Aitken, 2002: §5). Some important contributions to our knowledge of Older Scots orthography by Veronika Kniezsa (1989, 1997) on the Northern English origins of the i-digraph spellings and the

continuity of Scots and Northern Middle English orthography generally are also taken into account in that chapter.

Amongst AJA's papers he had retained an earlier draft of 'Variation and variety', which contains "much unpublished matter".[2] Some of the material omitted from the published version later appeared elsewhere, mainly in 'Oral narrative style in Middle Scots' (1978, 2015). I have added some of the unpublished additional material to the notes here (in square brackets) and have placed lengthier sections on prose style in an Addendum. For a cogent description of Older Scots prose styles, see J. Smith (2012: 61 ff.).

[177] **1**

According to Gregory Smith, "Middle Scots was, more exclusively than any companion phase in the languages of north-west Europe, the special affair of literary habit, as distinguished from the spoken dialect." "Not only is Middle Scots a literary speech," he proceeds, "but it is the common medium of every writer during a century when Scottish literature was at its best. Despite certain internal differences, which we shall see were less idiosyncrasies than the sporadic effects of influences from without, the uniformity in the practice of Middle Scots is one of its most striking features" (1902: xi–xii). In the Introduction to his edition of Robert Henryson's *Poems*, H. Harvey Wood restates this theme with still greater emphasis: for him Middle Scots "is not a spoken, historical dialect of the Scottish language at any period; but an artificial, created, 'literary' language, used, for almost a century, by writers of very different locality and degree, with an astonishing measure of uniformity" (1933: xxxi).[3]

As will appear below (Section 6), Middle Scots possessed a somewhat loosely defined standard of spelling which was generally followed by those writers with some pretensions to literacy. It is also possible to detail certain common tendencies and usages at other linguistic levels which characterise, at least in their most dignified passages, literary prose, the principal records and most other official writings, and some of them also serious verse:

a general tendency to hypotactic rather than paratactic structure and towards the use of certain constructions, such as the Latin-derived 'accusative plus infinitive' construction, which were perhaps not normal to unstudied vernacular speech;[4]

a fondness for passive and impersonal constructions;

a free use of loanwords of Latin or literary French origin in addition to, or instead of, equivalent [178] vernacular expressions;

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[2] Editor's note: two pages are wanting: it is possible that AJA abstracted these for inclusion elsewhere.

[3] [2] The notion is carried to its ultimate extreme by Stearns who writes: "The new (*ie* Scottish Chaucerian) poetry was written in Middle Scots, a literary language which was probably never spoken" (1949: 6) though he adds elsewhere (129), "Although the dialect of Middle Scots was never spoken, Henryson's verses, read aloud, would probably have been easily understood by his contemporaries at any social level." [On the other hand Kuipers (1964: 75–6) prefaces his account of Middle Scots, much the most useful that has so far appeared, with a much more careful and better informed statement: "When speaking of literary Middle Scots, it must of course be borne in mind that 'Older Scots' comprised various spoken dialects and that the literary language might in various degrees approach dialectal speech." - AJA]

[4] Editor's note: on Latin influence, see Jumpertz-Schwab (1998).

in the later writings, the sporadic use of English-derived forms as alternative to their native cognates;

the employment of *quh* forms of the relative where vernacular usage more probably had *that* or the 'zero-form';[5]

the (more or less sporadic) habit of inflecting certain adjectives in plural concord;[6]

and the avoidance of certain constructions and of certain words which apparently had specially strong colloquial overtones.[7]

In these respects such writers conformed to a literary standard. But this standard was itself far from uniform and even within it variety of usage remains a notable feature. Hence the reader of G. G. Smith's 'The Main Characteristics of Middle Scots' (1902: xvi ff.) will find as many indications of variation and inconsistency as of homogeneity and uniformity; phenomena are "common" or "frequent", seldom "exclusive" or "universal". And by no means all texts conform to such standard as there was. Many of the departures apparently reflect dialect and colloquial forms and usages of which we should otherwise have little contemporary indication. There is an abundance of evidence of this kind among the minor Middle Scots record sources, only awaiting collection and (cautious) interpretation.[8]

For many items of Middle Scots vocabulary indications of regional distribution may be observed in the relevant entries in the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue* (DOST).[9] Apart from the interest of these words as early instances of dialect usage, they also occasionally serve to confirm localisations of authors and texts. Thus John Knox's connections with Haddington are confirmed by his sharing with the Haddington burgh records the item *lowand-ill*, and Father

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[5] [3] The relative constructions of Early Scots (to 1500) have been admirably studied in Caldwell (1967), unfortunately as yet unprinted.

Editor's note: published in 1974. For a detailed study of the relative clause in Middle Scots, see Romaine (1981, 1982).

[6] [4] Commonly only the adjectives *(fore)said(is)*, *vther(is)*, *(welebe-)lufitt(is)* and the relative adjective and pronoun *(the) quhilk(is)*. Gilbert Hay and John Bellenden and some others writing under the immediate influence of French or Latin originals also occasionally inflect some other adjectives, apparently only of Latin origin, often with the (French or Latin) inverted word-order for the noun-adjective phrases, as *instrumentis subordinatis* (Hay I, 76/30), *all vther thingis necessaris* (Bellenden, *Boece* (M) I, 25). The habit, never invariable in any text, is absent from most verse and some literary prose texts (for example, James VI's *Basilicon Doron*), and from many texts of the 'sub-standard' type discussed in Section 6 of this paper. No doubt it was indeed an "artificial, literary" feature.

[7] [5] See below (pp. 178–9) for a few examples of these.

[8] [7] Particularly interesting would be a study of the innumerable dialogue passages in the narrative prose of Knox and his successors and in the sixteenth-century court records. In the latter the wording of alleged statements by the accused as cited in witnesses' depositions is frequently evidential (e.g. in trials of treason or slander) and thus presumably plausible as to wording. Here is a reasonably reliable basis for a description of the colloquial, as distinct from literary, register of Middle Scots.

Editor's note: AJA returned to this subject in 'Oral narrative style in Middle Scots' (1978, 2015). Some further relevant material cut from the published version of the present paper is given below in an Addendum.

[9] [8] See, among many others:

• (for Orkney and Shetland) *cloggand* or *clowgang*, *hafe-wrak*, *hallow*, *handband*, *heavie*;
• (for the North-East) *codrach*, *daker* v., *halfdisch* or *haddisch*, *kard* n.[2], *leit* n.[1];
• (for Central and South Scotland) *clour*, *herring-drave*, *hirst*, *holm*, *hope* n.[2], *hurl* (to wheel), *idilteth*, *kimpill*, *lokman*;
• (for the South-West) *clachan*, *clat*, *inspreth*, *lime-craig*, *lime-holl*;
• (for the East Coast) *likkarstane*, *linkis*, *lippie*;
• and more narrowly localised items like: *inland* (inner portion of a tenement, Aberdeen), *cumling* (incomer, Perth), *greveschip* (precinct, Moray Firth burghs), *kirkmaister* (church-officer, Kirkcudbright), *kist* (fish-cruive, Inverness), *murement* (spoil, Sheriffhall coalmine).

James Dalrymple's possible Ayrshire origins by his use of *clachan* and *inspreth*; one or two such items also provide clues to the localisation of the authors of works of verse.[10]

The dictionary likewise provides useful indications of the stylistic distribution of items of vocabulary:

> that *knaw* and *pas*, for example, may have functioned as the literary 'translations' of the vernacular *ken* and *gang* or *ga*,

> that the three members of the set *hound*, *dog* and *tyke* had quite different overtones,

> that items like *cummer* (female crony), *gully* (large knife), *juggis* (lees of drink), *lug*, *bony* (bonny), *scunner*, as well as some others which are recorded only in comic verse, such as *gane* (face), *kyte* (belly), *larbar* (impotent), *lounge* and *queir*, had quite restricted spheres of use at the opposite pole from that of many of the "exquisite termis quhilkis ar nocht daly vsit ..., dreuyn or rather to say mair formaly reuyn fra lating" (*Compl.* 16).[11]

Intensive [179] investigations of the distributions of the elements of the Middle Scots vocabulary from some such point of view as this would certainly enhance greatly our appreciation of the subtleties of its literature.[12]

We are even less well informed on the distribution of the elements of the syntax of Middle Scots. Almost everything remains to be done here – ranging over every point of the stylistic spectrum, from the structurally complex syntax of the most dignified literary and official style down to the paratactic, parenthetic and elliptical structures which mark the raciest kind of narrative (common in John Knox and his successors) and the passages of dialogue and direct speech abundant in these narratives and also in the court records.[13] It would be of great interest to have a reliable account of the distribution of certain minor constructions which appear (on a purely impressionistic judgment) to be specially favoured in contexts of the latter kind and in certain other writings which bear traces of lack of sophistication in other ways:

> elliptical constructions like *I will in and se quhat thai ar doing* (1567 *Criminal Trials*, I, 495), *tha mecht never getin sa gud ane tym* (p. 200 below), *he begowd rakein owp ane selder quhissell* (p. 201 below);

> inverted constructions of adverbs or adverbial phrases with verbs of motion or action, e.g. *West about goes it*, *for doun goes the croses*, *of goes the surpleise* (Knox I, 259, 260);

> and rhetorical questions on the pattern *Quha ... but...*, e.g. *and who was share to led the ring but the Quein Regent herself?* (Knox I, 259).

For the same reason one would like information on the commonness or otherwise in different types of text of the narrative present tense. In these and other respects the great stylistic variety of Middle Scots offers material for interesting and fruitful study, so far almost wholly neglected.[14]

Even on simpler matters such as the distributions of variant features of the accidence of Middle Scots we are still remarkably ignorant. It would be possible to assemble a lengthy list of

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[10] [9] For Richard de Holland's 'Orkneyisms' see DOST s.vv. *Lang reid* and *Idy* (the latter in the Additions and Corrections to Volume III). At lines 734–5 the author of *King Hart* (most recently edited by Bawcutt, 1967), employs two items now localised to the middle and the western Border shires – *waile* (read *wyle*, 'thraw-cruik', rope-twister) and *rewle* (1. ravelling, 2. revelling) (see Watson, 1923, s.vv. *Wyle* and *Rewel*).

[11] [10] My abbreviated references are as prescribed in the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*'s 'Combined Register of Titles of Works Quoted' in Vol. III.

Editor's note: also revised in vol. XII, but not presently (2015) searchable online by abbreviated reference.

[12] Editor's note: AJA returned to this subject in 'The language of Older Scots poetry' (1983, 2015).

[13] Editor's note: on the prose of John Knox, see Jack (1981). For a study of adverbial clauses, see Häcker (1999).

[14] Editor's note: see AJA's 'Oral narrative style in Middle Scots' (1978, 2015).

alternative forms of expression at this level, of the distributions of which we have at present only the haziest notions:

variant forms of the plurals of certain nouns (like *brether*, *bretherin*, *childer*, *childering*),

inflected and uninflected plural forms of certain nouns (especially numerable nouns of measure[15] and personal surnames[16]),

uninflected and inflected possessives of personal names and nouns of relationship,[17]

the alternative possessives of *it* (*thairof*, *of the samin*, *of the self*, *of it*, *it*),

certain anglicised forms of pronouns and verbs (e.g. *these*, *thais*, *those* beside *thir* and *tha*, or present tense verbs in *-est*, *-ist* and *-eth*, *-ith*, beside the native equivalents in *-is*),

uninflected and inflected past participles of Latin-derived verbs [180] (*creat*, *deput*, *disjunct*, etc),

the alternative negative adverbs (*na*, *ne*, *nocht*, *not*, *no*) and other variable types of negative expression (*nor*, *na*; *nocht-*, *not-*, *non-*),

the conjunctions *na*, *nor* and *than*,

the presence or absence of enclitic *that* or *at* after conjunctions or relatives (*gif that*, *quhen that*, *quhilk that*, etc),

and pairs or sets like *my* and *mine*, *thy* and *thine*, *na* and *nane*, *to* and *till*, *in*, *into* and *intill*.[18]

Variety of usage in such matters was certainly much greater than the quotations given at the outset of this paper might lead one to suppose. Another linguistic level at which "uniformity in the practice of Middle Scots" can hardly be said to apply is that of orthography. In what follows I shall consider in necessarily general impressionistic terms some problems of distribution of certain types of variant spelling in Middle Scots. As well as possessing the interest due to them as an essential part of the general description of Middle Scots usage, these also possess, in their Middle Scots setting, the same kinds of dialectological and stylistic interest as do some comparable phenomena in Middle English which have been attracting much attention in recent years.

It is less likely that anyone would attribute uniformity of practice to such variant scribal practices as letter shapes, ligatures and the like or to different forms (allographs) of the same letters (graphemes), such as, in Middle Scots, the several clearly distinguishable forms of the letter *s*, or to variations in frequency or contextual incidence of these or of abbreviations in manuscript and print. Clearly these and related palaeographic matters deserve to be studied for Middle Scots as much as for any other medieval language. So far this too has, however, been scarcely attempted, but I shall not attempt to pursue it further in this essay, confining myself to that level of orthographic usage which is treated in dictionaries and glossaries and for which some, albeit as yet very incomplete, information is available.

Nor is this essay intended to be a contribution to the evolving theory of graphemics. No doubt the concepts and terminologies of this theory will feature largely in the further, more

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15 [11] Like *mark*, *pund*, *fute* (the plural of the noun of measure is *futis* or *fute*), *elne*, *mile*, *hour*, *ȝeir*, *hors*, *schepe*.

16 [12] As *Jhon and Andro Moffatis* (1564 *St A. Kirk S*. 220).

17 [13] Like *fader*, *moder*, *brother* (also *lady* and *maister*). For some examples also with personal names, see Müller (1908: 121).

18 [14] Perhaps, by the sixteenth century, some of these may turn out to be regionally distributed, as was guessed by J. Murray ed. (1872: cii–ciii). On the similar case of pre-consonantal *a* and *ane*, see note 53 [our note 68 – Ed.].

detailed studies which this aspect of Middle Scots deserves.[19] But for my present purpose of a broad survey of the Middle Scots situation as a whole, an approach from a fairly traditional standpoint using as far as possible a more traditional terminology seemed to be adequate.

My examples have been drawn mainly from my own reading over a wide range of Middle Scots texts and my tentative judgments about distribution and comparative frequency are mainly impressionistic or based on the selective evidence presented in DOST or in the few word-lists [181] available at the time of writing. Though they will therefore require revision and massive amplification when the necessary detailed and rigorous studies of these phenomena have been carried out, it is hoped that they will meantime be tolerated in a preliminary exploration of this kind. I have confined my attention to the main Middle Scots period, from the fifteenth to the early seventeenth century, though similar questions naturally arise for the periods before and after this. Since verse texts present many special (though analogous) problems peculiar to themselves I have, except in one instance (pp. 196–7 below), concerned myself chiefly with the evidence of the prose sources and only incidentally with the verse, ignoring entirely such verse peculiarities as the much earlier occurrence there of anglicised forms.[20]

I have also confined myself to those prose texts which seemed to me to be in the main Scottish tradition. Thus I leave out of account Scottish copies of English works such as some of the contents of the Loutfut MS and MS Arundel 285 and Murdoch Nisbet's copy of Purvey's New Testament, and likewise those works of the later sixteenth century, including the statements of faith and discipline of the Scottish Reformed Church, and the printed prose of the seventeenth century, in which the spelling habits conform to English, not traditional Scottish, principles. These and other exceptionally heavily anglicised writings of the sixteenth century no doubt present problems interesting enough in themselves but capable of largely separate treatment.[21]

For this general and preliminary survey (consisting largely of a lexicographer's impressions and gleanings) I have perforce relied on the best editions and manuscript transcripts which were available, though it is clear that for detailed work on these and related questions more complete and trustworthy texts of many of the sources will be needed.[22]

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From the general viewpoint of the lexicographer surveying Middle Scots over its whole chronological, regional and stylistic range, the spelling system of Middle Scots was a perhaps extreme example of a common medieval European type, in which free variation was a

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[19] [15] The seminal writing on this subject, with special reference to Middle English, is McIntosh (1956). The influence of this on my own view of the Middle Scots problems will be apparent in what follows. See also McLaughlin (1963) for a first attempt to apply these principles to a specific Middle English text (reviewed by McIntosh, 1964). For a brilliant demonstration of a methodology for analysing rigorously and objectively the kind of phenomena mentioned in the previous paragraph of the present essay, see Francis (1962: 32 ff.).

Editor's note: these methods have now been applied to Older Scots. For some references, see the Editor's Introduction (above).

[20] [16] On these see especially Gray (1912: xxi ff.) and DOST s.vv. *Be* v. I and 2c, *Fro*, *Go*, etc.

[21] [17] For some general remarks on all this see Bald (1926: 107 ff.; 1927: 179 ff.).

Editor's note: also AJA's 'The Pioneers of anglicised speech in Scotland: a second look' (1997, 2015).

[22] [18] One hazard run by the investigator of these matters at present is the normalisation practised by many editors, especially, but not only, historians editing record texts. For some avowals of this see Graves ed. (1884: xliii), D. Laing ed. (1846: xliii, n. 1), Burton ed. (1877: xliv ff., especially l–lii), and A. Murray (1965: 28). In these and other similar cases the intention is only to modernise the treatment of *i* and *j*, *u*, *v* and *w*, *y* and *th*, *y* and *ȝ*, to expand abbreviations without notice and to supply a modern punctuation. No doubt there is a more serious hazard in the lapses in accuracy which occur with greater or lesser frequency in many modern editions.

prominent and important feature.[23] Some of these variations,[24] with other features of the system,[25] Middle Scots simply inherited from Middle English. Others were it seems largely its own.[26] Among the consonants [182] the latter included:

ȝ and *y*;

v and *w* and also, in non-initial positions, *u*, *w*, *f* and *ff*;

a largely interchangeable set consisting of postvocalic *th*, *ch*, *tht*, *cht* and superscript *t*;

intervocalic and occasionally morpheme-final *-m(m)-* and *-mb-*;

intervocalic and morpheme-final *-k*, *-ck*, *-kk* and often *-ct* (as well as *-que* and *-cque* in many but not all of the same words);

-p and *-pt*;

-x and *-xt*.

Similarly, by the sixteenth century one finds the members of the following sets interchanging more or less freely:

i(-e), *y(-e)* and *yi*; *e(-e)*, *ei*, *ey* and, in some words only, *ie*, *ye*;

a(-e), *ai*, *ay*;

u(-e), *ui*, *uy*, *wi*, *wy* (and in some words *o*, *oi*, *oy* are added to this set);

and a number of other sets of interchangeable vowels and vowel-digraphs.

One characteristic Scottish variation is typified by the interchange under certain conditions (before *k*, *p*, *t*) of *au*, *aw*, *al*, and (before or after *b*, *f*, *m*, *v* or *w*) of *a*, *au*, *aw*, *al*: e.g. *bahuif*, *bawhuif*, *balhuif*; *chamer*, *chawmer*, *chalmer*; *wapin*, *wawpin*, *walpin*; *hauk*, *hawk*, *halk*; *faut*, *fawt*, *falt*.[27]

Among a few prefix and many suffix syllables, sets like the following occur:

a- and *e-*;
-is, *-es* and *-s*;
-ill and *-le*;
-ioun, *-iown* and *-ion*;

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[23] Editor's note: variation on a given form of words can be seen, for instance, in the declaration that begins each county submission of the 1649 Land Tax rolls ('Land tax rolls - various counties').

[24] [19] E.g. interchangeable *i* and *y*, *au* and *aw*, and, under certain conditions, *y* and *th*, *c* and *s*, *c* and *t* (e.g. *nacioun*, *natioun*).

[25] [20] E.g. the alphabet itself, many of the digraph and trigraph groups, the phonemic or morphemic correlations (see below) of many of the graphemes, the usual restriction of geminate consonants to non-initial positions and by other conditions (as a rule only after short simplex vowels and vowel-digraphs) and the tendency to restrict the combination (simple consonant plus mute *e*) to a different set of conditions (on the conditions for single and double consonants see further Section 3).

[26] Editor's note: using data from *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, Kniesza (1997) demonstrates that some of the features AJA lists are also shared with Northern Middle English. Features that Kniesza finds to be particularly Scots, however, are: <w> as a vowel spelling word-initially, e.g. <wp> (up); *-ill* e.g. <litill>; <lȝ> and <nȝ> for l-mouillé and n-mouillé, and <ae> for vowel 4, e.g. *frae*. There remains, of course, a contrast between Scots and Midland English, the emerging standard, in the ways AJA describes.

[27] [... and /wās/ *wawis* also as *wallis*, [but] /twā/ *twa* (two) and /hwā/ *quha* (who) only very rarely as *twaw* and *quhaw* and never as **twall* and **quhall*, though *sall* appears at least once for *saw* (saying) (*Harl. MS. 4700* fol. 282a). ... ... There is also a number of common items in which ... alternative spellings might have been expected, but that are nevertheless almost invariably restricted to a single fixed spelling, such as *ane* (one), *anerly* (only), *fra* (from), *ony* (any), *mony* (many) and the present participle *-and* – until, that is, the arrival of anglicised alternatives ... – AJA]

-our and *-or*;
-ure and *-our*, *-or*;
-ar, *-are*, *-air* and *-er*;
-y, *-ie* and *-e*.

Free variation of this sort was then no less prominent a feature of Middle Scots than of Middle English. One difference from Middle English as a whole, however, was that in Middle Scots only a few spelling variants can be assigned to definable regions. Most variants, including all of those mentioned, were, so far as we at present know, current in comparable Scottish writings of every region. Throughout the period, too, the general trend was towards a proliferation of variants of this kind, as further items were assigned to particular variant sets. And, though one can observe considerable changes in the course of time in the relative frequencies of occurrence of the different members of some of the individual variant sets (particularly some of the sets containing digraphs in *-i* and *-y*, in which the latter became increasingly popular), this seldom resulted in the total obsolescence of the less favoured variants; the only notable loss of a variant of this kind was the disappearance of *yh* and *ȝh* after the early sixteenth century, leaving *ȝ* and *y* as the only members of the set in question. In the second half of the sixteenth century the already considerable body of sets of alternative spellings in Scottish use was further supplemented by the introduction of graphemes which had till then remained largely or entirely confined to Tudor English (to the exclusion of Scots):

sh was now added to *sch*;
tch to *ch* (corresponding apparently to /tʃ/ in the spoken range);
gh to *ch* (corresponding to (only postvocalic) /x/);
[183] *ea*, *ee* to *e(-e)*, *ei*, *ey*;
oa to *o(-e)*, *oi*, *oy*;
oo to *u(-e)*, *ui*, *uy*;
-ed to *-it*, *-yt*.

And though, in the course of the seventeenth century, the native spelling system largely gave way to a much less variable English system, the old tolerance of spelling variation has continued in writings in Modern Scots vernacular down to the present day.

The dictionary record manifests this continuing tolerance of spelling variation in the fact that virtually every common Middle Scots word of more than one syllable possessed numerous alternative spelling forms, many of them contemporaneous, and most monosyllabic words at least several, resulting from the permutations of different members of the variant sets concerned. Among the vowel spellings only *e* was in certain words (those probably which had the /ĕ/, vowel 16, phoneme in speech) fairly invariable throughout the period. Variation was a good deal less general, of course, among the consonants and consonant digraphs and combinations (particularly in the word-initial position), so that a few words like *bend* or *lent* do exist which (if we ignore the possibility of adding mute *e*) were possessed of only one spelling. But these form only a small minority of the total.[28]

Though free variation, fluctuating in these ways according to the vagaries of fashion, is a striking aspect of Middle Scots spelling practice viewed as a whole from the standpoint of the lexicographer, we need not expect that it will be present to the same degree when we turn to the orthographic practice of single texts or writers – to single orthographic idiolects. At the same time it would be surprising, since presumably all writers of Middle Scots had access to this general varying system, if any one text or writer proved to possess a completely consistent practice with one and one only spelling for each of his words – with a fixed spelling system of

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[28] Editor's note: mute *e* with short vowels is a feature of late Middle Scots, when the orthographic conventions for distinguishing long and short vowels break down.

his own. As a glance at any full glossary to, or description of, a Middle Scots text will show, few, if any, Middle Scots scribes (or, for that matter, printers) are wholly consistent in their spelling habits in this way. Some degree of free variation was normal in the spelling practice of individuals as well as over the system as a whole. And some scribes, like the writer of the Laing MS of Pitscottie's Chronicle, [29] are indeed highly inconsistent, varying freely between different spellings of single items, sometimes in quite short stretches of text, in what, to us, may seem a curious and striking manner. Without this habitual tolerance of spelling variation, the changes in popularity of particular variants and the introduction of new variants, including the anglicised spellings common in later sixteenth-century texts like the Pitscottie, could of course hardly have [184] occurred. The reader may like to work out the consistencies and inconsistencies of spelling of the following fragment of early sixteenth-century Scots:

> and yis maist ewill & crewall pepil1 & generacioun sail no*ch*t pas one to ye tym of ye antechrist neir*e* ye end of ye warld & ya*n* yai sall be extendit our all ye warld for yai ar sa mony yai may no*ch*t be numerit nor tald for multitud nor yar na pepill may resist to yam bot yar sall cum ane fyr fra ye hewyne salt suelli yai*m* be hi*m* quhilk is till iuge ba*th* queik & deid Alsua yar is ane p*art* of ane desert quhar ye Sandy see is ane pepill quhilk has round feit as ye clwis of ane hors and ya men hes na wawpynis bot yai teyll ye erd and yai ar gud teillme*n* bot yai ar werry crewall and yar habitacioune is *rycht* stark and yai ar subdeit till ws and one ye tothir part of ye desert yar is ane land callit ye veme*n* land quhar yair is na man nor na ma*n* dar byd our*e* ane ȝeire and yis land lestis xl days jurnay one baitht ye sidis in ye quhilk land yar is thre quenys *with* owt vthir greit laides yet haldis grett citeis & tovnys strenthes and castellis and quhen yai pleis till rid one yair*e* i*n*imeis yai ar ane hundretht thousand ridand ladeis w*ith*out yame y*at* passis on fut w*ith* carrag*is* & metis and yai ar werray stark and cruell.
>
> (From the fragmentary Middle Scots version of the Letter of Prester John in BM Royal MS 17 Dxx, ff. 310 ff., transcribed from photostats in the National Library of Scotland, MS 8494 (ii).) [30]

It is nevertheless true that all writers of Middle Scots seem also to display some greater or lesser degree of consistency in some at least of their spelling habits. Gilbert Hay (1456) has, in one of his works, only two examples of *mair* to 221 of *mare* (more), and sixty-six of *maist* to one only of *maste* (most); and his spellings of *maidin* and *maister* are (according to the available edition) invariable. [31] In the choice between initial *v* and *w* (in words which apparently had either the /v/ or the /w/ phonemes) [32] some scribes, like Alexander Wood of Old Aberdeen, copyist of Q. Kennedy's *Breif Tracteit*, have a strong preference for *v*- (spelling, e.g. both *veill* (veal) and *veill* (well), or *vile* (vile) and *vile* (wile)), others, such as some of the scribes of the Boyndlie MS of Bellenden's *Livy* and the copyist of the fforde MS of Kennedy's *Breif Tracteit*, prefer *w*-, some, like Gilbert Hay (1456), the scribe of the Advocates' MS of Bellenden's *Livy*, and James Dalrymple (1596), have a modern distribution of the two letters, some seem merely inconsistent, like the scribes of John of Irland's *Meroure* and of the version of Pitscottie mentioned above (and there is one instance of an invariable preference of *u* to either *v* or *w*, in the person of King James VI). [33] No doubt all writers had access to the general

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[29] [21] As printed in the STS edition of Pitscottie: see Mackay ed. (1899: lxxii) on this MS, and the glossary of that edition for evidence of this statement.

[30] [22] Though abbreviations are marked, other variations of the sort mentioned above, between, for example, different forms of *s*, have not been indicated.

[31] [23] At least in the initial syllable: *maidin* also appears as *maiden* and *maidyn*. The source of these details is the computer-made word-list to Hay in the files of DOST: see p. 204 for further information on this.

[32] Editor's note: i.e. words that had one or the other of the /v/ or /w/ phonemes.

[33] [24] [Mary Queen of Scots and James Melvill (the minister) are two others whom the present writer (and no doubt

variant system; but [185] each made his own personal and idiosyncratic selection from the alternatives available to him.[34]

In these circumstances it would be highly improbable, in view of the very large number of different possible combinations within the system as a whole, that any two writers should coincide over the whole range of their spelling habits. The few brief and highly selective lists of spelling peculiarities of single texts[35] which have been published certainly do not contradict this: in the aggregate all differ widely from each other. Thus a writer's individual assemblage of spelling-choices could be just as distinctive of him as his handwriting – his idiosyncratic habits in forming and connecting his written symbols – is generally accepted to be; as indeed was recognised in one celebrated trial at law when five unsigned, treasonable letters were brought home to an alleged author on just such grounds:

> ffirst, that he newir vseit to wrytt '3' in the beginning of ony word, sik as '30w', '30uris', '3eild', '3ea', and siclyk; bot ewir wrait 'y' in staid of the said '3'; that he wrait all wordis begynning with 'w' with ane singill 'v'; and quhan that letter ' v' fell to be in the myddis or end of ane word, he wrait ane doubill 'w'; that quhen he wrait 'quhen', 'quhair', 'qlk' or ony sik word quhilk vsis to be written and spellit be vtheris with 'quh', he wrait onlie 'qh', 'qhen', 'qhair' and siclyk; quhaneeuir ane word began with 'con', he newir wrytt 'con' at lenth, bot with ane '*9*'; quhan euir 't' fell to be in the end of ane word, he wraitt it without ane straik throw the 't'; and did the lyk quhan ewir 't' fell in any pairt of ane word."
>
> (From 'The Summons of Treason and Forfeiture of the Memory and Estaites of the deceased Robert Logane of Restalrig, June, 1609', in Pitcairn (1833: vol. 2, p. 288), also in *The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland 1124 -1707*, vol. IV, 423/1.)

No doubt the same was also true of sub-graphemic or allographic writing habits – the habits of preferring particular letter-forms in particular word-positions – and habits in respect of abbreviations, punctuation, capitalisation, word-division and so on, as is also recognised in the passage just quoted.

Unfortunately none of the existing studies of Middle Scots spelling peculiarities covers more than a fraction of the total lexicon of each text and the selections of lexical items are mostly not the same. Thus while we are on safe enough ground in making assertions about differences in general habit, we are as yet in no position to set about assessing general and particular *resemblances* between roughly contemporary texts. But the possibility clearly exists of studying numerically the habits of individuals in these matters – of identifying those habits in which each writer is consistent, those in which he shows strong preferences and those in

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some of their contemporaries) could identify at sight from their spelling idiosyncrasies ... – AJA] For the Q. Kennedy texts see the edition by Kuipers (1964: 84 and 107). For James VI see especially his *Basilicon Doron* (J. Craigie ed., 1944, 1950; see also II: 120) and his *Poems* (J. Craigie ed., 1955).

[34] [25] In her unpublished dissertation *Studies in the Language of Bellenden's Boece* Sheppard (1936: 211) writes: "The complete orthographical independence of the sixteenth-century scribes is shown by a comparison of the *Boece* manuscripts. Each scribe has a characteristic and (more or less) consistent mode of spelling." Subsequently (230–1) she notes the inconsistency as between *v* and *w* of David Douglas, a notary practising mainly in Elgin, who was the scribe of the Pierpont Morgan MS (c. 1531) of Bellenden's *Boece*.

[35] [26] For prose texts, Kuipers' edition of Q. Kennedy (1964: 104 ff.); W. A. Craigie's edition of Bellenden's *Livy* (1903: vol. 2, 330 ff.); and J. Craigie's edition of James VI's *Basilicon Doron* (1950: 118 ff.); and, for verse, Mühleisen's *Textkritische, metrische und grammatische Untersuchungen von Barbour's Bruce* (1913) (much the fullest and most self-consistent of these studies), and a brief comparison of some of the spelling details of two alternative prints of the same work (Douglas's *Palice of Honour*) in Bawcutt ed. (1967: xxiii–xxiv). All of these – and they are unfortunately all we possess – are concerned with alternative scribal copies of common literary originals: cf. note 28 [our note 36 – Ed.].

which no preference is visible – and thereafter of matching and comparing writers one with another.

[186] What would emerge from this we have no present means of telling. *A priori* it seems likely that pupils would share at least some of the preferences of their teachers, especially, no doubt, writing-teachers, so that schools of spelling-tradition would exist, each of these sharing a common dialect or style. If this were so, in principle it should be possible to allocate individual writers between such schools by procedures similar to, though doubtless much more complex than, those of the dialectologists of medieval languages. Conversely, however, it is just possible that the tradition of free choice in the matter of these variants did indeed overrule any tendency for one writer to imitate the preferred choices of another. This is apparently what is at present commonly assumed. If this proved to be so and no more than chance similarities in practice emerged, it would in itself be interesting. But until someone has tried to find out, we are in no position to prejudge it. For this and other purposes we need fully comparable accounts of the spelling habits of a number of Middle Scots texts of different types, beginning preferably with the available holograph texts.[36] Editors of texts could assist this by providing exhaustive rather than selective word-lists – something which so far only a very few of them have done.[37]

Comparative investigations of the spelling habits of Middle Scots writers could be carried out without reference to the phonemic level of Middle Scots at all, treating the spellings simply as phenomena in their own right, independently of whatever spoken forms they might be thought to represent.[38] For this purpose, the language could indeed be viewed as "the special affair of literary habit, as distinguished from the spoken dialect". The least general procedure, which might nevertheless prove profitable, would be a simple comparison between various texts of the distributions of variant spellings of individual words. But it might prove convenient, and doubtless also revealing, to group together those words which proved to share the same variant sets or perhaps those which not only shared the same sets but also used the different members in roughly the same proportions. (For some texts, for example, it would turn out that the relative frequencies of *a-e*, *ai*, *ay* in, on the one hand, *lare* (lore) and *mare* (more), and, on the other, *lair* (resting-place) and *mair* (sheriff's officer), were strikingly different.) In this way we could assemble a system of orthographic variant and single member sets with a lexical inventory for each one.

This orthographic system could then be related to a phonemic system or systems reconstructed at least partly on other grounds – such as [187] general rhyming practice, etymology and the modern dialect reflexes. Such a phonemic system for Middle Scots has been used and set out in outline by Kuipers ed. (1964: 76 ff.).[39] To detail its reconstruction is beyond the scope of this essay but it is assumed in what follows.

In the past some such relationship between the orthographic system of Middle Scots and its presumed phonemic system(s) has always apparently been taken as axiomatic (with a few exceptions such as the so-called 'artificial' spelling of the pre-consonantal indefinite article *ane*). To argue a case for this assumption would take us well beyond the intended confines of this essay, but it is perhaps not an impossibility. In general, much that we know of Middle Scots

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[36] [28] So far this question has been approached only in the few comparisons of different scribal versions of literary works listed in note 26 [our note 35 – Ed.]. The scribes of copied texts of this sort may be presumed sometimes to belie their own spelling habits by imitating some of the spellings of texts they are copying rather than those which they themselves otherwise favour. The resultant mixing of spelling practices thus introduces a further complication to the comparative study of Middle Scots orthography which to begin with we might do well to avoid, concentrating instead on holograph texts.

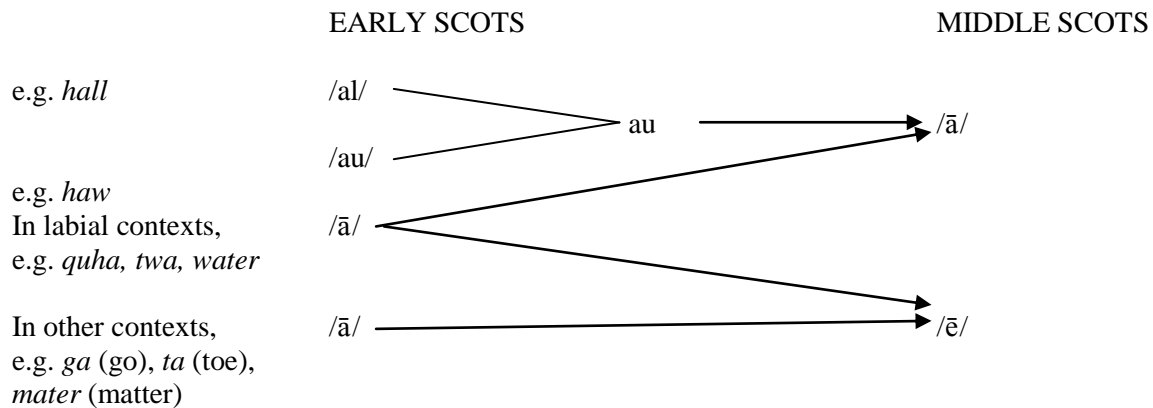[37] [29] For Middle Scots prose, so far only Kuipers ed. (1964).

[38] [30] As proposed (for Middle English) by McIntosh (1956).

[39] Editor's note: Kuipers himself acknowledges AJA "who generously allowed me to make use of his unpublished notes on Middle Scots" (1964: v).

spelling and phonology does seem to square with a belief in a reasonable fit between the orthographic and phonemic systems over a good deal of their area.

Many of the patches of misfit which we can detect at certain stages are apparently due, as we should expect, to a tendency to retain established orthographic arrangements after the phonemic arrangements which they formerly reflected had ceased to exist. Though the early fifteenth-century coalescence of the segments /al/ vowel 12a, /au/ vowel 12 and certain allophones of vowel 4 /ā/ [see Figure 1] is soon reflected in spelling under the conditions indicated above, it is much less generally and immediately reflected in, for example, word-final conditions, so that *hall* (hall) and *haw* (livid) and *quha* (who) continue in general to be so distinguished in spelling throughout the period. Conversely, the emergence of Middle Scots doublets in /ē/ as well as in /ī/, in vowel 3 words like *dede* (dead) and *dethe* (death) which had /ē̜/ in Early Scots [see Figure 2], is partly concealed by a persistent preference of most writers for the traditional *e-e* or *ei*, *ey* spellings (which in Middle Scots frequently equate with vowel 2 /ī/), in contrast with the rare and tardy occurrence of the *a-e*, *ai*, *ay* spellings (which do indeed imply the doublets in vowel 4 /ē/).[40]

[Figure 1: schematic outline of the merger of vowel 12a, and certain allophones of vowel 4, with vowel 12][41]

	EARLY SCOTS		MIDDLE SCOTS

e.g. *hall* — /al/

/au/ — au → /ā/

e.g. *haw*
In labial contexts,
e.g. *quha, twa, water* — /ā/

In other contexts,
e.g. *ga* (go), *ta* (toe),
mater (matter) — /ā/ → /ē/

Note: the divergent arrows represent divergent developments, resulting in doublets, in different dialects and idiolects.

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[40] [33] Both of these developments and the resulting sets of doublets (on which see further Section 3) are fully attested in rhyme and in modern reflexes (which appear to be regionally distributed but with areas of overlap: cf. below p. 191 and note 36 [our note 46 – Ed.]).

[41] Editor's note: because of technical difficulties, this table has been moved from original note [31] and provided with a heading.

[Figure 2: schematic outline of the split of vowel 3][42]

EARLY SCOTS   MIDDLE SCOTS SPELLINGS

e.g. *dede* (deed), *sede*   /ẹ̄/ ⟶ /ī/   *e-e, ei, ey*
(seed), *methe* (boundary)

e.g. *dede* (death), *dethe* /ę̄/
(death)

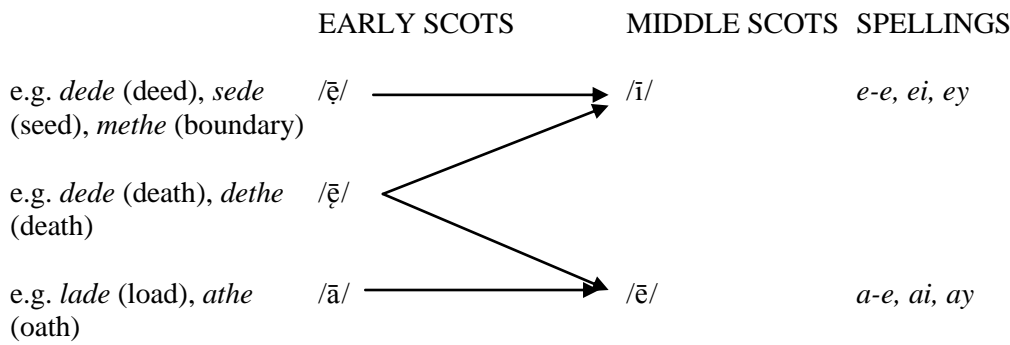e.g. *lade* (load), *athe*   /ā/ ⟶ /ē/   *a-e, ai, ay*
(oath)

Note: the divergent arrows represent divergent developments, resulting in doublets, in different dialects and idiolects.

    In what follows it will be assumed that, with qualifications such as those instanced in the previous paragraph, an equation can be made between the general or overall orthographic and phonemic systems of Middle Scots at the different stages of its development. It will further be assumed that individual writers of that language could, if they so chose, and in practice often did, evolve their own spellings or establish their spelling habits according to the rules of equivalence so constituted. It will however appear that some writers applied these 'phonetic' principles more freely than others; and, as we have just seen, [188] this 'phonetic' motivation was by no means the only one which controlled Middle Scots spelling practice.

3

Once we have mastered the rules of spelling variation discussed in the previous section it becomes possible to predict for every common word all the variant spellings which we may expect to meet in the majority of Middle Scots texts, the less numerous aberrant texts of the type discussed in Section 6 only excepted. Morpheme-final *-k* has its limited set of normal variants (including, most commonly, *-ck* and *-kk-*). The sequence *a* followed by a single consonant followed either by final *-e* or by another syllable varies, up to about the mid-sixteenth century, only with *ai*, *ay* and, less commonly *e*; in certain cases (where the consonant is *f, l, t* or there is a second syllable) the three last may be followed by either a single or a double consonant, with or without a following *e* (e.g. in *hale, hail, hayl, haile, hayle, haill, hayll, haille, haylle, hel, hell* (whole)); and this set apparently correlates with the phoneme /ē/, vowel 4, in speech. In other words these variations operate regularly and within predictable limits throughout the whole of the Middle Scots lexicon, accompanying their particular corresponding phoneme or phonetic segment in every word in which it occurs.
    Middle Scots also however possesses a large number of words which appear to display more than the normally predictable range of variant spellings. These words constitute a substantial minority of the items in the dictionary. One of them is the verb 'to make', which appears in the variant spellings, all of frequent occurrence, *mak, mack, makk-*, and *make, maik, mayk*. The first of these subsets of three variants reminds us of the set of common variants for 'back' (*bak, back, bakk-*), and of part of those for 'act' and 'fact' (*ak, ack, akk-*, but also *act*, and *fak, fack, fakk-*, also *fact*); the second subset may similarly remind us of the common variants for 'oak' (*aik, ayk, ake*, also, but only rarely, *ak*). We may also recall that the spelling system as a whole

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[42] Editor's note: because of technical difficulties, this table has been moved from original note [32] and provided with a heading.

includes a majority of instances in which *a* followed by a double consonant and *ai*, *ay* are mutually exclusive, e.g. in *hatt* (hat) and *hait*, *hayt* (hot, and to hate), or in *capp* (cap or cup) and *caip* (cope), or in *call*, *kall* (call) and *caill*, *kaill*, *kayll* (kale, cabbage). Or, to put this differently, we have seen that the spelling *a* followed by a double consonant regularly corresponds to a reconstructed /ă/, vowel 17, phoneme for Middle Scots, which was in contrast with the reconstructed /ē/, vowel 4, phoneme with which the *ai*, *ay* spelling frequently corresponds. To return to 'to make', we [189] may also note that the Modern Scots dialects contain reflexes both of a Middle Scots type /măk/ and of a Middle Scots type /mēk/ for this word: these would rhyme respectively with /ăk/ *ak*, *ack* (act) and /ēk/ *aik*, *ayk* (oak). This would seem to imply that Middle Scots possessed not one but two distinct synonymous morphemes for 'to make', which were similar but not identical in spoken form, and that each of these was spelled regularly according to the normal rules of the system.

By parallel processes of reasoning we are led to infer the existence of a large number of other similar sets of (apparently) synonymous doublets or morphemic variants in Middle Scots. Besides *mak* and *maik*, we have also:

> *blak* and *blaik* (black); *lak* and *laik* (lack); *tak* and *taik* (take); *brek* and *breik* (break); *spek* and *speik* (speak); *glad* and *glaid*;

and we have other sets like:

> *sic* and *sa* beside *swilk* and *swa*;
>
> *waik* and *tway* beside *wauk*, *walk* and *twaw*;
>
> *giff* and *liff* beside *geve* and *leve*;
>
> *mekill* and *sekir* beside *mickill* and *sicker*;
>
> *abuif* and *abuin* beside *abouf* and *aboun*;
>
> *chese* beside *chuse*;
>
> *lese* beside *los*;
>
> *warld* and *warldly* beside *wardill* and *wardly*;
>
> *seildin* beside *seindill* (seldom);
>
> *brin* and *thrid* beside *birn* and *third*;
>
> *brander* and *hunder* beside *brandreth* and *hundreth* (and *houndreth*);
>
> *broder* and *fadder*[43] beside *brother* and *father*;
>
> *bus* and *mers* beside *busk* and *mersk*;
>
> *nar* beside *nere*;
>
> *neist* beside *nixt*;
>
> *nerrest* and *narrest* beside *nerest*;
>
> *heich* and *hey* (high);
>
> *laich*, *lauch* and *law* (low);
>
> multiple sets like the various forms of 'great' (*grett*, *greit*, *gritt*, *gryte*, *gert*, *gart* and *girt*) and a similar set for 'grass'.

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[43] Editor's note: *fudder* [sic] in original text.

One very numerous group exists among the principal parts of most 'strong' and some 'weak' verbs, where analogical processes supplemented the simple phonological and morphological causes which gave rise to the variants already instanced.

Still another group exists in those verbs of Latin origin which had doublet forms borrowed respectively from the Latin present and past stems, like *dispone* and *dispose*, *expreme* and *express*, *promit* and *promeis*, *posseid* and *possess*, *include* and *incluse*.

Each part of DOST provides evidence of scores of these sets, consisting of several segments which were constant and only one which varied, so that the near-identity of all the members is evident (and indeed is commonly assumed by modern readers). In all they must be numbered in thousands. Though this phenomenon is an important fact of life for the student of Middle Scots, its existence has so far gone virtually unnoticed and has hardly ever received separate comment.[44]

A few of the variants of this type were only partly synonymous, and this raises semantic problems which it is unnecessary to treat here. [190] Thus *lak* and *laik* (lack) coincide over the whole of the semantic range of *laik*, but *lak* has quite distinct additional senses not found for *laik*. Again, *laich* and *lauch* (low) occur chiefly in the literal senses of this adjective; only the cognate *law* is at all common in the figurative ones.[45] But even if we exclude such instances and those others, like *laich* and *law* itself, or *droich* and *dwerch* (dwarf), where the variation extends over more than one segment so that the formal relationship is less obvious, we are left with a large majority of synonymous variants of the sort being considered. Nor is the number greatly reduced by excluding those instances in which the uncertainties or ambiguities of the spelling system leave room for doubt whether we are justified in regarding the contrast as potentially phonemic or merely orthographic, as with *ak* and *act*, *effek* and *effect*, *temp* and *tempt*, *count* and *compt*, *nummer* and *number*.

Many of these variant sets clearly existed as phonemic variants before the beginning of the Middle Scots period: a considerable number (such as *mak* and *maik* or *heich* and *hey*) can be seen, for instance, to return to the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. But some others, like *gritt* and *gryte* beside the older *grett* and *greit*, and some of the variant past tense and past participle forms of verbs, as well as other sets to be mentioned below (Section 5, and see also Section 2 above), arose within the Middle Scots period itself. The general trend was plainly towards the accumulation of a larger and larger number of variants, only partly offset by the obsolescence of items like *ȝude* (went) to leave only *ȝeid* (itself later superseded by the analogical *gaid*) or *hevid* beside *heid*. As with the simple orthographic variants, the habit of tolerating this sort of variation perhaps provided a suitable condition for the ready acceptance, in the later sixteenth century, of a massive number of additional variants of English derivation like *oath*, *more*, *most*, *quhom*, *quhich*, *so*, *only*, *owe*, *kingdom*, *much*, *either*, *any*, *from*, *if*, *would* as occasional or frequent alternatives to the native *aith*, *mare*, *maist*, *quham*, *quhilk*, *sa*, *anerly*, *aw* or *aucht*, *kinrik*, *mekill*, *owther*, *ony*, *fra*, *gif*, *wald*.

Variants of this type are of course not unknown in other dialects and languages (including Middle and Tudor English). Middle Scots, however, seems to have been quite exceptional in possessing an extremely large number for which, at present, no regional or other specialisation of distribution is apparent – which co-existed as free variants over extensive regions and often

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[44] [34] Instances are occasionally noticed in passing, generally as resolving some phonological crux, in some of the studies mentioned in note 54 [our note 69 – Ed.] below; the fullest list, which is nevertheless, even for this one work, by no means complete, could be extracted from Mühleisen (1913) and another from Müller (1908). But nowhere is there any attempt at sustained comparative study.

Editor's note: scholars who have taken up AJA's call for detailed descriptions of orthographic variation include van Buuren ed. (1982) and Glenn ed. (1987, forthcoming).

[45] Editor's note: for a tabulation of the senses of *laich*, *lauch* and *law*, see Macafee (1997: Table 6.1).

in single, including some holograph, texts. Instances like the occurrence in close juxtaposition of *greit* and *grett* in the text quoted on p. 184 above are quite frequent.

[191] It is of course not at all impossible that variant pronunciations of synonyms of this type existed in the same areas and even the same spoken idiolects, and that thus both variant spellings of this type genuinely reflect a feature of the writer's or his community's speech. Instances of this are common enough in modern Scottish speech, not only as between a speaker's English and Scottish forms, such as *two* [tuː] and *twae* [tweː], but also, in some areas, between doublets of native origin, like *twae* [tweː] vowel 4 and *twaw* [twǫː] vowel 12.[46] Perhaps we may take it as a reasonable working hypothesis that at least in holograph texts written variants of this type do often imply that the writer either used himself or was familiar with the particular spoken form or forms to which, by the normal spelling rules, these written variants correspond; that, for example, a writer who wrote *greit* and *grett* (great) in fact knew the spoken forms /grīt/ vowel 2 and /grĕt/ vowel 16 in his own or his neighbours' speech.

This is reasonable enough as a working assumption, and we can perhaps be nearly certain that at least the *originators* of variant spellings of this type were familiar with (and probably used themselves) the particular spoken forms apparently implied (that, for example, the sixteenth-century *gritt* /grĭt/ vowel 15 and *gryte* /greit/ vowel 1 were indeed when first written genuine reflections of their original writers' pronunciations). But we cannot of course guarantee, even for holograph texts, that this was invariably the case once these spellings had come into established use. What were phonemic variants for one writer may conceivably sometimes have been merely orthographic for another. Thus whereas spelling *innovations* are quite likely to be 'phonetic', *established* spellings on the other hand may conceivably reflect the pronunciations of others than the writer, or former phonemic arrangements which no longer applied in any contemporary speech (cf. above, p. 187).

Indeed, some quite clear instances exist of scribal defiance of phonemic principles of spelling in cases of this sort. Most North-Eastern scribes fairly consistently prefer 'standard' spellings like *quhare* or *quhair* when, as is likely, their own local pronunciation would have been less ambiguously rendered by *for*[47] or *fair*, which indeed (see Section 5 and note 41) a few of them also have as occasional spellings. We may imagine, too, that in writing English forms like *oath*, *if*, *from*, *would*, writers of the later sixteenth century were similarly misrepresenting their normal speech-habits (in which, it is probable, they mostly used *aith* /ēθ/ vowel 4, *gif* /gĭf/ vowel 15, *fra* /frē/ vowel 4, *wald* /wald/ or /wăd/ vowel 17 or /wād/ vowel 12). The spelling *neixt* (next) of a Selkirk scribe of the 1520s and 1530s and of John [192] Wallwod (see Section 6) is perhaps an orthographic blend of the phonemic variants *nixt* and *neist* and thus quite indeterminate as to its writer's preference between these two as spoken forms.

Though this uncertainty about the exact implications of variants of this type exists, it need not discourage us from studying their distributions and patterns of incidence as spellings. The results of this are bound to be interesting and revealing even if we are often not certain whose favoured pronunciation is being revealed to us – that of the writer himself, his writing teacher, those writers who set the national 'standard', or some other.

Some variant pronunciations of this type are involved in another kind of uncertainty, for a somewhat different reason – that of ambiguities inherent in the basic system of phoneme-grapheme equivalence itself. In Middle Scots, as in other orthographic systems of a similar type, individual symbols or graphemes commonly participated in more than one orthographic set. Thus the graph *a* participated both in the set *a*, *a-e*, *a*, *ay* /ē/ vowel 4 and in the (in this case single member) set *a* /ă/ vowel 17, so that such a spelling as *lard*, out of context, is completely ambiguous as between /lărd/ (lard) and /lērd/ (laird). With non-synonymous

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[46] [36] See the distributional map for the similar case of 'who' in McIntosh (1952: 117).

[47] Editor's note: so spelled in the example quoted at the end of Section 4, though *far* would be expected.

instances of this sort, of course, the ambiguity will nearly always be resolved in the usual way by the linguistic context at other levels than that of orthography. With synonymous variants of the type we have been considering, however, forms like *mak* may well remain ambiguous in some instances; since *a* participates both in the set:

(/ă/) *a* plus double consonant, *a* plus single consonant, on the one hand,

and also:

(/ē/) *a-e*, *ai*, *ay* and also, though rarely, *a* plus single consonant.

Similarly *gret* may be ambiguous, though *grett* /grĕt/ and *grete*, *greit* /grīt/ are (as a rule) not. Equally the commonest spellings for 'two' and 'who', *twa* and *quha*, fall uncertainly between the sets *a*, *ai*, *ay* /ē/ vowel 4 and (in a labial context) *a*, *au*, *aw* /ā/ vowel 12; the unambiguous spellings *tway* and *quhay* are rather less common; and the unambiguous spellings representing the other doublets, *twaw* and *quhaw*, are rare.[48] By studying the specific habits of individual scribes some of these may be resolved: thus some scribes regularly exclude *a* plus single consonant from the *a-e*, *ai*, *ay* set. But this will be defeated if the scribe is at all inconsistent in his habits and no doubt a large residue of unsolvable ambiguities will remain.

As against such considerations, however, we may also take note that, although many individual Middle Scots scribes do employ more than one variant from particular sets of the phonemic or *quasi*-phonemic [193] type we have been considering, it is also evident that many of them had at least some individual preferences and more or less consistent habits. That copyists could often be more loyal to their own habits in this respect than to their author's apparent intentions is shown by the fairly numerous cases when it is necessary to restore an alternative variant to make a verse line metrical or to provide a rhyme. The rhymes of the Maitland MS copyist's version of *King Hart*, for example, require a number of emendations of this kind (for *betrayid* (line 382) read *betraysit*, for *suppleit* (390) *suppleid*, for *dunt* (537) *dint*, for *glaid* (554) *glad*, and for *iustifeit* (574) *iustifyid*); similar examples from many other poems could easily be collected.[49] And, of course, different recensions of the same original often show consistent differences in their choice of variants of this kind (just as much as in the orthographic variants considered in the previous section). Whereas the copyist of the Edinburgh MS of Barbour's *Brus* regularly has *gan* (the auxiliary verb), *gres* (grass), *hundir* (hundred) and *leawte* (loyalty), his contemporary of the Cambridge MS as regularly prefers *can*, *gyrs*, *hundreth* and *lawte*, *laute.*

As yet we have little enough information on the detailed incidence of such variants even in literary texts. Besides these, we need also detailed studies of the distributions of some of the variants of this kind over limited chronological periods, based at least partly on the localised and holograph writings. Until all this is done we have no means of knowing what the detailed distributional patterns were and how these correlate, if at all, with chronological, regional, stylistic or personal factors. The possibility exists that patterns might emerge which would serve to date and place more accurately than we now can some of those Middle Scots literary texts whose origins and dates are at present quite indeterminate, as well as providing further

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[48] [38] See note 31 [our Figure 1 – Ed.] for the phonology of these doublets.

Editor's note: see †Aitken (2002: §20.9), summarised in Macafee and †Aitken (2002: §6.26).

[49] [39] Perhaps it was this kind of thing that Gavin Douglas had in mind when he wrote:

> Ʒhe writers all and gentill redaris eik,
> Offendis nocht my volum, I beseik,
> Bot redis leill and tak gud tent in tyme
> Ʒhe nother maggill nor mysmetyr my ryme,
> Nor alter not my wordis, I ʒou pray.
>   (Coldwell ed., 1960: 194/21 ff.).

insights into the nature of our available copies of all literary texts. In any case, in its possession of numerous variants of this type Middle Scots presents us with an interesting phenomenon which deserves detailed study for its own sake and for its potential implications for historical phonology, albeit the precise nature of these implications is at present not as obvious or as straightforward as might be wished.

4

Although most variants of the type considered in the last section cannot as yet be seen to have been regionally distributed, others either certainly or probably were. It is the present writer's impression that the two variants of 'wake' (*waik* /wēk/ vowel 4 and *wauk*, *walk* /wāk/ vowel 12) had a similar distribution to those of their modern dialect reflexes, i.e. /wēk/ in the South and South-East and /wāk/ elsewhere. A similar suggestion for the distribution of the variant *maik*, *mea(c)k* (as against *mak*) has been made in DOST s.v. *Mak* v. Perhaps the three variants of 'water' (*watter* /ˈwătĭr/ vowel 17, *waiter* /ˈwētĭr/ vowel 4 and *wawter*, *walter* /ˈwātĭr/ vowel 12) may turn out similarly. It might also prove that in these cases the boundary area was, as it now is, within the Central Scots region, from which many of the texts come, which would account for the comparative commonness in record of all of the variant types.

It seems very probable (in view of the well-established normal correlation of the spellings *ʒ-* and *y-* with the /j/ phoneme) that the following spellings do indeed reflect early instances of pronunciations with prosthetic /j/ which, though now only characteristic of Central and Southern Scots speech, appear to have been more widely distributed in Middle Scots:

yane (one) (1527 *Prestwick B. Rec.* 52),

and *ʒown* (= *oun*, oven) (1517 *Wigtown B. Ct.* 64a),

and *ʒaikin* (oaken) (1578–79 *Elgin Rec.* I, 153),

yetling, *yetlit* (= *ettil* to try) (1606 *Inverness Rec.* II, 42, 47, 57, 59);[50]

as well as the still more widespread *ʒake*, *ʒaik* (to ache), *yerl* (earl), *ʒerd* (earth), which are common in all classes of text.

A noticeable and apparently regular habit of the clerk of Wigtown Burgh Court in the early years of the sixteenth century was that of writing *t* or less frequently *d* where his contemporaries wrote *th* or postvocalically *tht* or superscript *t*, as:

tyrd (f. *8a*), *clat* (9a), *a towsand v hundyrd* (9b), *tre hundyr bollis* (ibid.), *tolboud* (10a), *triys*, *triis* (12a), *hunderet* (14b), etc.

Here, in view of the coincidence of the locality, it does seem possible to compare Andrew Symson's remark in his *Large Description of Galloway* of 1684 (1823: 97):

Some of the countrey people, especially those of the elder sort, do very often omit the letter h after t, as ting for thing, tree for three, tacht for thatch, wit for with, fait for faith, mout for mouth.

Another group of variant spellings whose phonological implications seem reasonably certain are those which apparently reflect North-Eastern dialect features of pronunciation. In

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[50] [40] And *yin* inscribed for the indefinite article, apparently by confusion with the numeral *ane*, on a gravestone in Monkton, Ayrshire:

Heir lys yin vary honrible mon Davit Blair of Adamtoun spouse to Marget Hamiltoun quo decesit Sep. 1577 (quoted in Hewat, 1908: 84).

contrast with the last example, some of these are very rare indeed in their incidence, as very occasional aberrations from more or less standard spelling-practice: thus, at least on the evidence of the printed record, the *for* spelling in the 1539 quotation below is a unique exception to this scribe's otherwise regular *quhar*. Nevertheless, the coincidence in regional distribution [195] with the modern spoken reflexes encourages the belief that we have here genuine reflections of dialect speech. In the quotations the variants in question are italicised:

> And the *quyntray* was dangerfull throw this plage of pestilence (1500 Stuart ed., 1844: 68 [*Aberd. B. Rec.* I]);

> That na burges ... sal haue nay forstaller vnder him to pas in *quintray* (1507 ibid. 435);

> In calling of hir commond vyld freris huyr that scho wes that hes ane pek of lyis betuix thi shoulderis. I sell leid the to the place *for* the freir swewyt the quhar thou tynt the pendace of thi belt in the hie publict gett (1539 ibid. 159);

> Ane *phingar* (= *quhingar*, whinyard) (ibid. 161);

> To heid the blokhouse with faill and to put ane fulse *rief* thairon, thykit with faill (1542 ibid. 184);

> Dauid Anderson, maister of wark to the *stein* wark of the sayme gable of the parish kirk (Cullen, 1842: 33 [Cullen, W. *Chron. Aberd.*]);

> And their efter I paist to Dunnotter *fair* I beheld his grace at his supar (ibid. 53);

> Swa that *neyn* belewit his lyif (1596–97 Strathauchine, 1841: 85 [*Misc. Spald. C.* I.]);

> Beand gryt *wymb* with barne (ibid. 92);

> *Wytit* on be the cummer (ibid.);

> And quhow *sein* the woman spak of God, that ewill spreit vaniest away withe ane rwmleng (ibid. 100);

> In the forme of ane four futit heist, and speciallie lyk ane *futret*, and sum tyme lyk ane catt (ibid. 148);

> *Futherit* (ibid.);

> Seing he wes ane man so guidlyk and ritche ... and scho ane vgle harlot *quyne* (ibid. 178).[51]

5

Still another class of occasional phonemic variant spelling exists in which the distribution of the implied spoken forms was apparently by register rather than by region. This is most obvious with certain items of that group of words which underwent phonetic reduction by the loss or assimilation of intervocalic or final consonants, resulting in the emergence of reduced and unreduced doublets, such as *aw* and *all*, *deil* and *devil*, *mow* and *mouth*, and so on. In every case both doublets persisted at least as orthographic variants. Since many of them are still

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51 [41] Alexander Wood of Old Aberdeen has three instances of *for* for 'where' in his copy of Q. Kennedy's *Breif Tracteit* (see Kuipers ed., 1964: 84 and s.v. in the Glossary). For some further examples of these and other North-Eastern forms, see DOST s.vv. *Correll, Cort* n.[2], *Cuntra(y* n (*quintra*) and *Cuntré* n. 3a (*quentre, cuintrie*), *Fayte, Folp, Fort* and *Fow* adv., and *Fedill* n. Several other examples are cited (without exact reference) by McKinlay (1914: 8 ff.).

represented in the Modern Scots dialects of today by spoken doublets, it seems that for Middle Scots most of them can also be classed as phonemic variants. As well as in the spellings to be considered below the reduced members of these variant sets are evidenced also in reverse spellings like:

ewine for *ein* 'eyes' (after *evin*, *ein*, 'evening') (*Leg. S.* II, 557)

or *send* for *sen* 'since' (after *send*, *sen*, 'send') (Cullen, W. *Chron. Aberd.* 50),

and in innumerable instances in [196] rhyme in (chiefly particular classes of) verse,[52] like:

evin (evening) with *wene* (*Kynd Kittok* 12)

or *send* with *den* (Henryson, *Fab.* 556).

Some examples of this sort of variant show no obvious tendency towards specialisation of distribution. It appears, for example:

that *hauch*, *bow*, *how*, *know*, *row* and *gouff* were as common in all classes of text as *halch*, *boll*, *troll*, *knoll*, *roll* and *golf*;

and *fouth* and *stouth* seem to have completely superseded *fulth* and *stulth.*

Clais seems to have been as widely and freely used as *clathis*;

ill and *evill*, though unrelated, were perhaps regarded as variants of this kind and indeed interchange freely (for example, in different recensions of the same text) and neither form appears to have been any more specialised in distribution than the other;

and the specialisation of *fow* (as opposed to *full*) is apparently by meaning rather than by dialect or register.

With sets like *aboun*, *abone* and *abovin*, *abuvin* and *lesum* and *leve-*, *leifsum*, the reduced variant is much the more common, without any evident specialisation of distribution of either alternative.

But, when all these have been excluded, there remains a large residue of sets of this class whose reduced members seem either certainly, or, pending a full investigation, possibly to have been restricted in their distributions:

a, *aw* (beside *all*);
caw, *kaw* (beside *call*);
faw, *fa* (beside *fall*);
staw (beside *stall*, stole);
fas (beside *fals*);
haus, *hasse* (beside *hals*);
hauf (beside *half*);
bowtt (beside *bolt*);
stown, *stoun* (beside *stolin*);
wow and *woune*, *wone* (beside *wolf* and *wollin*);
pow (beside *pull*);
cowtter, *kutir* (beside *culter*);
deil (beside *devil*);
ein, *eining* and *ʒistrein* (beside *evin*, *evining* and *ʒistrevin*);
hairst (beside *harvest*);

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ge and *gein* (beside *geve*, *geiff* and *gevin*, *geiffin*);
him-, *ȝoursell* (beside *-self*);
twell (beside *twelf*);
a and *ha* (beside *have*, *haiff*);
mow (beside *mouth*);
no (beside *nocht*);
uncow (beside *uncouth*);
sen (beside *send*);
Iis, *ȝeis* (beside *I sall*, *ȝe sall*);
Ile, *Iill* (beside *I will*);
yeil (beside *ye will*).

In his 'Reulis and Cautelis to be observit and eschewit in Scottis Poesie' King James VI specifies such "cuttit schort" forms, as he calls them, exemplifying them by *Iis neir cair* for *I sall neuer cair*, as specially appropriate for "flyting and inuectiues" and adds that in "loue or tragedies" "ȝour wordis man be drawin lang quhilkis in flyting man be short" (J. Craigie ed., 1955: 75/22 f.). In rhyme these reduced forms are indeed frequent only in certain specific genres of verse: comic and satiric verse of every kind and certain narrative poems, such as Hary's *Wallace*, the Asloan MS *Sevyne Sages*, Douglas's *Aeneid*, Stewart's *Chronicle* and Rolland's *Seaven Seages* (many examples could be assembled from the relevant entries in DOST); but in serious lyric or [197] didactic verse and in courtly narrative (like Douglas's *Palice of Honour* or Dunbar's *Goldyn Targe*) they are rare or absent. As spellings (in other than rhyming positions) these forms seem to occur only in the same comic and narrative poems. They are also a prominent feature of the colloquial Scottish speech of the Jockies and Jamies of some English dramas of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, e.g. in:

Ays or *I'se* (I shall);
thouse (thou shalt);
I'll (I will);
deel (devil);
our sell (ourself).[53]

With the other distributional problems we have been considering, their incidence in Middle Scots prose requires further study: but they do appear to be much commoner in certain less conventionally spelled texts of the sort we shall briefly consider below (pp. 199 f.) than in those whose spellings are more 'standard' (p. 198): a few examples are:

kaw (call) (1438 *Ayr B. Ct.* 32b);
sydwawdyk (side wall dyke) (1462 *Peebles B. Rec.* I, 147);
thayr sell (1497 *Dunferm. B. Rec.* 77);
gein (given) (1521 *Selkirk B. Ct.* f . 89b);
eining (evening) (1561 *Edinb. Old Acc.* II, 121);
eyne (evening) 1600 *Glasgow B. Rec.* I, 101);

and others may be sought in the appropriate DOST entries.

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53 [42] See Eckhardt (1910), especially 'Die schottische Mundart in den einzelnen Dramen' (vol. 1, pp. 91 ff.). Eckhardt provides a full account of the individual word-forms and items of vocabulary with respect to their Scottish provenance. But he takes no account of other aspects of the language (cf. for example, the word-order of *that sall I, mary* and the ellipsis of *have* (cf. p. 179 above) in "mary, I wad full faine heard some question tween you tway", in the Scottish captain's speeches in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, III, ii; and he is naturally unaware of the stylistic implications of his material. I owe thanks to my colleague, Dr J. A. C. Stevenson, for reminding me of this source and bringing Eckhardt's work to my notice.

In general it looks as if, in this matter of these reduced and unreduced variant sets, the 'standard' spelling practice favoured the more traditional or conservative unreduced variants whereas the reduced variants are chiefly specialised to the particular classes of text suggested. It may also prove that *'d*, as the reduced and voiced variant of *it* (see DOST s.v. *'D*), had a similar distribution to these other reduced variants. It is possible also that some, though clearly not all, of the items of the class of aphetic forms which are such an obvious and well-known characteristic of the Middle Scots morpheme system may have a similar distribution: this may turn out to be so with:

> *chete*, *cheit* (beside *escheit*) and *tach* and *tachment* (beside *attach* and *attachment*) (e.g. 1456 *Peebles B. Rec.* I, 115),

though apparently not with:

> *fect*, *feck* (beside *effect*), *levint* (beside *elevint*, *alevint* (eleventh)) or *mendis* (beside *amendis*).

6

A dictionary such as DOST records all the variant spellings found in its collections for each of its word entries. In a somewhat crude way it also makes clear that some variants were much more common in their incidence and widespread in their distribution than others. What the dictionary record already shows crudely a more exhaustive study would no doubt confirm. It appears that the great majority of Middle [197] Scots texts at each chronological stage adhered fairly regularly to a variant spelling system which included only the more common and widespread variants just mentioned and in general excluded the rarer variants. Conversely, there also existed a minority of texts in which these less common variants were rather profusely used. But the boundary between these two classes of texts is somewhat indeterminate, since one is apt to meet an occasional uncommon variant even in texts which generally conform to the more limited system and since there are also texts whose practice falls between the two extremes of somewhat limited variation and the free use of uncommon variants. Nevertheless it is already possible to specify those texts whose spelling practice is noticeably regular (i.e. which have a more limited range of variation) and others, less regular, in which the less common variants are clustered.

Perhaps the narrowest limits of variation in this way will prove to be those adhered to in some of the printed prose and verse of the later sixteenth century, as if the Scottish printers were moving, like their English opposite numbers, towards a fixed spelling; this movement, if it existed, came to an end when, early in the seventeenth century, the Scottish printers abandoned the native spelling tradition altogether for an imported English one. Among the sixteenth-century manuscript sources, however, the great national registers (of Parliament, of Privy Council, of the Great and Privy Seals) and almost all the existing copies of the major literary texts in prose and verse, also conform to comparatively narrow limits of variation (as exemplified in Sections 2 and 3 of this paper). And much the same range of variants is adhered to by many other writers of that century, including local clerks, minor officials and the writers of private records. If we assume that it was writers like these royal and literary clerks who were likely to have set the standards of spelling and of other literary usages, then we may regard this limited, majority practice as the 'standard' form of written Middle Scots. That there was a contemporary belief in the possibility of some such standard is implied in the frequent complaints of or apologies for "wrang ortographie and fals spelling" (Charteris, [1568], 1931: 402 [Charteris, H. *Lyndesay Pref.*]) or "many incorrect errouris ... in ... the ortographie" (J. Craigie ed. 1955: 99/16 [James VI *Poems* I]), which occur in sixteenth-century Scottish

writings.[54] A number of other instances, from 1549 (*Corr. M. Lorraine* 316) to c. 1608 (*Elphinstone Chart.* 181) are quoted in DOST s.v. *Ortographie*.

But, as we have noted, the boundaries between this standard system [199] and the less conformist system of spelling was neither sharply defined nor immutably fixed. Occasional irregular or 'sub-standard' spellings, of the types exemplified in the previous section and in the following pages, do turn up in otherwise 'correctly' spelled texts, like *thua* (two) and *bethuix* (betwixt) in one early MS of Bellenden's *Boece*, and *staw* (p.t. of *stele*, to steal) in another (Sheppard, 1936: 211, 236). Even so, the rarity of these is itself strong proof of the general rule of the standard spelling: *staw*, for example, appears to be recorded only once in a MS of over 300 folios (the Pierpont Morgan Bellenden's *Boece*) as against the commoner *stall*. The available glossaries to other literary prose[55] are equally unproductive of these irregular spellings, together yielding only a handful. The highest single yield, that from the Laing Pitscottie (Mackay ed., 1899–1911), includes *schoissin* (chosen), *schyre* (chair), *staw* (p.t. of *stele*), *stowin* (p.p. of *stele*) and *schowne*, *shone* and *sowun* among the variants of 'soon,' in each case only as a unique or a much less common variant of the regular spelling or spellings (*choissin*, *chyre*, *stall*, etc). But as more word-lists become available it may turn out that there were others among the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century literary and official scribes and men of letters who, as well as enlarging their limits of spelling variation with the new anglicised spellings (pp. 182–3 and p. 190) were also relaxing some of the traditional Scottish prohibitions. With spellings like:

> *ga* (gall) (Pitcairn ed., 1842: 125) and *stowin* (stolen) (423),
> *blaithe* (blithe) (126) and *whait* (white) (270),
> *swyt* (sweat) (137), *sweik* (= *swilk* or *sic*, such) (170),
> *schosin(e)* (chosen) (128),
> *lainthe* (length) (317) and *strainthe* (strength) (157)

Rev James Melvill[56] is at least one instance of a highly literate writer of late Middle Scots who was no longer conforming strictly to the earlier rules of 'correct' orthography.

For the seventeenth century we may have to assume a number of different traditions or different standards: of the printed literature in, virtually, English; of more or less regularly spelled and rapidly anglicising official registers, such as those of Parliament and Privy Council, and literary works circulating in manuscript, like Spalding's *Memorialls of the Trubles*; and of the miscellaneous mass of minor records and private writings, also increasingly anglicised, but in addition displaying a much wider overall range of characteristically Scottish spelling variation on similar lines to James Melvill's practice described in the preceding paragraph. A clearer picture will only emerge after much detailed study of the kind suggested in Section 2.

Meantime however it is of course possible to identify impressionistically those texts which are most irregular in their spelling-practice [200] and thus lie at the opposite pole of this di-polar situation from the regularly spelled texts which we have tentatively thought of as representing 'standard' or most generally approved practice. Writers of texts of this strikingly 'sub-standard' category include a number of local clerks (for example, certain of the burgh clerks of Aberdeen, Ayr, Dunfermline, Elgin, Inverness, Peebles, Selkirk, Stirling and

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[54] [A common excuse, as in the latter instance, is "my merrie younge & tender yeares". – AJA]

[55] [44] Viz, Macpherson and Quinn eds. (1926–65), W. A. Craigie ed. (1901–1903), Law (1888), J. A. H. Murray ed. (1872), Graves ed. (1884), Kuipers ed. (1964), Hewison ed. (1888–90), Mackay ed. (1899–1911), Meikle *et al.* eds. (1914–40), Cody and Murison eds. (1885–95), J. Craigie ed. (1944, 1950) and Hamilton-Grierson ed. (1920–26).

[56] [45] An important writer who deserves study from this and many other points of view, including the literary and the stylistic. Most of these forms and others like them, however, appear in Melvill's personal narrative; in copying official documents and formal declarations, including those originally composed by himself, his spelling standards were perhaps less relaxed.

Wigtown) and some writers of private documents,[57] such as letters or accounts, but, so far as my observations go, few others.[58] Their spelling-practice is typified in the following passages:[59]

> It is statut and ordanit that na persoun nor personis woucht ony maner of clais at the toune bouirn within the Barrasyet or aboun, for fyling of the bourn, undir the pain of viij s. vnforgevin and brekin of the weschal that tha wous with
> (1522 Renwick ed., 1887: 17 [*Stirling B. Rec.* I.]).

> It was fundin be the said assis that Robe Murra and Jame Mur had thiftusly stouin ane gryne clok, ij syourds, ane sertane of sarkis, courcheis and colaris, vij pair of schoun, ane pair of hois, ane buklar
> (1525 ibid. 24).

> Als sua I beseik your grace to caus my son and all uder Scottis men that ye ma forga to cum in this cuntre, for ther welbe besyns about this toun or ellis in som uder pairt in this cuntre. The French men that wes heyr cald not agre with the capeden wes sent to tham and said to hem they aucht na servis to the king and we haf caussit hem to send for uderis and pout them away. This last rad was mad in Ingland has doun na gud bot maid our inimeis harde and quhill it be mendit the Inglis men well never trast to geit skath. Your grac maun be vere scherp batht on the Franch men and on the Scottis men or it will nocht be weill; yet ader to do as aferis to tham or let it be, tha mecht never getin sa gud ane tym. Pardon me that writtis sa hamly to your grac for in gud feth it cumis of ane gud hart as than that loifis bath the honour of Scotland and Frans. Forder, God keip you grace. Writin of Hom, the ix day of Merch be your gracis servetour Marion Lady Hom.
> (1548–49 Cameron, ed., 1927: 292 [*Corr. M. Lorraine*]).[60]

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[57] [46] Collections of private correspondence, such as *The Scottish Correspondence of Mary of Lorraine* (Cameron ed., 1927) and the many published collections of family letters, provide a good many specimens of this sort of thing. Another example is an apparently holograph letter of King James V, printed in *The Miscellany of the Spalding Club* vol. II (1842: 193). The highly idiosyncratic Scots spellings of the holograph writings of his French-educated daughter, Mary Queen of Scots, are doubtless a special case.

[58] [47] For one very minor literary text containing a number of irregular or 'sub-standard' spellings, see Meier (1966: 11 ff., especially 21). The majority of the irregularities in the separate Dunbar collection now incorporated as pp. 3–18 and 339–42 of the Maitland Folio MS are of the type discussed in the previous section of this essay and in keeping with the comic character of the poems copied (cf. pp. 196–7 above); otherwise, despite W. A. Craigie's remark (1927: 6) that these fragments "have a very unconventional and almost illiterate spelling of many words", they largely though not entirely conform to the 'standard' limits of variation.

[59] [48] Another instance occurs in note 40 [our note 50 – Ed.].

[60] [Though it is clear that Lady Home has had some training and practice as a writer, her composition and spelling still leave something to be desired. She mis-spells or spells phonetically *serten*, *besyn[e]s*, *cald* (for *culd*), *capeden*, *scherp*, and *feth*, and *pout* is at least uncommon; and the vowel /ĭ/ (vowel 15) in weak forms perhaps, as in the similar case of the Peebles scribe (below), as a 'phonetic' tendency, with her shares, though not invariably, with /ĕ/ (vowel 16) the spelling *e*, in *well*, *welbe, hem* and *mecht*; and *stoun* (stolen) is a 'phonetic' rendering of the vernacular form with vocalised *l*. Her propositions are for the most part unlinked and themselves structurally simple, with a preponderance of *and*-connected principal clauses. She appears to eschew entirely relative pronouns in *quh-*, though she has several with *that* and two (*the capeden wes sent to tham*, *This last rad was mad*) with the zero-form. The last is in keeping with her strong inclination to elliptical constructions, including the ellipsis of the infinitive *have* after conditional past auxiliaries (*tha mecht never getin*), which is also characteristic of modern colloquial Scots. And her vocabulary is 'hamly' and vernacular as might be.

   Others who feature in the same collection and display similar colloquial habits in their writing include William Cunningham of Glengarnock (e.g. 1543, pp. 48–9 and 1544, pp. 72–3), one Nicol Ruthven (1544, pp. 78–9) and the Earl of Huntly (1551, pp. 348–9). Many other comparable examples could be collected from the vast body of holograph correspondence surviving from the 16th century, beginning, perhaps, with the collections of family records compiled by Sir William Fraser in the latter decades of the last century. – AJA]

Item for owr lledein of collis awcht skor and awcht pownd quhilk was to yowr payrt 21 lib. Item quhane we came bak to Dondei was bocht mell and elle and canwes that sormontit to 26 lib. 10s quhilk is to yowr payrt 3 lib. 4s. Sua gaid I till y cam to Engelland one and warrit 15 lib. 15s quhilk was in Inglis monnay 37s 6d. Item bocht sex payr wone schankis cost 5s the pair quhilk was for sex payr 30s (John Wallwod, supercargo of the 'Grace of God' of Dundee, 1600 (McNeill ed., 1965: 67)).

Thane it came that he grantit to llend ane hownder and fowrtei crownis to the mayrschand and that he begowd rakein owp ane selder quhissell that the mayrschand hid promeist him or the scheip sowld go to the sei and some dray fisch that he gif the mayrschand to wettell the schip withall. And y gif the hell monney that y sowld hawe send yow for the proffeit was gowd gif we haid gottein it quhilk was fowrttei of the hownder
(Idem in 1602 ibid. 73).

Some of the spellings employed by writers such as these[61] are so unusual as to be unique or almost unique:

John Wallwod's habit (following a simple orthographic analogy) of doubling his initial *ll-* in e.g. *lledein* (leading or loading) and *llend* (1600 McNeill ed., 1965: 67 [*Misc. Hist. Soc.* X]);

or his unique spelling of 'silver' as *selder*[62] (1602 ibid. 73);

or the practice of the Stirling clerk of writing *sy-* for normal *sw-*, e.g. in *syourd* (sword), *syene* (swine), *syoerne* (sworn) (1525 Renwick ed., 1887: 24, 25 [*Stirling B. Rec.*]);

or the same clerk's *kt* for normal *cht* in *slaktir* (1526 ibid. 26);

or his quite logical (but unique) *lujene* (for *luging*, lodging) (1525 ibid. 23);

or Skipper Morton's unique 'phonetic' spelling of 'narrow' as *nawrye* (*a* 1600 *Account Book of Walter Morton, skipper 1589‑1600*, MS NAS RH9/1/5, p. 48a [*Skipper's Acc.* (Morton)]).

More often, however, these irregular or 'sub-standard' spellings conform to recurrent patterns common to this group of writers as a class. It was apparently chiefly writers of this kind who were given to writing *sch-* where standard spelling prescribed *ch-* as:

schallans (= *chalange*), *schairge* (charge), *schertee* (= *cherite*, charity), *scheis* (= *chese*, choose), *schosing* (= *chosin*, chosen), etc.;

and, though apparently less frequently, the converse of this in e.g.:

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[61] [The few writings of Scottish seamen of the late 16th or early 17th century which survive are all highly individual in their spellings and a few of the spellings of single items turn out to be quite 'phonetic'. – AJA]

[62] [49] Apparently to be explained thus: *silver* had become, colloquially, *siller*, by normal reduction of *-v-* in this position; in a number of words dialect or colloquial /-1/ was represented in standard spelling as *-ld* (e.g. *cauld*, *auld*, *ȝeild*), and Wallwod is one of those (see p. 202) who frequently have *e* in place of standard *i*. [Among the numerous bizarreries of this highly idiosyncratic spelling ... we may note particularly the form *wone* ('phonetic' for the l-vocalised form of *wollin*) ... The word orders of *Sua gaid I till y cam to Engelland one* are anomalous, at least in normal literary use (cf. the remarks on John Campbell's word-orders in 'Oral narrative style in Middle Scots', 1978, 2015); no doubt this is colloquial idiom, as also is the unpremeditated and idiomatic structuring of the propositions in the second passage quoted. Wallwod's restrictive form of the relative pronoun is only *that*, but he makes free use of *quhilk* in the resumptive function, which may well reflect normal colloquial practice. The colloquial tendency to ellipsis appears once in the omission of *to* before the infinitive in *he begowd rakein owp*. And once again the diction is fully vernacular. - AJA]

chep, *cheip* (sheep) (1468 *Peebles B. Rec.* I, 157; 1503 *Dunferm. B. Rec.* 132; 1557 *Inverness Rec.* I, 10);

and in *fycht* (as well as *fysche*) (1519–20 *Stirling B. Rec.* I, 3);

and *flecht* and *flechour* (as well as *flescheir*) (1520 ibid. 15);

and *feych* (fish) (1532 *Selkirk B. Ct.* 160b).[63]

A similarly widespread tendency in many of these texts is to interchange *th* and *t* spellings in e.g.:

tha tyngis (14. . *Liber Calchou* 449),
efter the theching of this trethis (ibid. 451),
qwath anwallis (1456 *Peebles B. Rec.* I, 113),
at thwa termis (ibid.),
his thachment (ibid. 115),
bethwen (1457 ibid. 122),
ragrathing (1520 *Stirling B. Rec.* I, 7),
scheit (for 'sheath') *makar* (1520–21 ibid. 14),
flything (ibid.),
thwa siluer ringis (1540 *Elgin Rec.* I, 49),
thwyching as well as *tweching*, *twyching* (touching, concerning) (ibid. 52),
outout (= *outouth*, outwith) (1541 ibid. 65),
thalch (= *talch*, tallow) (1542 ibid. 73),
schait (= *scaith*, injury) (1543–44 ibid. 79),
the [202] *tain ... the thother* (ibid.),
thechyt (1546 ibid. 89).[64]

Other recurrent 'sub-standard' variants are:

i, *y* for 'standard' *e*, *ei*, *ey* (/ī/) vowel 2 (e.g. by our Stirling clerk[65] or by Mary Queen of Scots);

ou, *ow* for 'standard' *u* (either /ŭ/ vowel 19 or /ȳ/ vowel 7) in e.g. *hourt*, *goud*, *soun*, *schoun* (shoes);

and *e* for standard *i* (/ĭ/) vowel 15, in e.g. *meln*, *mestour*, *begit* (= *biggit*, built), *kel* (= *kill*, kiln), etc. (1456 *Peebles B. Rec.* I, 115 f.), *well* (will), *hem* (him), *mecht* (might) (by Lady Home, above, p. 200), *selder* and *wettell* (victual) (by John Wallwod, above, p. 201).[66]

In addition, some rather more widely distributed variants, like:

ai, *ay* as an addition to *i*, *y*, *yi* /ei/ vowel 1;

or *-ene*, *-ein*, *-eyn* as an addition to *-ing*, *-yng*, *-in*, *-yn* for the verbal noun ending (cf. *lledein*, p. 200, and *lujene*, p. 201);

and *ra-* beside *re-* in e.g. *ragratour*, *ralef*, *raward*

are especially common in recognisably 'sub-standard' contexts.

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[63] [50] Müller (1908: 110, 112) has some further examples.

[64] [51] For other examples of coincidences between Northern and Southern usage, see the spellings in *y-* and *ȝ-* cited on p. 194 and, at the lexical and morphemic levels, DOST s.v. *Landimer* and *Milve*.

[65] Editor's note: i.e. <gryne> *green*.

[66] Editor's note: Meurman-Solin (1999: 317, 320 n.3) adds <wo> for <wi>, i.e. vowel 19, e.g. *wosdum* 'wisdom'. Cf. 15th century <o> forms of *Wympil(l)* n. and v., *Windo(w)* v., and *Wisp* n.

Some of these variations arc no doubt 'phonetic' in origin. Evidently, like some illiterate spellers today, these 'sub-standard' spellers were given not only to apparently inexplicable idiosyncratic modifications of the general spelling system (like the Stirling scribe's *sy-* symbol) but also to 'phonetic' innovations, to 'improvements', in the standard spelling system in the direction of greater 'phonetic' consistency. These spellings thus reflect idiosyncratic or dialectal or even generally distributed phonemic or allophonic variant pronunciations which the more stable and conservative standard spelling fails to reproduce.

This explanation and the consequent interpretation of the spellings can often be applied with some confidence (as in the externally supported instances listed in Section 4). The variant *-ene*, *-ein* of the verbal noun ending, for example, bears, according to the normal phonemic-orthographic rules, a clear relationship to a morpheme /-īn/ of which we have abundant confirmation in modern speech and early rhyme; it may well have been, in spoken use, more common than its doublet /-ĭŋ/ which the 'standard' spelling *-ing, -yng* on the face of it represents.

But of course in the absence of external confirmation of this kind we must be much more cautious. It may be that the interchange of *sch* and *ch* noted above originally arose from an assimilation in some or all positions of /tʃ/ to /ʃ/ in some dialects or idiolects and that all the spellings noted either directly imitate this or follow as reverse spellings. A similar phonemic levelling might be advanced in explanation of the interchange of *th* and *t* also exemplified. This explanation would have an advantage in accounting for the tendency of these spelling habits to [203] recur in widely dispersed texts of this type. At the same time I do not see that we can exclude the possibility that we are dealing with purely orthographic phenomena such as the interchange of *v* and *w* mentioned above (p. 182) may also represent. If this were so the recurrence of these habits in texts which, so far as we know at present, have no local or other points of contact, is harder but not necessarily impossible to explain.

7

This essay must at least have shown that the old concept of Middle Scots as an "artificial" and highly uniform language should now be discarded. At every linguistic level it is marked by variety of usage rather than uniformity. The fact of this variety and its particular manifestations are clearly enough displayed in DOST. But there is a need to proceed beyond what the Dictionary presents and to explore the details of distribution, particularly regional and stylistic, of the numerous variant phenomena. Few contributions towards this as yet exist.[67] Even for such a commonly noted feature as the occurrence of the indefinite article *ane* before consonants, no attempt has ever been made to show how it and its variant *a* were comparatively distributed.[68] From all this we may expect illumination of every aspect of the history of the language, notably in its dialectological and stylistic aspects.

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[67] [52] A useful beginning is Caldwell (1967, 1974). Kuipers ed. (1964) and Sheppard (1936) both provide useful data on the lexis and syntax of the texts studied by them.

[68] [53] The practice of writing the indefinite article as *an* or more often *ane* before consonants as well as before vowels first becomes common in the second half of the fifteenth century, though an instance occurs (*till an michty lord*; Slater, 1952: No. 2) as early as 1379. Many sixteenth-century writers, such as those quoted on pp. 184, 185 and 200 above, as well as some others who have been mentioned (e.g. the copyist of the Laing MS of Pitscottie's *Chronicles*; Mackay ed., 1899) strongly favour *ane*, though seldom to the complete exclusion of *a*. Others, such as George Bannatyne or the copyist of the Cotton MS of Buchanan's *Chamaeleon* (Brown ed., 1892: 42 ff.), vary freely between these two. On the other hand some, but not all, of the copyists of the 1566 MS of John Knox's *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, follow what was and is the normal English practice, and had been that of early Scots, of writing *a* before consonants and *an* or *ane* before vowels. Around the turn of the sixteenth century the ministers James Melvill and James Carmichael have the same usage. But sporadic instances of *ane* before

Not the least varied and complex of these manifestations of varied usage of Middle Scots is its orthography. Only the merest beginnings to a proper account of this as yet exist in the phonologies of various poets and one or two prose writers.[69] At most these include only some minor contributions[70] to some of the questions raised in this essay. For this purpose a much more systematic examination of the spellings as such is needed – and not one which, as some of these works do, presents a hotch-potch of the spellings of a later copyist or even several later copyists as somehow representing the pronunciation of an earlier author. Only one study, of rather limited value for the purpose suggested, has been provided for a holograph writing (J. Craigie, 1950, on the language of James VI's *Basilicon Doron*). Nothing whatever has been written on the spellings of the major official records, which may well have predominated in the setting of orthographic standards. Only one minor work exists on strictly localised texts (Müller, 1908), and this is dependent on fairly inaccurate editions. Private writings have been totally ignored.

We are then still at the very beginning of the study of this aspect of Middle Scots. One need at this point is for diplomatic editions, which [204] are also more reliable than those we now have, of many of the national and local and private record sources. Further study of some of the questions posed might well be assisted by computer techniques, based on an enlargement of the computer archive of Middle Scots texts on which a start has been made in Edinburgh (Aitken and Bratley, 1967: 61–2; 1966: 45 ff.) – once we have adequate texts to feed in to the archive.

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consonants continue to occur in Scottish official and legal writings down to the eighteenth century (see MacQueen, 1957: 397 and Glossary s.v. *Ane*). That this was a quite conventional and 'unphonetic' or 'artificial' symbol for whatever form of the indefinite article the context required is indicated, *inter alia,* by usages like *ane levin, ane mendis* (= *amendis*) and *ane mis* (= *amis,* amiss): see DOST s.vv. *Ane-levin, Mendis* n. 2 and *Mis* n. 6.

[69] [54] Consisting for the most part of German doctoral dissertations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They are listed in part in Geddie (1912), and most of the remainder in Woolley (1954).

[70] [55] Most of these which have something to offer have been mentioned in previous notes.

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Addendum: prose style

Editor's note: the following are rough notes, containing material omitted from the published paper.

AJA distinguishes between a preference for hypotactic structure (subordination) in literary prose, and a preference for paratactic structure (coordination) in less studied prose. J. Smith (2012: 61 ff.) distinguishes further between a trailing style that adds subordinate clauses at the end of their superordinate clauses (appearing as right-branching in a tree diagram) and a Ciceronian style that embeds clauses within clauses (appearing as centre-embedded in a tree diagram), as well as a Senecan style (typified by Knox) that varies between long and short sentences and allows a role for parataxis. Görlach (2002: ch. 6) places syntactic developments in Older Scots prose in the context of Latin models and contemporary English.

[The following] generalisations seem fairly to sum up the regular syntactic tendencies of all the most important works of literary prose – didactic and narrative alike – from Gilbert Hay down to Habbakuk Bisset and John Spalding, and of the compilers of all the major official registers, of Parliament, of the royal Councils, and of the Great and Privy Seals, as well as most other public records of any importance. This is notwithstanding those occasional instances and bursts of racy narrative and dialogue which occur only rarely in earlier works but more frequently in John Knox's *History* and some of the writings which follow it. All these writings display a great and often excessive preference for passive and impersonal uses of the verb and all are much given to absolute and appositive participial constructions and to accusative and infinitive verbal complements, in many cases no doubt under the direct influence of their Latin stylistic models. Stock rhetorical devices, such as cumulation of synonyms, antithetical constructions, exclamations and rhetorical questions, are much in use. But perhaps the most useful single generalisation that can be made about this sort of Middle Scots prose is that it was carefully structured – into compound sentences with subordinate clauses and phrases, and into carefully fashioned periods. Typically it is structurally complex and sometimes, though not in the most efficient writers, even confusingly elaborate. In this respect serious verse in the courtly or the moralising manner evidently follows the same general precepts as good literary prose.

By way of contrast we may imagine that everyday conversational speech was then, as it is today, typically unstudied – made up of successions of disconnected or loosely connected principal statements (paratactic), tending to omit subordinating relatives and conjunctions (asyndeton), apt to lose the thread of the more elaborate constructions (anacoluthon), or to break into one statement with another (parenthesis), and given to elliptical constructions. Subordinate clauses would be much less frequent than in studied literary work, and sentence structure simpler. The active voice would predominate.

It is *a priori* probable that the profuse use of words which are close in form to Latin originals and thus necessarily of learned adoption is a literary rather than a colloquial stylistic feature. In sets of alternatives of this sort:

(Latin) *malediction*,
(French) *malison*,
(vernacular) *cursing*, *warying*, *banning*, *widling*,

the first normally correlates with other features of a specifically 'literary' provenance, whereas some of the others (in this case *malison*, *warying*, *banning*, *widling*) more often accompany other 'colloquial' features of style. All Middle Scots literary prose works employ a noticeable proportion of nouns, adjectives and verbs of Latin origin, and some – outstandingly the Mar Lodge translation of Boece's *History of Scotland* – do so in remarkable profusion, along with other artificial, Latinate features of style already mentioned.

[There is] a vast body of Latinate and vernacular vocabulary, including many sets of near-synonyms, offering a wide range of choice of individual expression. Even in the prose, of formal legal deeds, based on established 'styles' and drawing on a repertory of fairly stereotyped formulae, one finds that the formulae themselves were subject to idiosyncratic variation and modification, so that, for example, in no two 'bonds of manrent' or 'letters of assedation' will one find an identical choice of words in the various formulae of which these are composed; this despite the fact that style-books did of course exist. In other kinds of prose writing – statutory, official, legal and literary alike – one finds even less that is predictable about the word-choice. In vocabulary, no more than in other linguistic respects, was there a rigid fixed standard: idiosyncrasy and local background play their parts as well as register.

One conclusion which must follow on the above survey is that in no respect can Middle Scots literary usage in prose be described as uniform. In addition to those writers touched on above, and G. G. Smith's own description of the 'Main characteristics of Middle Scots' (1902: xvi ff.), the present essay lists many other details of spelling, as well as of lexis and syntax, in which is diversity not uniformity of usage. Nevertheless, there did exist a literary as distinct from the colloquial register.

The prescriptions of correct literary use would appear to have included these:

a general tendency to some elaboration in sentence structure and towards the use of certain constructions, such as the Latin-derived 'accusative plus infinitive' construction, which were not normal to vernacular speech;

a free use of loanwords of Latin and French origin in addition to or instead of equivalent vernacular expressions;

the employment of *quh-* forms of the relative where vernacular usage had *that* or the 'zero-form';

the (more or less sporadic) habit of inflecting certain adjectives in plural concord;

and the (more or less sporadic) use of the *ane* form of the indefinite article before consonants as well as before vowels.

The proscriptions were these:

avoidance of the characteristically paratactic syntax and certain elliptical constructions of speech;

the avoidance of some 'low' or colloquial expressions;

the avoidance of certain 'phonetic' spellings corresponding to comparatively novel 'reduced' morphemic variants (*caw = call*, *mow = mouth*, *et al.*);

the avoidance of certain regionalisms of speech (*fair = quhare*, etc.);

and the more literate and expert writers operated within a certain limited range of spelling alternatives.

Such was the 'standard' of literary Middle Scots. Adherence to this standard is the rule in the great national registers throughout the Middle Scots period and by all authors and copyists of literary works before Knox. Such breaches of these rules as instanced are, until this time, to be looked for in the local records, notably those of the burgh courts and councils, where, we may suppose, they were less likely to be challenged, and in the holograph writings, especially the correspondence, of non-professional writers. Following Knox we meet in the numerous memoirs and histories of that time, many passages of racy narrative, vernacular in syntax and vocabulary, and interspersed with reproductions of colloquial dialogue, and the narrative

passages in the court records are sometimes equally vernacular. In syntax and vocabulary at least there was latitude for wide variation of register and of idiosyncrasy. But much the same variety exists between different registers and personal styles in the standard literary languages of modern Europe, including Modern Standard English. The standards of good literary Middle Scots are more lax than these chiefly in the limited latitude granted in spelling variation.

Regional indications

Though the phonological and orthographic standards of literary Older Scots were essentially those of Central Scotland it does not appear that writers from the regions had any inhibitions about local lexical items, at least of a colourless, purely designatory kind. No doubt more of these would have been recorded had the topics specially favourable to lexical regionalism been more fully represented in the surviving and accessible sources, viz. the details of regional agricultural, fishing, mining and domestic crafts. ... ... The Older Scots historical records of Orkney and Shetland are quite typical of this. In forms and orthography, in formulae and grammar, these show little to distinguish them from similar documents of the Scottish mainland. In vocabulary, on the other hand, there is a large body of local Norn-derived words and uses in constant use, especially those for legal and administrative concepts and practices and for the local systems of weights, measures and land-measures, but also a few words of less restricted contextuality such as those mentioned above.

Conscious or overt attempts at the mimicry in writing of regionalised speech are almost unknown in the Older Scottish period and begin to appear (in Lauder's *Journals*, Cleland's *Highland Host* and Pitcairne's *Assembly*)[71] only after the middle of the seventeenth century, when too the first attempts at description of local speech (by Andrew Symson (1823: 97) as above, and John Brand in his *Brief Description of Orkney, Zetland, Pightland-Firth & Caithness* (1701) also appear. The only exception to this known to the present writer is the comic imitation of the 'broken' or 'pidgin' Scots of a Highland speaker by Richard Holland in his *Howlat* (ll. 796 ff.): the features included are the use of *scho*, *hir* in place of normal *I*, *me*, and colloquialisms of word-form and lexis. Curiously, Lyndsay of Pitscottie's comic Highlander is made to speak a racy and vernacular but perfectly 'native' Lowland Scots, adorned with one or two rhetorical graces suited to the company addressed, despite the fact that he, allegedly, "cuild nocht speik guid Inglis bot evirie word was ane mow that he spak" (Mackay ed., 1899–1911: I 198/18). The spellings *rosad* (= *roset* resin) and *tyg* (= *tyke*, cur) which occur in the Scots entries in the *Book of the Dean of Lismore*, may well reflect the confusion of voiced and voiceless stops and affricates of which much is made in the comic representations of Highland speech by Cleland (1697) and his successors down to the present day.

Colloquial usage[72]

In respects other than vocabulary then, written evidence of Middle Scots dialect forms is sparse. Reproductions in writing of linguistic forms and usages which belong primarily to the spoken rather than the standard literary register are much more common. These occur in some of the places where they might *a priori* have been expected. The earlier historians, such as Bellenden and the author of the Mar Lodge translation of Boece, put an inflated rhetorical language into the mouths of their speakers, no doubt in imitation of the rhetorical Latin they

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[71] Editor's note: see Addendum B to 'Scottish accents and dialects' (1984, 2015) in the present edition.

[72] Editor's note: AJA returned to this subject in 'Oral narrative style in Middle Scots' (1978, 2015).

were translating, so that their dialogue tends to be stylistically more inflated (and thus even less vernacular) than their narrative. But later vernacular historians and diarists, such as Knox, the two James Melvilles and Robert Bruce, are full of convincing passages of colloquial dialogue. Such writers indeed have a whole range of registers, from memoranda submitted to official bodies, sermons, polemics and formal speeches, all more or less literary in style, through lively narratives of incidents down to the wholly realistic vernacular of their dialogue. The following small extract from Robert Bruce's 'Narrative of his Troubles' (c. 1600, in *The Bannatyne Miscellany*, 1827–1855: I. 166) is typical of the latter:

> His Majestie speiris nixt at Mr James Balfour: Ar ye fullie persuadit? His ansuer wes, I sall speik nating to the contrair, sir. Bot ar ye nocht persuadit? No yit, sir, sayis he. Mr William Watsoun said siclyke. Mr Walter said that he wald affirme all that Mr Dauid Lyndsay preichit into the pulpet in presens of your majestie yisterday. Quhat said Mr Dauid? sayis the King. Mr Dauid foundit him vpoun your majesties report and made ane faithfull recounte of your reporte and sa sall we, sir. Think ye, sayis the King, that Mr Dauid doutit of my reporte? Quhair is Mr Dauid? sayis he.

The speeches of 'A Pretended Conference held by the Regent, Earl of Murray' (1570, in *The Bannatyne Miscellany*, 1827–1855: I. 37 f.; Bannatyne ed. Pitcairn, 1836: 5 f.) represent a rather different level of style. Each of the persons portrayed is made to speak in character,[73] Lord Lindsay in an excessively brash and forthright manner, simple and direct in syntax, with some lexical colloquialisms and some soldier's slang, and Knox and Wod in parodies of sermonising language, ponderous in syntax, literary in vocabulary, full of rhetorical devices, Wod's speech being divided into several 'heids' in the manner of sermons. But all of these are set speeches, much more coherent and formally contrived than the dialogue passages.

The more detailed of the narrative portions of the later criminal trials – the dittays and the depositions of witnesses – and the reports of crimes and misdemeanours before other judicial bodies, from Privy Council to Kirk Sessions, frequently employ a profusion of homely vocabulary – the vernacular designations of the commonplace objects and actions concerned – and a simpler, less elaborated syntax than some other kinds of Middle Scots writings. But here again, the most fully colloquial register is represented by the numerous instances of direct speech which occur in these reports, either when witnesses' depositions are given in their own words or when alleged statements (the exact wording of which is frequently evidential, for example, in accusations of slander) are reported. In this way, the witnesses' depositions and the accounts in the same records of the legal arguments of the advocates and prolocutors are commonly in striking contrast, presenting a stylistic range from the most direct and homely to the most stilted, formulaic and literary. One example of these depositions in direct speech has already been quoted [see Section 4 above], where dialect as well as colloquial features are reproduced. Some other typical instances are these:

> I se I can get na nychtborhede bor we sall deyll it with our neiffs. Cum doun off jugement owt of the bar & se geve ye [thow *overwritten*] dar byde at that.
>   (1533 *Dumfries B. Ct.* 136b)[74]

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[73] [According to Bannatyne, "The wryter or wryteris (for it apeiris thair hes bene moe than ane) laboures wonderfullie to counterfute the countenance, the knawledge and the affectiounes of sic as ar broght to give counsall to the Regent" (p. 5). – AJA]

[74] Editor's note: MSS transcribed for DOST by A. E. Truckell.

Walter Adie delatat with thir wordis, Wille Mayne, will ye give me ane techet to be served the Divellis dirt? I sall by ane poynt of wyne and ane laif, and I sall haif als gude ane sacrament as the best of them all sall haif.
(Hay Fleming ed., 1889: 35)

Margaret Murdow delatate for blasphemous sayings against the sacrament of the body and blude of Christ, sayand thir wordes in the oppin fische mercat: Ye gif your supper quhome to ye pleas. I traist to God ye salbe fayne to steale fra that supper and denner or this day tolmonthe. (ibid. 36)

Johne Law said, The Divell knok owt Johne Knox harnes, for, quhen he wald se him hanget, he wald get his sacrament. John Law granttis that he said, God give Knox be hanget. (ibid.)

In calling of the said Janet ane huyr, and at sche wes huyr to hyr awyn servand and hyir man, or sic lyik wordis in effect. (ibid. 105)

[He] oppinlie in the public essemble manest boistit and injurit the said minister in the pulpet, saying thir wordis following or sicklyik in effect: My brother is and salbe vicar of Crayll quhen thow sal thyg thy mayt fals smayk; I sall pul the owt of the pulpet be the luggis and chais the owt of this town. (ibid. 106–107)[75]

Applyand his doctrin to the fals bretheren of Papistis, wythowtyn ony just occasion of offence mayd be hym to ony person, Elizabeth Arnot, spows of William Bous[ie], rays in the essemble and wyth hech voce said aganis hym thyr wordis or siclyik in effect following: It is schame to yow that ar gentillmen that ye pull hym nocht owt of the pulpet be the luggis. (ibid. 107)

ʒe said thair suld be may betuix ʒou quhill ane of ʒour skinnis wes cutit
(1539, in Pitcairn ed., 1833: I. 220)

The said maister William in dispyteful maner and with thrawin continance having na thing to do at that tyme in the said kirk bot to trubill the said examinatioune said to the said Jhone thir wordis, Thow demandis of that womane the thing quhilk thow nor nane of thy opinioune allowis nor keipis. And eftir gentill admonitioun made be [sic] him be the said Jhone, he said to him alswa thir wordis, Thou arte ane verray knaif and thi doctrin is verray false as all ʒour doctrin and teiching is ... Item, the said maister William is convict for breking of the said proclamatione insafar as he vpon the tent day of December in presens of ane grite multitude and nowmer of pepill within the tolbuyth of Edinburghe, herand sum gentilmen spekand of the lordis supper was than to be ministrat the Sonday nixt eftir in the said kirk, said thir wordis, Is that ʒour communioun? The Devill birst me quhen euir it cumis in my belly. And the Devill birst thame in quhais belly it cumis, for it is ane verray Devill. (1561 ibid. 417)

And that at the Frier Wynd fute this deponar said to Pat Willson at the conveying of the last carriage thir words, Jesu, Patt, quhattin ane gaitt is this we are gangand? I trow it be not gude. And he answerit, I trow it be not gude; but weist, hald ʒour tongue. Item, deponis quhan the deponar and Pat Willson come to the Frier ʒet with the last convoy and laid the same down, Robert Ormestoune come furth and said thir words, This is not gude like. I trow this purpois will not come to this nycht. I will in and se quhat thai are doing. (1567 ibid. 494–495)

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[75] Editor's note: the quoted speech from this passage is transcribed phonetically in AJA's 'How to pronounce Older Scots' (1977, 2015).

Apart from the obvious direct speech features (of person and tense), the frequent occurrence of interrogative and exclamatory sentences and the general features of word choice and syntax already mentioned, these few examples throw up also a fair number of detailed features which in their general distribution may fairly be labelled colloquial, among them these:

the overtones of *dirt* were evidently more offensive (see s.v. in DOST) than those it has today and *belly* was at least no less offensive;

lug and the various abusive terms (e.g. *huyr*, *knaif* and *smaik*) are all primarily colloquial in their distribution;

as are *weist* (whisht!), the phrases *God give* and *hald ʒour tongue* and the expletive *I trow* (common also in colloquial verse), the form of *quhattin* and the structure of *I will [go] in and* (compare literary *pas in to*) *se*.

... ... [E]xcept in the details just itemised it would not be hard to find narrative and even sometimes polemical passages of Middle Scots prose with the same vernacular vocabulary, including analytic vernacular phrases like *come to* as well as synthetic literary ones like *succede* or *prosper*, and a similar paratactic structure. And account-books and similar factual records are commonly very vernacular in vocabulary and direct in syntax. The distinction between colloquial and literary Scots was not in fact a sharp clear-cut one but one of shades or degrees. ... ...

Some of the clerks of local communities – of Prestwick, of Peebles, of Wigtown, of Aberdeen, at various stages in their burgh records – are sometimes informal in their wording, or, as we have seen, careless in their spelling. Even legal deeds may be, though exceptionally, as in the following passage, ill-spelled:

Tyll boyn and oblesce ws / And byndyss ws and owr successoris for the tym beande perpetealy and euer to the day doym / Tyll say or synge a daly meiss tyll and for a mychty and rycht nobyll lorde and herylle of Heraille Heyrlle Wylyam the Hay . tyll his spoyss contass and layde Deym Betterecht of Dogles . tyll thair soyn Erylle Wylyam present . thar antycessoris and successoris for euer . for the rawarde gewyn till ws intyll gret myster be the handis of the forsade layde Deym Betteregis of Dogles and his soyn Eryll Wylyam the Hay present / in this deyr yeir qway ... mell gywis xxiiij schillingis . mawyte xxx schillingis . beyr ij markis . qweyte xxxij schillingis . a lytil haddok vij pennyis . a kellyn xxx pennyis . a gallon of haylle xxxij pennyis . et cet . In owr supple of owr lewynge and owr plass raparalynge And in specially owr gretest wyndoys mendyn . The qwhilk mes sall be doyn at owr he auter or qwayr it plesis the hoyr man for the tym qweill the forsade layde Layde Betteragis ples to raparalle an awter in owr kyrk for hir deuocion and than that mes to be doyn at that awter forhowte frawde gylle or ony kynde of dissate with all diligenss be grass grantyt tyll ws fra God Almychte and owr successoris or obsstakylle of ony maner.
(1482 'The Erroll Papers', 1842: 324–5)

Note in particular the ellipsis of *the day doym* and the 'phonetic' spelling *mawyte* (malt). The confirmatory deed is more conventionally spelled:

Certan euidentis and endenturis maid betuext an worschipful ladye Betreche of Douglas Contass of Erole on the ta part / And Frer James Lyndessay wycar generalle of the said ordour conuenit at Dunde and all the wardanis of the said ordour on the tother part / twychin a meiss to be songyng or said perpetealy and daly at the he auter of our said plass of Dunde ay and on to the tym it pleissis the said ladye to big and reperal an auter in the said kyrke of The Three Kingis of

> Colan / efter the quhilk bigyng the said mess to be doyn at the said auter of The
> Three Kingis / and to be callit The Contass Mes / perpetealy for certain meritis
> benefice and guid deidis doyn be the said ladye tyl our said plass of Dunde as in the
> said euidentis fullar is conteinit. (1490 ibid. 327–8)

The many surviving accounts and inventories are inevitably homely in their vocabulary, employing the vernacular terms for everyday objects. As these are commonly made by practical men rather than men of letters, there are instances to be found here also of unconventional spelling:

> Item v ald claths rewyne for my lords bourd, ... Item xi sylver spownis tharof the
> granetre has ane ..., Item in the chawmer nerrest the yet of the new hous iij bedds
> wyth iij bostrs. Item in the chawmer nerres the bourin iij bedds wy^t iii bostrs.
> (1530, in A. Laing ed., 1876: 489)

The spellings to be marked here are *bourd*, *spownis* and *bourin* (= *burn*, stream), *nerres*, and *bedds* (for the more conventional *beddis*).[76]

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[76] Editor's note: AJA does not remark on the l-vocalised *bostrs*. *Boster* is the usual form, along with *bouster*, from the second half of the fifteenth century (see DOST s.vv. *bolster*, *boster*, *bouster*).