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Nine Centuries of Man: manhood and masculinities in Scottish History, edited by Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Ewan, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2017, xii + 284 pp., £75.00 (hardback), ISBN-13: 978-1-4744-0389-4

The rise of a 'four nations' approach to British history over the past quarter of a century has had a profound influence on historical approaches well beyond its initial political and economic conception. Among the variety of socio-cultural perspectives that have adopted this methodology, gender history has been a significant beneficiary of more nuanced readings of national identities within Britain across time. Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Ewan's new collection, **Nine Centuries of Man**, seeks to add to this growing literature through focussing on the range of masculinities both emerging from and associated with Scotland, from the High Middle Ages to the late 20th century.

In exploring existing areas of historical enquiry through new methodological lenses in this way, the authors and editors are rather more successful in locating their arguments in the historiography of gender than of national identity. The introduction provides a clear, if somewhat familiar, summary of the state of the art in relation to histories of masculinity, rehearsing much of the material covered in 2014 in John Arnold and Sean Brady's introduction to their monumental collection, **What is Masculinity?: Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World** (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). In their turn, Abrams and Ewan clearly identify key debates and the range of gaps which remain in our understanding of masculinities across time which the collected authors seek to explore. What they are less successful in articulating is what a focus on the history and archives of Scotland in particular brings to these discussions. Indeed, the reader's knowledge of the shifting history of Scotland between the 11th century and 1975, as well as the related historiography across the period, tends to be taken as read by the editors. Given the immense

changes to Scottish identity – national, religious, economic – as well as its various and significant contribution to the histories of Britain, its empire, and continental Europe, this lack of justification feels like something of a missed opportunity, while a historiographic overview would have been hugely beneficial to scholars approaching the subject from a different field of specialism.

The importance of locating the arguments in both the gender and four nations historiographies is reinforced by the collected essays themselves. The most successful ones, such as Janay Nugent's location of 16th and 17th century masculinities in the context of Church of Scotland constructions of gendered authority, go beyond simply utilising Scottish archival and authored material to demonstrate how the particular social and cultural context of the material shaped definitions of masculinity. Such contexts relate comparatively not only to England or Britain but, particularly in the case of religious masculinities, to continental Europe as well, reinforcing the importance of exploring Scotland as a unique political and cultural space in European history within which gendered identities developed.

As a whole, the collection demonstrates once again the depth and breadth of scholarship relating to masculinity, although the strength in relation to period is uneven, with early modern scholarship dominating. Given the changes to Scottish society, both urban and rural, occurring in this period, this is perhaps unsurprising. Nonetheless, the intriguing work of Cynthia J. Neville on tenth-century royal seals and Tanya Cheadle's excellent chapter on social morality in Victorian Glasgow offer exciting glimpses of the many areas and periods still to be explored in greater depth. Cheadle's chapter is particularly strong in its use of theories of gender developed in relation to the early modern period to offer an important critique of established readings of gender in a later period.

The collection is ambitious not only in its periodisation but also the range of methodologies employed. Objects, documents, both official and personal, oral records and

literary all appear and are interrogated in interesting ways, although here again the results are somewhat mixed. Sergi Mainer's analysis of John Barbour's Bruce epic feels disjointed as it attempts to encompass two distinct representations of masculinity in ways which don't, on the argument presented here, necessarily link. The problems of analysis are reinforced by the extensive quotation of the poem in the original Scots, followed by the essential translation, an approach that has the potential to distance the reader not already familiar with either the text or the period. By contrast, Katie Barclay's use of begging letters as source material enables her to clearly articulate key problems with the use of gender hegemony as a framework for analysing hierarchical societies predicated on 'broader expectations [which] relied on people "knowing their place".' (144) This essay, as with all the best in this collection, offer insights that go well beyond the specificities of period, source material or theoretical approach, to afford insight into historical constructions of masculinity more broadly.

Overall, there are more essays in this collection that achieve these wider aims than otherwise, and as whole it provides a useful addition to scholarship on historical masculinities. Individual chapters will make important contributions to undergraduate reading lists, providing helpful introductions to approached and theories in the field, as well to particular regional archives and sources. The overarching question posed by this volume, of the necessity of understanding specifically Scottish masculinities as regional identities across time, may be left open, but the collection does start to demonstrate exactly why it is very much worth considering.

Jessica Meyer

University of Leeds

j.k.meyer@leeds.ac.uk

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