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The State of Scottish History: Gender

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In Scotland, the exploitation of gender history's potential to enact a fundamental paradigm shift in historical enquiry is a relatively recent endeavour. In 1990, the paucity of printed scholarship on women was such that in their pioneering collection of essays on the gendered division of labour in industrialising Scotland, Eleanor Gordon and Esther Breitenbach decried the 'enormous disjuncture between research and interest on the one hand and published material on the other'.¹ Within medieval and early modern scholarship, the situation was similarly bleak, in 1995 Elizabeth Ewan declaring starkly 'we still know little about early Scottish women'.² Approximately twenty years later, the picture is dramatically altered, with an emerging consciousness that gender history in Scotland is reaching maturity. The past two decades have witnessed the gradual accumulation of a corpus of wide-ranging and innovative research, exploring the material realities and discursive contexts of Scots women and men's lives across all time periods. Burgeoning research communities have been facilitated by the development of an institutional and committee-level infrastructure, with in 1995 the formation of the Scottish Women's History Network, now Women's History Scotland, and in 2008 the establishment of the Centre for Gender History at the University of Glasgow, currently hosting the prestigious international journal *Gender and History*. In addition, two new reference works, *Gender in Scottish History since 1700* and a *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, both published in 2006, are fulfilling a valuable synthesising role and bringing the arguments and concerns of gender history to a wider audience.³

The objective of this article is to provide a useful synthesis of recent research for those interested in employing gender as a category of historical analysis, focusing on the key themes of politics, imperialism, work, family life, sexuality, literature and religion. By no means exhaustive, it aspires to highlight the subject matter within these themes that appears to

be generating an exciting momentum, as well as the theoretical approaches that are eliciting fresh insights, whilst also revealing the ominous silences in the scholarship. It begins with an overview of the evolution of the discipline itself, nationally and internationally, during the last thirty years.

Gender History/ Women's History: An Introduction

The dual nomenclature of 'women's history' and 'gender history', often a source of confusion for those working outside the disciplines, has also been the subject of fierce debate for those working within them. Yet whilst they undoubtedly represent distinct methodological approaches, they also share many overlapping concerns. A serious academic commitment to women's history first arose out of second-wave feminism and was initially concerned with reinserting women into the historical landscape from which they had been largely absent. The titles of early scholarship reflected this, seminal works including Barbara Mayer Wertheimer's *We Were There*, Sheila Rowbotham's *Hidden from History* and Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz's *Becoming Visible*.⁴ However, it quickly became apparent that the exclusion of women from traditional histories not only created omissions but distorted the past, concealing the partial and ideological nature of the definitions being employed. The questions asked by women's historians expanded to reflect this new awareness. Why, for example, did history texts describe societies as 'democratic' when at least half the population did not have the vote, or used the term 'universal suffrage' when they were in reality referring to male suffrage?

Gender history emerged out of women's history, although it has never supplanted it; instead both disciplines operate productively alongside each other. Defined not by its subject matter but by its approach, gender history questions commonly held assumptions about gender divisions, highlighting their historical construction and viewing them as a historical fact that requires analysis. By including the category 'gender' in the historical account, gender historians seek to explore the fundamental nature of the process of historical change

and transform our understanding of the past. Bringing a gendered perspective to the Enlightenment, for example, subverts the traditional historical narrative of the period as constituting a triumph of reason, individualism, liberty and progress. Instead, gendered histories have demonstrated that the Enlightenment conception of separate spheres, which defined women in relation to the private sphere and exalted moral motherhood, also undermined claims for female equality and reinforced patriarchal relations between men and women.⁵ A comparable rewriting of history has been effected by work on class, Mary Ryan in the United States and Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall in Britain transforming our understanding of the rise of class society and the making of the middle classes by their focus on gender and family relations.⁶ Whilst in traditional accounts, the unifying factors in class formation are located in economic and political spheres, gender historians have demonstrated that class and gender are mutually constitutive and that the familial ideology of domesticity was a powerful factor in the moulding of bourgeois class identity.

The value and novelty of gender history also rests in its consideration of institutions, social formations and sources that were not previously included in the purview of history. This involves historicising behaviour and activities often deemed to be 'natural' and expanding the range of topics considered historically important, to include the sexual division of labour, domestic labour, wife-beating, working-class heterosexuality, same-sex relationships and shopping. This approach not only opens up aspects of human activity that were previously hidden from history, but also sheds light on other historical processes. Linda Mahood's study of Magdalen homes in Victorian Scotland, for example, tells us not only about the regulation of lower-class female sexuality, but also about the complex dynamics of power, politics and sexuality of the period. Similarly, Annmarie Hughes' work on domestic violence addresses the role of state actors in the persistence of an entrenched Scottish masculinity based on violence and workplace identity.⁷

In the 1980s, frustration at the continued marginalisation of women's history led a number of historians, initially in the United States, to adopt an approach influenced by post-structuralism. One of the distinctive features of this kind of history is its exploration of the

ways in which language, discourses and the non-material have shaped meanings of femininity and masculinity. Gender was redefined in more abstract terms to mean representations of the social organisation of sexual difference. The argument of historians such as Joan Scott was that powerful groups formulated ways of thinking and talking about the world (discourses) and this shaped and limited people's experience.⁸ Since gender was a primary way of signifying relationships of power, it was a concept that was integral to all areas of history. One rich strand of inquiry that emerged from this illustrates the pervasiveness of gender discourses in state policies, the military and many other areas of human activity where gender had seemed an irrelevant category. It is an approach which foregrounds the discursive use of perceived sex differences, tracing how they constitute relationships of power and the ways in which the language of gender has shored up hierarchies of race, class, regions, politics, nations and empire.

This is not to suggest that gender is *the* primary category of analysis. Gender historians have been to the forefront in exploring the interrelationship between gender and other forms of social relationship, particularly class. It is also acknowledged that in different contexts, other factors, such as class, ethnicity and race, might have greater primacy in shaping experience and identity than one's gender, and that other forms of perceived difference constitute gender as much as gender constitutes them.

Gender history is a rich and varied field of historical inquiry, which draws on a number of different approaches. It thrives in several different incarnations and co-exists and overlaps with the history of women. However elusive the goal of a transformative history, the common aims of all gender historians are to explore the fundamental nature of the process of historical change, expand our understanding of what is historically important and show how the inclusion of the analysis of gender involves rewriting the past. This is no less true in Scottish history, and it is to the ways in which gender historians have rewritten various aspects of Scotland's past, that this article now turns.

Politics

Political history, arguably still the dominant mode of historical inquiry, has in the past been construed as the discipline most hostile to gendered analysis. Scott, in her famous 1986 *American Historical Review* article, referred to it as the ‘stronghold of resistance to the inclusion of material or even questions about women and gender’.⁹ It is appropriate therefore, that it is with politics that this survey begins. The most obvious and time-honoured way in which gender has gained purchase on the field is through its meditations on the reigns of individual queens and on the political influence exercised by aristocratic women. Scottish history is no exception, with Mary, Queen of Scots a consistently popular subject of research. Recent scholarship includes Kristen Post Walton’s analysis of the shifting gender performance of Mary’s tenure as regnant queen of Scotland within the context of Europe-wide debates on women’s fundamental right to rule, and Rosalind Mitchell’s study of the diverse female coterie which surrounded Mary during her life course, which offers a new perspective on a queen usually situated discursively and materially amongst male kings and advisers.¹⁰ Fiona Downie has provided the first monograph on the fifteenth-century queens Joan Beaufort and Mary of Guelders, focusing on the extent of their political power both as kings’ consorts and in widowhood, whilst recent research on noblewomen Lady Agnes Campbell and her daughter Finola MacDonnell, royal mistress Janet Kennedy and calligrapher Esther Inglis has helped fill substantial blanks in our knowledge of elite medieval Scottish women and politics.¹¹

Gender history has also been seminal in redefining and extending what is understood by political activity, to encompass wifely advice and support, informal lobbying within familial and friendship networks and even everyday, routine acts, the daily resistances of people’s lives. This revisionist work has found particular resonance amongst scholars of Scottish history from the eighteenth-century onwards. Rosalind Carr and Nicola Cowmeadow, building on prior biographical work on Anne, Duchess of Hamilton and her politically active daughters, have demonstrated female political engagement with the Darien scheme and 1706-7 union debate.¹² Similarly, Maggie Craig has used a wide variety of

sources to reinsert women into the historical accounts of the 1745 rebellion, whilst Jane Rendall is building a picture of women's political radicalism through their literary work and social networks from the 1790s onwards.¹³ What remains under-researched, despite its popularity in English history, is non-elite women's engagement in politics and their reclamation of public spaces.¹⁴

A related project, that of demonstrating the fluidity of the 'political' and the 'personal', has been an abiding preoccupation of modern gender historians, who have questioned whether the doctrine of 'separate spheres' was a universal paradigm that necessarily determined men and women's lives.¹⁵ Jane McDermid, in her work on school board women and Megan Smitley, in her book *The Feminine Public Sphere*, have revealed how women in late Victorian and Edwardian Scotland used notions of Christian duty and civic maternalism to legitimate their involvement in philanthropic, reforming and local governmental bodies, setting important precedents for women's active participation in Scottish public life.¹⁶ In its focus on constitutional methods and organisations outside traditional suffrage associations, their work also marks a significant advance in our understanding of the first-wave feminist movement in Scotland, after a lengthy hiatus in published research.

For the twentieth century, a new book on women and citizenship, edited by Breitenbach and Pat Thane, provides invaluable surveys plotting women's involvement in all aspects of feminist and party politics.¹⁷ As it indicates, our understanding of the interwar period has benefited from a proliferation of recent studies, substantially revising our prior understanding of the period as one of relative feminist inertia, following women's partial enfranchisement. Sarah Browne, Valerie Wright and Sue Innes have highlighted the important role played by women's citizens' associations, which arose directly from the suffrage movement, and which worked to maximize female voting power by lobbying on a range of issues and organizing educational activities designed to equip women with the skills necessary to actively participate in politics.¹⁸ Hughes has demonstrated the need to redefine our understanding of what constitutes feminist activity. Her work on the role working-class

women played in socialist politics, the General Strike and popular political protests reveals how women who did not necessarily identify themselves as feminist, nonetheless responded to the extreme gender antagonism and economic insecurity of the period by practicing a 'rough kind of feminism' in their everyday lives.¹⁹

Moving forward through the century, Browne's research on the women's liberation movement in Scotland has questioned the accepted chronology of abrupt decline in 1978, arguing instead that the movement's fragmentation into a variety of single-issue campaigns led to a greater diffusion of feminist ideas. Breitenbach and Fiona Mackay have charted feminism's changing relationship with the state from the '70s to the present day.²⁰ Together with Kenneth Baxter's thesis on women in party politics and Neil Rafeek's oral history of communist women, their work marks an important reinsertion into the historical record of women whose political contribution, both then and now, has been consistently undervalued.²¹ However, a comprehensive, overarching perspective of women's political involvement throughout the modern period will only be achieved once significant gaps in the historiography are addressed. The gendering of politics during the war years, feminist activity from 1945 to the advent of women's liberation and indeed a broader application of the concept of a 'rough kind of feminism' that must surely have been practiced by working-class women to a greater or lesser degree throughout the period, are all areas worthy of attention.

Empire, Imperialism and Race

The history of the Scottish Empire and the ways that Scots both shaped and were shaped by their encounters beyond their borders is increasingly fashionable, opening up questions around the formation and nature of Scottish identity. Reflecting the collaborative nature of encounters with the 'other', historians have meditated both on the Scots in Empire, and the Empire at home. Yet, while scholars of British imperialism have long been engaged in a profitable dialogue with gender, it is only relatively recently that Scottish historians have begun to draw on the extensive literature this dialogue has generated. Expanding on the

history of Scots as colonisers, Breitenbach, in her book on the domestic understanding of the missionary enterprise, provides a thorough examination of the female experience of Scotland's imperial project across the long nineteenth century, as missionaries and missionary wives, fund-raisers, philanthropists, contributors to periodicals and speakers at public meetings. Indeed, Breitenbach argues that such women can be considered 'proto-feminists', in their use of the missionary movement to campaign for access to the professions, notably teaching, nursing and medicine.²² Equally, if not more important, is the book's gendered analysis of missionary literature. It reveals how the depiction of native women as 'degraded' drudges controlled by their, at turns, brutish, or else effeminate husbands provided a forceful justification for colonial rule; how male missionaries were heralded as exemplars of 'muscular Christianity', equipped with the requisite moral and physical bravery to face the ever present dangers of disease, conflict and wild animals; but also how contemporary biographers struggled to reconcile the lives of pioneering women with acceptable notions of femininity.²³ William Knox reflects further on this in his study of Mary Slessor, describing how Mary herself was riven with internal contradictions regarding her gendered role, as a missionary in Nigeria travelling 'where no white man would go', cutting her hair short, going barefoot, living in communal huts and providing refuge for outcast women and children, yet remaining intentionally remote from debates about women's rights in England.²⁴ In a similar vein, work by Marjory Harper, Angela MacCarthy and John MacKenzie on emigration to the New World and South Africa highlights both the scale of female migration and also their role in shaping new societies and new identities as Scots abroad.²⁵ Despite this promising start, a gendered analysis of Scots women in Empire for earlier periods is yet to be written.

A gendered history of Empire at home is still at an embryonic stage, despite suggestions in the early work of Gordon and Breitenbach that Empire was brought into the home through female consumption, and the ways that fears around national security in Empire shaped ideas of 'manliness' and state interference in the lives of working-class men.²⁶ Carr has recently demonstrated how engagement in Empire shaped definitions of manhood within eighteenth-century Scotland, illustrating both how comparisons with the foreign

'other' were used by the Lowland elite to interpret the behaviour of Highland men, and how elite manliness became implicated in the ability of Scotland to succeed on an international stage.²⁷ For historians of earlier periods, the relationship between gender, Scots and the 'other' is harder to find, but Maureen Meikle's work on lairds and gentleman on the Scottish and English borders starts to raise these questions, exploring how men and women performed their different national identities within a relatively small geographic area.²⁸ Other work has considerable potential to contribute to this discussion: the debate amongst medievalists on the significance of ethnic identities during the period where Scotland creates itself as a nation is surely worthy of some gender analysis, while new research on relationships between Scots slave owners and their children with slave women opens up space for discussions around being a black Scot.²⁹ As multiculturalism becomes central to understanding modern Scotland, perhaps it is also time to reflect more deeply on the ways that different cultures shaped Scotland's past, unpicking the intersection between gender, race, ethnicity, class and the many other facets of identity, something beginning to happen through the use of oral histories amongst migrant groups in Scotland during the twentieth century.³⁰

Work and Economy

Some of the earliest work in Scottish women's history discussed women's role in the economy.³¹ Seminal works by Gordon and Breitenbach for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and Elizabeth Sanderson for the eighteenth century began the process of placing women's economic contribution into the national history.³² The differing economic and social contexts were reflected in the divergent approaches. For historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the initial objective was to explore the entrenched gender divisions that circumscribed women's employment opportunities, whilst allowing women to retain a sense of agency as workers, and highlighting the heterogeneous nature of experience across class, culture and region, demonstrating, among other things, that women's role in industry was vital to Scotland's economic transformation.³³

In contrast, historians of earlier periods have focused on the ways that women were integrated into the medieval and early modern economy that was often built around the household and kin networks. This is not to say that women did not have gender-differentiated working roles, but the focus on family businesses and family economies has emphasised women's role as part of the economic unit of the family, rather than segregated into different industries by gender.³⁴ A notable exception is Kim Curran's work on medieval nuns, exploring their role and responsibilities within single-sex communities.³⁵ Work by Sanderson, Cynthia Neville, Deborah Simonton, and most recently Cathryn Spence, has emphasised the significance of the life-course in shaping women's experiences, as youth, marriage, motherhood, and old-age come to bear on the working life – a topic that also has resonance for the modern period in the work of Hughes and Gordon.³⁶ This has been complemented with research by Katie Barclay and Alison Duncan on the workings of the eighteenth-century household, an area crying out for further exploration in all periods.³⁷ A closer inspection of the household has also highlighted the numerous and complex ways that women and men made ends meet, with a growing body of work on crime, prostitution and makeshift economies.³⁸

As the history of work has become more developed, and reflecting the move more broadly within the discipline towards identity studies and cultural history, gender has also been used as an analytical tool to explore relations both between but also within the sexes and to understand how gender shaped people's understanding of themselves as workers. Arthur McIvor and Ronnie Johnston's oral history project on the Clydeside heavy industries has demonstrated how the physically demanding and dangerous nature of the work fostered, reinforced and reproduced a 'hard man' masculine identity, whilst simultaneously creating the conditions for the male workers' emasculation, through unemployment, disability and ill-health.³⁹ Alison Turnball has explored how men in reserved occupations during World War Two shored up their manliness against claims of cowardliness and draft-dodging, through suggesting that it was a sign of their wit and intelligence that they had avoided being sent to war.⁴⁰ Emma Wainwright's study of the 'woman's town' of Dundee, has drawn on concepts

of spatial history to illustrate how female weavers obtained sanction for their employment in a male-coded occupation, by their performance of an overtly respectable femininity, their careful traversing of the town's 'moral geography' and their complicity in the casting as 'others' of the loud-talking, shawl-wearing, frowsy-haired female spinners.⁴¹

However, in the Shetland Isles, as Lynn Abrams' anthropological history has shown, the magnitude of the demographic imbalance and its distance from the mainland metropolitan bourgeoisie rendered such manoeuvres unnecessary. In both material and representational terms, Shetland was a 'woman's world', in which men's absence on lengthy fishing trips and women's dominance of the family, the economy and the cultural imagination enabled them to construct in their minds a "liberated", autonomous identity of themselves long before organized feminism was invented'.⁴² However, there remains huge scope for applying theories of gender to other industries and time periods, while the reclamation histories that uncover the diversity of women's experiences of work and work-training are still vital, demonstrated in recent work, such as Jill de Fresnes' social history of the Scots Herring Girls and Roslyn Chapman's ongoing PhD on hand-knitting.⁴³

Family Life

Twenty-five years ago, Chris Smout singled out the topic of family life as in need of urgent attention.⁴⁴ The reason for its neglect is easy to surmise: perceived as remote from the institutions of state, it appeared of little consequence to historians preoccupied with the mechanics of change. Since that time, the family, especially as an economic and political unit, has been a growing topic of interest. Perhaps because of the historical and popular significance of the clans in Scotland, medieval and early modern historians now recognise the importance of family to economic development, alliances, political power and more.⁴⁵ Yet, while the importance of women as actors within kin networks has been recognised, it has only been with the emergence of women's and gender history that a gendered analysis has been applied to family life, helping untangle the lines and processes of social power, as well as

providing a more nuanced picture of the operation of family life. From the medieval period onwards, historians have been unpicking the nature of family relationships, with Ewan demonstrating the ways that sixteenth-century families attempted to reinforce the idea of marriage as a partnership through marriage contracts, Janey Nugent illustrating how power within the early modern household was negotiated in the context of a surveillant community, and Barclay analysing how the emotional world of the Scottish elite shaped power relationships between husband and wife.⁴⁶ Ewan and Nugent have driven research for the early modern period forward with their recent edited collection on family life that incorporates work on parenting, adoption and kin networks, and godparents.⁴⁷

The family is also of increasing significance for the modern period, reflected in Gordon and Gwyneth Nair's work on family composition in the nineteenth century, where they highlight the numerical significance of female headed households and the numerous visitors in middle-class homes, disrupting the myth of the Victorian home as a patriarchal and nuclear idyll away from the public world.⁴⁸ This is complemented by Hughes' work on the contested nature of power within working-class homes in the interwar-period, and by Kelly Davis's social anthropological research on motherhood in the post-war period that demonstrates the continuing belief in a 'maternal instinct'.⁴⁹ More clarity on the late-nineteenth and twentieth century may emerge with a new study on the history of marriage and marital breakdown recently begun by Gordon, Rosemary Elliot and Hughes, and by the doctoral work on domestic violence currently being undertaken by Megan Butler and Andrea Thomson.⁵⁰

The family also has potential for study as a place where values are shaped, where personal relationships are worked out, where people build a sense of home, and where they love. A feeling history of the family, which engages with the history of the emotions, constructing identity and self, and as a place for emotional support and security, is yet to be written for Scotland and actually is difficult to find for much of Europe.⁵¹ Barclay's work on marital relationships, which engages with how love and intimacy were negotiated within the patriarchal context of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and how ideas of love,

intimacy and gender changed with the increasing importance of individualism and Enlightenment thought goes some way to developing this history, but this needs to be expanded across time and into different social groups.⁵² There also needs to be greater discussion of individuals often viewed on the periphery of the nuclear household; something begun in Alison Duncan's work on eighteenth-century singlewomen in elite households, Stana Nenadic's work on women's career paths during the same century, and Abrams' work on orphans in the modern period.⁵³

A fuller picture of the family also requires a history of the Scottish household, how it operates and the roles of family members within it. This has begun for the nineteenth century in Gordon's analysis of middle-class homes, and for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the recently published series, *The History of Everyday Life in Scotland*.⁵⁴ As Abrams and Brown point out, the home is central to the majority of people's life experience, imprinted with society's wider structures and values.⁵⁵ Whether or not 'everyday life weighs heaviest on women', as Henri Lefebvre has argued, as a theoretical approach it accords well with many long-standing objectives of gender history, including how time may be experienced differently by men and women, how subjectivities are formed in the context of a range of competing discourses and how power and authority can be resisted and challenged through routine, personal acts.⁵⁶

The collection broadly substantiates the familiar narrative that from 1800, the Scottish home became increasingly gendered as female, discursively reconfigured as a private haven, away from the public male world of economically recompensed work. The particular implications of this shift in terms of the material realities of people's lives are explored in detail, in chapters by W. Hamish Fraser, Trevor Griffiths, Abrams and Linda Fleming, bringing new insights on, for example, the arduousness and monotony of housework in Victorian tenements; of its partial alleviation through female support networks and the communal structuring of certain tasks; of the lack of a clear demarcation for women between work and leisure time; of the overcrowding and squalid conditions which encouraged men to seek a home-from-home in the pub and of the deliberate rhetoric employed in the inter-war

years to relocate men's leisure to the 'safer', domestic spaces of the shed and garden.⁵⁷ The impression that remains is of the tenacity of gendered household roles, Callum Brown commenting that 'by the end of a century which witnessed vast improvements in gender equality in most spheres, the home remained stubbornly resistant', and with statistics for 1998-9 suggesting that women in Scottish households continue to undertake the majority of the shopping, cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing and childcare.⁵⁸ Similarly, Yvonne McFadden's ongoing doctoral work on suburbia, suggests the pervasiveness of popular discourse in structuring people's relationship with modernity and material culture.⁵⁹

As in the field of politics, 'separate spheres' as a deterministic model has been subject to sustained critical re-evaluation, with Gordon and Gwyneth Nair, in *Public Lives*, and in their recent book on the Victorian cause célèbre Madeline Smith, demonstrating the public nature of Victorian middle-class homes and the wide range of discourses that were available to bourgeois women alongside domesticity.⁶⁰ Moreover, there now needs to be a history of the medieval and early modern household that explores gender relationships in an era before 'separate spheres' came to cultural dominance, expanding on the recent work by Nugent on food culture in the seventeenth century.⁶¹ This work could be particularly fruitful if contrasted with the work on the Holy Household in Germany, which explores how the Reformation changed the shape of family life.⁶²

Similarly, while modern Scottish historians have been particularly interested in the role of men within the home, engaging in the now flourishing international discussion on the history of masculinity, this is only just being developed for earlier periods. In a working-class context, Abrams and Hughes have worked to reinstate men as social actors within the nineteenth and twentieth-century home, albeit from strikingly divergent perspectives. While Abrams has offered evidence to show that working-class fathers in the modern period were 'as affective, indulgent and involved with their children as their middle-class counterparts appear to have been', Hughes, in her forthcoming article on the history of wife-beating, has dismissed any suggestion of the emergence of a softer domestic ideal for men and insisted instead on the continuance of a traditional conception of masculinity based on violence and

workplace reputations.⁶³ An attempt to mediate between these two extremes has been made for the twentieth century by Hilary Young, in work on 'Everyday Masculinities'.⁶⁴ Men in earlier periods await further attention, although Melissa Hollander produces fascinating work on fatherhood in the early modern period and Barclay's analysis of married life gives equal attention to male selfhood, as to their wives.⁶⁵ On a more positive note, a project on 'Scottish Masculinity in Historical Perspectives' is ongoing at the University of Glasgow and will no doubt begin to redress this gap.⁶⁶

Sexuality

Research into the history of sexuality in Scotland, has, like that of masculinity, been sporadic and clustered around particular issues and time periods. In the 1980s and '90s, the focus was on illicit sex and the enforcement of 'godly discipline' by the Parish Kirk Session, the work of Michael Graham, Leah Leneman, Rosalind Mitchison and Andrew Blaikie ranging across time from 1560 to 1900. Collectively, their work suggests an overall narrative of high illegitimacy rates in the eighteenth-century, albeit subject to regional and class variations, with a decline in church authority from approximately 1780 onwards. There is a particularly lively debate around the punishment of sexual offences, with some scholars finding an attempt at equality of discipline for both men and women, while others noting that fathers of illegitimate children often successfully evaded punishment.⁶⁷

Questions of national identity have often been central to this work, in particular the formation, modification and invocation of a particularly Scottish moral and religious character at various points in the nation's history. Barclay, Carr and Norah Smith have examined the shift in sexual mores associated with the Enlightenment, when elite men, whose behaviour was held to signify the character of the nation, promoted new ideals of sexual self-control as a marker of their 'civilisation', within a wider project to rehabilitate 'North Britain' from its reputation as a 'savage' land'.⁶⁸ Writing on a much more specific historical event, Geraldine Friedman has argued that in 1811, the judges who presided over a case concerning

improper relations between two Edinburgh school-mistresses, were able to preserve an ideal of chaste Scottish womanhood, by situating female sexual agency in the Empire, embodied in the mixed race Anglo-Indian pupil who witnessed the alleged sexual activity.⁶⁹ This practice of the ‘othering’ of deviance in order to ameliorate anxiety over perceived sexual permissiveness has also been observed in other time periods. Tanya Cheadle’s work on sexually progressive sub-cultures in late-Victorian Scotland has shown how the charismatic polymath Patrick Geddes presented his vision of an imminent, neo-romantic and highly moral Celtic renaissance as an antidote to London decadence.⁷⁰ Similarly, Roger Davidson, Gayle Davis and Jeff Meek’s research on homosexual law reform between 1950 and 1980, has illustrated how legal, political and public debates were influenced by a desire to protect the purity of Scotland’s moral fibre, in contrast to the permissiveness believed to be increasing south of the border.⁷¹

Their work on homosexuality is a rarity in Scottish history. Brian Dempsey has investigated accusations of sodomy in the nineteenth century, but a LGBTQ history of Scotland is clearly still to be written, as is a study of male and female friendship, romantic or otherwise.⁷² Whilst recent scholarship within the field, including Barclay’s on elite marital relations, Gordon and Gwyneth Nair’s on Madeleine Smith’s sexual relationship, Eilidh MacRae’s on body culture and physical recreation and Lynn Jamieson’s on working-class heterosexual relationships, demonstrates a sophisticated application of new theoretical expositions on affect, intimacy, inter-subjectivity, bodies and the everyday, there clearly remains much scope for more work on other classes, sexualities and time periods.⁷³ Above all, what feels needed in this area is synthesis, particularly with regard to the nineteenth century. Mahood and Louise Settle’s work on prostitution and Tim Siddons’s doctoral work on infanticide, offer important insights into the gendered assumptions around sexuality in Victorian Scotland, but there is as yet no overarching analysis to rival those of Lesley Hall, Jeffrey Weeks and Frank Mort for the English context.⁷⁴

Education, Women’s Writing and Literature

The histories of education and writing in Scotland have been driven by an interest in nationalism and the expansion of democracy. Pride in a world-class education system, as well as high literacy levels, drove historians to uncover its roots and the reasons for its successes, while the place of literature in creating national identity led to the identification of the Scottish canon. At the same time, the importance of literacy in encouraging political engagement, as well as the fact that contributing to the public sphere through publishing is a form of participating in the polity, meant that a history of literacy and writing became key to understanding the expansion of democracy. Yet, in much of the early history in this area, the male experience of education, with an emphasis on national schooling and the possibility of university for the brightest, was assumed to be universal. As a result, the history of women's education and, to a lesser extent, their role as writers was the focus of much early women's history, as we sought to understand women's social position and how they became political actors.⁷⁵ Early work by Smout and Rab Houston demonstrated that women had better literacy than in other parts of Britain, if still falling behind their male counterparts and with some regional variation.⁷⁶ This work was expanded on by Helen Corr, McDermid and Lindy Moore who provided a picture of women's education in Scottish schools from the late-eighteenth-century onwards, demonstrating the emphasis on 'domestic' education that was provided to women, but also the ways that girls, women and even education authorities resisted this education in favour of 'book learning'. They also provided a history of women's entry into the Scottish universities and their roles as educators, with the 'feminisation' of the teaching professions towards the end of the nineteenth century.⁷⁷ Work for the modern period has recently been complemented by Katherine Glover's research on eighteenth century girls' education in private homes and Moore's work on early girls' schools, which demonstrate the investment in girl's education as a marker of a civilised society, but also their role in reinforcing gender roles.⁷⁸

This educational backdrop perhaps suggests that Scottish women should have been engaged in publishing and the intellectual public sphere from an earlier period than in many

European countries, but in fact, the picture is more complicated. On the one hand, research into women's writings from the medieval period onwards is increasingly fruitful, with anthologies of women's spiritual writings, emphasising their role in the creation of poetry and song.⁷⁹ On the other hand, work on the eighteenth century highlights that women were excluded from the intellectual societies in which Enlightenment thought was debated and formed, while very few women were published in Scotland before 1800, especially in genres other than poetry. Moreover, work on gender identities during this period demonstrate the ways that Enlightenment thought promoted a restricted role for women, focused around the domestic sphere and enabling men to be full political actors.⁸⁰ Currently there is no history of the Scottish blue-stockings, but rather depressingly, the work on the Enlightenment context now raises question over whether they even existed. Yet, such a claim needs more rigorous research and a discussion of why that may be the case. It is also the case that this is not a static picture: as the eighteenth moves into the nineteenth century, opportunities for women to participate in the public sphere as intellectuals and writers starts to expand, initially driven by women's 'special domestic' insights, but increasingly by recognition of women's intellectual and literary abilities.⁸¹ Their writings have been meticulously uncovered by a series of works on female authorship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁸² Moreover, the importance of women's writing to the twentieth-century 'Scottish Renaissance' is a burgeoning area, with ongoing research by Margery Palmer McCulloch, Angela Smith and Siân Reynolds on women and modernism.⁸³

While we are now more aware of the state of women's education across time and are uncovering the women who were intellectuals and authors, perhaps because this work is new, what female writing says about women's social or intellectual position in Scottish society is still to be uncovered. While there are a number of biographies of Scottish female writers, especially since the publication of the *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Women*, there is little reflection on who was writing and the implications for social class, literacy or the potential for social mobility.⁸⁴ While a number of Scottish female authors are now being given serious attention as part of the 'British canon', there are few survey works of women's

writing as a field of Scottish writing, and women are still to be placed in the Scottish canon, which is dominated by ‘dead, white men’.⁸⁵ There is no work on who read women’s writing or what impact it had, a noticeable dearth given the growth in reading and library history in Scotland. Patricia Bawcatt, Glover and Mark Towsey explore Scottish women’s reading habits, yet how writing by women fitted into this history is unknown.⁸⁶ There is no work on how women’s writing was weighted as texts, despite ongoing discussion on the size and costs of various editions of different books after the introduction of the printing press, and what this says about the authority they held in society. There is no work on how well women’s writings sold, who they sold to, or whether it was a good export. There is also little discussion of what role writing played in everyday life (beyond work on literacy), which is happening in England in the work of Susan Whyman and others.⁸⁷ And, this is an area where Scottish history could lead the way, with library, book and reading history a particular strength of the field.

Religious Belief and Practice

While histories of education have focused on gendering concepts such as ‘the Enlightenment’, ‘democracy’ and ‘universal access’, in the sphere of ecclesiastical history, it has been the uncritical acceptance of a gendered understanding of Presbyterianism, as an overtly misogynistic institution seminal in inculcating a national sexism, which has required scrutiny. According to Callum Brown, John Knox’s tract of 1558, entitled *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, formed the basis of a powerful myth of a Kirk intent on subjugating women both discursively and materially, through its anti-female rhetoric and its court processes, in which women’s bodies were subject to undue disciplining and control.⁸⁸ This myth has been challenged and nuanced in different ways depending on the period and topic under analysis. In the now substantial scholarship on Kirk sessions for example, historians such as Leneman, Mitchison, Margo Todd and Michael Graham have substantially revised our understanding of ‘meddlesome’ elders, demonstrating instead the altruistic motivations and attractiveness to some women of the justice provided by the parish

committees, whilst not denying the frequent brutality of their methods.⁸⁹ Similarly, in recent work on witch-hunts, a gendered approach has garnered a far more sophisticated picture of the complex motivations behind the accusations of witchcraft made by both men and women, and the impact of the prosecutions on female witches and the small minority of male witches who were accused by the Kirk and brought to trial.⁹⁰

For the modern period, the so-called ‘feminisation’ of Christianity from 1790, in which piety and morality became increasingly associated with women, and immorality with male pastimes such as gambling, drinking and womanising, is reflected in the historiography, with a notable emphasis on female agency. Lesley Orr Macdonald and Smitley have demonstrated how middle-class Scottish women capitalised on the evangelical notion of ‘woman’s mission’ to expand their roles beyond marriage and motherhood, legitimating their participation in a ‘feminine public sphere’ of philanthropic, missionary and temperance work.⁹¹ A comparable picture is emerging in research on Catholicism, Karly Kehoe’s work on women religious in Glasgow and Edinburgh illustrating the ways in which such female ‘foot soldiers’ were ‘pivotal and cooperative protagonists in a changing church’.⁹² The comparative absence of any sense of female agency in the church prior to the nineteenth century, however, undoubtedly needs rectifying. Who, for example, were our female pamphlet writers, whose work has been so successfully utilised by English historians, and if they don’t exist, why not?⁹³ And where are our modern histories of Covenanting women?⁹⁴

Conclusion

What this survey has hopefully served to demonstrate is the increasing scope and sophistication of the body of work accumulating in Scottish gender history, distinctive by its application of emergent and established theoretical approaches, notably post-structuralism, oral history, spatial history, the history of everyday life and micro-history. The challenge that remains is three-fold. Firstly, it is undeniable that large gaps in the historiography remain, especially when one reviews the themes as a whole. Secondly, there is still scant employment

of gender as a primary category of analysis by Scottish historians from disciplines other than gender history; certainly it enjoys nowhere near the same ease of application as class or ethnicity. Indeed, those historians comfortable with transitioning back and forth between gender and other forms of analysis tend to be located in Canada, rather than on Scottish soil, raising questions about what is happening that is different in institutions beyond Scotland. Finally, it is also important to acknowledge that Scotland's gender history need not always be distinctly Scottish, that it is perfectly legitimate to look beyond our borders to England and other European countries for comparative material and that making a significant contribution in an insightful and innovative way to the international historiography of gender, social and cultural history, is as important as the further nuancing of Scottish historical narratives.

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