Edited by David J. Parkinson

The Muses Threnodie: Or Mirthful Mournings on the Death of Master Gall

by Henry Adamson

THE MUSES THRENODIE

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Preface

The Muses Threnodie (*MT*) was completed on the eve of the National Covenant, 1638. From that perspective, it seems to come from a world about to end. It traces the walks taken by two of Perth's citizens as they venture out into the fresh air in pursuit of pastimes and then in search of local spots of historical and natural interest. This long poem pays special attention to various sites and monuments associated with events in the town's past. Its protagonists observe and comment on peculiar and useful features of the natural world they witness, including various species of plants and aquatic animals once prevalent in the region. At some of the spots they visit, they expatiate upon scenic beauty or rugged grandeur. Adamson draws on Scottish chorography as epitomised by the preliminary sections of Hector Boece's *Scotorum Historiae* (1527), George Buchanan's *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* (1582) and John Monipennie's much-reprinted *Abridgement or Summarie of the Scots Chronicles* (1612). In contrast to the enumerating descriptions of several of his predecessors (among them the English chorographer William Camden), Adamson hits upon an experiential way to display Perth. Though he views his region at times from national and even global perspectives, he is depicting Tayside as a region worthy of attention in its own right. *MT* has the potential to stimulate interest in the ways local literary production shapes cultural identity at and near Perth.

This edition might be considered atypical of the series in which it appears. At first glance, it appears to be in English, not Scots. Its links to Scottish literary traditions are not immediately apparent. Closer attention reveals deeper affinities. Linguistically Adamson's poem exhibits a rich merging of Scots and English; for some of its forms and items, it is unique. Topically it has exceptional range, with extended passages about cabinets of curiosity, local monuments and ruins, sports and pastimes (including archery, as well as golf and curling), herbalism and natural history, and practical and speculative branches of learning. It highlights places in and near Perth for their significance in the history of the nation. Adamson employs a wide register of literary genres to celebrate Perth's past but also probe into the causes of its present decline. He alludes to painful issues such as the Gowrie conspiracy (1600) and the loss of the Tay bridge in the flood of 1621. Tracing six excursions on foot and by boat, Adamson presents the friendship between his two main characters as both ludicrous and genuine.

MT was last edited by James Cant in 1774. Cant presented Adamson's poem as Perth's main historical source; as announced on its title page, his edition is packed with 'explanatory notes and observations, King James's charter of confirmation, an account of Gowries conspiracy, a list of the magistrates of Perth with notes' and so on. Two hundred and fifty years later, the present edition has as its primary focus the establishment and elucidation of a poem that reorients understanding of the literary culture of seventeenth-century Scotland. Study of this text calls for the range of commentary to expand into fields such as geography, architecture, botany and mathematics. Above all, this edition of *MT* is designed to shed light on the ways local

literary production shapes a sense of place at and near Perth. The poem provides a model for new kinds of maps or narratives to engage with the local landscape within a day's walk from Perth. As its two eccentric citizens visit the region's haunts and ruins, they indulge in wishful and inventive imaginings about earlier temples, townsites and bridges; they allude to the erasure of dynasties and religious traditions. The poem's model of engagement is portable; it can be put into use elsewhere.

Henry Adamson was completing *MT* in the mid-1630s, when anxieties were increasingly consuming the Scottish Church whether to accommodate observances and hierarchies deemed offensively English. The curtailed recollections of *MT* reflect this anxious period; from this perspective, its having been published posthumously, in the early weeks of 1638, just before the drafting of the National Covenant in February of that year, seems a farewell to an age but also a premonition. Situated thus, the poem is as oriented to a polarised, depleted futurity as a nostalgically depicted past.

Acknowledgements

Many conversations echo through this book, which would have been the better if these echoes had been more clearly recalled. Though it would be a pleasure to express my thanks to everyone who helped me along the way, space is limited, and some perforce will not be mentioned.

This edition appears in the form in which it was proposed to the Council of the Scottish Text Society (STS). The STS provides the most authoritative series of medieval and early modern literary texts primarily but not exclusively in Older Scots, that variety of English prevalent in southern and eastern Scotland from the fourteenth through the seventeenth century. By accepting my proposal, the STS Council inspired initial conceptual thinking about a larger collaborative project, *Walking Perth's Past*. The Council also made a consequential decision in engaging Pamela King to be the adviser for this edition. Professor King read successive drafts and commented incisively on each; she identified new avenues for research and introduced me to experts in various fields the project touched upon. I hope the resulting edition repays in some measure the Council and its adviser's faith and care.

As presented here, *The Muses Threnodie* (*MT*) fits in a research programme called *Walking Perth's Past*, vital support for which came from a 2023 Visiting Fellowship to the University of St Andrews awarded by the British Academy. I am delighted to express the programme team's thanks to the British Academy for its affirmation of our projects and our capacity to bring them to successful completion. Among other benefits, this Visiting Fellowship provided me three months of residence in Scotland, to complete this edition but also to initiate the next stages of *Walking Perth's Past*. On the strength of this award, it was possible to apply successfully to the University of Saskatchewan for a Global Communities Grant, for which I, an emeritus professor, felt particular gratitude. At St Andrews, the Strathmartine Centre provided a warm welcome and comfortable accommodation; its director, Norman Reid, and Research Fellow John Stewart showed me much kindness. The Trustees of the Strathmartine Fund awarded a Research Grant for subsequent phases of *Walking Perth's Past*. These awards and the support they entailed assured the *Walking Perth's Past* team that our research was gaining the interest of our institutional and scholarly communities, which encouraged us to proceed with greater determination.

At every stage, expert support has been forthcoming from various libraries in Scotland and beyond, including the provision of digital images of copies of *MT* and related texts and documents: the A. K. Bell Library, Perth; the Alexander Turnbull Library in the National Library of New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand; the British Library, London; the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California; the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh; the National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh; University of Edinburgh Library; University of Glasgow Library; the Richardson Research Library, University of St Andrews; the Library of the Writers to the Signet, Edinburgh; and the Committee of Management of the Guildry Corporation of Perth. I am grateful to Claire Devine, James Hamilton, Elizabeth

Henderson, Douglas McGlashan, Anthony Tedeschi, and their colleagues for the care and kindness with which they responded to my requests.

This edition was completed at the University of St Andrews. I would like to thank its principal, Dame Sally Mapstone, for her cordial welcome and cogent advice. As Head of the School of English, Ian Johnson advocated strongly for *Walking Perth's Past*. From start to finish, Rhiannon Purdie kept me convinced that the edition could be achieved and guided me past various editorial whirlpools; its completion is very much due to her wisdom and watchfulness.

Two more people have sustained the project throughout. Fresh from editing George Lauder and *Jacobean Parnassus*, Alasdair MacDonald encouraged me to tackle *MT* and advised me about the presentation of evidence and argument; assisted by Betty I. Knott, he prepared translations of the preliminary Latin poems and identified readings for emendation. Every day of the last four years has been illumined by conversation with Heather Giles about some aspect of the project; in July 2023, she spent two weeks in Perth with me, walking along its waterways and meeting with representatives of local and national organisations. She commented trenchantly on every draft of every section. This project could not have been completed without her help.

Walking Perth's Past has provided a stimulating context for this edition. I am grateful to Derek Hall, Lucy Hinnie, Lorna MacBean, Jessica Reid and Bess Rhodes for devising further steps in our shared research programme, including podcast episodes, a research workshop and further community engagement in Perth. Also part of *Walking Perth's Past* has been my University of Saskatchewan colleague Brent Nelson, who first encouraged me to take up Adamson's poem, which he was studying for his research database *The Digital Ark*.

In Edinburgh, Jane Dawson, Julian Goodare and Jamie Reid Baxter showed me how to address some historical and textual questions. In Glasgow, Rhona Brown, Craig Lamont, Margaret Mackay, Theo van Heijnsbergen and the lively-minded participants in a seminar at the University of Glasgow's Centre for Scottish and Celtic Studies opened my eyes afresh to the larger implications of Adamson's work. Also in Glasgow, the editors of *Scottish Literary Review* permitted me to use some findings and arguments from my article on *MT* (Parkinson 2022b). At the University of Bristol, Kate McClune brought *MT* into a wide-ranging workshop on ecology, conservation and the humanities. At the University of Sussex, Allison Steenson led a masterclass that provided a memorable opportunity to discuss some of the methods and tools used in the edition.

In and near Perth, support was unstinting: Rosalind Bryce, Yunior Perdomo, Matthew Short and Steven Timoney at the University of the Highlands and Islands; Catherine Leatherland (Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust); Mike Robinson (Royal Scottish Geographical Society); David Strachan (Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust); Mark Hall (Perth Museum and Gallery); John Jessop and the Historic Towns Heritage Trust; the Friends of the Perth and Kinross Archives; and abidingly, Margaret Borland-Stroyan, David Bowler, Theresa Hughes and David Perry of the Perthshire Society of Natural Science.

Various other kinds of advice have been gratefully received, if not perfectly followed: on the Bonar MS, Elizabeth Ewan, Susanna Kuokkanen and Sebastiaan Verweij; on freemasonry, Andrew Prescott; on Master Gall and Monsier George, Donald Smith;

on music and song in *MT*, Jane Pettegree; on wells near Perth, Margo Todd; on freshwater pearl mussels, Mary Cairncross; on salmon, Ronald N. B. Campbell. It is also a pleasure to thank Payel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee, Armel Dubois-Nayt, Tricia McElroy, Rachel Parkinson and Nicola Royan for their encouragement and help. Bringing the whole process to a happy conclusion, Demi Wormgoor, Christy Beale and Paul Martin expertly prepared this volume for publication.

Abbreviations

Aldis	NLS, *Scottish Books 1505–1700*
An	George Anderson's 1638 print of *MT*
BL	British Library
Bo	Bonar Commonplace Book
Canmore	*Canmore: National Record of the Historic Environment*, https://canmore.org.uk/
CHEL	*The Cambridge History of the English Language*
DOST	*Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*, part of the *Dictionary of the Scots Language*, https://dsl.ac.uk/
EEBO–TCP	*Early English Books Online–Text Creation Partnership*
EME	Early Modern English
ESTC	*English Short-Title Catalogue*, https://cbsrinfo.ucr.edu/ESTC
KJV	King James version of the Bible, 1611
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
MT	*The Muses Threnodie*
Mu.	Muse (as section heading)
MW	*The Muses Welcome*
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NRS	National Records of Scotland
ODNB	*The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, www.oxforddnb.com
OED	*The Oxford English Dictionary*, www.oed.com
OSc	Older Scots
PKS	Perth Kirk Session records
PP	Perth Presbytery minutes
Pre.	Preliminary (as section heading)
PTC	Perth Town Council minutes
RPS	*Records of the Parliaments of Scotland*
SP	James Balfour-Paul, *The Scots Peerage*
SRS	Scottish Record Society

STC	*A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640,* 2nd ed. begun by W. A. Jackson and F.S. Ferguson, completed by K. F. Pantzer, 1976–91
STS	Scottish Text Society
UP	University Press

Introduction

As announced on the title page to its 1638 imprint, *The Muses Threnodie* (*MT*) is a poem 'containing varietie of pleasant poeticall descriptions, morall instructions, historicall narrations, and divine observations, with the most remarkable antiquities of Scotland, especially at Perth'. In nine parts, called Muses, it depicts a series of day-long routes that two citizens take, on foot or by boat, in various directions from their town. As they go, they share knowledge about the sites they come across. The author of the poem, Henry Adamson, knew the town and its district; he lived there almost all his life. His expression of his interests is neither simple nor uniform; in its subject, style and tone, *MT* is protean. At one level, the poem is a satire on provincial, middle-class pretensions, but its two main characters rise to seriousness and eloquence when they are engaged in the extended narratives and reflections that take up much of their dialogue.

In various ways, the poem is also elegiac. Its narrator is commemorating events that took place over a decade earlier, and he does so to lament the subsequent death of his companion. Besides the narrator's indulgence of his personal grief, deeper laments arise for Perth's ruined monuments, not least its pre-Reformation religious houses but also the walls, waterworks and Tay bridge that once displayed the town's former prestige and prosperity. For all its playfulness and free movement through open space, *MT* has a way of circling back into meditations on loss and change. The poem's mercurial manner may in part be due to the challenge of reflecting independently on urban decline while requesting help from powerful, distant personages.

MT can be seen within a tradition of poems on the relationship between Perth and the river Tay written by medieval and early modern clerics, teachers, merchants and burgh officials (Adamson 1618, 137–61; Marshall 1849, 174–8; Smart 1932, 16; *Perth Guildry Book* 1993, 493; *Corona Borealis* 2020, 117–37). This tradition has a long afterlife (MacKenzie 2019). Many of the earlier Perth poems are directed to visiting monarchs, and *MT* also has moments in which Charles I is appealed to, if not directly addressed. Nevertheless, Adamson bases his poem in its local, middle-class context. Not so much petitioning for royal regard as celebrating its civic audience's access to notable sites nearby, *MT* gains a sharpening of focus, the significance of which is now becoming evident. Rhiannon Purdie comments that this is a poem 'about the contours of Perth for the very people who walk or boat along them' (2023).

The author of *MT* had deep roots in Perth but also wider connections. Henry Adamson was reader at Perth's parish church, St John's; for decades he played an important but supporting role in local worship and administration. Two of his uncles, Patrick Adamson, the ill-starred archbishop of St Andrews (1537–92), and the Perth magistrate Henry Anderson (died 1623), were celebrated neo-Latin poets. Henry Adamson's elder brother John (1576–1651?) served as principal of the Town's College of Edinburgh, that city's university (Handley 2004). John Adamson edited *The Muses Welcome* (1618) for James VI and I's only return visit to Scotland and collaborated

with the rector of Edinburgh's High School Thomas Crawford and Scotland's premier poet William Drummond of Hawthornden to devise speeches and pageants for Charles I's 1633 visit (*Scotlands Welcome*). These affiliations hint at a distinguished but politically complex background to Henry Adamson's poem.

Adamson did not attain the standing of his famous relatives. Despite his long service in the parish and presbytery, he was never ordained as a minister. His subordinate status offers one reason why *MT* only touches upon high-flown genres such as epic or panegyric. In its burlesque episodes, contestive dialogue and pervasive mimicry, it takes up Dunbar's and Buchanan's tools of *ad hominem* satire but handles them more gently; in this regard, Adamson merits comparison with his contemporary, the neo-Latin poet Arthur Johnston (*Apollos of the North* 2006, xlviiii). Reading *MT*, we never forget that the two main characters are friends as well as two of Perth's more colourful personalities. With its mock-heroic, mock-pastoral representation of sports, merriment and song, *MT* epitomises the practice of convivial verse persisting in seventeenth-century Scotland, following the tradition of *Christis Kirk on the Grene*; but it advances beyond this tradition by nudging these topics toward social commentary. The comic and satiric touches enhance the presentation of life in a town mourning its former eminence.

One may detect a similar modulation in Adamson's linguistic choice (discussed below), of an English with its resources expanded by frequent recourse to Scots. Though he had a reputation as a neo-Latin poet, he is not writing (as in the contribution ascribed to him in *The Muses Welcome*) for a scholar-king; nor is he addressing an international audience (*Bridging the Continental Divide* 2012–2020, xi–xiii). The readers of *MT* are inhabitants of Perth and its region who are concerned with the challenges of economic, environmental and political change, which the poem identifies. In its diction and many of its allusions, *MT* summons these readers into the zone of polite, serious discourse in which they conduct their worship, business and other civic affairs; its scope of address occasionally expands to citizens in other Scottish burghs, and hence the nation. In its phonology and prosody, but also its emphasis on local turns of phrase, *MT* assures these readers that their feet are planted on solid local ground.

This counterpoise of polite and colloquial has implications for the way the poem is situated from the outset. Such a learned title as *The Muses Threnodie* is bound to create expectations of high style, but these are undercut by the ensuing reference to *Mirthful Mournings*. In their catalogue entries for the poem, libraries have emphasised its comic and critical tendencies. WorldCat (worldcat.org) gives it the subject heading 'Scotland – Humor'; the NLS catalogue calls it 'A satirical poem containing information about the antiquities of Perth and its surroundings'. *MT* turns out to be a poetic narrative in which a citizen of Perth recalls his excursions a decade or so earlier with a now-deceased friend into the regions around their town. During four eventful days and their aftermath, these two wayfarers exchange discourses about the natural features and historical associations of the sites they visit. They debate the causes of their town's cultural and economic decline. They find secluded places in which to escape and vantages from which to consider 'the citie woes' (7Mu.166). Now mourning the death of his friend, the survivor finds consolation in their having claimed the right by skill, learning, curiosity and eloquence to step beyond their workaday lives in so crowded, malodorous and closely shepherded

a town. This consolation is not undercut by indications that their access to these artistic and intellectual virtues is imperfect. The beguilingly inglorious verse in which Henry Adamson clothes his characters' sentiments and aspirations serves as the outermost of several stylistic misdirections, as if to distract official attention from any culpable criticism within.

Authorship and date

Evidence for authorship in An

On its title page, the 1638 print of *MT* identifies 'Master Henrie Adamson' as the author (1Pre., p. 49). The next leaf, recto, presents Adamson's dedication to 'his native town of Perth' (2Pre.). In these conventional ways, this volume indicates its authorship; but, on its ensuing pages, it reveals a more complex, layered awareness of the milieu in which it took shape. One more turn of the page, and the preface (*To the reader*) casts a partial light on relations between the author and the published text. This preface evokes the poem's initial production and reception by alluding to the 'recreation' and 'great contentment' of Henry Adamson's first audience (3Pre.). As long as this tight-knit enjoyment lasted, there would have been no call to prepare the poem to 'thole the presse' (3Pre.). In its original setting, the poem grows out of the very pastimes of tale-telling, impersonation and role-playing, competition and collaboration, that it goes on to exemplify.

A main function of this preface is to display a letter of commendation from 'the prime poet of our kingdome', William Drummond; this letter is characterised as 'the last brash' in a series of efforts to convince the author to let his poem be published (3Pre.). Drummond shows awareness of at least the imminence of Adamson's death: he links the blazoning of Perth's 'due honours' to the raising of Adamson's own 'monument'; both are 'preserved by the towne of Perth for her owne sake first' and then for the author's (3Pre., p. 50). These remarks depend on their writer's knowing that Perth town council had already sponsored the publication of the volume. Drummond summons up funereal associations that will be made explicit later in the preliminaries.

Within the fictive world, authorship is shared by the two main characters, known throughout as Monsier George and Master Gall. Both of them correspond to documented citizens of Perth: Gall (referred to once only as James Gall; 3Pre.) and George (identified only once as George Ruthven; 1Mu.a) figure in town records. The shift into convivial role-playing begins in the preface to the *Inventarie*. This preliminary poem 'was alleaged to be written by Master Gall'. The point will be reiterated at the beginning of the poem proper, where the narrator, Monsier George, extols Gall's 'matchlesse Muse' for having made his collected curios (which he calls *gabions*) 'immortall' (1Mu.4). The editors acknowledge that the *Inventarie* was composed by 'the author of this book', but 'not without Monsier George his owne advice' (3Pre.). They dismiss Gall's candidacy, only to suggest that George has taken a hand in the making of the *Inventarie*. It has already been described as a place-holder, to suffice until this second character, the nonagenarian Monsier George, has 'set out the historie of himself' (3Pre.). In the copy of the *Inventarie* in the Bonar Commonplace Book (described below), the foregrounding of characters at the author's expense continues,

with George highlighted as 'ane citizen of perthe or Stjounstoune quho wes callet Mr George Rothuen' and Henry Adamson dismissed as merely 'ane mirrie poet'.

The game of impersonation continues in the preliminaries to the 1638 print of *MT*. The *Apologie*, the ensuing piece, is described as having been composed 'as by the mourner' – Monsier George again, persisting in grief over the defunct Master Gall. However, the pretence is flimsy; this new section has an argumentative edge more in character with the actual author and his sense of the risks of publishing an unfinished work than it does with friendships sustained or remembered. The *Apologie* contrasts decisively with the burlesque of the preceding *Inventarie*: no more jolly conviviality but instead concerted, learnedly documented argument about the poet's role in instilling virtuous behaviour, 'true nobility', in spite of the envious backbiting of sycophants. Going well beyond the *Inventarie* in referring to the circumstances of composition of the book as a whole, the *Apologie* identifies the moment at which *MT* was 'reft from under my rude quill' (5Pre.98). Someone else has intervened, and the text has been sent on an ambitiously outward course. This arbitrary cessation of an incomplete process of composition has aroused the fear of hostile misreading. The interplay of past jollity with present anxiety is thus woven into the depiction of authorship. From this perspective, the 'Farewell' appended to the *Apologie* marks the author's relinquishing of his text. One turns the page, however, and that farewell takes on further significance, in Thomas Crawford's Latin elegy about the author's untimely death.

John Adamson's role

While Henry Adamson was in the last stages of his fatal illness and even after his death, momentum was building towards the publication of *MT*. In this activity can be detected the presence of the author's distinguished elder brother John. John Adamson served as minister at the parishes of North Berwick, Liberton and then Edinburgh's Greyfriars, but also as a member of the faculty of the Town's College of Edinburgh and for many years its principal. Guiding *MT* towards publication, John Adamson reprised the editorial role he had perfected in the compilation of the volumes commemorating the visits of the absentee kings James and Charles in 1617 and 1633 (*MW* 1618; *Entertainment* 1633; Craufurd 1808, 23; Dalzel, Laing and Innes 1862, 2.97). John Adamson is also reputed to have worked with David Calderwood to edit the *Melvini Musae* (1620), a collection of anti-episcopal poems by the presbyterian reformer Andrew Melville (Reid 2014, 133–4; Green 2016). For each of those projects, he remained anonymous, one benefit of which would have been that it enabled him to cross increasingly sharply defined political lines without being typecast within a single faction.

Loyalty to his family and home town would make sense as factors in John Adamson's decision to advocate for the publication of *MT*. Political adeptness may also have played a role. With its celebration of vigorous outdoor games and pastimes, praise of Perth's ascendant noble family the Hays, suppression of positive comment on its disgraced Ruthvens, and accolades to James VI and Charles I, the poem upholds a regime that faced increasing criticism from dominant voices in the reformed Church of Scotland. Between 1634 and 1638, John Adamson moved from endorsing to denouncing episcopal injunctions (Row 1842, 374; Johnston 1911, 306).

His commitment to *MT* had been fulfilled in the nick of time, just before the collapse of the Scottish Church's accommodation of royal prerogative and the promulgation of the National Covenant.

John Adamson's professional advocacy for his brother was part and parcel of his familial role as elder brother. Though based in Edinburgh, John maintained strong ties with his home town, inheriting properties in Perth's Watergate and Southgate (Milne 1891, 179, 194, 235, 243, 246). In 1618, the Perth section of his *Muses Welcome* included a poem by *Henricus Adamides*. In 1619, John advised and advocated for his younger brother when Henry sought the position of reader at Perth's St John's church. In his last testament (attested 9 February 1637), Henry named John executor for and guardian of his youngest children, James, Margaret and Janet, in the event of the decease of their mother, Jean Letham (*Scotland's People* 2024; NRS CC20/4/9, pp. 546–7). As John Adamson's negotiations with Perth town council show, he also took on the role of his brother's literary executor. He emerges as a likely candidate as the writer of the dedication, preface, errata, rubric and marginal glosses; he may also have contributed the anonymous short poems *In authorem libri* and *Ad Pertham*. His professional connections with William Drummond would help to explain why that famous poet contributed an admiring letter to *MT*. John Adamson also had close ties with the printer George Anderson, who had already published books by him in 1637.

As principal of the College of James VI in Edinburgh since 1623, Adamson was well placed to commission prefatory texts by Edinburgh luminaries. He appears to have circulated at least parts of his brother's poem with his contributors, William Drummond, Thomas Crawford and John Moore. Drummond's letter exhibits particular but not unique insight into *MT*'s design and structure. In his first piece, Crawford identifies *MT*'s diversity of genre. Moore shares Drummond's appreciation of the dressing of 'wisedome' in 'follies collours' (11Pre.2). John Adamson evidently relied on established professional and personal relationships in commissioning these commendatory texts. He would have been under particular pressure in gathering the less cogently integrated makeweight pieces for the final preliminary quire; Crawford's second contribution digressively lauds the poet's archepiscopal and Latinist uncle Patrick Adamson; two anonymous epigrams (9Pre and 10Pre; likely by John Adamson himself) restate the theme of grief over the poet's death.

John Adamson was ideally placed to orchestrate the preparation of *MT*. It was in his interest to ensure that the poem would repay the expressions of respect lavished in its preliminaries. As published, *MT* is coloured by his concept of its form, meaning and purpose. Advocacy for a local poem deserving wider recognition is evident in all the steps John Adamson took in preparing the way for *MT*'s publication; but the impression he evidently worked hard to instil, of a fully rendered and articulated long historical poem in nine parts, may be slightly misleading. Perhaps the complaint voiced in the *Apologie* should be taken seriously that the poem had been pulled out of the author's grasp while still unfinished.

Henry Adamson: biography

The author of *MT* is the Henry Adamson who was baptised at St John's Church in Perth by its minister Patrick Galloway on 11 November 1581 (A. K. Bell Library, Old Parish Register 387/1, p. 110). He was born into a prosperous, high-status local family

of merchants and administrators. His mother was Margaret Anderson, sister of the local magistrate Henry Anderson. His father was the merchant James Adamson (died 1623), a leading light of Perth's civic establishment, who during a long life served the burgh as bailie (municipal magistrate), dean of Guild, master of King James Hospital, elder of Perth Kirk Session (parish court) and provost (mayor). James's eldest brother Patrick Adamson (alias Constantine; 1537–92) was the eloquent, controversial, ousted archbishop of St Andrews (consecrated 1576; Kirk 2004). Patrick was not the only disgraced Adamson uncle; his and James's brother Henry, dean of Guild in the 1580s, long evaded charges of adultery but was killed by a cuckolded husband's kinsman (*Perth Kirk Session Books* 2012, 48–53). Literary excellence had been achieved on both sides of the family: Patrick Adamson and Henry Anderson were respected Scottish exponents of neo-Latin poetry, and selections from their work would be included in the epochal 1637 anthology *Delitiae Poetarum Scotorum* (*Bridging* 2012–20). The family's reputation for learning and eloquence was upheld by Henry's elder brother, John. A review of the evidence for the biography of Henry Adamson contributes to understanding the authorship of *MT* as well as elucidating several points of interpretation in its text.

A son in one of the town's most prominent families, Henry Adamson would have been educated at Perth Grammar School. This institution enjoyed a high reputation but had entered a hiatus during the years of Henry's early schooling. Its long-serving rector William Rind accompanied the young earl of Gowrie first to Edinburgh in 1591 and then to Padua in 1594, not returning to Perth until 1597; in the interim the school's operation would have been left to its *doctors* (assistants) such as Duncan Riddoch (Juhala 2004; Smart 1932, 12; Durkan 2013, 354). It is possible to glimpse something of the curriculum that would have prevailed at a Scottish grammar school in the late sixteenth century. Describing his own childhood in Montrose in the early 1560s, the reformer James Melville lists his textbooks: 'the rudiments of the Latin grammair, withe the vocables in Latin and Frenche' and 'dyverse speitches in Frenche, with the reiding and right pronunciation of that toung', leading to Lily's and Linacre's Latin grammars. Pupils advanced to some of the shorter Colloquies of Erasmus, with a selection from Virgil's Eclogues, Horace's Epistles and Cicero's letters to his wife Terentia (1842, 17; Durkan 2013, 79–80). In recalling his opportunities for recreation at school, Melville's style becomes more animated:

> Ther also we haid the aire guid, and fields reasonable fear, and be our maister war teached to handle the bow for archerie, the glub for goff, the batons for fencing, also to rin, to loope, to swoom, to warsell, to preve pratteiks, everie ane haiffing his matche and andagonist, bathe in our lessons and play. A happie and golden tyme, indeid … (1842, 17)

These outdoor memories rise fluently into Scots.

A *Henricus Adamsoun* appears in the list for 1615 of MAs of the Town's College of Edinburgh; this is the earliest mention in these academic records of anyone by this name (Fairlie 1615, title page; University of Edinburgh 1858, 29). If this *Henricus* is the poet, he would then have been about 33. Graduating so 'well stept in age' was not unheard-of: before receiving the MA and being elected as professor of Humanity in 1597, the Edinburgh academic John Ray had long been 'employed in diverse private

charges', including service in the household of Alexander Guthry, Edinburgh Town Clerk (Craufurd 1808, 41; Durkan 2013, 108). John Adamson, six years older than Henry, graduated sixteen years before him, in 1597, having been 'most approven, and elected regent to his classe' (University of Edinburgh 1858, 14; Craufurd 1808, 42).

In his history of the Town's College of Edinburgh, John Adamson's colleague Thomas Crawford recorded the 'manner of the tryal of the Students of Philosophy'. New students were given 'an publick theam prescribed to them in Scottish' to 'turn it in Latin, and write it over in a fair hand'; next, a Latin theme was to be translated into Greek. Students were then given a passage by 'some Latin or Greek author' for logical analysis; this exercise led into questions on Pierre Ramus' method of logic and studies in Greek poetry and prose. Students were then examined in Aristotelian logic, leading to study of the Topics and Sophistics, together with further study of Ramus, followed by 'interrogating' selections from Origen's treatise on First Principles and Aristotle's Ethics (Craufurd 1808, 57–9). It is a stringent if circumscribed curriculum, designed to bring students rapidly from grammar and rhetoric to logic and disputation; Aristotle figures large, but even more does the anti-Aristotelian Ramus.

It might be asked why John and Henry Adamson studied at Edinburgh rather than St Andrews. In the seventeenth century, Perth lay within the latter university's province (Smart 1974, 96). There is precedent in John Ruthven, earl of Gowrie's attendance at Edinburgh (Juhala 2004). Edinburgh's rising status and enrolment may have been a factor in their choice. Another compelling reason for the Perth Adamsons to avoid St Andrews would have been the disgrace and downfall of their uncle Patrick, the archbishop, in the late 1580s, recent enough to be fresh in memory.

The year of King James's only return visit to Scotland was decisive for Henry Adamson. By the spring of 1617, Adamson had been leading the singing of the Psalms in place of John Fyff, the reader at St John's Church. Now he announced to the kirk session that his brother John Adamson had sent him word of 'sum mater being to his behuiff' (benefit), having implicitly to do with a position elsewhere (PKS CH2/521/6 12 May 1617, pages 189–90). The gambit worked, because of Henry's cachet as a son of a former provost but more obviously because of the prestige of his elder brother John, by then minister of Liberton and regent of Philosophy at the College of Edinburgh. The hint of another offer for Henry's 'behuiff' was sufficient; Perth Kirk Session supported Henry's appointment. Within a fortnight, its members agreed to provide two hundred merks from Hospital revenues each Whitsunday and Martinmas toward the new reader's stipend, 'for taking up the phsalmes at preching and prayeris at the kirk of Perth' and 'to hald ane musick scole' (PKS CH2/521/6, p. 192; 26 May 1617).

As reader, Adamson would enter his lectern beneath the pulpit in St John's kirk to read passages from the Bible for an hour before each Sunday service but also on Saturday mornings (Todd 2002, 68; *Perth Kirk Session Books* 2012, 30). Though no record of Adamson's inception has been found, his successor's commencement in the office of reader was described in the Chronicle of Perth. On 5 September 1637, the provost and town council paraded into St John's kirk, where they invested Mr Robert Lawrie at his lectern and 'deliverit to him the bybell and psalme buik in his hands' (*Chronicle of Perth* 1996, 27); though this investiture was unprecedentedly performed by town council rather than the parish's ministers, its general outlines would have been followed in Adamson's commencement, twenty years before. As Lawrie's predecessor at this lectern, Adamson would have read from the King James Bible; in 1611,

the year that version was first published, Perth's dean of Guild had presented 'ane new bybill contening the auld and new testamentes of gret volume' to Mr Alexander Balneavis, then reader (PTC B59/16/1 25 March 1611, p. 540). As precentor, Adamson also led the rendition in church of psalms selected for the services, probably from the *Psalmes of David* (as in the editions Hart printed regularly between 1611 and 1622); he chanted the melody of each line solo, to be echoed by the congregation.

Adamson had already taken his first steps as the substitute and possibly even the new incumbent in this double role by 5 July 1617, the day of James VI and I's visit to Perth, during the king's first and only return to Scotland since assuming the English crown in 1603. Commemorating James I's 1617 visit, *The Muses Welcome* was edited by Henry's brother John. It contains groups of literary offerings from places on James's itinerary as he crisscrossed the nation. The section for Perth includes *Heliomonikon* ('On the Sun-King'), a Latin poem by *Henricus Adamides Perthensis*. *Heliomonikon* appears amidst a sequence of poems that is headed by three pieces by Perth's most distinguished living Latin poet, Henry Anderson, Adamson's maternal uncle. It has been suggested that Anderson, or else the Perth schoolmaster Patrick Johnstone, was in fact the author of the entire sequence (Smart 1932, 16; Green 2016, 149). Equating James with Phoebus, *Heliomonikon* uses a well-established trope of Stuart kingship. This poem takes its place respectfully and competently within neo-Latin adulation of King James but also as an assurance of a lively literary culture in Perth, and indeed of the family tradition of neo-Latin eloquence celebrating kingship. Given this prominence as an eloquent representative of his town in addressing the king, Henry Adamson owed much to his elder brother. Both he and the town recognised this debt: on 1 February 1619 Perth town council gave Adamson six days' leave to visit John, 'now seik in Edinburgh' (PTC B59/16/1, p. 676).

His working week was normally more mundane. Along with his regular duties as reader, Adamson was tasked with some at least of the responsibilities of a parish clerk. For instance, it fell to him to register baptisms (PKS CH2/521/7 11 February 1619, pp. 14–15). Adamson was also assigned the duty of proclaiming the banns of proposed marriages on successive Sundays before the wedding. When he failed in this duty, he was reprimanded (PKS CH2/521/7 23 December 1622, p. 385).

Adamson's place in the ecclesiastical hierarchy advanced a step in 1619, when he applied for the additional post of clerk of Perth presbytery. This was the higher court of the ecclesiastical district, to which matters were referred by the kirk sessions of its member parishes. Presbytery met regularly (at its peak, once a week) in the vestry of St John's kirk in Perth. Adamson was called to 'giff specimen doctrine' on the gospel of John, 3:16, a core text of Christian doctrine (PP CH2/299/1 9 February 1619, p. 32). The following week, Adamson was accepted as clerk. After a hiatus, he served in this office until his final illness. Attending presbytery, he would have rubbed elbows with the ministers of parishes such as Aberdalgie, Abernethy, Dron, Forteviot, Kinfauns, Kinnoull, Methven, Rhynd and Scone (Wilson 1860, *passim*), districts that figure in *MT*.

Adamson made more regular appearances in Perth presbytery records than in kirk session or town council minutes. As shown by his declaiming a 'specimen doctrine' by way of an audition, his primary duty would be to take his turn in *giving the exercise*, the exposition of a scriptural text (*DOST exercise n.* sense 2; Cowan 1982, 132; Todd 2002, 30, 49, 363n4). Members of Perth presbytery usually gave the