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## Paper Monuments: the Latin Elegies of Thomas Chambers, Almoner to Cardinal Richelieu

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**PAPER MONUMENTS:  
THE LATIN ELEGIES OF THOMAS CHAMBERS,  
ALMONER TO CARDINAL RICHELIEU**

*Kelsey Jackson Williams*

On 6 September 1638 Cardinal Richelieu received a messenger from the king informing him of the birth of the future Louis XIV. Richelieu, then with the army at Saint Quentin, immediately proceeded to the local church, accompanied by a train of noblemen, officers, and bureaucrats. There they heard mass, the *Te deum* and *Domine salvum fac regem* were sung, and afterwards the cardinal gave his benediction to the assembled congregation, artillery firing all the while to mark the royal birth. Leading this thanksgiving mass was one Thomas Chambers, the son of an Aberdeen merchant and almoner to Cardinal Richelieu.<sup>1</sup>

Chambers was one of a multitude of Scots serving the French state during this period. While the Auld Alliance may have lost some of its vigour by the seventeenth century, its long-term impact was still very real for the soldiers, scholars, bureaucrats, and merchants who lived their lives between France and the Stuart multiple monarchy.<sup>2</sup> In the decades since 1560 this human and cultural exchange had taken a new, confessional turn as France became a key node in the European network of Scottish

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I am indebted to Steve Murdoch and Peter Davidson for much valuable advice on Scottish soldiers and Catholics abroad, to SSL's anonymous reviewer for suggestions on structuring and argument, and to Michelle Gait and all the staff of Special Collections, Sir Duncan Rice Library, University of Aberdeen, for their kindness and efficiency in providing me access to the Strachan *album amicorum*.

<sup>1</sup> Theophraste Renaudot, *Recueil des gazettes nouvelles* (Paris: Bureau d'Adresse, 1639), 535-536.

<sup>2</sup> The older assessment of the Auld Alliance's passing with the Reformation has now been systematically challenged by Siobhan Talbott, *An Alliance Ended?: Franco-Scottish Commercial Relations, 1560-1713* (PhD thesis, University of St Andrews, 2010). On the literature surrounding this, see *ibid.*, 13-19, and also Matthew Glozier, *Scottish Soldiers in France in the Reign of the Sun King* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), esp. chaps. 2-3. Francisque Michel's venerable *Les Écossais en France: les Français en Écosse*, 2 vols. (London: Trübner, 1863), remains essential for the *longue durée* study of the Auld Alliance.

Catholics, serving as both training ground—with its Scots Colleges at Paris, Pont-à-Mousson, and latterly Douai—and refuge for the many forced to flee the persecuting culture of post-Reformation Scotland.<sup>3</sup> Chambers, himself a secular priest, was an integral part of this confessionalised network.

He was also one of its memory keepers. The present article examines Chambers's only surviving literary work: forty-four folios of Latin verse tucked into the middle of the *album amicorum* of an earlier Scottish Catholic, the orientalist and traveller George Strachan.<sup>4</sup> This manuscript, now in the Scottish Catholic Archives, offers a lens through which to view the kinship and friendship networks of Scots in France during the Thirty Years War.<sup>5</sup> Consisting of epitaphs written for twenty-two persons who died between 1625 and 1648, it allows us to reconstruct the ways in which Scots abroad memorialised their communities and the often circuitous routes by which paper elegies became marmoreal epitaphs, as well as providing a rich store of evidence for the construction of Scottish Catholic identity in a generation for which the Reformation was increasingly fading into the distant past.

This article will begin by identifying Chambers and his contexts before turning to the history of the manuscript in which he recorded his epitaphs. It will then examine the epitaphs themselves, exploring the overlapping networks of Chambers's own kin, the kinship group of the Marquess's of Douglas, the Regiment Écossais, and the circle of Cardinal Richelieu, before discussing at least two instances where Chambers's compositions were used as carved, physical epitaphs on the funeral monuments of Scots buried in France. It will conclude with a more general discussion of what this text, its monumental descendants, and its contexts can teach us about the nature of Scottish Catholic culture in seventeenth-century France.

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<sup>3</sup> The institutional history of Franco-Scottish Catholicism is covered in Brian M. Halloran, *The Scots College, Paris, 1603-1792* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1997) and Thomas McNally, *The Sixth Scottish University: The Scots Colleges Abroad, 1575 to 1799* (Leiden: Brill, 2012). See also, more generally, Michel, *Les Écossais en France*, and William Forbes-Leith, *Memoirs of Scottish Catholics During the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Green, 1909).

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Catholic Archives (hereafter SCA) CB/57/12. The only previous significant discussion known to me is in James Fowler Kellas Johnstone, *The Alba Amicorum of George Strachan, George Craig, Thomas Cumming* [Aberdeen University Studies, 95] (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1924), 1-17.

<sup>5</sup> As such it is a key document in any project attempting to do for Scots in Southern Europe what has been done for their Northern European counterparts in Steve Murdoch, *Network North: Scottish Kin, Commercial and Covert Associations in Northern Europe, 1603-1746* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

### The Abbé Chambers

Who was this Scottish priest singing the *Te deum* for Louis Dieudonné in the church of Saint Quentin? Reconstructing Chambers's life is made more difficult by the presence of a near-contemporary man of the same name, also a priest and also active in France. In a few documents Richelieu's almoner is distinguished as junior and his namesake as senior, but the two led sufficiently similar careers that at least one standard work on the subject conflates them into a single figure, making accurate biographies of both essential *desiderata*.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas Chalmer *senior* was born in Aberdeenshire about 1604, was raised as a Protestant, but converted to Catholicism and entered the Jesuit seminary at Braunsberg (now Braniewo) in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in July 1619.<sup>7</sup> After staying there for six years, he "secretly ran away in long clothes with his Calvinist soldier brother" on 19 June 1625 and thereafter temporarily disappears from the archival record.<sup>8</sup> Whatever confessional or educational backsliding might be implied by this flight, it was evidently not permanent for on 21 October 1629 he entered the Scots College in Rome, renewing the oath—apparently to enter the priesthood—which he had made at Braunsberg four years before. He was made a priest while in Rome and departed from there on 27 April 1632, probably for the Scottish Mission as a later list of missionary priests includes "Mr Thomas Chalmers Senr" under the year 1632.<sup>9</sup> At some point he must also have spent time in the Scots College at Paris, for upon his death on 8 March 1661 he appears in the necrology of that institution as "*socii quondam et Benefactoris nostri*."<sup>10</sup>

This man, however, was distinct from our subject: Thomas Chambers or Chalmer *junior*. He was one of a number of children born to the

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<sup>6</sup> Halloran, *Scots College, Paris*, 14-15.

<sup>7</sup> Georg Lühr, *Die matrikel des päpstlichen Seminars zu Braunsberg, 1578-1798* (Braunsberg: Druck der Ermländischen Zeitungs- und Verlagsdruckerei, 1925), 73. In the present article Thomas Chambers is referred to by that surname on the grounds that he consistently uses "Chambers" to sign his correspondence. In general, however, the Scots form of the name, "Chalmer(s)," has been preferred when discussing his kinsmen, who, by and large, did not follow his Anglicizing practices. In Latin, the name is consistently written "Camerarius," and in French, "Chambre".

<sup>8</sup> Lühr, *Braunsberg matrikel*, 73.

<sup>9</sup> William Forbes Leith, *Records of the Scots Colleges at Douai, Rome, Madrid, Valladolid and Ratisbon*, vol. 1 [New Spalding Club, 30] (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1906), 109; M. V. Hay, *The Blairs Papers, 1603-1660* (London and Edinburgh: Sands, 1929), 249.

<sup>10</sup> Hay, *Blairs Papers*, 242.

Aberdonian merchant Gilbert Chalmer of Cults and his wife Christian Con. On his father's side he was a descendant of a family of Aberdonian merchant patricians whose richly-carved pew in the west kirk of St. Nicholas proudly proclaimed their place for "many centuries" amongst Aberdeen's elite.<sup>11</sup> On his mother's side he was connected to the nerve-centre of the northeast's Catholic gentry. His uncle was George Con, Scotland's almost-cardinal (of whom more below), his great-grandmother was a Leslie of Balquhain and through her he was a cousin of the historian and polemicist Thomas Dempster and the Imperial soldier Count Walter Leslie.<sup>12</sup>

Chambers first appears on record, as 'Thomas Chalmer junior,' when he was admitted to the Scots College at Rome on 27 June 1630.<sup>13</sup> The College's rector at that time was the aristocratic Jesuit George Elphinstone, and Chambers entered an institution already filled with Aberdonian kinsmen—Francis Dempster, Arthur Cheyne, and Thomas Chalmer *senior* were all fellow students—and closely linked to the Counter-Reforming endeavours of his uncle George Con. He took the missionary oath on 1 November 1631, but remained in the College until 1637, studying philosophy and theology and ultimately being ordained a secular priest.

By the spring of 1637 Chambers had left Rome and was actively seeking preferment. A letter from one of his cousins, George Chalmer, Professor of Laws at the Jesuit College of Pont-à-Mousson, to another, David Chalmer, Rector of the Scots College in Paris, mentioned, rather acidly, that Thomas "continues still in hope to become greit," which the

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<sup>11</sup> Alexander M. Munro, *Memorials of the Aldermen, Provosts, and Lord Provosts of Aberdeen, 1272-1895* (Aberdeen: for the subscribers, 1897), 123. Munro described the Chalmer pew as "an oak form or seat with the arms of the family ... and the following inscription:—'Alexandri de Camera consulis ejusque familiae multorum saeculorum prosapia honoribusque conspicuae requietorium et cathedra, 1313'" (*ibid.*, 123).

<sup>12</sup> The Leslies of Balquhain and their palace at Fetternear are emerging as one of the centres around which the Counter-Reformation coalesced in Scotland, making their close kinship to key Scottish Catholics such as Chambers and Dempster all the more important: see Penelope Dransart and Nicholas Q. Bogdan, "The Material Culture of Recusancy at Fetternear: Kin and Religion in Post-Reformation Scotland," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 134 (2004): 457-470, and Peter Davidson and Prue King, "The Fetternear Vestments at the Blairs Museum," *British Catholic History*, 33 (2016): 259-277, as well as, for the Austrian branch of the family, David Worthington, *Scots in Habsburg Service, 1618-1648* (Leiden: Brill, 2003). The only monograph-length study is Charles Joseph Leslie's long-outdated *Historical Records of the Family of Leslie from 1067 to 1868-9*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1869), III: 1-272.

<sup>13</sup> Details in this paragraph from *Records of the Scots Colleges*, 108-109.

better-established George contrasted with his own “desyr to flie no higher.”<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, Chambers succeeded in his attempts; by 1 September 1637 he was one of the “gentilshommes de sa maison” of no less a figure than Cardinal Richelieu. On that date Richelieu wrote an instruction to Chambers, then intending to pass over into Britain to visit his uncle Con, who in the previous year had been made the Vatican’s representative to the British court.<sup>15</sup>

The cardinal’s orders were both precise and daunting. The French crown hoped to raise six thousand soldiers in three regiments out of Scotland, but the diplomatic situation of the times made this a difficult endeavour. Chambers was to use his uncle’s influence at court to attempt to convince the British crown to allow this recruitment drive or, if it proved impossible to obtain the full six thousand troops, to at least boost the recruitment of Hepburn’s Regiment (already in the French service). While networking amongst the “Scottish lairds” (“seigneurs du pays ... en Escosse”), he was to pay particular attention to the advice of “milord Gray,” the Catholic nobleman Andrew, 7<sup>th</sup> Lord Gray, who was probably known to Richelieu by virtue of having served in the French Gens d’Armes.<sup>16</sup> Chambers’s role in Richelieu’s service was clarified in a subsequent letter from the cardinal to the Comte d’Estrades mentioning that he was about to send Abbé Chambre, his almoner, on a mission to Scotland.<sup>17</sup>

Chambers made this journey and spent at least some time in Scotland, as his name appears on an eighteenth-century list of missionary priests under the year 1637.<sup>18</sup> He did not remain long, however, and on 24 July 1638, he sent a letter from Amiens to his cousin the rector of the Scots College in Paris.<sup>19</sup> That autumn he was with Richelieu at Saint Quentin when he participated in the mass described above. In 1640 he was one of the French agents involved in the attempted accord between the Scottish Covenanters and the French government, and by the 1640s he seems to have been in a position of increasing power amongst the Scottish community in Paris, advising the hot-headed priest Gilbert Blakhal on his

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<sup>14</sup> Hay, *Blairs Papers*, 122.

<sup>15</sup> Armand Jean du Plessis Richelieu, *Lettres, instructions diplomatiques et papiers d’état*, 8 vols., ed. Georges, Vicomte d’Avenel (Paris: Impr. impériale, 1853-1877), V: 847-850.

<sup>16</sup> James Balfour Paul, ed., *The Scots Peerage*, 9 vols (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1904-1914), IV: 286.

<sup>17</sup> Hay, *Blairs Papers*, 126.

<sup>18</sup> Hay, *Blairs Papers*, 249.

<sup>19</sup> Hay, *Blairs Papers*, 127-128.

attempts to solicit aid from the queen.<sup>20</sup>

Several letters survive between Chambers and the leading Covenanter William Ker, Earl of Lothian, from the years following the latter's 1642-1643 mission on behalf of the Scottish Privy Council to renew the privileges formerly granted to Scots resident in France.<sup>21</sup> On 10 May 1644 Chambers wrote to the earl asking for help in the matter of his uncle James Con, banished from Scotland on account of his Catholicism and "farre in age and of a weake disposition."<sup>22</sup> On 15 July 1645 he wrote to Lothian hoping for a revival of Scots privileges in France, and on 17 March 1649 he wrote yet again hoping that "his old decrepit uncle, James Conne" might be allowed "to return for 6 months to his native air."<sup>23</sup>

Towards the end of his life Chambers turned his mind towards the endowment of his *alma mater* in Rome. In a letter of 14 September 1649, William Christie, SJ, recorded that Chambers had bequeathed "some old bookes" and one hundred crowns to the Scots College in Rome and wished this to be put towards the altar of the new church of St Andrew there, upon which, he hoped, would be placed his coat of arms.<sup>24</sup> This echo of his grandfather's armorial pew in New Aberdeen sat poorly with Father Christie, partly, it would seem, because the amount Chambers had given was insufficient for the task, and it seems doubtful whether the latter's heraldic vision was ever realised.<sup>25</sup> In any case, he must have died soon after, for a letter from Sir Edward Hyde to Sir Edward Nicholas, responding to Nicholas' fears that Chambers was negotiating a correspondence between Cardinal Mazarin and Cromwell, noted that "Dr. Chambers has been dead almost a year," placing his death sometime in late 1651 or perhaps early 1652.<sup>26</sup>

Chambers's historical and literary significance stems, however, not so much from his career as a node in Franco-Scottish intelligence and familial networks, but for the poems he carefully copied into the orientalist George Strachan's *album amicorum*.<sup>27</sup> How he obtained this manuscript is unclear.

<sup>20</sup> Gilbert Blakhal, *A Breiffe Narration of the Services Done to Three Noble Ladyes*, ed. John Stuart [Spalding Club, 11] (Aberdeen: printed for the Spalding Club, 1844), 121; Murdoch, *Network North*, as in n. 5 above, 120-122.

<sup>21</sup> Balfour Paul, ed., *Scots Peerage*, V: 472.

<sup>22</sup> NRS GD40/9/21/1.

<sup>23</sup> NRS GD40/9/21/2 and GD40/2/16/Add 7.

<sup>24</sup> Hay, *Blairs Papers*, 124-125.

<sup>25</sup> Hay, *Blairs Papers*, 125.

<sup>26</sup> H. O. Coxe, et al., eds, *Calendar of the Clarendon State Papers Preserved in the Bodleian Library*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869-1970), II: 149.

<sup>27</sup> The principal sources for Strachan's career are David McRoberts, "George Strachan of the Mearns: An Early Scottish Orientalist," *Innes Review*, 3 (1952): 110-128; G. L. Dellavida, *George Strachan: Memorials of a Wandering Scottish*

The entries in the *album* made by Strachan himself begin at Béarn in August 1599 and conclude during his time at the Collège du Mans in Paris with an entry by the physician Peter Hay, dated at Paris on 5 September 1609.<sup>28</sup>

A potential link between Strachan and Chambers exists in the person of Chambers's cousin David Chalmer, noted above as Rector of the Scots College in Paris. Several decades before, David Chalmer was a religious exile in Paris, "compelled by his zeal for the House of God and the fury of the heretic ministers to relinquish his fatherland," when on 15 July 1609 Strachan wrote a letter of recommendation on his behalf to Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, the future Pope Urban VIII.<sup>29</sup> Strachan's later career as a traveller, sometime convert to Islam, and collector of oriental manuscripts is well known, but it seems doubtful if his *album amicorum* followed him through Constantinople into Syria, Persia, and beyond. If so, it certainly was not used for its original purpose during that time. It is possible that Strachan gave the *album* (and perhaps other books and manuscripts) into David Chalmer's keeping before his departure for the East and that, in the fullness of time, Chalmer then gave it to his young cousin.

Another possibility, however, is that Strachan did take the *album* east with him and that it subsequently found its way into the collection of manuscripts he gave to the Discalced Carmelites at Rome in 1621.<sup>30</sup> In support of this interpretation, it should be noted that the first entry by Chambers is dated 1632, while he was still at the Scots College in Rome, and it may be that he had obtained the manuscript from the Carmelites or another Roman source after it had been discarded as irrelevant to Strachan's collection of oriental materials.

Regardless of how Chambers first acquired the manuscript, he seems to have added to it regularly between 1632 and 1648. His earliest entry commemorates his cousin George Chalmer of Fintray in 1632, and his latest memorialises the drowned daughters of the Earl of Angus in 1648; as discussed below, an epitaph on Thomas Dempster, who died in 1625, was evidently not written at the time of his death. Between these years Chambers transformed Strachan's *album amicorum* into a collective memorial for Scottish Catholics abroad, a secular necrology which meshed with and built upon Strachan's earlier record of Scottish Catholic

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*Scholar of the Seventeenth Century* (Aberdeen: printed for the Third Spalding Club, 1956); and Johnstone, *Alba Amicorum*, 1-17. Tom McNally's *George Strachan of the Mearns: Seventeenth Century Orientalist* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020) was not available for consultation when this article went to press.

<sup>28</sup> SCA CB/57/12, *passim*.

<sup>29</sup> Dellavida, *Strachan*, 25-26.

<sup>30</sup> Dellavida, *Strachan*, 73-74.



sociability to become a carefully-crafted paper monument to the tiny and beleaguered community. Integral to this project was his rebinding of the manuscript itself. Chambers's binding is a rich red calf with lavish gold tooling including images of the Virgin and Child, the crucified Christ, and at its centre Christ as stag with a star between its horns and a cross overhead. Stamped in gold on the front board are the words "1599 ALBUM AMICORVM GEORGII STRACHANI SCOTI". The gauffered fore-edges retain a crisp and fluid vegetal design. This volume was meant to be valued, both for its physical appearance and for its contents.



Figure 1. Binding of SCA/CB/57/12, the *album amicorum* of George Strachan.

### The Text

The epitaphs and elegies which make up Chambers's work fall into four intersecting groups: those relating to the kinship and patronage network of Chambers himself, the officers of the Regiment Écossais, the kinship group of the Earls of Angus, and the circle of Cardinal Richelieu. Chronologically, these groups overlap with each other, but certain patterns nonetheless emerge. Chambers began by commemorating his own kinship group as early as 1632, was particularly involved in the fate of the Regiment Écossais, 1634-1637, constructed an elaborate pro-Richelieu narrative in a series of poems dating from 1638 to 1640, soon after he had become the cardinal's almoner, and returned to his own kinship network and that of the Douglas Earls of Angus in his final decade. Collectively, they reflect Chambers's twin concerns of commemorating Scottishness, especially Scottishness abroad, and post-Reformation Catholicism.

The epitaph as a poetic form already possessed a venerable history by the time Chambers came to engage with the genre.<sup>31</sup> From its Greek and Roman origins a rich tradition of epitaphic poetry, both on stone and paper, had developed in early modern Europe. Iiro Kajanto has discussed the rapid revival of the classical epigraphic epitaph on Roman tombs from the fifteenth century onward, distinguishing the comparatively formulaic "hic requiescit" medieval epitaph from its more linguistically and semantically elaborate humanistic successors.<sup>32</sup> Neil Kenny, in turn, has traced these origins in the epitaphs of early modern France—geographically and chronologically closer to Chambers—and seen in them an increasingly elaborate system of gradated degrees of physical or spiritual presence or absence.<sup>33</sup> By the later seventeenth century, the genre was both widespread and conventionalised with poetic handbooks such as Laurence le Brun's *Eloquentia poetica* devoting numerous pages to potential models and forms for appropriately decorous epitaphic poetry.<sup>34</sup>

As early as 1606, Pierre Labbé in his *Elogia sacra* could lay out a

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<sup>31</sup> For the English context see Joshua Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph: Commemoration and Conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

<sup>32</sup> Iiro Kajanto, "Origin and Characteristics of the Humanistic Epitaph," *Epigraphica: Rivista Italiana di Epigrafia*, 40 (1978): 7-31.

<sup>33</sup> Neil Kenny, *Death and Tenses: Posthumous Presence in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 116-133.

<sup>34</sup> Laurent le Brun, *Eloquentia poetica sive praecepta poetica exemplis poeticis illustrata*, 2 vols (Paris: Cramoisy, 1655), II: 507-590. See also the collections of epitaphs in Otto Aicher, *Theatrum funebre, exhibens per varias scenas epitaphia nova, antiquara; seria, jocosa* (Salzburg: Mayr, 1675).

template for the principal forms of epitaph. The first type, he wrote, were strictly historical, giving “the name of the deceased, birthplace, parents, offices, and age ... of such a kind were ancient epitaphs.”<sup>35</sup> The second type mixed moral reflections with its facts, while the third was consciously enigmatic and witty, and the fourth was an utterance of grief or mourning.<sup>36</sup> As will be seen in Chambers’s work, however, these divisions are rarely clear cut; an epitaph could just as easily combine the historical, the moral, and the grief-stricken within the space of a few lines.

Chambers’s texts should also be placed within the larger context of Scottish Neo-Latin poetry. They fall rather later than the golden age of Scottish Neo-Latin which led to the compilation of the *Delitiae poetarum Scotorum* (1637) or even that of Caroline Scottish Latinists such as Arthur Johnston.<sup>37</sup> Standard accounts of this poetic tradition see it rapidly declining after the beginning of the seventeenth century and making only a brief resurgence with Archibald Pitcairne and his coterie at the opening of the eighteenth, but manuscripts such as Chambers’s should encourage us to consider the possibility that this is only a partial view of Scottish Latinity.<sup>38</sup> At the very least, it restores a distinctly Latin voice to the middle of the seventeenth century in Scottish literary studies.

Questions of chronology in Chambers’s collection are complicated by the fact that at least two of the epitaphs were written some time after the

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<sup>35</sup> Pierre Labbé, *Elogia sacra, theologica & philosophica, regia, eminentia, illustria, historica, poetica, miscellanea* (1606; repr. Leipzig, 1686), 656.

<sup>36</sup> Labbé, *Elogia sacra*, 656-657.

<sup>37</sup> *Delitiae poetarum Scotorum*, 2 vols (Amsterdam: Blaeu, 1637). For Scottish Neo-Latinity, see Steven J. Reid and David McOmish, eds., *Neo-Latin Literature and Literary Culture in Early Modern Scotland* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) together with R.P.H. Green, P.H. Burton, et al., eds, *Scottish Latin Authors in Print up to 1700: A Short-Title List* [*Supplementa Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 30] (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012). While some of Johnston’s later publications chronologically overlapped with Chambers’s compositions, he belonged to an earlier generation and a very different literary context; see Alexander Farquhar, *Arthur Johnston and the Fostering of Scottish Letters* (DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2014).

<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., Jack MacQueen, “From Rome to Ruddiman: The Scoto-Latin Tradition,” in *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature, Vol. I: From Columba to the Union*, ed. Thomas Owen Clancy and Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 184-208; David Allan, “‘The Divine Fury of the Muses’: Neo-Latin Poetry in Early Modern Scotland,” in *Literature and the Scottish Reformation*, ed. Crawford Gribben and David George Mullan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 63-78; and Colin Kidd, “The Ideological Significance of Scottish Jacobite Latinity,” in *Culture, Politics and Society in Britain, 1600-1800*, ed. Jeremy Black and Jeremy Gregory (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 110-130.

deaths of their subjects. In one case, the subject is central not only to the community of lives Chambers was memorialising, but also to his own family's rise to prominence on the continent. This was Thomas Dempster (1579-1625), the pugnacious and controversial Scottish professor of humanities at the University of Bologna.<sup>39</sup> Dempster was a cousin of Chambers through the Leslies of Balquhain, but his place in Chambers's necrology probably owes less to that tenuous kinship than to his role as patron to Chambers's uncle George Conn while the latter was a young man in Bologna.<sup>40</sup> Chambers presents Dempster as a model Catholic humanist, famous for his edition of Rosinus's *Antiquities*, extensively travelled, and knighted by Pope Urban VIII, who was known for his attention not only to Scots but also to scholars.<sup>41</sup> Dempster's now much better-known polemical works receive no mention.

It is tempting to suppose this was written during what might be termed Chambers's "Roman" phase as a student at the Scots College there. More definitely from this phase was his epitaph on Dempster's friend and his own cousin, George Chalmer, professor of humanities at the University of Padua (d. 1632).<sup>42</sup> George may, indeed, have provided an inspiration for the young Thomas Chambers. As well as his *Sylva Leochaeco suo sacra*, a verse exchange between him and the Scottish Latin poet John Leech, he also published a substantial *Emblemata amatoria* at Venice in 1627.<sup>43</sup> This

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<sup>39</sup> For Dempster see the *ODNB*, s.n., John Durkan, "Thomas Dempster: A Scottish Baronius," *Innes Review*, 54 (2003): 69-78; Ulrike Moret, "An Early Scottish National Biography: Thomas Dempster's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Scotorum* (1627)," in *A Palace in the Wild: Essays on Vernacular Culture and Humanism in Late-Medieval and Renaissance Scotland* [*Mediaevalia Groningana*. n.s. 1], ed. L. A. J. R. Houwen, et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 249-269; and, for his Etruscan interests, Robert Leighton and Celine Castelino, "Thomas Dempster and Ancient Etruria: A Review of the Autobiography and *De Etruria Regali*," *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 58 (1990): 337-352.

<sup>40</sup> Jason Harris, "Exiles and Saints in Baroque Europe: George Conn and the Scotie Debate," in *The Ulster Earls and Baroque Europe*, ed. Thomas O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons (Dublin: Four Courts, 2010), 306-326, esp. at 314-315.

<sup>41</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fol. 163r-v.

<sup>42</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fols. 162r-163r. For Chalmer, see Thomas Dempster, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Scotorum* (Bologna: Typis Nicolai Thebaldini, 1627), 172, Giacomo Filippo Tomasini, *Gymnasium Patavinum ... libris V. comprehensum* (Udine: Ex typographia Nicolai Schiratti 1654), 343, and John Leech, *Epigrammatum libri quatuor*, ed. Jamie Reid-Baxter and Dana F. Sutton, <http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/leech/>, note to IV.68.

<sup>43</sup> George Chalmer, *Sylvae Leochaeco suo sacrae: sive, Lycidae desiderium* (Paris: s.n., 1620) and *Emblemata amatoria* (Venice: Ex typographia Sarcinea, 1627); R. P. H. Green, et al., as in n. 38 above, no. 13/1-2. He also left a poem in manuscript, *Ad Urbanum VIII P.M. Scotiae quandam sic protectorem silva*, noted in the

substantial collection of Latin poems, copiously illustrated by a series of woodcuts mostly borrowed from Crispin de Passe's *Thronus Cupidinis*, includes a series of elegies: to the king of France, to Paolo Leoni, Bishop of Ferrara, Ottavio Buttorini of Verona, and, crucially, to both the poet's own father Patrick Chalmer and Thomas Dempster.<sup>44</sup>



Figure 2. The funeral byre of Patrick Chalmer as imagined in George Chalmer, *Emblemata amatoria* [Venice, 1627], sig. N3r.

It was probably in this same Roman phase that Chambers penned another short epitaph commemorating another kinsman, George Chalmer, Professor of Law at Pont-à-Mousson, who died on 22 April 1637.<sup>45</sup> It is a trite, conventional poem, extending to only seven lines and characterising the professor as one who had the good fortune of lying “in the lap of literary leisure,” something that Thomas, then on the hunt for patronage,

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Vatican Library by Ernest Graf in 1938 and discussed in Leech, *Epigrammatum*, ed. Reid-Baxter and Sutton, note to IV.68.

<sup>44</sup> Chalmer, *Emblemata*, esp. 192-193 (Dempster) and 194-195 (Patrick Chalmer). For the identification of the woodcuts see Mario Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. [Sussidi eruditi, 16] (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura 1975), 295.

<sup>45</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fols. 183v-184r. See Hay, *Blairs Papers*, 122.

seems to have envied.<sup>46</sup> It also includes what was to become a characteristic clause in Chambers's epitaphs, "descended from the illustrious families of Chalmer and Barclay in Scotland." The individual was always presented as a part of the larger family network.<sup>47</sup>

The emotional core of Chambers's poems to his kingroup lies not in these early poems, however, but in three written in the late 1630s: two to his mother, Christian Con, and one to his uncle, George Con. Chambers's mother died in Aberdeen on 21 April 1639 and it seems unlikely that Chambers had seen her since his time in Scotland in 1637-38, if even then.<sup>48</sup> Her death called forth a flood of poetry, but in two noticeably different modes. The first epitaph in his notebook is entirely personal, describing her as the "best of parents" and a "most dutiful mother," who was devoted to and beloved by her children.<sup>49</sup> The second, however, is much more public. While both epitaphs are addressed to that "noble and well-born matron, Lady Christian Con," the latter emphasises her genealogical and confessional heritage, beginning by identifying her as the daughter of Patrick Con of Auchry and sister of George Con. Her father, Chambers specifies, was *praefectus* (captain) to Francis Hay, 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Erroll, during the Battle of Glenlivet in 1594, when the Catholic earls Erroll and Huntly defeated an army sent north by the crown. Chambers emphasised the confessional nature of the conflict, recording how his grandfather had fought the "heretics" in battle.<sup>50</sup> This confessionalised family narrative then turned to Christian's brother George Con, apostolic nuncio to the British crown and "soon destined for the purple by the Vatican," before focusing on her own dedication to the Catholic faith in the face of opposition.<sup>51</sup> The poem as a whole presented Christian as the ideal Scottish Catholic noblewoman, the scion of the ideal Scottish Catholic noble family.

Christian's second epitaph speaks directly to that on her brother George, placed immediately after hers in Chambers's manuscript. The promised cardinal's hat, so proudly gestured towards in Christian's epitaph, had not materialised before Con's death on 10 January 1640 and

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<sup>46</sup> "In otij literarij gremium sese contulisset" (SCA CB/57/12, fol. 184r).

<sup>47</sup> "Illustribus Camerariorum et Barclaiorum familij in Scotia oriundus" (SCA CB/57/12, fol. 183v).

<sup>48</sup> "Obijt in Aberdoniae in Scotia xxi Aprilis M.D.CXXXIX." (SCA CB/57/12, fol. 175v).

<sup>49</sup> "Parentem optimam . . . matri dutissimae" (SCA CB/57/12, fols. 174r-175v).

<sup>50</sup> "Clarissimi domini Patricij Conaei de Achry | quibatque Comitissae Errolij Magni Scotiae stabuli Comitissae | in Praelio Glenliuetano Praefecti, filia, | qui uno duntaxat è pluribus commisso in haereticos praelio, tribus eques ab hostibus effossij" (SCA CB/57/12, fol. 176r).

<sup>51</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fol. 176v.

Chambers, with a degree of bitterness, wrote that he would have been “a Roman cardinal had he lived.”<sup>52</sup> Con was characterised as an ornament to letters and a possessor of natural nobility, but also a “defender of religion,” one who was simultaneously “noble, learned, and virtuous.”<sup>53</sup> The attributes highlighted in Christian’s epitaph reappear in that of George: loyal to the Catholic faith in the face of opposition, noble, and possessing an immovable virtue. These were Chambers’s markers of the ideal post-Reformation Scot.

Soon after, another member of Chambers’s agnatic kingroup died, David Chalmer, Principal of the Scots College in Paris, whose death occurred just over a year after Con’s, on 18 January 1641.<sup>54</sup> The principal was a distant relative of Chambers, and his epitaph is accordingly more public and less emotional, praising him for the “splendor of his blood and his erudition,” his extensive historical knowledge (Chalmer had published *De Scotorum fortitudine* in 1627, an important Catholic reinterpretation of Scottish history), and his good relations with popes Paul V, Gregory XV, and Urban VIII.<sup>55</sup>

Chambers only returned to familial subjects once more in 1645, when he wrote an epitaph for his brother Alexander.<sup>56</sup> By then, the style and structures of his compositions had become fixed, almost formulaic. He began with his brother’s descent from “a famous equestrian family in Scotland,” before moving on to the latter’s honourable career for twenty years as a *tribunus* in the Regiment Écossais in France. He then turned to the circumstances of his death, representing him as amongst the bravest at the Battle of Nordlingen, repelling the Imperial forces, but falling to a bullet in the midst of battle and dying a glorious death. A concluding period described him as beloved of God and a friend to all. This—on the

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<sup>52</sup> “Hunc Cardinalem Romanum diu viuere” (SCA CB/57/12, fol. 177v). Con’s narrow miss of the purple was an ongoing sore spot for Scottish Catholics, with debates over the epitaph on his tomb revolving around whether or not to mention his near-elevation (see McNally, *Sixth Scottish University*, 38).

<sup>53</sup> “Religionis defensor . . . etiam nobilibus, etiam doctis, etiam probis . . .” (SCA CB/57/12, fol. 178r).

<sup>54</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fol. 183r-v. For David Chalmer see Dempster, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 196; Hay, *Blairs Papers*, 110-117; Edward Rosen, “David Chalmer of Fintray”, *Notes and Queries*, 195 (1950): 248-249, and Halloran, *Scots College, Paris*, 30-31.

<sup>55</sup> “Cuius es sanguinis et Eruditionis splendor fuit” (SCA CB/57/12, fol. 183r). His *De Scotorum fortitudine doctrina, & pietate, ac de ortu & progressue haeresis in regnis Scotiae & Angliae libri quatuor* (Paris: Sumptibus Petri Baillet, 1631) is an important but neglected milestone in the historiography of post-Reformation Scottish Catholicism.

<sup>56</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fols. 186r-v.



whole rather factual—poem concludes with the intriguing colophon that it was “publicly set up by his dutiful spouse Susanna Maria von Jaxheim, a noble Frenchwoman, and his grateful brother, the weeping T.C.,” suggesting that at least notionally it may have been intended as the text for a physical funeral monument, though where it might have been erected is not clear.<sup>57</sup>

This late epitaph offers a point of intersection between the first category of Chambers’s subjects, his own kingroup, and the second, the members of the Regiment Écossais, for which he had been a recruiter during his time in Scotland in 1637–38. Chambers’s links to the Regiment were in turn intertwined with a long-standing association with the Douglas Earls of Angus, who regularly contributed officers to the regiment and were one of the leading Scottish Catholic families in France at the time.<sup>58</sup>

The epitaphs of the Regiment Écossais fall into two groups: an early series apparently written while Chambers was still in Rome and a later triad from the following decade. The early group consists of four officers: Andrew Gray, Robert Douglas, John Hepburn, and James Hepburn, all active in the Regiment during the 1630s. John and James were both colonels of the Regiment, then and afterwards called “Hepburn’s Regiment,” while Gray and Douglas served under them.<sup>59</sup> In each case the men in question died in battle, and in each case Chambers dwelt upon their history of military service and the circumstances of their deaths. Gray, a *centurion* in Hepburn’s Regiment, was killed at the siege of La-Mothe-en-Bassigny in Lorraine on 12 June 1634, though, as Chambers wrote, his and the regiment’s appearance on the field was as much an omen of victory as

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<sup>57</sup> “Sponso dutissimo Susanna Maria de Jaxheim nobilis franca fratrique suauissimo T. C. lachrymae unde P.P.” (SCA CB/57/12, fol. 186v). Susanna Maria was presumably a sister or kinswoman of Maria Magdalena, daughter of Christoph Sebastian von Jaxheim, Imperial Landrichter of Nürnberg, who married the Chalmers’ cousin General John Urry (Johann Seifert, *Hoch-Adeliche Stamm-Taffeln*, 4 vols. [Regensburg: Auctor Regensburg Hofmann, 1721–1732], iv. unpaginated [tafel “Jaxheim”]; R. R. Stodart, *Scottish Arms: Being a Collection of Armorial Bearings, A.D. 1370–1678*, 2 vols. [Edinburgh: Paterson, 1881], ii. 259). Maria Magdalena’s brother Jobst Wilhelm von Jaxheim was later active in England, receiving license to travel to Hamburg in 1650 (*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic*, 1650, 562).

<sup>58</sup> On the Regiment Écossais, see Steve Murdoch and Alexia Grosjean, *Alexander Leslie and the Scottish Generals of the Thirty Years’ War, 1618–1648* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014), 28–29; Glozier, *Scottish Soldiers*, chap. 2.

<sup>59</sup> See Michel, *Les Écossais en France*, ii. 284–285, for the regiment as it was in 1633.



the celestial St Andrew's Cross which appeared to King Achaius.<sup>60</sup> Robert Douglas of Glenbervie, a younger son of William, 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Angus, died of wounds sustained in battle at Montbéliard on 16 June 1635, and was summed up in a phrase which nicely encapsulated Chambers's priorities: "His religion? Catholic. His country? Scotland."<sup>61</sup>

The famous John Hepburn, Field-Marshal of France, who had begun his career under Andrew Gray, was commemorated by Chambers in two separate epitaphs.<sup>62</sup> Hepburn had been killed by a gunshot at the siege of Savern on 8 July 1636 and as with Chambers's mother the first epitaph focused on personal qualities, the second on public position. The latter epitaph is closely paralleled by that of his kinsman James Hepburn, his successor as regimental colonel, who was killed at the siege of Damvillers in Lorraine. As usual, his birth, his time in the French service, and the circumstances of his death are noted.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> "Decussatam Diui Andrae Crucem cui litus mi cantem in omen victoriae suspexit aliàs Achaius Scotorum Rex LXIII" (SCA CB/57/12, fol. 180v). The legend that King Achaius had seen a fiery St Andrew's cross in the sky before his battle with the English had a venerable history going back at least to Hector Boece's *Scotorum historiae a prima gentis origine* (Paris: Iodoci Badii Ascensii, 1527), fol. CXCVIv. Gray, another northeastern Catholic, had had a lengthy military career stretching back to service in the Earl of Huntly's army in 1594: see Matthew Glozier, "Scots in the French and Dutch Armies During the Thirty Years' War," in *Scotland and the Thirty Years War, 1618-1648*, ed. Steve Murdoch (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 121-122, corrected by SSNE, no. 378, and Murdoch, *Network North*, as in n. 5 above, 70-71. As indicated by Glozier and Murdoch, he has frequently been confused with Andrew Gray, 7<sup>th</sup> Lord Gray (see Balfour Paul, ed., *Scots Peerage*, iv. 286-287), who was also in French service, a confusion compounded by Chambers's identification of the man who died in 1634 as "Graiorum familiae Principis et haeredis" (SCA CB/57/12, fol. 180r). See also Patrick Hannay, *Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Russell (Glasgow: privately printed, 1875), 30-39 (Hannay's "Songs and Sonnets" were dedicated to Gray).

<sup>61</sup> "Si Religionem? Catholicus, Si Patriam? Scotus fuit" (SCA CB/57/12, fol. 184v). He was the fourth son of William Douglas, 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Angus, and left descendants in Scotland (Balfour Paul, ed., *Scots Peerage*, i. 198; Sir Robert Douglas of Glenbervie, *The Baronage of Scotland* [Edinburgh: Bell & Bradfute, 1798], 19).

<sup>62</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fols. 158v-160v. For Hepburn see SSNE, no. 2660, *ODNB*, s.n.

<sup>63</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fol. 164r-v. Chambers's manuscript erroneously calls him "Patricius" rather than "Jacobus," presumably a scribal error as the circumstances of death described in the poem are undoubtedly those of James Hepburn (see *ODNB*, s.n., and SSNE, no. 2657). The relationship between James and John Hepburn has been the subject of considerable confusion. On 28 July 1636, one Andrew Hepburn, describing himself as brother-german of the deceased Colonel Sir John Hepburn and Lieutenant-Colonel James Hepburn, made a supplication to the Scottish Privy Council for a testimonial allowing him to claim his deceased brothers' estates in France (*Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., vi.

Chambers did not return to the officers of the Regiment Écossais as subjects until 1645, when he composed the epitaph for his brother Alexander, discussed above, and two more for Field-Marshal Lord James Douglas, younger son of William, 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess of Douglas, nephew of Robert Douglas of Glenbervie, and colonel of the Regiment Écossais. The first listed his personal and military merits, while the second recorded his ancestors as far back as his great-grandfather, his dedication to Catholicism, and his service in Scotland, France, Flanders, Italy, and Germany, culminating in his death in a skirmish near Douai on 21 October 1645 at the early age of twenty-eight.<sup>64</sup>

Lord James was succeeded by his brother Archibald Douglas as commander of the regiment, and it was Archibald's three daughters who form the subject of the final, unusual, epitaph in Chambers's manuscript.<sup>65</sup> In June 1648, the children had perished in a shipwreck near Amsterdam, and Chambers commemorates them in a more than usually fluent and tightly constructed poem, significantly at variance with some of his more formulaic pieces. Aside from his mother, they are the only women memorialised in Chambers's works, and their epitaph seems to be a more personal response to their deaths, perhaps due to Chambers's close links to the Douglas family.

Collectively, this second group of epitaphs by Chambers represents a verse narrative memorialising the Regiment Écossais over two decades: a rare coming together of what Thomas Urquhart described as Scotland's twin strengths of "arms and arts." Founded in private networks of kinship and friendship, it was also a public monument to the dedication of Scots in French service and to their achievements at the highest levels during the Thirty Years War.

The defining relationship in Chambers's life during the period 1637-1642 appears to have been his connection to Cardinal Richelieu. As discussed above, he was almoner in the cardinal's household by September 1637, and in the years that followed he composed several epitaphs in

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305, 603), but James Hepburn did not die until 16 October 1637 (SSNE, no. 2657, confirmed by SCA CB/57/12, fol. 164r). Moreover, John Hepburn's tomb (discussed below) indicates that he was descended from the Hepburns of Athelstaneford, while Chambers states that James was one of the Hepburns of Waughton (SCA CB/57/12, fol. 164r). As such, it seems very doubtful that they were brothers and more likely that Andrew Hepburn's petition was either confused or actively fraudulent.

<sup>64</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fols. 188r-191r, and see below.

<sup>65</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fol. 191v. There is a reference to two daughters of the earl dying on their way to France in Sir William Fraser, *The Douglas Book*, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, at the Edinburgh University Press, 1885-1886), II: 441.

honour of other members of Richelieu's circle. First amongst these were two on François le Clerc du Tremblay, better known as Père Joseph (1577-1638), the Capuchin agent and advisor to Richelieu who had himself been educated by the Scot George Crichton and was friends with Field-Marshal Hepburn, another significant figure in Richelieu's circle.<sup>66</sup> These were rapidly followed by two lengthy epitaphs honouring the Protestant general Bernhard von Sachsen-Weimar (1604-1639), one of the leading French commanders in the Thirty Years war, who was lauded by Chambers for his military victories and whose military strength he compared to the justice of Louis XIII, the fortune of the Dauphin, and the sagacity of Richelieu.<sup>67</sup>

In the same summer, Chambers composed an epitaph for Richelieu's lieutenant of the guards, Jean de Mayola, who was killed at the taking of Hesdin on 23 June 1639. That autumn, he composed two more epitaphs for Cardinal Louis de Nogaret de la Valette (1593-1639), a lieutenant-general under Richelieu, whose ecclesiastical wisdom and military tenacity were equally lauded in Chambers's compositions.<sup>68</sup> A further epitaph belonging to this cycle is that of Claude de Bullion, finance minister to Louis XIII and an ally of Richelieu, but Chambers's misdating of his death to 1638, rather than 1640, suggests that this might, for whatever reason, have been written later than the rest of the cycle when the precise date and circumstances of his subject's decease were somewhat hazy in Chambers's mind.<sup>69</sup>

The coda to this cycle came several years later with Richelieu's own death, which elicited a single, comparatively short epitaph from Chambers, praising the "hero optimo" in rather general terms.<sup>70</sup> While Chambers was

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<sup>66</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fols. 161r-162r, and see Michel, *Les Écossais en France*, ii. 307-309. Père Joseph's education at the Collège de Boncourt in Paris is discussed in the "Vie du fameux père Josef, Capucin nommé au cardinalat," in *Archives curieuses de l'histoire de France*, 27 vols. (Paris: Beauvais, 1834-1840), 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., IV: 121, as is his education by George Crichton, "l'un des plus sçavans hommes de son siècle" (Crichton was professor of Greek at the Collège Royal and one of the leading Scottish scholars in early seventeenth-century France, see *ODNB*, s.n., and Jean-Pierre Nicéron, *Memoires pour servir a l'histoire des hommes illustres dans la republique des lettres*, 43 vols. in 44 [Paris: Briasson, 1727-1745], XXXVII: 346-357).

<sup>67</sup> "Sic Ludouici Justitia, sic Delphini foelicitas, sic Richelij prudentia, sic tua Veymari Fortitudo voluerunt" (SCA CB/57/12, fol. 257r).

<sup>68</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fols. 166r-167r (de Mayola), 170r-173v (de la Valette). Mayola's death was also recorded in Theophraste Renaudot, *Recueil des gazettes nouvelles* (Paris: Bureau d'Adresse, 1640), 368 ("le sieur de Mayola Lieutenant des gardes du Cardinal Duc").

<sup>69</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fols. 185r-186r.

<sup>70</sup> SCA CB/57/12, fol. 187r.

later almoner to Richelieu's successor, Mazarin, the political events of the later 1640s failed to call forth the same intense poetic response as those of a few years before. Perhaps most strikingly, the death of Louis XIII in 1643 went entirely uncommemorated by Chambers, although we know that he wrote other, increasingly personal, epitaphs well into the 1640s.

Chambers's texts, taken as a whole, appear to have been composed over a period of sixteen years, from 1632 until 1648, but the vast majority of them date from his *anni mirabili* of 1637 through 1640. Then, suddenly at the centre of European politics by virtue of his appointment as Richelieu's almoner, Chambers developed his previous scattered elegiac compositions into a coherent whole and responded with renewed energy and feeling to the deaths of his beloved mother and his patron uncle, George Con. While most of his epitaphs commemorate public figures—officers, scholars, and statesmen—the collection as a whole is surprisingly personal in tone. Chambers seems to have used it, at least in part, to reflect on and describe the key figures in his own life: kinsfolk, friends, and colleagues in the social networks of early seventeenth-century France. At the same time, however, these personal reflections were part of a larger, more public statement of post-Reformation Scottish Catholicism, one which emphasised the nobility of its practitioners, the antiquity of its practice, and the purity of its devotion.

### The Monuments

Chambers's compositions were not solely private, however, nor was the paper mausoleum he had created within George Strachan's *album amicorum* necessarily the final form of his epitaphs. In at least two instances his paper epitaphs were transformed into marble as they became incorporated into the funeral monuments of James Douglas, at Saint Germain des Prés, and John Hepburn, at Toul.

The chapel of St. Christopher in the Benedictine abbey of Saint Germain des Prés had been the burial site of the Douglas Earls of Angus since the burial there of William Douglas, 10th Earl of Angus, in 1611 and continued in use until at least 1715.<sup>71</sup> When Lord James Douglas died, therefore, an agreement was drawn upon between the family and the sculptor Michel Bourdin for a monument of black marble with the figure of Lord James in white marble, all to be finished within the year at a cost of 2,900 livres.<sup>72</sup> This lavish monument, of which only the figure and arms

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<sup>71</sup> Jacques Bouillart, *Histoire de l'abbaye royale de Saint Germain des Prez* (Paris, 1724), 319-320.

<sup>72</sup> Fraser, *Douglas Book*, II: 428.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

**Figure 3. The tomb of James Douglas as it appeared before the revolution (Jacques Bouillart, *Histoire de l'abbaye royale de Saint Germain des Prez* [Paris, 1724], facing 219).**

survive, bore two epitaphs.<sup>73</sup> One was a short poem on this “new hope of the Douglasses”; the other was Chambers’s second epitaph to the deceased soldier, identical to that in Chambers’s manuscript save for the final flourish of “Th. Camerarius inscripsit,” which did not appear on the monument itself.<sup>74</sup>

The second funeral monument on which a text by Chambers appears is that of Field-Marshal John Hepburn. After his death at the siege of Savern in 1636, his coffin, upon which were placed his marshal’s baton, sword, helmet, and spurs, was carried to the nearby town of Toul, where he was buried in the presence of his kinsmen George and James Hepburn in ceremonies officiated over by Charles-Chrétien de Gournay, Bishop of Toul.<sup>75</sup> It was not until 4 January 1669, however, that the chapter of the cathedral were instructed to construct over Hepburn’s coffin the marble monument intended for him. Unfortunately, the monument was destroyed during the French Revolution and is known now only from earlier antiquarian descriptions. Located in the far corner of the transept, the monument was made of white marble and stood twenty-five feet high by eighteen feet long, occupying the entirety of the chapel recess in which it was placed. Hepburn himself was presented in his “natural grandeur and military habit,” lying supported on his elbow, with the helmet and gauntlets he wore in life placed at his feet, and with his armor and sword hung above. To either side of this statue were sixteen heraldic shields, arranged in two vertical rows of eight, each supported by a black marble lintel inscribed in gold with the names of the relevant families. These thirty-two coats of arms recounted the marshal’s ancestry back to his great-great-grandparents and indicated his kinship to, among others, the Earls of Huntly, the Marquesses of Douglas, and—distantly—to Chambers himself.

Above this imposing array were further allegorical and religious bas-reliefs and sculptures including statues of St. “Mansuy,” the “Scot from Ireland” who was patron saint of Toul, St. Palladius, St. John, and St. Andrew.<sup>76</sup> On the black marble table upon which Hepburn’s statue rested was inscribed the opening lines of Chambers’s first epitaph to the marshal,

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<sup>73</sup> The engraving in Bouillart’s *Histoire*, facing 319, depicts a lavish mural monument with the reclining statue of Douglas resting upon a black marble altar tomb, his helm at his feet, with pillars to either side, and a large coat of arms above. All that now survives are the arms and the statue itself (minus the helm); the current epitaph is a modern imitation of the original.

<sup>74</sup> Bouillart, *Histoire*, 319-320. Compare with SCA CB/57/12, fols. 189r-191r.

<sup>75</sup> Gustave Clanché, *Sir John Hepburn, Maréchal de France: inhumé à la Cathédrale de Toul en 1636* (Toul: Imprimerie Moderne, 1918).

<sup>76</sup> “Mansuy” was the semi-legendary St. Mansuetus, Bishop of Toul: see Dempster, *Historia ecclesiastica*, as in n. 42 above, 447-448.

giving his name, rank, and the circumstances of his death, followed by the second of Chambers's two poetic epitaphs, which was apparently rendered into prose. The final lines of Chambers's original were replaced with a line attributing the inscription to Thomas Chambers, "a Scottish priest who held the famous man in his arms as he expired."<sup>77</sup>

The presence of Chambers's epitaph on a tomb which was not erected until at least two decades after his death raises a number of questions. Who supplied the inscription? and what was their source? being the two most pressing. While there is no clear answer to these questions, it is possible either that the epitaph on Hepburn circulated independently within the Scottish exile community and was subsequently repurposed for his tomb upon its late erection or, indeed, that Strachan's *album* with Chambers's additions may have been drawn upon for the copy-text of the inscription (though, as indicated below, its whereabouts during this period are unknown).

Monumental commemoration was an important part of Scottish Catholic culture abroad, as is attested by numerous grand tombs of Catholic Scots across Europe. Chambers's manuscript, however, provides an unusual insight into one part of monuments whose social context is rarely known: their inscriptions. In Chambers's case, these texts were not necessarily written to order in any straightforward way, but seem instead to have first existed as paper monuments which were only intermittently converted into marble, often long after the fact. They hint at a wider circulation of monumental texts which could form the basis for physical memorials given the right circumstances. As such, they also encourage us to reflect more generally on the interaction between text and monument in the early modern period. They were not necessarily born out of the same context or same need, but could come together long after the fact in unexpectedly fortuitous and roundabout ways.

### A Culture of Memory

The type of monumental commemoration seen here was part of a larger culture memorialising individuals and families which is evident across post-Reformation Scottish Catholic society. In the benefactors' books of the Scots Colleges, in the necrologies of the Scots Monasteries, in the annual letters of the Scots Mission, and in a host of other documents and physical artefacts, the tenuous history of Scotland's Catholic remnant was created, shored up, and defined through a collage of individual lives. Because of the embattled and migratory nature of Scottish Catholicism, the fragments of this memorialisation which have survived are largely those

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<sup>77</sup> Clanché, *Hepburn*, *passim*.

associated with long-standing ecclesiastical institutions such as the colleges and the monasteries; Chambers's manuscript, by dint of its survival in a college library, provides a less common secular example of this phenomenon, a collective memorialisation of some of the leading Scottish Catholics of the mid-seventeenth century.<sup>78</sup>

But Chambers's texts are also a record of both the individual and the collective experience of being Scottish on the continent in the seventeenth century. Their focus on geographically far-flung but tightly-knit kingroups, the importance within them of the links of patronage and clientage amongst Scottish exiles, the affinities developed through shared military or scholarly service, and the dual lives of Scots living in other countries and other cultures, all shine through to provide a rich portrait of the often shadowy lives of these figures. Chambers's text allows us to recover not just a single poet and politician, but the community within which he existed, one which included both Scots and French and which stretched from Aberdeen to Rome.

Most intriguingly, Chambers's work offers a bridge between the literary and material cultures of Scottish Catholicism. The use of at least two of his epitaphs on materially realised funeral monuments provides an important window onto the circumstances and practices of funereal memorialisation, which are often recoverable only through a physical artefact inevitably divorced from its creative contexts. Reading the tombs of James Douglas and John Hepburn with an awareness of their epitaphs' places within Chambers's larger project provides a new way of understanding the interlocking trio of community, text, and artefact.

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<sup>78</sup> The *album*, as indicated, now resides in the Scottish Catholic Archives and was previously part of the collection of the Blairs College Library (see Kellas Johnstone, *Alba Amicorum*, 1). Its whereabouts before the nineteenth century, however, are conjectural with the next piece of provenance in the volume itself after Chambers's writing being a note on the front flyleaf recording that it was "Delivered by Rev. John Farquharson, on his leaving Glasgow, at Whitsunday 1805."