EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES

Lorna Hutson, *England's Insular Imaginings: The Elizabethan Erasure of Scotland* (Cambridge University Press, 2023). xii+322pp. ISBN 978 1 009 25357 4.

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Although this book's title foregrounds the Elizabethan erasure of Scotland, Lorna Hutson in fact traces the English erasure of its northern neighbour's status as a sovereign kingdom from the reign of Henry VIII to the reign of England's composite Scottish monarch King James VI and I. The opening chapter, for example, focuses on England's attempt to conquer Scotland in the period of 1542-1550 (the euphemistic 'Rough Wooing'), and this rich and detailed material lays the groundwork for what follows, including brilliant readings of Elizabethan texts — Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, English history plays — as well as rich critical analyses of Jacobean texts — Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* and *King Lear*. One of the book's strengths, therefore, is its emphasis on the ways in which pre-Elizabethan Anglo-Scottish warfare conditioned later English attitudes to Scotland and, crucially, English insular imaginings.

Motivating brutal, violent mid-century warfare between England and Scotland was a desire for England to ideologically incorporate its northern neighbour. Through close, critical analysis of legal terminology, historical myths and rhetorical terms, the book's first two chapters lay bare the signal concept of 'Anglo-British indigeneity': that is 'the idea that English kings had inherited indigenous British sovereignty over the whole island' (p. 156). Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain* is crucial here, for Edward I's 'feudalisation of Geoffrey' (p. 161) underpins the Tudor belief that since Brutus' division of Britain Scotland has been a fief of England's kings and queens. Thus, Spenser's epic-romance demonstrates how 'the idea of a glorious Galfridian reconquest of the island [is] being replaced by the idea of England *as always already an island nation*, now girding itself to embrace its imperial maritime future' (p. 72). Not surprisingly, in the Proem to book one of *The Faerie Queene*, Spenser hails Queen Elizabeth, or Gloriana, as 'Great Ladie of the greatest Isle'. For Hutson, Spenser's erasure of Scotland is especially evident in the absence of the names of Scotland's rivers from Spenser's poem.

Just as this book extends our understanding of early modernity, its illuminating literary history exposes our limited knowledge of the period, which remains, even with the emergence of three kingdoms revisionist historical and literary scholarship, deeply Anglocentric. In response to scholars of 'early modern England' who are hesitant to engage with Scotland, Hutson describes the English 'invasion and laying waste of Scotland between 1542 and 1550' as 'the unconscious of Elizabethan literature and the Elizabethan insular self-image' (p. 19). Again and again, Hutson exposes English historians' and literary historians' blind spots. Take, for example, the following passage from a chapter focused on Scottish literature within the context of the Marian Crisis:

> For most people and in most scholarly writing, Mary Queen of Scots is figured as the great danger threatening Elizabethan England and shaping of English national identity. She is Spenser's Duessa, the Whore of Babylon, an important catalyst of the anti-Catholicism that became so central to the formation of English nationalism. Yet Mary's flight from Scotland led, in Scotland itself, to a devastating period of what has been called 'civil war' from 1567-1573. (p. 118)

This same chapter does a brilliant job of shedding invaluable light on the poetry of the Maitland family, Sir Richard and Thomas in particular. Hutson cites Quentin Skinner's *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (1978), which dismisses Thomas Maitland as '"the easily bullied figure"' (p. 125) who plays yes-man to George Buchanan's radical political ideas in his *De iure regni apud Scotos Dialogus*. Building upon the crucial spadework of Steven Reid, Hutson paints a rather different picture of Maitland, whose political perspective on Mary Queen of Scots shifted from removing the Queen from power to restoring her to the Scottish throne. Hutson's rereading of Maitland is the product of a close and critical engagement with rich archival material — letters, poems — in Maitland's hand. Hutson's argument that Maitland offers 'a version of Scottish national consciousness that finds little place in modern critical accounts' (p. 129) is indebted to her fine attention to the material vehicles within which these ideas were expressed and transmitted. This chapter demonstrates the ways in which this book introduces early modern scholars to writers with whom they are likely un- or less familiar, not only the Maitlands but also Hector Boece, George Buchanan, Thomas Craig, William Lamb and David Lindsay. Many readers of this book will also encounter for the first time rich and informative scholarship on early modern Scotland by the likes of Roger Mason, Tricia McElroy, Marcus Merriman — the list goes on.

As noted, Jacobean texts receive critical coverage. Race-making in Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* is explored via Camden's 'de-territorialising of Scottish antiquity' (p. 223) in his *Britannia*. *King Lear* is read in relation to Elizabethan British tragedies' production of 'an

affective identification of place and birth, of Britain as the womb and home of a single, indigenous nation which cannot include the Scots' (p. 252). In the book's final section, a coda on *Macbeth*, the question of whether Shakespeare's Scottish play disproves the book's central argument that the 'conscious project of English insular imagining was to make Scotland as nation inconceivable' (p. 2) is put to the test. Hutson's response focuses on 'the emotional work being done by the invocation of the name Scotland' in Act 4, scene 3. Dismissing the standard narrative about what Shakespeare found in Holinshed (a 'primitive Scotland'), Hutson works closely with the sources for Holinshed's version of early Scottish history — Hector Boece via John Bellenden's translation and John of Fordun — to relabel Shakespeare's Scottish play as the product of what he made of what he found in Holinshed: namely, figuring 'the Scots not as ridiculous but as tragically incapable of nationhood' (p. 292). Given the emphasis on this particular scene in the play, it is unfortunate that Macduff's use of the neologism 'birthdom' ('Birthdome' in the First Folio) to refer to his native Scotland goes unnoticed, as does the fact that the words 'Scot', 'Scots', 'Scottish' and 'Scottishman'/'Scottishmen' never appear in *Macbeth*. The use of 'birthdom' rather than, say, kingdom along with the absence of the aforementioned words ostensibly render the Scottish play yet another example of an English writer's erasure of Scotland. But given that words such as 'England' and 'English' see a major decline in Shakespeare's Jacobean works, might an erasure of England and Scotland signal a reimagining of the political space under James's three-kingdom, four-nation rule? The absence or evacuation of key words (not to mention the invent of new ones) can, no doubt, signal an erasure, but they can also register a rejection or rewriting of dominant political discourses.