Chapter Seven

The anglicisation of *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyn*: A critical analysis of the history of *Awntyrs* scholarship

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1 Introduction and historical overview

In 1792,[1] John Pinkerton borrowed a transcript of what is now the Oxford MS Douce 324, promising owners Francis Douce and Joseph Ritson that he would not print any of the previously unpublished poems without permission. Though Ritson was especially clear on his refusal to grant permission, Pinkerton surreptitiously produced a 'very blundering copy' (Robson 1842: xii) of *Sir Gawan and Sir Galaron of Galloway*, the poem we know today as *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyn*. In this 'wretched edition' (Amours 1897: vii), Pinkerton speculated that the poem's author was also responsible for *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawain*, and that he could be identified as the Clerk of Tranent, a name mentioned in William Dunbar's *Lament for the Makars*:

Clerk of Tranent eik he hes tane
That maid the anteris of Gawane.

<div align="right">(quoted in Ketrick 1931: 17)</div>

Pinkerton also speculated on the identity of another of Dunbar's poets, 'Syr Hew of Eglintoun', suggesting that because the names Hugh and Huchown were alternative forms, Sir Hugh was likely the 'Huchown of the Awle Ryale' mentioned in Andrew of Wyntoun's *Cronikyl of Scotland.* Unfortunately for

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future researchers, things did not get any less confusing.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate that because of its association with Huchown, *Awntyrs off Arthure* has never been properly evaluated. In the discussion that follows I will begin by expanding on the story of the poet Huchown and his alleged works, addressing how the once Scottish *Awntyrs* became English. I will then move to analysing literature concerning technical elements of the poem, including the dialect and metre. Following this, I will review previous scholarship concerned with the poem's content, examining claims about the relevance of the characters and topography. To conclude, I will briefly explore modern scholarship that demonstrates the lingering problems of the Huchown era, proposing that *Awntyrs* deserves to be reevaluated as part of the Scottish literary canon.

1.1   Huchown, Sir Hugh and the Clerk of Tranent

Since the 1792 publication of Pinkerton's speculation on Huchown, accounts of his possible identity and work usually begin in the same place, Wyntoun's *Cronikil*, which today remains the sole documented reference to the poet. Throughout the historiography Wyntoun frequently refers his readers to his own sources, namely Laʒamon's *Brut*, but also to the similar *Gest Historyalle*, authored by 'Huchown of the Awle Ryale'. An excerpt from the oft referenced passage reads thus:

. . . Men of gud dyscretyowne
Suld excuse and loue Huchowne,
That cunnand wes in literature ;
 He made the Gret Gest of Arthure,
 And the Awntyr of Gawane,
 The Pystyl als of swete Susane.
 He wes curyus in hys style,
 Fayre of facund, and subtile,
 And ay to plesans and delyte
 Made in metyre mete his dyte.

(quoted in Madden 1839: 302)

Wyntoun has been addressing a discrepancy between most versions of the *Brut* and Huchown's *Gest* – Huchown has named Lucius Hiberius rather than Leo as the Roman Emperor who demands tribute from King Arthur – and asks that his readers forgive Huchown for the error. The above passage is

Wyntoun reassuring his audience that the poet is indeed gifted and recommending several of his other works. Of the poems listed here, only *Pistil of Swete Susan* has remained unchallenged as a Huchown poem. The other works named in the passage, *Gret Gest of Arthure* and *Awntyr of Gawane,* became the focus of intense debate and speculation over authorship that would continue in some form for over two hundred years.

Although John Pinkerton initially brought Huchown to the attention of literary critics and historians, he was not responsible for the ensuing onslaught of authorial attributions crediting the poet. It was not until the early nineteenth century that literary scholars, George Ellis, James Sibbald, David Laing and George Chalmers among them, began to expand on Pinkerton's ideas of the authorship of *Awntyrs* and *Golagros and Gawain*. All were not in agreement about the identity of Huchown as either the Clerk of Tranent or Sir Hugh of Eglinton, but all did agree that the two poems were by the same author. Other popular theories were that *Awntyrs off Arthure* and *Golagros and Gawain* were the poems mentioned by Wyntoun, or that Huchown's *Awntyr of Gawane* was actually the Clerk of Tranent's *Anteris of Gawane,* an idea that gave many the impression that the Clerk and Huchown were one and the same.

Included in Frederic Madden's 1839 edition of *Syr Gawayne; A Collection of Ancient Romance-poems, by Scotish and English Authors* are the second published editions of both *Awntyrs off Arthure* and *Golagros and Gawain*, the first since Pinkerton's unpopular and much maligned version. In reference to those two poems, Madden writes that the style and 'peculiar construction of the stanza' indicate that 'it is almost certain' that the two works share a common author (Madden 1839: 328); Madden believed that author was Dunbar's Clerk of Tranent, and was unrelated to either Huchown or Sir Hugh. He did believe, however, that Huchown had authored *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* as well as the rest of the poems of the Cotton Nero A.x manuscript. An 1878 study by Moritz Trautmann revealed that this was probably not the case – the Cotton Nero poems were likely by a single author, but that author was not Huchown. Trautmann further concluded that Huchown, whom he believed to be Sir Hugh of Eglinton, had certainly authored *Pistil* as well as the alliterative *Morte Arthure*.

In an article the following year, George P. McNeill, who also believed Sir Hugh and Huchown were one and the same, traced a brief history of the former, basing his sketch on historical chronicles, peerages, and royal documents. High born into the Eglinton family of Eglinton, Sir Hugh was a

fourteenth-century Scottish nobleman, knighted by King David, and employed in various state offices throughout his lifetime. McNeill reasoned that Dunbar's positioning of Sir Hugh in his *Lament* –

He has done piteously devour,
The noble Chaucer, of makars flower,
The Monk of Berry, and Gower, all three;
Timor mortis conturbat me.

The gude Syr Hew of Eglintoun,
And eik Heryot, and Wyntown,
He has tane out of this countrie;
Timor mortis conturbat me.

(quoted in McNeil 1888: 287)

– offers a chronological hint that he and Huchown could easily have been one and the same. Dunbar's identification of Sir Hugh as a poet roughly contemporary with Wyntoun, and Wyntoun's own reference to 'Huchown', a once common diminutive of the name 'Hugh', does lend plausibility to the theory.

    The biography of Sir Hugh would be filled out in much greater detail in 1902 by George Neilson, whose opus on the poet was written with the intent 'to prove unity and correlation where others have failed, or denied' (Neilson 1902: 264). Neilson believed in the poet's greatness, and in his attempt to secure Huchown's place alongside the likes of Chaucer, ahead of John Barbour as 'the beginning of Scottish poetry' (Neilson 1902: 252), he unwittingly initiated the beginning of Huchown's end. Although Neilson was far from the only scholar interested in Huchown, retrospectively he appears to be the most passionately optimistic. In addition to the poems that had been claimed as Huchown's at the time – *Awntyrs off Arthure, The Destruction of Troy, Golagros and Gawain, Morte Arthure, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Cleanness, Patience, Pearl, Pistil of Swete Susan* – Neilson believed the poet to be responsible for *St. Erkenwald, Wynner and Wastoure, The Parlement of the Three Ages, Titus and Vespasian* and *The Wars of Alexander* as well. Perhaps it was because of the 'extravagance and weakness' of Neilson's claims (Ketrick 1931: 22), or perhaps it was because '40,000 lines of the very meat of Middle English literature [had been] identified as the work of a Scotch-man' (MacCracken 1910: 516), in any case, the myth surrounding

Huchown began to fall apart.

1.2 Scholarship after Huchown

Some researchers and critics tried to support Neilson – Brown examined Neilson's 'ingeniously marshalled' evidence (1902: 3), politely concluding that while he agreed with Neilson on the identification of Huchown and Sir Hugh of Eglinton as the same person, he could not accept the rest of Neilson's claims – although the majority were quick to denounce his work. By the close of the first decade of the twentieth century, the controversy surrounding Huchown had largely died out.

According to Gates' 1969 edition of *Awntyrs*, the question of Huchown's literary contributions had been definitively answered by MacCracken in 1910. Gates describes MacCracken's paper as an outline of the history of the debate and a careful re-examination of the evidence, though I would add that it also serves as a vivid documentation of the frustration literary scholars and critics must have been feeling at the time. MacCracken can scarcely contain his vexation, particularly with Neilson, supplementing his historical account with colourful narrative asides like the following:

> The time was ripe, evidently, in this welter of conflicting opinions, for some one to rise and, by that right which genius always claims of appropriating the good ideas of others, to assemble all this mass of material and give it final utterance. As usual, the kind goddess Nature provided the man in the person of Mr. George Neilson of Glasgow.
>
> (MacCracken 1910: 514)

MacCracken later writes of Neilson's 'search for new material for his beloved Huchown' (MacCracken 1910: 515), and states that Neilson 'coolly appropriated' *The Parlement of the Three Ages* for Huchown (MacCracken 1910: 518). By the end, MacCracken is so perturbed that he sneeringly writes that 'It is perfectly obvious to every one but Mr. Neilson that the author of Sir Gawayn [and the Green Knight] was not the author of Morte Arthure' (MacCracken 1910: 532), never mind the fact that Frederic Madden was the main proponent of this idea, a point MacCracken himself makes at the beginning of his paper. Whether MacCracken's pique can be attributed more to George Neilson and the entire Huchown saga, or to the potential of '[according] twenty-five thousand lines of some of the best alliterative verse in English literature' (MacCracken 1910: 507) to a Scottish poet is hard to say. In the end, MacCracken's 'final verdict', as he puts it, is that Huchown's

case is 'not proven' (MacCracken 1910: 534). *Concerning Huchown* is one of the first papers to capture the Huchown-related exasperation critics were feeling, but as will be discussed shortly, it is certainly not the last.

Scholars through the 1930s continued to ponder the contributions of Huchown, although much more quietly. In his notes to *The Relation of Golagros and Gawane to the Old French Perceval,* Paul Ketrick contemplates the authorship of the poem, that is, he addresses the issue of Huchown, writing that 'no additional evidence of importance has come to light during the discussion now covering nearly 140 years' (1931: 17). And nothing concerning the authorial contributions of Huchown has changed since the publication of Ketrick's book nearly ninety years ago. However, one important attribute of the *Awntyrs* has changed – the once Scottish poem has become English.

As previously noted, early scholars were all but unanimous in their opinion that *Awntyrs off Arthure* and *Golagros and Gawain* were by the same author. Critics pointed to the metre, language and content of the poems as indicative of their connectedness. Even modern scholarship is quick to recognise the similarities between the two works. In his collection of Sir Gawain romances, Hahn writes that

> *Awntyrs* and *Gologras* in many respects constitute exceptions to the general remarks made here about the popular character of the Gawain romances … both seem to have been produced by a self-conscious and literate composer, working from a written source, who made the fullest use of alliteration and formulas traditionally associated with native poetic traditions … the exceptional artfulness of their meter, verse forms, and descriptive detail separate them from the unchecked narrative movement of the other poems in this volume.
>
> (Hahn 1995: 22)

Yet Hahn maintains the poems are unrelated, one the product of Northern England, the other of Scotland. *Golagros* was, and is, considered a Scottish poem, largely because the single extant copy of the poem bears the stamp of Edinburgh's Chepman and Myllar Press. Coupled with the poem's language, among other traits which will be discussed presently, indications are that the poem was created by a native of Scotland. When the Huchown controversy was effectively ended in 1910, it meant that all the poems attributed to him were once again anonymous; *Awntyrs* and *Golagros*, once taken as a pair, were no longer related. To look at the history of scholarship of *Awntyrs,* one

would be led to believe that the only reason it was considered a Scottish poem was because its twin bore the mark of an Edinburgh printer. In no way is this the case, but it does raise the question: what really makes a Scottish text Scottish? or an English text English, for that matter? In other words, when faced with an anonymous piece of writing, what really 'gives' the text its nationality?

In the case of *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, in early scholarship the conversation was centered around the alleged author, who was generally considered a Scotsman, allowing for the assumption the poem was Scottish. Over time, though, as the Huchown story faded, critics shied away from suggesting the poem had a Scottish origin, beginning to argue instead for a Northern English provenance, all the while citing evidence that was equally supportive of a Scottish one.

At this point I would like to move on to explore the question of how a text is assigned a nationality by looking at how *Awntyrs* has been written about over time. Drawing from previous academic discussions of what it means for a poem to belong to one place or another, I will discuss both technical elements, such as dialect and metre, and the poem's content, including characters and setting.

2 Language and form

Scholars working with Scottish texts, including Edwards and Purdie, have considered the question of a poem's literary heritage regarding two texts that are 'known' to be Scottish: *Eger and Grime*, and *Golagros and Gawain*. In Edwards' work with *Eger* (Purdie's work with *Golagros* will be discussed below), he writes of the complications that arise in localising a text, beginning with what he deems to be the most obvious criterion, the linguistic. He continues:

If *Eger and Grime* did not survive in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century

> [v]ersions printed in Scotland, it would be hard to claim it as Scottish on the
> basis of the version surviving in the Percy Folio which contains few, if any,
> distinctively Scottish features in its language beyond occasional place names.
>
> (Edwards 2000: 64)

What allows for easier acceptance of the 'Scottish' designation may be the history of the poem's circulation. Evidence from the late fifteenth century

reveals *Eger and Grime* inspired a ballad tradition in Scotland, while the sixteenth-century *Complaynt of Scotland* lists the poem alongside other Scottish romances, such as *Rauf Coilȝear* and *Lancelot of the Laik.*

Similarly, *Awntyrs* was once listed alongside Scottish romances, and while it may not have inspired any literary traditions, it is very closely connected to the thirteen-line alliterative revival in Scotland, as I will discuss in detail below. First, though, I would like to address what has been written on the poem's dialect, which, like *Eger*, has many Scottish place names, but few distinctively Scottish features.

2.1   The dialect of *Awntyrs*

Understandably, dialect is an obvious place to start when investigating the provenance of a text; however, when the text in question can be placed in the Anglo-Scottish border region the dialect is not always particularly revealing, considering the linguistic history of the area. In his work on written Northern Middle English and Older Scots, Williamson (2002) explains that these linguistic labels have been used to 'distinguish geopolitically what is perceived to have been a common speech area' (2002: 253). Williamson does stress that this view is an oversimplification, but he also concedes the border area's 'strong linguistic coherence … is not at issue' (2002: 254).

Kniezsa (1997) echoes the sentiment, particularly regarding writing during the Late Middle Ages. Kniezsa's analysis of the distribution of orthographic features of the period demonstrates that 'the whole English-speaking area from the English Channel to the Firth of Forth … belongs to one orthographic continuum' (1997: 32). Her conclusions, which are based on data from the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English* (LALME), reveal that what are often considered regional-specific features may not be as restricted as they initially seem.

In the case of *Awntyrs*, the variation between the four extant manuscripts makes it exceedingly difficult to determine the poem's original dialect. These complications are elaborated upon in Gates' 1969 edition:

> First, each MS is in a different, but mixed, dialect. Second, whatever features are shared by all the MSS can only indicate the dialect of their archetype, which may have differed from that of the original poem because of the process of copying.
>
> (Gates 1969: 29)

Indeed, of the four manuscripts, only two can be localised with precision. The Lambeth MS is the only southern copy, thought to be from the London area, and the Thornton MS is known to have been written by Robert Thornton from the North Riding of Yorkshire. The remaining two, the Douce MS and the Ireland MS, are thought to be from the North West Midlands of England (Hanna 1974: 1–8). Even with scribal variations accounted for, the dialect cannot be specified more precisely than Northern England or possibly southern Scotland (Hanna 1974: 148).

In his 1897 edition of *Awntyrs off Arthure*, Amours asserts that even with hypothetical copies of the poem, freshly penned in Scotland by the author himself, we would be 'unable to decide whether they were composed south or north of the Tweed, for then and long [after the era of composition] the same language prevailed from the Humber to the Moray Firth' (Amours 1897: lxx). More recently, Edwards (2000) has discussed potentially problematic evidence of linguistic data 'given the admixture of Scottish and English forms that seem to have to obtained in some kinds of fifteenth-century Scottish literary language' (2000: 64) in texts from the border area. Similarly, Hanna, in his discussion of the *Awntyrs'* dialect, writes that 'precise localisation . . . is extremely difficult, for the vocabulary of alliterative poetry seems to have moved across other dialect boundaries with exceptional ease' (Hanna 1974: 148), although he uses the poem's general vocabulary to place it in the north of England.

These arguments certainly present an oversimplification of a complex linguistic situation; however, their purpose is to caution against relying too heavily on dialectal evidence in investigations involving literature from the Anglo-Scottish border region. In the *Awntyrs'* case, studies of the poem's linguistic characteristics have, to date, not provided any incontrovertible answers that would justify highlighting the dialect as a key indicator of the poem's origin. In the case of the poem's metre, however, the evidence appears more conclusive. Nevertheless, the discord between evidence and opinion is especially apparent in literature on the poem's place in the thirteen-line alliterative poetry tradition.

2.2   Metre

Nineteenth-century discussions on *Awntyrs'* metre were frequently focused on finding parallels with other poems thought to be the work of Huchown. Many of these alliterative works, for example *Golagros and Gawain* and *Morte Arthure*, do in fact share stylistic features and vocabulary with both *Awntyrs* and each other. In fact, it is because of the many similarities found in fourteenth-century alliterative poems that 1930s scholars on the subject concluded that there must have been a tightly connected group of poets whose works were interrelated. By the 1970s, however, scholars began to realise this was not necessarily the case – the use of similar vocabulary and formulaic phrasing did not mean two poems were related, and even if they were it could be extremely difficult to prove which was the lender and which the borrower (Turville-Petre 1974: 28–29). It was during this era that the questions surrounding Huchown's body of work had been answered and *Awntyrs* was able to become just another alliterative poem, albeit an English one. The poem's nearly two-hundred-year old status as a Scottish poem was becoming a thing of the past.

In the case of another poem once argued to be Scottish, *Sir Tristram*, the metre played a key role in settling the debate of the poem's origin. In McIntosh's 1989 paper, he states that 'no exact parallels to the stanza-form of *Sir Tristram* have been found in other Middle English verse or in Scots either' (McIntosh 1989: 90). McIntosh acknowledges the variety of stanzaic forms used in Middle Scots poetry, but writes that he '[knows] of none which resembles the *Sir Tristram* type … as closely as that exemplified' by a poem known to be written by Englishman Laurence Minot (McIntosh 1989: 92). The importance of the metre used in *Awntyrs* is similarly telling, though in this case it clearly suggests a Scottish origin, rather than an English.

According to Riddy (1998), the Scottish alliterative tradition was 'both later than the English and different in kind. Whereas most Middle English alliterative verse is in the unrhymed long line, there are very few unrhymed alliterative poems in Scots' (Riddy 1998: 41). Another crucial difference is in the stanzaic patterns used by the two groups. Thorlac Turville-Petre (1974) writes that the Scottish alliterative poems constitute their own 'clear-cut group' ('Summer Sunday' 3), as the poets used a distinctive pattern that differed from the varied stanzaic patterns favoured by the English. One typically English variant used 'an octave of alliterative long lines rhyming alternately, followed by a 'bob' and completed by a 'wheel' of four short lines' (Turville-Petre 1974: 1), expressed $abababab_4 \ c_1 \ dddc_2$. The pattern

used by the Scottish poets replaced the bob with a full line of four stresses, resulting in the pattern *ababababc$_4$ dddc$_2$*. Turville-Petre does note a single exception where this characteristic Scots pattern is seen in an English poem: *The Awntyrs off Arthure*. He suggests that *Awntyrs*, which he conjectures was written in Northern England, is 'perhaps the earliest example of this pattern' (Turville-Petre 1974: 3), and was probably what inspired the Scottish poets.

With regard to chronology, Turville-Petre's argument makes sense. The alliterative revival reached Scotland late, becoming part of the poetic tradition long after it had fallen out of fashion in England (Riddy 1998: 41). *Awntyrs* was likely written in the late fourteenth century, making it contemporary with the English alliterative revival. However, as Felicity Riddy notes, 'we need not assume because *Awntyrs* predates the [other poems in this style] that this particular stanza originated in England' (Riddy 1998: 43). Riddy also points out that it is 'surely inconceivable that no Scottish writer used any metre [other than four-stress couplets] for a hundred and fifty years while English poets were trying out a whole range of forms' (Riddy 1998: 41). Although Riddy is not making the argument that the *Awntyrs* was written in Scotland, her reasoning supports the notion.

Others have taken the stance that *Awntyrs* is a transitional work, allowing for the interpretation of the poem as simultaneously English and Scottish. Fein (2000) labels the poem 'a metrically transitional work that points toward the Scottish tradition' (Fein 2000: 99), citing the examples of *Rauf Coilʒear, Golagros and Gawane*, and *The Buke of the Howlat* as later Scottish works that use the *Awntyrs* stanza. Similarly, Pearsall (1977) writes that the alliterative poetry revival can be divided into two groups, a Northern/North Midland group, featuring a bob-and-wheel stanza, and a Scottish group, with the bob eliminated (Pearsall 1977: 185). Pearsall goes as far as including *Awntyrs* in the Scottish group, but then frustratingly labels the work 'transitional'.

Of the two viewpoints discussed in this section, *Awntyrs* as either strictly English or as a transitional work, the latter is more palatable. To accept *Awntyrs* as an anomaly in English alliterative poetry is, as Kratzmann writes, to overestimate 'the influence of English poetry upon Scots' (Kratzmann 1980: 3). Discussing the larger relationship between the English and Scottish literary traditions, Kratzmann notes that the influence of the former has long been recognised, if over-emphasised, and therefore 'it seems strange that the possibility that Scots poetry may in turn have had some influence on the way English poets wrote has seldom been discussed' (Kratzmann 1980: 3). That

there was borrowing across borders is not in question; however, the fact that it went both ways may often be overlooked.

Twenty-first century scholarship regarding *Awntyrs* in the alliterative tradition has seen a new position emerging – that the poem is, in fact, Scottish. Royan (2010), Schiff (2011) and Klein (2017) have all advocated the possibility of a Scottish provenance, all three supporting Hanna's proposal of the idea. In notes to his 2008 edition of *Golagros and Gawain,* Hanna writes that 'there is no special evidence to indicate that, in origin, *The Awntyrs* should be placed south of Solway Firth' (Hanna 2008: xxxv). His stance is a complete reversal of that in the notes to his 1974 edition of *Awntyrs,* now arguably the standard edition of the poem. Unfortunately, researchers working with *Awntyrs* will not necessarily consult the notes to *Golagros,* and may inadvertently continue to disseminate dubious claims regarding the provenance of the poem. To be fair, it is not Hanna's fault if researchers do not look beyond his *Awntyrs* edition, though it is not uncommon in Middle English studies for scholars to consult only the most current editions, leaving the earliest completely forgotten (Matthews 1999: xv). The fact that the entire Huchown story has been all but lost to history is a glaring example of this forgotten past.

3   Themes and story

To return to the aforementioned studies on the literary heritage of 'known' Scottish poems, I will now turn to Purdie's (2005) exploration of *Golagros and Gawain*, wherein she asks what a poem's 'Scottishness' might consist of when 'superficial factors [such] as language of composition or manuscript and circulation history' are removed (Purdie 2005: 96). In the case of *Golagros*, with factors like dialect and circulation eliminated, what remains is a romance that is seemingly unconnected to Scotland, save Sir Gawain's occasional Scottish heritage. By looking beyond the surface, however, Purdie draws out more subtle aspects of the poem. For instance, the titular Golagros is a landholder, proudly pledged to no king, who places great value on his freedom:

Quhill I may my wit wald,
I think my fredome to hald,
As my eldaris of ald
Has done me beforne.

<div style="text-align:center">(ll.450–453) [2]</div>

According to this passage, Golagros' independence goes beyond stubbornly refusing to capitulate to King Arthur; it is part of an ancestral tradition, part of who he is. What Purdie ultimately concludes is that the themes of the poem, like this 'self-conscious use of the term "freedom"' (Purdie 2005:104), hold the key to its Scottishness. She connects this theme to elements of earlier Scottish poems, including the immortal line 'A, freedom is a noble thing!' from Barbour's *The Bruce*. Suddenly, this tangentially Scottish poem encapsulates a key element of the country's culture.

I have highlighted Purdie's 'search for Scottishness' in *Golagros,* previously considered a brother to *Awntyrs*, to bring to the fore the way the content of *Awntyrs* has been written about. Theoretically, there should be no need to search for Scottishness in *Awntyrs* – the poem has a Scottish character and many references to places in Scotland. However, because of the poem's association with the Scottish Huchown, it has become, ironically, almost taboo to take these Scotticisms at face value. In the following section I will look at what has been written about the content in order to demonstrate that based on the poet's treatment of the characters, as well as his apparent knowledge of the poem's real-life setting on the Anglo-Scottish border, there is no valid reason to rule out a Scot as the poem's author.

3.1   Character representation

The Awntyrs off Arthure is a story told in two parts with roughly half of the poem devoted to each section. The first half is a retelling of *The Trental of St. Gregory,* and reads as a didactic horror story intended to remind audiences of the importance of doing their devotionals. A brief summary: While King Arthur and his court are on a hunt in Inglewood Forest, Guinevere and Sir Gawain are visited by a macabre apparition of Guinevere's mother who warns the pair that the royal court's grandiose lifestyle is doomed, and asks that they

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[2] All citations and translations from *The Awntyrs off Arthure* and *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawain* are from Hahn (1995), unless otherwise noted.

pray for her soul.

The second half is the quintessential Arthurian story: as the royal household enjoys a feast, a mysterious interloper disrupts the festivities, issuing a challenge that leads to one of the knights facing the stranger in combat. Upon entrance, the stranger announces himself: 'Mi name is Sir Galaron, withouten eny gile/The grettest of Galwey of greves and gyllis' (*My name is Sir Galaron, without any guile; The greatest of Galloway, of the thickets and ravines*, ll. 417–418). As Sir Galeron continues it emerges that he has come to confront Arthur regarding some of those very lands having been wrongfully seized by the king and given to Sir Gawain. The knight's proclamation regarding his native land makes it difficult to ignore his nationality. However, some scholars view this detail as too overt, cautioning that 'Galleron's Scottishness should not be taken to indicate that the poem itself is Scottish in origin' (Rushton 2005: 115). Undoubtedly, this is a valid point – claiming that *Awntyrs* is a Scottish poem because it has a Scottish character is not a compelling argument; nevertheless, such details should not be ignored.

As the scene in the poem progresses, Sir Galeron and Sir Gawain meet at the lists where a bloody battle ensues. Galeron proves to be Gawain's equal in the beginning, but eventually yields to the superior knight. John Robson described this scene in his 1842 edition of *Awntyrs*, presenting it as a story of a Scottish knight who not only has his lands wrongfully taken by the English king, but who also shamefully loses the battle he initiated, hoping to reclaim them.

Robson (1842) argues that there is no way the poet could have been Scottish and written a story where the English dominate the Scots, even momentarily. Robson's reading seems to place too much emphasis on Sir Galeron's nationality, while at the same time giving too little credit to Scottish poets. While Robson sees Galeron as victimised and on the losing end of a battle, the story ultimately ends with Galeron joining the Round Table, as well as reclaiming ownership of his lands. Throughout, Galeron is treated respectfully by both the English king in the story and by the author of the poem, who introduces him by writing 'He was the soveraynes of al sitting in sete/That ever segge had sen with his eye sight (*He was the lordliest of all, sitting in his proper place/ That any person had seen*, ll. 358–359). The poet has kind words for Galeron's lady and his horse, as well. The lady is 'the worthiest wight that eny wy welde wolde' (*the most worthy person that anyone might wish to possess*, l. 365), and his horse is 'in fyne sandel . . .

Stode as a unicorn'(*in fine silk. . . wearing horse-head armor to resemble a unicorn*, l. 386; l. 388). Though Galeron does face Gawain in battle, it hardly seems accurate to describe him as a villain, and it is clear the audience is meant to respect him, if not root for him.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the seized lands were given to Sir Gawain – son of the King of Lothian and Orkney, popularly known as the Lord of Galloway (Hahn 1995: 169) – meaning the lands were always in the hands of a Scot. As for Galeron losing the battle – of course he does; this is a Sir Gawain tale, after all. It is hard to imagine a poet, Scottish or English or otherwise, writing a story where the hero of the story loses to an unknown character.

While the themes here are superficial, they are not necessarily extraneous to the overall exploration of what can be gleaned from the content of the poem. In that vein, much has been written on the geographic and topographical elements of *Awntyrs*, including Galeron's disputed lands, with scholars frequently disagreeing on what, if anything, can be deduced from the information found within.

3.2   Authorial knowledge

Claims pertaining to the significance of the setting of *Awntyrs* generally suggest that Northern English authorship can be inferred from the poet's knowledge of the Cumbria area; however, these same claims invariably go on to say that the poet has detailed knowledge of southern Scotland as well, as is made clear in the references to sixteen Scottish locations (Kelly 1979: 3). Although the poet appears to be equally familiar with both sides of the border, treatises on the subject overwhelmingly conclude the author was an Englishman. Unfortunately, there is a lacuna in the literature concerning what factors, if any, suggest a stronger connection to England than Scotland. As will be seen below, the existing work on the subject suggests that scholars began to designate the poet as English by default.

Hooper's 1935 essay on the dialect of *Awntyrs*, written largely to weigh in on potential authorial contributions by Huchown, touches on the question of the author's nationality. Hooper believes that hints about the poem's provenance are revealed in evidence such as

> The local knowledge displayed by the author: the scene is in the neighbourhood of Carlisle. Tarn Wadling, Inglewood Forest and Plumpton all seem well known to the author, who may therefore have been a native of

Cumberland or Westmoreland. He also shows a knowledge of Southwestern
Scotland whilst, on the other hand, his idea of the South of England is vague.

(Hooper 1935: 62)

Gates quotes Hooper's comments in his 1969 edition of *Awntyrs*,
adding that 'a further indication of Northern provenance is the stanza form,
which occurs almost exclusively in poems written in the North and Scotland'
(Gates 1969: 30). Although here Gates has clearly stated that the poem has
the same likelihood of being Scottish as English, he takes the stance that it is
the latter, thus furthering the supposition. Gates does include an additional
factor to support his stance, explaining that the Lambeth MS, which is the
work of a southern scribe, does not include the place-names of the Tarn
Wadling or Inglewood Forest. However, according to Kelly (whose
comprehensive toponymical study of *Awntyrs* is discussed at length below),
it is the discrepancies in the place-names themselves that best illustrates the
unreliability of the four manuscripts.

The notion that the *Awntyrs* poet must be English, based on only half
of the evidence, continued into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In
Phillips' 1988 edition of the poem she writes that 'there seems to be nothing
that points to Scottish rather than English authorship' (Phillips 1988: 10),
adding that several locations in the poem were well-known romance settings.
More recently, Rushton has written that 'the poem has clear features
(specifically language and metre) indicating a northwest provenance, but
Cumberland rather than Scotland is considered the likeliest region of origin'
(Rushton 2005: 115). As in the works that came before, there is no significant
additional information explaining why that is the case, nothing explaining
why the north of England is the more likely of the two locations.

Arguments that take the opposite stance are rare. Early *Awntyrs* editor
F.J. Amours reasoned in 1897 that 'if the poem belonged to Cumberland or
Lancashire the reverse should have happened: the Scottish topography should
be hazy and the southern places easy to identify, especially as [the texts] are
the work of English copyists' (Amours 1897: lxxiii). While Amours'
interpretation did not leave the same lasting impression as the
counterargument, his work would be continued in a way, in a kindred study
nearly a century later.

3.2.1 Topographical detail
Kelly's 1979 discussion of 'Place-names in the Awntyrs off Arthure', covers

in detail all the locations mentioned in *Awntyrs* in an attempt to identify clearly their real-world counterparts. By analysing the place-names as they are listed in all four manuscripts, as well as previous scholarship, notably editions by F.J. Amours (1897) and John Robson (1842), Kelly is able to identify, with reasonable certainty, many of the locations mentioned in the second half of the poem. The locations are divided into three sets: the lands Galeron claims Arthur has seized, the lands Arthur gives to Gawain following the duel, and the lands Gawain returns to Galeron. While all three sets of names are of interest, the discussion here will focus on highlighting Kelly's conclusions about the first set, Galeron's seized lands.

When Sir Galeron introduces himself at King Arthur's court he proclaims that he is the rightful lord

[Of Carrake] of Connok, of Conyngham, and also Kyle,
Of Lomond, of Losex, of Loyane hilles.

(ll. 419-420)

As mentioned, the four manuscripts show a great deal of variation in the named locations. The table below reflects the variant of each toponym from the above passage as it is found in each manuscript.

Table 1. Comparison of place-name forms

Thornton (T.)	Douce (D.)	Ireland (Ir.)	Lambeth (L.)
Carryke	-	*Carrake*	*Careyk*
Konynge	*Connok*	*Cummake*	*Connok*
Conyngame	*Conyngham*	*Conyngame*	*Coynham*
Kylle	*Kyle*	*Kile*	*Kylle*
Lomonde	*Lomond*	*Lonwik*	*Lomound*
Lenay	*Losex*	*Lannax*	*Leynaux*
Lowthyane hillis	*Loyane hilles*	*Laudoune hillus*	*Lewans hillis*

Kelly's analysis easily identifies the place-names in the first line, *Carrake*, *Connok*, *Conyngham*, and *Kyle* as Carrick, Cumnock, Cunninghame, and Kyle, respectively. It is worth noting that all four of these are located in, or were historically part of, the Ayrshire region in southwest Scotland, which itself was once part of Galloway. Admittedly, the region may have been relatively well known at the time – on many medieval maps Scotland is a nebulous entity, though Galloway is occasionally prominently labeled (Klein 2016: 50) – but the *Awntyrs* poet appears to have known the area well enough to include highly specific geographic details.

Regarding the names from the second line of the passage, *Lomond*, *Losex*, and *Loyane hilles*, the findings are not as conclusive.[3] *Lomond* is very likely the area of Loch Lomond in Dunbartonshire and Stirlingshire; *Losex* is possibly the ancient county of Lennox, which encompassed Dunbartonshire during the Middle Ages; the *Loyane hilles* of D., as well the *Lowthyane hillis* of T., and the *Lewans hillis* of L. possibly refer to the Lothian hills, although if that were the case, this particular locale would fall outside of Galeron's Galloway lordship. However, if Ir.'s *Laudone hillus* refers to Loudoun Hill, as Robson (1842: xvi) suggests, all of the place-names in these two lines would fall under Galeron's purview, as Loudoun Hill is an actual location in Ayrshire.

The second set of place-names represent the lands that Arthur bestows upon Gawain, following the battle:

Al the Glamergane londe with greves so grene,
The worship of Wales at wil and al wolde,
With Criffones castelles curnelled ful clene;
Eke Vlstur halle to hafe and to holde,
Wayford and Waterforde [in Wales I wene];
Two baronrees in Bretayne with burghes so bolde

(ll. 665–670)

These lands are not meant to be in the border region, however, excepting *Glamergane londe* (Glamorganshire) and *the worship of Wales*, these place-names are the most obscure of the three sets. *Criffones castelles* (also *Gryffones castelle* and *Kirfre castelle*) 'cannot be located in Wales, southwestern Scotland or northwestern England' (Kelly 1979: 14). *Vlster halle* is even more opaque, the variations being *þe Husters haulle* and *Hulkers home*. Kelly locates possible candidates in the Carlisle area but there is not enough information to say with any certainty what the author's original intention may have been. The final names of interest in this set are *Wayford and Waterforde in Wales*, though only D. specifies a location in Wales. *Bretayne* in the final line (or *Burgoyne* in T.), likely refers to Brittany, Kelly reasoning that, if the baronies were meant to be in Scotland, England, or Wales, it seems likely the poet would have given specific names. Taken as a

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[3] For detailed information on how Kelly accounts for the greater variance in the final three place-names see Kelly (1979: 10-13).

whole, the majority of the manuscripts make clear reference to regions of Wales and France, but no other easily recognisable locations in Britain.

The third and final set of place-names analysed by Kelly are those that Sir Gawain announces he will return to Sir Galeron. Only the first line of the passage is necessary for the present discussion:

Al the londes and the lithes fro Lauer to Layre

(D. l. 678)

In this line there is little variation across the four manuscripts: Ir. reads *Logher to Layre*, while T. and L. read *Lowyke to Layre*. Although the identification of *Lauer*, *Logher*, and *Lowyke* requires some conjecture, '"Layre" is of course Ayr', as Robson simply states (1842: xvi). The <L> is apparently appended for alliterative assistance.

The focus here has been on the minor place-names of *Awntyrs*, particularly those that are not immediately identifiable. Such discussion is not necessary for places like Carlisle's Tarn Wathelyn and Inglewood Forest, as they were common romance settings, serving as the backdrop for at least *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle*, *The Marriage of Sir Gawain,* and *The Avowyng of Arthur*. With this in mind, and taking Kelly's findings as a whole, I would argue that the detailed list of locations in Scotland reveals more than those of Northern England. It seems reasonable to expect a poet crafting an Arthurian story in the late fourteenth century to use familiar tropes and settings, such as the ghostly goings-on at the Tarn, with no real need for firsthand knowledge of the area. True, some of the Scottish place-names might have been somewhat well known as part of the oft-contested borderlands (Klein 2016: 48), but the proximity of the locations in the first set of place names, presented with such accuracy, suggest the poet had more than just a passing knowledge of the region.

Though Kelly's work provides copious evidence that supports the possibility that *Awntyrs* was authored by a Scot, this is not her objective. In fact, her piece begins by stating that the poet might have been 'a native or at least a long-term resident of the northwest of England. He may well have been a Cumbrian' (Kelly 1979: 1). Granted, Kelly's paper is not arguing authorship, it is purely a study of place-names; however, the dissonance seen in her work is the embodiment of the post Huchown-era problem with scholarship. Ascribing authorship of *Awntyrs* to an English poet has become a standard part of the poem's lore.

4   Conclusion

4.1   The legacy of Huchown

To recapitulate the arguments thus far, *Awntyrs off Arthure* is related to the alliterative thirteen-line English poetry of the fourteenth century in only the most general sense; however, it is intimately related to the later alliterative poetry tradition in Scotland in its use of a very particular stanzaic pattern. Until recently, scholars have tended to accept *Awntyrs* as a Northern English poem, meaning it is either the catalyst for the Scottish tradition, or a transition between the two groups. Regarding the poem's language, there is no decisive evidence to place the poem firmly on either side of the Anglo-Scottish border. As for the story itself, because of the poem's bipartite structure, it is possible to say that *Awntyrs* is the story of a ghostly encounter in Carlisle, and the tale of battling Scottish knights, in equal measure. In other words, an argument in favor of a Scottish provenance is just as strong, if not stronger, than an argument for the opposite. Why then, is the argument seldom made?

Perhaps the answer can be summed up as 'Huchown' – the mysterious poet once hyperbolically deemed 'an immortal who ranks among the great formative forces in the literature of the English tongue' (Neilson 1902: 389). Perhaps, due at least in part to epithets such as this, Huchown's fall from literary favour was particularly abrupt. Only eight years after the publication of Neilson's adulatory essay on Huchown, MacCracken (1910) cantankerously declared that nothing had been proved except for Huchown's authorship of *Pistill*, effectively putting an end to the entire ordeal, at least on the surface.

More than sixty years later, Huchown's literary legacy had diminished, but it had not completely vanished. Turville-Petre lets slip his frustration in his 1974 paper on the thirteen-line stanza, writing that 'the absurdities of the "Huchown controversy" revealed only too clearly' the sensitive work involved in establishing connections between alliterative works (Turville-Petre 1974: 12). In the epilogue to his 1977 book on the same subject, while considering early efforts to find commonalities in various alliterative poems, he writes that:

> In the early years of this century these parallels were used to bolster one of the most absurd literary hypotheses of all time, in which it was argued that the author of the majority of alliterative poems was a certain 'Huchown of the Awle Ryale'. The name of this poet who was apparently so prodigiously

prolific would have sunk without trace if he had not had the good fortune to be mentioned in the early fifteenth century by Andrew Wyntoun … Huchown himself proved somewhat elusive, but several identifications, a number of them Scottish, were proposed. This elaborate construction, lacking all scholarly foundation, tumbled to the ground when subjected to gentle probing.

<div align="right">(Turville-Petre 1977: 28)</div>

Clearly, Huchown remains a proverbial thorn in many an academic's side. Edwards echoes Turville-Petre's complaint, though in a more measured way, writing of the 'excesses of attributional optimism [that] have recurred in the editorial tradition of Scottish romance … and have contributed to the problems of establishing secure criteria for the localising of romances as Scottish' (Edwards 2000: 63–64). This surely refers, at least in part, to the Huchown controversy – and it is a valid point: the 'attributional optimism' has arguably halted efforts to add to the body of medieval Scottish literature. At the very least it steered conversation in the wrong direction for nearly two centuries.

4.2   Next steps

As mentioned above, several contemporary scholars have referred to *The Awntyrs off Arthure* as a Scottish poem, without any qualification. In my view, the casual labeling of *Awntyrs* as Scottish is a great step forward; perhaps soon *Awntyrs* will find a home among the medieval Scottish romances. While some readers may agree, others may ask: why does any of this matter at all? What is to be gained by including *Awntyrs* as part of the Scottish canon? For these readers I am afraid I do not have an answer. For the last century, the poem has been read and discussed as English. What might be discovered when reading it as Scottish? By approaching the poem with our existing knowledge of intertextuality and history, and a new mindset, free from any expectations, subconscious or otherwise, that we have of a 'Middle English romance', reading a Scottish *Awntyrs* may be like reading a new poem entirely.

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