

## SOME SCOTS IN DENMARK

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Three men stand out among the Scots in Denmark of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: John McAlpine or Machabeus, Bothwell, and Thomas Kingo. In Denmark they know little of McAlpine these days, in Scotland Bothwell is still being painted blacker than he deserves and Kingo, when mentioned at all on this side of the North Sea, is characterized by one single sentence and an ambiguous one at that.

A good picture of McAlpine can be obtained from the entry in the DNB when it is backed by the information supplied in A.F. Mitchell's edition of the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis* (STS 1897). Born shortly before 1500, McAlpine was Prior of the Dominican Convent in Perth from 1532 till 1534 but fled to England when summoned to appear before the Bishop of Ross at Holyrood to answer a charge of heresy. In England he married Agnes Macheson, like himself a Scot and religious refugee, whose sister Elizabeth married the English reformer and translator of the Bible Miles Coverdale. Proceeding to Wittenberg, McAlpine took his doctorate in Divinity under the benevolent eye of Luther himself, classicized his surname in good contemporary fashion to Machabeus, and was sent by Luther to help Christian III with the completion of the Reformation in Denmark. In Copenhagen he became a royal chaplain and one of the professors of Theology in the refounded university. He was a senior member of the commission responsible for the ultimate form of the Danish Bible of 1550 which, on Christian III's instructions, stuck pretty close to Luther's final version of the Scriptures of 1545. McAlpine died in 1557. F.J. Billeskov Jansen in his *Dansk Litteratur Historie I* (1976) does mention McAlpine but it is sad that the Scot does not find a place in modern Danish encyclopedias or even in S.E. Stybe's *Copenhagen University: 500 Years of Science and Scholarship* (1979) which pays great tribute to many of the Danish-born theologians of the Reformation period. From this island, however, we catch two interesting glimpses of McAlpine. The title-page of David Lyndsay's *Monarchie* (1553)

includes the statement 'Imprinted at the command and expenses of Doctor Machabeus of Capmanhovin'. That at the very least makes it probable that McAlpine and Lyndsay were in touch with one another when Lyndsay was in Copenhagen on a diplomatic foray on behalf of Mary of Guise in 1548. Then, in 1553, McAlpine clearly persuaded Christian III to intercede with Mary Tudor on behalf of his brother-in-law Miles Coverdale who had become Bishop of Exeter under Edward VI but was now deposed and in custody. King Christian had, it is true, to jog Queen Mary's elbow but in 1555 Coverdale was allowed to leave England and escape the fate of his fellow-reformers Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley. Coverdale went first of all to Denmark where he had already been with the McAlpines in the course of his exile after the fall of Thomas Cromwell under Henry VIII. Coverdale's family link with the McAlpines of course not only saved his life but also gave him opportunities to become familiar with the Danish Lutheran liturgy, the subject of one of the finest pieces of writing of that great English stylist, *The Order of the Church in Denmark etc.*

James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, the third husband of Queen Mary Stuart, has surely had enough written about him for an agreed version of his biography to be established. Alas, the old calumnies are still being repeated even in the notes of such an excellent work as Patricia J. Wilson's edition of John Galt's *Ringan Gilhaize* (Edinburgh 1984). We read there on page 340 that 'Bothwell .... made his way to Norway where he was imprisoned by the kinsmen of a Danish lady whom he had earlier seduced. He died a prisoner in the Castle of Dragsholm, in the north of Zealand, and a body reputed to be his is to be seen in the nearby church of Faaravejle.' A much less sensational picture emerges if we follow T.W. Manson in his 'Bothwell Abroad' (A. Stewart: *Scots in the Baltic* – Centre for Nordic Studies of Aberdeen University, 1977 –). Bothwell met Anna Trondsdatter, the daughter of a Danish admiral, in Copenhagen in 1560 and she was seemingly bound to him by a *trolovelse*, a formal betrothal. Anna came to Scotland in 1562 but found that Bothwell was languishing in English captivity and returned home without meeting him. She saw him again when he was a fugitive in Bergen in 1567 – we remember 'Denmark' included Norway in those days – and took him to court, alleging he had 'three wives, one of them herself, the others Lady Jean Gordon and Queen Mary'. She accepted, however, Bothwell's offer of compensation, never fulfilled, and abandoned the suit. Bothwell was

at first treated as a guest in Denmark on this occasion but was ultimately a prisoner in Dragsholm Castle in Sjælland where he died in 1572, possibly insane. It is true that Boswell's supposed mummified corpse used to be on show under a glass cover in Faarevejle. Some years ago, however, Queen Frederika ordered it to be decently coffined.

Thomas Kingo, poet and bishop, was a Scot only on his father's side but a famous one. The usual short statement about him is that he was 'the son of a Scottish weaver who emigrated to Denmark' (e.g. *The Blue Guide to Denmark* p.84). This should really read 'the son of a Scot whose parents had brought him to Denmark as an infant and who later became a weaver there' as the 'Scottish weaver who emigrated to Denmark' was our Thomas's grandfather, a tapestry-weaver also called Thomas, and he went to Denmark from Crail in Fife about 1588, taking with him his wife and their little son John – in Denmark: Johannes/Hans – born in 1586. The young family settled in Helsingør (Shakespeare's Elsinore) where the Scot probably enjoyed royal patronage. It is not surprising that a native of the East Neuk went to Denmark at the time as 'the East Neuk ports and Crail in particular had strong trading links with Scandinavia and there were large Scottish communities in Copenhagen and Malmö' (Dr. Ronald Cant of St. Andrews in a recent letter). What is surprising is that a Scot should be a tapestry-weaver so skilled that he could compete for employment or business with the Flemings and Brabanters who were the great masters of the craft at the time and were certainly tapestry-weavers employed by the Danish royal court in the fifteen-eighties. As to the derivation of the surname 'Kingo' I have consulted both Dr. Cant and Dr. Robert Smart, Librarian of St. Andrews University, and have decided that 'Kingo' is probably a Gaelic patronymic, a variant of 'Mackenzie' which was pronounced 'Mackingie' as late as Scott's day, the z-pronunciation coming in with the faulty interpretation of the old 'yogh'. Dr. Smart's material shows there were plenty of Kingos with plenty alternative spellings of the name in Fife round about 1600 including a Thomas in Pittenweem and another Thomas in the parish of St. Andrews and a John in Crail parish. One sinister occurrence of the name belongs to the second half of the seventeenth century, a Kingo accused of witchcraft (G.F. Black: *The Surnames of Scotland*).

John/Hans Kingo, brought to Denmark as a small child, was a

weaver like his father but a weaver of linen and damask. He spent most of his life in Slangerup in Sjælland and was twice married. Thomas Kingo, poet and bishop, was the son of his second wife Karen Soerensdatter. He was born in Slangerup in 1634 and attended the local grammar school from 1640. When about seventeen or eighteen he moved to the grammar school of Frederiksborg where he lodged with the headmaster Albert Bartholin who probably influenced him towards an interest in Danish language and literature. He left school in 1654, studied till 1658 at Copenhagen and graduated in Divinity in the latter year. After that it was at first a seventeenth-century Danish clergyman's normal career for a time: a couple of private tutorships, seven years as an assistant minister in a country parish, then nine as parish minister of his native town of Slangerup and finally promotion to the see of Fyn with his residence at Odense where he remained from 1677 till his death in 1703.

Kingo's fame as a poet rests now on his religious verse, his hymns. He published the first part of his *Aandeligt Sjungekor* (Spiritual Choir) in 1674 while still a parish minister. Like Luther and others after him he did not see why the Devil should have all the best tunes and poached his title and some of his melodies from the highly successful *Astrée Sjungekor* of a Danish poet of the preceding generation, Soeren Terkelsen, which owed its title and part of its content to Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrée* (1607-1627), the first novel of modern French literature. The second part of Kingo's work appeared in 1681 and the two sections together were the reason why King Christian V asked – or ordered – him in 1683 to 'compile and arrange a good hymnal of the old, common, and best spiritual songs and hymns and improve them with some of his own'. Kingo set about this task and earned in 1690 royal praise for Part One of it but thereafter followed almost a decade of clerical quarrelling and in-fighting which, however, ended happily in the publication in 1699 of a hymnal containing 85 of Kingo's hymns out of a total of 301. This new hymnal had on its title-page 'prepared for the press by Thomas Kingo, Bishop of Fyn' and it became known as *Kingos salmebog* (Kingo's Hymnal). I shall not dwell at length on Kingo's religious verse. Suffice it to say that it is very properly his main claim to fame and that many of his hymns, usually suitably abridged, have survived in, or have even been restored to, the current official hymnal of 1953, a permanent memorial to Denmark's greatest poet of the seventeenth century and one of the great writers of

## European Baroque Literature.

But Kingo was not only a writer of hymns. Like most of his contemporaries he wrote occasional verse. He also wrote a couple of good love poems, a really spiteful contribution to what a Scot can only call 'The Flyting of Jacob Worm (his first wife's stepson) and Thomas Kingo' and some real country poems including one animal poem, *Sæby-gaards Koe-Klage* (The Lament of the Cows of Sæbygaard), which dates from his days as an assistant minister in a Sjælland country parish. This is *the* poem of his youth, a light-hearted parody with a wealth, or according to one's taste a heavy burden, of classical allusion and at the same time an often earthy reflexion of the young parson's interest in the glebe, the minister's kye and the bull up at the laird's home-farm. The bull and his fate are the subject of the poem and no Scot can read it without thinking of Parson Skinner's *Yowie wi' the Crookit Horn*, that famous victim of a sheep-rustler, or Burns's *Poor Mailie's Elegy*.

Kingo's bull and Mailie have in common the mishanter of falling in the water but *he* drowns in the carp-pond and Kingo has it to be a case of suicide, the poor old bull preferring death by drowning to the ultimate ignominy of being led through the streets of Copenhagen with his horns gilded and his brows bedecked with ribbons, the usual prelude in that age to landing in the slaughterman's hands. Unlike Skinner's yowie or Burns's Mailie the bull lacks a kind master to lament his passing but the cows he has served – in both senses of the word – do it with verve and a parodying of the high-falutin conventions of the seventeenth century that must have made it popular with the young estate-managers and the like Kingo was associating with, all the more so as it was a young minister that was laying aside his starched ruff and was being amusing in a way they could understand.

The poem runs to 750 lines, twice the length of *Tam o'Shanter*. It is in the familiar ballad (4 stress, 3 stress) metre, rhyming ab,ab,cd,cd etc. with many double stanzas. After the cows' introductory remarks it follows the fashion of a contemporary Danish parson's funeral oration on a distinguished parishioner: his ancestry, appearance, character, education (the bull is abstemious in feeding and drinking and does not indulge in excessive card-playing), then his active life, the danger he was in when the Swedes were harrying Sjælland, his 'retirement' after

accepting castration, his lament over his impending fate and his suicide.

The poem is not easy to read but the standard edition provides copious notes and an introductory commentary and it is well worth the effort. To give you an idea of its quality I conclude with a free translation of three passages from it, the choice of my medium being inspired by John Simpson's splendid paper on Peder Dass's *Norrlands Trompet* given in Edinburgh last year.

## I

### *The cows speak and Kingo makes fun of the Pathetic Fallacy*

We coos can bully, roar an greet  
Bit gin like men-we spak  
The wye that Baalam's ass could dee't  
A differ it wad mak.

Oor lood lament wad gar the wids  
In peety tae boo doon,  
The airn-hard aik, tho stoot its airms,  
Like saugh wad ben its croon.

The bonny beech wad sigh an sab  
An on the rodden reid  
We'd hing a cloke o mulberry  
For murnin o the deid.

Gweed-hertit aye, the hizzle-tree  
O tears wad ken nae lack  
An stocks an muckle dads o steen  
Like ony esp wad shak.

## II

### *The biography with classical allusions, bathos, and some earthy talk*

His fadder wiz an honest bull,  
Nane o yer Hielan stots.

His mither wiz a beast ye milk;  
We ca't a coo in Scots.

Auld Nature she hid hanselt him  
We mony a gift fan born,  
For fat a weel-faured bull sud hae  
He hid fae tail tae horn.

A sharger or a feel, A wat,  
Fowk couldna ca the breet;  
He aye wiz richt weel spoken o  
Tho slow upon his feet.

He wizna like the Minotaur  
Half bull, half buirdly chiel,  
Born tae that hoor Pasiphaë  
An coorse iz ony deil.

Perillos hidna biggit *him*  
Wi door o bress in's side  
As jile an place tae torter fowk  
Pharsalis couldna bide.

He aye wiz an upstannin beast  
Wi bonnie sleekit hide;  
His marra nivver yet wiz fun  
Tho socht baith far an wide.

### III

#### *The bull's soliloquoy and suicide*

'Baith skaith and scorn A noo maun thole,  
Aye, innocent maun dee;  
An suffer ill as recompense  
For gweed eence deen by me.

Ma counsel tae aa cattle beasts  
That's sib tae me is: "Brithers,  
Bewaur o shirras substitute

They'd hing or droon their mithers".'

Wi siclike thochts the peer auld beast  
He girnt the nicht awa  
Till wi its broos o siller grey  
The day begooth tae daw.  
The Mornin Starn wi purple cloke  
Its licht it covert syne,  
The cloke it hauds afore its face  
Fan first the sun will shine.

Oor gweed auld bull they noo tak oot  
An wi a raip they bin  
Like ony thievin cateran  
He canna loup nor rin,  
Like cateran at's on the road  
Tae gallows' hill an tree  
Wi fowk stravaigin efter him  
Tae see the wye he'll dee.

Oor bull, close fettert, syne wiz driven  
An struck fu mony a lick  
– Ye nivver hard sic sorry tale –  
Wi muckle hizzle stick.

(His ain coo-bailie wiz the first  
Tae tryst him oot. For shame!  
A howp the callant gets the pox  
Fae France cam ower the faem.)

*He* saw himsel stan aa his leen,  
*They* gied the raip a twist,  
*He* gied them aa a last 'Gweed nicht'  
An heelsterheid he kist  
Himsel wi aa his micht intil  
The carp-dam; twiz seen deen.  
Daith gied him syne the hinmaist straik  
An watter clost his een.



*Envoi*

Ye herds o cattle beasts aroon  
Come let us set a steen  
Upon his grave wi solemn wirds  
Tae keep his memry green.

'Here lies the bull o Sæbygaard  
Fu mony an eer he got  
Wi calf the kye for three mile roon  
An yet he deet a stot'.

**Main Danish Sources**

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