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Regency in Sixteenth Century Scotland, Amy Blakeway (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2015).

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Regency in Sixteenth Century Scotland. By Amy Blakeway. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2015. ISBN: 978-1-8438-3980-4. xvi + 304 pp. £60.

This book examines the definition and boundaries of the regency government and the series of regents in sixteenth-century Scotland. For fifty years of this century Scotland lacked adult monarchs. James V gained the throne at 17 months, his daughter, Mary, succeeded him at 6 days, and James VI was crowned at 13 months. Royal minorities were a hazard of hereditary monarchy. The problem of young rulers was addressed by the appointment of regents. The literary trope of the connection between the minority and political disturbance was well established by the writing of the period. Amy Blakeway addresses the issue through an examination of the regent's office during this period and raises the question of why the regency was so often depicted as a nefarious force that inevitably disrupted governance.

Blakeway discusses periods of regency not as a disruptive exemption to the stability of governance, but as times when power was rebalanced away from the centralised focus on the monarch. It was a type of reboot which renewed the power equilibrium. Such a premise provides the context for a discussion on the nature of regency government. Her first chapter sets the tone for the following examination of the regent's office by proposing that regency government evolved during the sixteenth century. At the start of the century, regents were appointed either by the testament of the previous monarch or by installing the infant monarch's closest relative. By the late 1560s there was a development towards understanding regency as an elected office. The inclusion of an election ideal, as evidence of the increasing voice of the people as separate from the dictates of the government, might be seen as an aspect of revolutionary reformist thought. The introduction of election was mitigated its connection to a notion of monarchical delegation, which led to a lack of clarity regarding the choice of regent. This created a space for debate and a discussion of the merits of a regent and his (or her) qualifications. The regency as an elected office was linked to George Buchanan's argument that kings were originally elected by the nobility and Blakeway points out that this was a natural progression of that assumption. The change to election of regents set the groundwork for a debate on the nature of monarchy.

Blakeway emphasises the continuity of regents' governments with those of the monarch's personal rule. There was not a major disjunction between the minority rule and adult rule as has previously been assumed. Rather, regents continued on with the process of governance whilst holding similar legal powers as well as the power to deal with crown finances. Blakeway argues that regents were generally held to be guardians, or placeholders, for the

monarch with abilities similar to him. Generally, historians have focused on the adult rules of the monarch, with the exception of the consequences of Mary's deposition and the minority of James VI, as the standard of sixteenth-century government. By focusing on the regencies, one disregards the assumption of their destruction. Thus, Blakeway's analysis of regency government, at a more basic level, provides insight to the similarities in legal standards and the regents' treatment of finances and the burghs. She concludes that regency governance was, for the most part, more attentive to justice and legality and less expansive. This points to the insecurity of the regents' office, as they were more susceptible to questions of legitimacy. The regents had to behave conscientiously like "good rulers," even more so than the actual monarch. Blakeway's argument aligns with interpretation of regencies as periods of the development of "collective government", emphasizing councils and parliaments working with the regent in contrast to the singularity of the monarch forwarded by Jenny Wormald and Julian Goodare.

Blakeway's examination of the evolution of the regency office could benefit from the inclusion of an insight on the qualities necessary in a regent as an elected individual, and the changes – if there were any – in those requirements as a response to the changing political situation over the course of the sixteenth century. The insight on the quality of the regency as a continuation of monarchical direct rule begs the question of whether or not they would have been required to live up to the same standards of a monarch, which would allow for greater comparison regarding the success of the regent at maintaining such standards.

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