

‘WITH A VERTU AND LEAWTÉ’: MASCULINE RELATIONSHIPS IN MEDIEVAL  
SCOTLAND

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## ABSTRACT

### **‘WITH A VERTU AND LEAWTÉ’: MASCULINE RELATIONSHIPS IN MEDIEVAL SCOTLAND**

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This thesis is an investigation of elite normative masculinity in medieval Scotland. The attempts of medieval men to claim, enforce or deny personal obligations within homosocial relationships provide evidence of how aristocratic Scotsmen ought to have behaved. These obligations appear in documentary and literary sources and indicate the importance of the relationships associated with them. Charters and bonds of friendship, fealty, and indenture, and three fourteenth-century literary sources, the *Liber Extravagans*, *Gesta Annalia*, and *The Bruce*, provide evidence of normative expectations of men in medieval Scotland. These sources present a picture of an ideal man whose interactions with other men were governed by expectations of loyalty, honesty, bravery, wisdom, and valour. It is also apparent that while courtly chivalry was an influential normative source, its precepts were of secondary importance to the welfare and protection of one's dependants. This study contributes to the growing body of work that emphasizes the importance of understanding manliness and male experiences as a gendered, constructed, and important force within society.

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*For the one who welcomed me home every evening of the past two years with*  
*“AREN’T YOU DONE YET???”*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgments .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	v
Introduction .....	1
Chapter One: Add Men and Stir? .....	7
Chapter Two: “Lele and Trew”: The Study of Feudalism and Lordship .....	18
Chapter Three:	
<i>Hominibus et Amicis Suis</i> : Documentary Records and Masculine Interactions .....	37
Chapter Four:	
Three Walks in the Medieval Woods: Literary Records and Masculine Interactions .....	49
<i>The Liber Extravagans</i> .....	55
<i>Gesta Annalia II</i> .....	60
<i>The Bruce</i> .....	63
Chapter Five:	
“‘That in his Tyme sa Worthy Was’”: The Case of Good Sir James, Lord of Douglas .....	72
Conclusion .....	85
Bibliography .....	94

## INTRODUCTION

When the subject of men in medieval Scotland is mentioned, it often conjures up images of muscular, kilted, claymore-wielding warriors intent on national independence, an image informed more by Mel Gibson's 1995 *Braveheart* than by historical fact. Regardless, the romantic pictures conveyed in period dramas, Hollywood films, and modern popular culture are not, in fact, entirely dissimilar to the ideals outlined in medieval texts. Medieval poems, such as John Barbour's *The Bruce*, emphasize and idealize 'masculine' qualities including military prowess, courage, and loyalty. These texts suggest that the ideal medieval Scotsman shared characteristics like these that are today often considered hyper-masculine. Through an analysis of literary texts and documentary records it is possible to begin to understand normative expectations of masculinity in light of the interactions between men, both factual and fictional, and the personal obligations implied by a range of homosocial bonds that are both specifically medieval and Scottish.

This thesis, "'With a Vertu and Leawté': Masculine Relationships in Medieval Scotland," takes a cultural approach to the question of masculinities, analysing the representations of manhood and maleness in the Middle Ages. The primary temporal focus of this work is the period of the Wars of Independence, 1296 to 1357. To date, historians have thoroughly treated the martial culture and political ramifications of the Wars of Independence, but few works of social or cultural history appear for this period. This study investigates how the identities claimed by aristocratic men and the obligations of their social roles affected medieval Scottish conceptions of an elite normative masculinity. A variety of sources, both documentary and literary, in particular romances and chronicles, portray men's efforts to claim, enforce, and deny

personal obligations arising from formal and informal bonds. This provides evidence of normative masculinised behaviour.

Scotland, during the Middle Ages, was the site of a number of both political and ideological conflicts. By the middle of the eleventh century, the kingdom of Scotland, known at the time as Alba or Scotia, had existed for over two hundred years.<sup>1</sup> Like medieval kings in England or continental Europe, the kings of Scotland enforced their rule through a variety of tactics. While rulers certainly utilized military force, other strategies, including the creation of kin relations and bonds of lordship or personal obligation, were more effective in realms where the central authority was militarily weak. From the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, the increasingly effective exercise of kingship by the descendants of Máelcoluim mac Donnchada (Malcolm III) welded together the disparate peoples of Scotland, establishing a “Scottish” identity.<sup>2</sup> Although in the history of medieval Britain, at least from the tenth century, it is frequently assumed that England was the principal, if not only, expansionist power, Scotland also sought to expand its authority over peripheral regions.<sup>3</sup> Prior to the Wars of Independence, Scotland was:

directed by ‘feudal’ kings who nevertheless drew heavily on the rituals and traditions of Celtic rulership; and the hybridity of the monarchy was reflected nationally in hybrid legal, political and social structures, all of which powerfully reinforced a common sense of Scottishness, despite the strength of local, regional and, indeed, cosmopolitan ties.<sup>4</sup>

Scots rulers employed the same strategies for strength and stability to outside powers as within the kingdom. The feudal bonds between England and Scotland, whose deterioration led to the Wars of Independence, 1296 to 1357, were of primary importance in this regard. Sources from

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Webster, *Medieval Scotland: The Making of an Identity* (London: Macmillan Press, LTD, 1997), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Dauvit Broun, “The Origins of Scottish Identity,” in *Nations, Nationalism and Patriotism in the European Past*, eds. Claus Bjorn, Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer (Copenhagen: Cardiff Academic Press, 1994), 35-36.

<sup>3</sup> Keith Stringer, “Scottish Foundations: Thirteenth Century Perspectives,” in *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History*, eds. Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer (London: Routledge, 1995), 93.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-96.

the period of the Wars of Independence including John Barbour's *The Bruce*, illustrate the political turmoil, burgeoning nationalism, and increasing concern with the questions of freedom and autonomy that characterized the age.

As a result of the hybridity of the kingdom, the aristocracy held a number of concurrent, and possibly conflicting, values. Scottish noblemen conceived of themselves in a variety of ways. Alan of Galloway (d. 1234), for instance, was a feudal magnate, Constable of Scotland, the hereditary chieftain of Galloway—a semi-independent Celtic province—the son of an Anglo-Norman noblewoman, a knight of the English Shires, and a favoured ally of King John of England.<sup>5</sup> These pluralistic identities had important implications for the interaction of noblemen such as Alan of Galloway and other Scottish elites who may, or may not, have shared his loyalties.

During the later Middle Ages, Scotland underwent a series of important social and political changes. The institutionalization of feudalism allowed Scotland to engage with a larger European community, offering both security and increased vulnerability.<sup>6</sup> It also created a far-reaching network of obligation composed of both Scots and foreigners. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the idea of 'Scotland' became an increasingly real and powerful force due to effective, centralized rule. Despite this, men such as Alan of Galloway were able to hold a variety of seemingly contradictory positions and to conceive of themselves in multiple ways—a hybridity that was also represented in the structure of the kingdom. During the final years of

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<sup>5</sup> Keith J. Stringer, "Periphery and Core in Thirteenth-Century Scotland: Alan son of Roland, Lord of Galloway and Constable of Scotland," in *Medieval Scotland: Crown Lordship and Community*, eds. Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 82; Keith Stringer, "Scottish Foundations: Thirteenth Century Perspectives," 88.

<sup>6</sup> In the past few decades, use of the term 'feudalism' and its study has fallen out of favour due to significant conceptual and epistemological concerns (cf. Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "The Tyranny of a Construct: Feudalism and Historians of Medieval Europe," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 79 No. 4 (1974): 1063-88). Although 'feudalism' appears with regularity in this study, I am not unaware of the complexity of the terminology and discuss its evolution and use in Chapter Three.



Alexander III's rule and the unrest of the Wars of Independence, political, though not cultural, hybridity was subsumed beneath the necessity of presenting a united front to outsiders. While the Wars of Independence caused social and political turmoil, they also helped to solidify Scottish conceptions of autonomy and nationhood. These factors combined to create a society that was uniquely Scottish, but that shared features with other medieval kingdoms in Britain and continental Europe. The Scotland that appeared in the fourteenth century had no room for men like Alan of Galloway whose loyalty and allegiances were divided.

Homosocial relations during this period were informed by a variety of obligatory relationships including familial ties, paternal, avuncular and fraternal bonds; fictive kinship, fosterage and god parenthood; and formal pledges, notably feudal bonds. The values underpinning so-called 'feudal societies' provided men with a normative framework from which to construct their own masculine sensitivities. For instance, within feudal relationships, loyalty was expected, demanded, and rewarded, a sign that not all vassals were faithful, or all lords loyal. Through examination of these types of obligatory relationships it is possible to begin to untangle the web of societal expectations governing the interactions of men in medieval Scotland.

Informal bonds, particularly familial ones, required no ritualized rites of acceptance but nonetheless had important behavioural repercussions, while formal pledges often carried with them additional implications for familial and fictive ties. In many cases, bonds required swearing to one's lord and his heirs, if not his brother as well. This created a complex network of obligation that linked kin and lordship together and extended even to the Gaelic lords of the north who, though culturally and linguistically non-European, considered themselves as much a

subject of their king as the great southern lords.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, the lens of feudal obligation is particularly useful as it was recognized throughout Scotland by the thirteenth century.

While gender historians, including Joan W. Scott, Natalie Zemon Davis and John Tosh, have increasingly acknowledged the need to examine the ways in which men interacted with each other, as opposed to strictly focusing on their interactions with women, the current body of work remains limited.<sup>8</sup> This is particularly true in Scottish scholarship. In part this is due to the problem of sources. Few texts offer a clear suggestion as to how men were expected to interact; fewer still illustrate how men actually engaged with each other along gendered lines. Gender historians tend to compound this difficulty further by dismissing the subjects of these few texts as belonging to an elite minority, unrepresentative of the general population. It must be kept in mind, however, that popular romances and epics conveyed elite or aristocratic ideals to a much wider audience. Although men of middling or lower class backgrounds may not have been expected to adhere directly to elite values, normative elite codes of behaviour influenced and informed other forms of behaviour.<sup>9</sup>

This study offers an examination of the normative expectations of elite masculine behaviour in medieval Scotland, though not the actual behaviours and actions of historical figures. In Chapter One, the historiography and methodology of gender history and their

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<sup>7</sup> Cynthia J. Neville, *Land, Law and People in Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 74.

<sup>8</sup> Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 91 No. 5 (1986): 1053-1075; Natalie Zemon Davis, "'Women's History' in Transition: the European Case," *Feminist Studies* Vol. 3 No. 3/4 (1976): 83-103; John Tosh, "What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections of Nineteenth Century Britain," *History Workshop* No. 38 (1994): 179-202; John Tosh, "Masculinities in an Industrial Society: Britain 1800-1914," *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 44 No. 2 (2005): 330-342.

<sup>9</sup> In her 2008 work on masculinity and Christology in Late Antiquity, Colleen Conway argues this point convincingly and concisely: "Together, the textual and material evidence testifies to the values and ideals of the ruling class, values which, as I argued in the introduction, undoubtedly played a role in the broader culture. Even if this picture of manliness did not represent the lived reality of most men in the empire, one would not have to look hard to find an image of masculinity that was intended to evoke admiration and honor, and to which one was supposed to aspire." Colleen Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16.

influence on the current work is evaluated. Chapter Two investigates the concepts of feudalism and lordship, key aspects in this analysis, from a historiographic and normative perspective, to question the development of feudalism and the extent to which it acted as a prescriptive force in medieval Scottish society. A selection of documentary records, including charters, land conveyances, and personal bonds, provide evidence in Chapter Three of how men negotiated relationships with each other. In Chapter Four, the analysis of three fourteenth-century Scottish literary texts helps to flesh-out the understanding of normative expectations in medieval Scotland. This chapter relies heavily upon the narrative theory Umberto Eco set out in his work *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* as a framework for textual analysis.<sup>10</sup> The final chapter offers a more traditional reading of the portrayal of Good Sir James Douglas in John Barbour's *The Bruce*. This case study provides an in-depth analysis of a single character and his presentation. This work helps to fill the lacuna in the current body of scholarship regarding conceptions of men and masculinity in the Middle Ages, as well as nuance modern understandings of gender and class in medieval society.

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<sup>10</sup> Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

## CHAPTER ONE: ADD MEN AND STIR?

What follows is a brief examination of the historiographical developments of gender history, an analysis of the advantages and dangers of literary sources, and the theoretical justification for their inclusion in this study. The field of gender studies offers an important historiographical and methodological foundation for this work in a general sense, in terms of feminist and gender theory, and more specifically in relation to studies of masculinity in the Middle Ages. The use of literary sources in investigations of gender roles and expectations has been well established, although such work requires careful negotiation between the claims that literature shapes and mirrors popular practice.<sup>11</sup>

The rise of gender studies in the mid-twentieth century has had a significant impact on the historical discipline. What began as an ‘add women and stir’ approach, before developing a hefty theoretical basis, has revolutionized the way historians conceptualize men’s and women’s roles. The acceptance of gender as both socially and historically constructed has necessitated a deconstruction of ideas of gender along chronological, regional, and class lines. While this interpretation was initially applied to the study of women and femininities, the importance of analysing male experiences as well was recognized early on by scholars such as Natalie Zemon Davis and Joan W. Scott, although rarely put into practice.<sup>12</sup> Fortunately, the growing field of medieval masculinity studies has helped to provide a framework for new and more specific work. The matter of masculinity in medieval Scotland, however, has not received a great deal of attention to date. While recent work has begun to explore issues of women’s history and gender relations in medieval Scottish contexts, specifically male relationships have received little attention outside of their political implications. By analysing these relationships from a gendered

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<sup>11</sup> Laura Gowing, “Early Modern Gender History: New Horizons?” *History Workshop Journal* No. 45 (1988): 289.

<sup>12</sup> See Davis, “‘Women’s History’ in Transition”; and Scott, “Gender.”

perspective, it is possible to move beyond strictly political interpretations. This allows us to understand better the ways in which men conceptualized themselves and others as *male* and the ways in which their masculinity was demonstrated to society.

In the second half of the twentieth century, feminist and women's historians raised the issue of gender as an important and constructed force in history. Subsequently, they identified gender as constantly changing and subject to a variety of social forces, including religion and politics. Historians of gender recognized its relational aspects early, realizing that gender was defined as much as by what it is as what it is not. In 1976, Natalie Zemon Davis famously stated:

[i]t seems to me that we should be interested in the history of both women and men, that we should not be working only on the subjected sex any more than an historian of class can focus entirely on peasants. Our goal is to understand the significance of the *sexes*, of gender groups in the historical past.<sup>13</sup>

This assertion did not entirely fall on deaf ears; historians such as Joan W. Scott also advocated the study of gender as an “entirely social construction of ideas about appropriate roles for women *and men*.”<sup>14</sup> In practice, however, most gender history focused on the roles and experiences of women until the early 1990s.

In 1991, John Tosh and Michael Roper published *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*, one of the first historical works on masculinity. Although this collection of essays added significantly to the body of scholarship, it was John Tosh's 1994 essay, “What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth Century Britain,” that addressed many of the concerns feminist historians had with the field of masculinity. Feminist historians regularly attacked the study of masculinity on three fronts: first, that it was an unwelcome take-over bid by historians who wanted to remove women as subjects; second, that it

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<sup>13</sup> Davis, “‘Women's History' in Transition,” 90.

<sup>14</sup> Scott, “Gender,” 1056. Italics mine.

was unacceptably subversive; and third, that it was the most recent in a series of passing fads.<sup>15</sup>

In his essay, Tosh addresses each of these concerns in turn, ultimately arguing that far from weakening the impact of women's history, the study of masculinity was "in a strong position to demonstrate (not merely assert) that gender is inherent in all aspects of social life, whether women are present or not."<sup>16</sup> Tosh's essay reassured many gender historians of the legitimacy and validity of the study of masculinity and a proliferation of studies has appeared since it was first published.

In 2005, the *Journal of British Studies* published a collection of essays related to the study of masculinity in Britain based upon a one-day colloquium held at the University of Sussex.<sup>17</sup> Some of the most prominent scholars of British masculinity participated in this discussion, including Alexandra Shepard, Karen Harvey, Michèle Cohen, John Tosh, and Michael Roper, all of whom responded directly or indirectly to Tosh's original essay.<sup>18</sup> The participants were asked to consider four questions central to the study of masculinity.<sup>19</sup> First, how has masculinity been defined and utilized as a category of analysis in both represented and experienced forms? Second, what methodologies and approaches have been used by historians of masculinity and how have these differences influenced the way that change is described? Third, how does masculinity influence power relationships between men and with women? Finally, is there a longer-term narrative inherent in the study of masculinity and does the narrative agree

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<sup>15</sup> Tosh, "What Should Historians do with Masculinity?," 179.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>17</sup> Karen Harvey and Alexandra Shepard, "What Have Historians Done with Masculinity? Reflections on Five Centuries of British History, circa 1500-1950," *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 44 No. 2 (2005): 274.

<sup>18</sup> Alexandra Shepard, "From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500-1650," *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 44 No. 2 (2005): 281-295; Karen Harvey, "The History of Masculinity, circa 1650-1800," *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 44 No. 2 (2005): 296-311; Michèle Cohen, "'Manners' Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry, and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830," *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 44 No. 2 (2005): 312-329; John Tosh, "Masculinities in an Industrial Society: Britain 1800-1914," *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 44 No. 2 (2005): 330-342; Michael Roper, "Between Manliness and Masculinity: The 'War Generation' and the Psychology of Fear in Britain, 1914-1950," *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 44 No. 2 (2005): 343-362.

<sup>19</sup> Harvey and Shepard, "What Have Historians Done with Masculinity?," 274-275.

with or challenge current periodization? The responses illustrate the variety of approaches taken by historians and demonstrate an important link between each author's chosen methodologies and their conceptualizations of masculinity.<sup>20</sup> Historians of masculinity have generally tended toward a social, psychological or cultural approach, and occasionally a combination of all three. Those historians who emphasize the social aspects tend to focus on questions of status and class. Those who prefer psychological approaches typically stress selfhood and the individual experience of being male, while cultural historians emphasize the representations of manliness and masculinity.<sup>21</sup>

The *Journal of British Studies* volume also demonstrates the influence of a variety of other, non-historical, disciplines on the study of masculinity. Of these, perhaps the most influential is R. W. Connell's sociologically based work, *Masculinities*. Connell's analysis of masculinity takes into consideration Marxist constructions of hegemony as set forth by Antonio Gramsci. Hegemonic masculinity, according to Connell, encompasses the "masculine norms and practices which are most valued by the politically dominant class and which help to maintain its authority."<sup>22</sup> Connell's concepts of hegemonic masculinity and alternative masculinities have proved enormously influential, although in many cases historians have modified these concepts, rather than incorporating them wholesale. The historical record has shown, for instance, that hegemonic codes tend to be "highly complex, fluid, and full of contradictions," not homogeneous dictates of behaviour.<sup>23</sup>

Even outside of Connell's conceptualization of hegemonic and alternative masculinities, historians have come to accept the idea of 'masculinities,' as opposed to a single masculinity.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 77.

<sup>23</sup> Harvey and Shepard, "What Have Historians Done with Masculinity?," 278.

Many recent works speak of multiple masculinities, and even multiple femininities.<sup>24</sup> This use, however, is by no means universal. In a recent study Derek G. Neal purposely avoids the use of ‘masculinities’ because of his concern that,

[t]he ‘multiplicity of masculinities’ idea is uncomfortably close to the idea of multiple ‘genders.’ When we begin to speak of ‘genders’ rather than ‘gender,’ we have lost sight of gender as a system of signification that people *make* and have made ‘genders’ into reified categories to which people *belong*.<sup>25</sup>

Although Neal’s concerns may well be valid, it may be not only deceptive but also ultimately harmful to speak of a single conceptualization of masculinity. In his work, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England*, Neal distinguishes between alternate *forms* of masculinity instead of alternate masculinities themselves. This approach, however, suggests the existence, though perhaps only ideologically, of a single, essential masculinity from which people and cultures interpret their own forms. Taken to extremes, this could imply that there are right or wrong interpretations of masculinity, a suggestion that runs directly contrary to the basic idea of constructed genders.

While the emergence of the study of masculinities from the later stages of women’s history has provided a useful theoretical and methodological framework with which to study the experiences of men, it has also shaped the subjects that are considered most appropriate for investigation. Scott suggests that an interest in gender signals “first, a scholar’s commitment to a history that include[s] stories of the oppressed and an analysis of the meaning and nature of their oppression.”<sup>26</sup> In many cases, this has been interpreted to mean that the most appropriate subject is of a low or middle class background. In the study of men, this often means an emphasis on

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<sup>24</sup> See, for instance, Jacqueline Murray, *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West* (New York: Garland, 1999); Claire A. Lees, ed. *Medieval Masculinities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Steven Bednarski and Andrée Courtemanche, “Learning to be a Man: Public Schooling and Apprenticeship in Late Medieval Manuscript,” *Journal of Medieval History* Vol. 35, No. 2 (2009): 113 – 135; Tosh, “Masculinities in an Industrial Society,” 330-342.

<sup>25</sup> Derek G. Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 244.

<sup>26</sup> Scott, “Gender,” 1054.



“the most ordinary men available,” an exhortation that is frequently interpreted as analogous to avoiding any mention of the upper classes.<sup>27</sup> This argument rests largely on the belief that until recently, history has been almost exclusively the study of ‘great’ men. However, the analysis of the experience of common men exclusively is not only impractical but also nonsensical. Davis’ recommendation for gender historians to study both the subjected and the dominant sexes, the same as a historian of class would study both peasants and elites, should apply not only between masculinities and femininities, but also within them.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, for the medieval period the majority of available sources deal directly with the upper class and aristocracy.<sup>29</sup> In order to understand fully the impact of gender as a system of signification during a given period, a variety of masculinities and femininities, both common and elite, must be examined.

More recently, Susan Lee Johnson, a historian of the North American West has echoed the call to examine gender from a variety of perspectives by issuing a set of challenges modelled in form, if not content, after Martin Luther’s *95 Theses*. Her first thesis states:

*[w]hen western women’s historians said, “think about women,” they willed the entire field of western history to be one of gendered specificity, and, more broadly, one in which power and privilege of all sorts would be rendered visible and then interrogated.*<sup>30</sup>

Johnson, in her second thesis, clarifies that this task cannot and should not be restricted to what she refers to as the “narrow subfield of western women’s history” but must be taken to heart by the historical discipline as a whole.<sup>31</sup> Though far from being realized, Johnson’s theses offer yet another link in the chain begun by Davis and continued by Tosh that argues for the recognition of the role gender plays in society whether masculine, feminine, hegemonic or otherwise.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>28</sup> Davis, “‘Women’s History’ in Transition,” 90.

<sup>29</sup> As a result of this consideration, many more medieval and early modern studies focus on the upper levels of society than found in modern gender history.

<sup>30</sup> Susan Lee Johnson, “Nail This To Your Door: A Disputation on the Power, Efficacy, and Indulgent Delusion of Western Scholarship That Neglects the Challenge of Gender and Women’s History,” *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 79, No. 4 (2010): 613. Original italics.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

In comparison to the work done on early modern and modern masculinity, the historiography of medieval masculinities is relatively limited. In addition to a number of important essay collections, only two full-length monographs on medieval masculinities have been published. The first, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* written by Ruth Mazo Karras, appeared in 2003; the second, Derek Neal's *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England*, appeared in 2008.<sup>32</sup> Karras and Neal take fundamentally different approaches to the subject of medieval masculinity. While Karras has analysed a variety of masculinities and particularly emphasized the division between boy and man, Neal focuses on the social and psychological experiences of manhood. In her work, Karras identifies three class-dependent ways through which boys were transformed into men during the Middle Ages: the aristocratic world of knights and chivalry, the religiously-oriented space of the universities, and the urban experience of artisans and craftsmen. Her study arose from the recognition of the need to understand men as men as opposed to as normative models for all of society, an exercise, she argues, that "lets us understand the gender and class dynamics of the societies in question."<sup>33</sup> Although Neal implicitly considers class through his selection of non-aristocratic subjects, his analysis emphasizes the primary importance of the "social self" as it transcends socio-economic influences, structuring his work around the exterior and interior modes of masculine identity.<sup>34</sup> The key component of 'true' masculinity in late medieval England, according to Neal, "emerges from the sum of such evidence as signifying an

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<sup>32</sup> Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England*, 5; Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

<sup>33</sup> Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 19.

<sup>34</sup> Robert Stretter, "Review," *Renaissance Quarterly* Vol. 62 No. 3 (2009): 1025.

uncomplicated honesty: openness, manifest veracity, and a surface meaning that is the only meaning “regardless of class or status.”<sup>35</sup>

Many medieval gender studies, both of femininities and masculinities and including those discussed above, make use of a variety of literary sources such as romances and prescriptive literature. In regards to masculinity, texts that appeared to propose a specific ideology of masculinity, such as Raymond Lull’s *Book of Knighthood and Chivalry*, have had an immediate appeal to some scholars.<sup>36</sup> Historians have also found fertile ground in romances and poems for evidence of specific conceptions of masculinity. Thelma Fenster, for instance, in the preface to Claire A. Lees’ essay collection maintains that the French epics are “a repository for depictions of violence, presented as both gendered and institutionalized,” and argues convincingly for their inclusion as legitimate sources for the study of masculinities.<sup>37</sup>

Literary sources, though perhaps more appropriate for gendered interpretations than other historical purposes, require careful consideration. Although all sources, literary or documentary, require interpretation, the signification of literary sources are more difficult to determine.<sup>38</sup> The extent to which the French epic, for instance, reflects a reality of medieval culture is debatable. Its currency and popularity, however, demonstrate something inherently attractive about both the message and the form. One of the greatest strengths of literary sources is the ability of ‘fiction’ to represent and embody the widely accepted social mores and intellectual suppositions of its age.<sup>39</sup> The use of literature in history relies upon this representative quality in order to give meaning to fictionalized events and accounts. Gabrielle Spiegel has argued that from a poststructuralist

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<sup>35</sup> Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England*, 41.

<sup>36</sup> Tosh, “What Should Historians do with Masculinity?,” 180.

<sup>37</sup> Thelma Fenster, “Preface: Why Men?,” in *Medieval Masculinities*, ed. Claire A. Lees, xi.

<sup>38</sup> Neal, *The Masculine Self in Late Medieval England*, 188-189.

<sup>39</sup> Beverly Southgate, *History Meets Fiction* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2009), 8.

perspective, there is no distinction between literary texts and other usages of language.<sup>40</sup> To this end, if the literary text is denied the ability to represent reality, so too are all texts. As Spiegel argues, “if we cannot reach ‘life’ through literature, we cannot reach ‘the past’ through document.”<sup>41</sup>

Regardless of this claim, there remain a number of important questions that must be asked of literary texts that may be avoided with documentary sources. Foremost among these questions is the matter of representation. Documentary sources such as manorial records are representative of the population as a whole to the extent that they are statistically relevant. Unfortunately, there is no such measure for literary texts. Audience and distribution may provide some indication, however, in the largely oral culture of medieval Europe audience is difficult to determine. There is also the matter of whether a text projects an interpretation of reality, in other words acting on the past, or shaping the author’s present and future. Although some suggest a line may be drawn between dramatic texts and prescriptive texts, the former reflecting a reality and the latter shaping it, in a medieval context the truth of the matter is much less clear due in no small part to differences of medieval and modern epistemology.<sup>42</sup>

Deriving many of their methodological principles from classical authors, medieval writers were not averse to incorporating subjective elements into their accounts.<sup>43</sup> History, for both classical and medieval authors, had several purposes including entertainment, education, and behavioural instruction, that is, should be imitated and what should be avoided.<sup>44</sup> The distinction between *res verae quae factae sunt* (true things that had happened) and *fallaces*

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<sup>40</sup> Gabrielle Spiegel, “History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages,” *Speculum* Vol. 65, No. 1 (1990): 64.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Laura Gowing, “Early Modern Gender History,” *History Workshop Journal* No. 45 (1998): 283-290.

<sup>43</sup> Anne M. McKim, “*The Bruce*: A Study of John Barbour’s Heroic Ideal,” PhD diss. (University of Edinburgh, 1980), 30.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 30.

*fabulae* (false legends) are rarely clear in medieval works.<sup>45</sup> Medieval texts are replete with storylines and characters taken from the historical record but embroidered to emphasize desired aspects, highlighting the heroism of the protagonists and the villainy of the antagonists. Despite these alterations, medieval authors frequently emphasize the veracity of their accounts. For instance, John Barbour, author of *The Bruce*, describes his account as “nocht bot suthfast thing,” despite the several places the text deviates from the historical record.<sup>46</sup> In many literary works, particularly epics or romances like *The Bruce*, the fictionalized and representative is closely intertwined with the factual and documentary. While this may make it more difficult for historians to justify these documents as records of actual events, they become more useful as sources of normative ideals through the emphasis of certain characteristics or behaviours and the corresponding suppression of others, allowing for the separation of ideals and actualities.

There remains a great deal of work to be done on medieval masculinities in its Scottish forms. Much of the scholarship on Scottish masculinities, such as Rosalind Carr’s “The Gentleman and the Soldier: Patriotic Masculinities in Eighteenth-Century Scotland,” and Melissa Hollander’s “The Name of the Father: Baptism and the Social Construction of Fatherhood in Early Modern Edinburgh,” has focused on early modern masculinities, as opposed to medieval ones.<sup>47</sup> While these works are of significant benefit to the field, early modern masculinities were influenced by a variety of forces not present during the medieval period, not the least of which include the Reformation, the 1603 Union of the Crowns, and the Act of Union in 1707. The

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<sup>45</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), I. 44.5; R. James Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland: Historical Narrative in Medieval Scotland* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 4.

<sup>46</sup> John Barbour, *The Bruce*, trans. and ed. A. A. M. Duncan (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1997), I.36; “Nothing but the truth” (46). All translations provided are from this edition unless otherwise noted.

<sup>47</sup> Rosalind Carr, “The Gentleman and the Soldier: Patriotic Masculinities in Eighteenth-Century Scotland,” *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* Vol. 28 No. 2 (2008), 102-21; Melissa Hollander, “The Name of the Father: Baptism and the Social Construction of Fatherhood in Early Modern Edinburgh,” in *Finding the Family in Medieval and Early Modern Scotland* eds. E. Ewan and J. Nugent (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 63-84.

various ways in which these events influenced concepts of masculinity in Scotland is as yet unknown; however, it is certainly plausible that these social and political transformations had a significant impact. Before it is possible to identify the influence of the upheavals of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the status of masculinities during the Middle Ages must be identified.

## CHAPTER TWO: “LELE AND TREW”: THE STUDY OF FEUDALISM AND LORDSHIP

For nearly two hundred and fifty years, historians have been using the term ‘feudalism’ with varying degrees of satisfaction to describe a form of social structure common in the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, there is no universally agreed upon definition of feudalism or its characteristics. This problem is further compounded by the fact that there is not even a general consensus as to its origins. As a result, the historiography of feudalism is equally muddled. Historians have undertaken a variety of approaches emphasizing the political, social, or economic aspects; in and of themselves, however, none is wholly satisfactory. This has led some, such as Elizabeth Brown and Susan Reynolds, to question the validity of the term altogether. Brown, for instance, has argued that “the tyrant feudalism must be declared once and for all deposed and its influence over students of the Middle Ages finally ended.”<sup>48</sup> Although it is important to continue to evaluate the usefulness of ‘feudalism,’ the wholesale dismissal of the term is counterproductive. It must, however, continue to be treated with extreme caution. This is particularly the case in regions such as Scotland where the expressions of feudalism do not quite meet with the normative expectations of feudalism. In the case of Scotland, historians have not always recognized the scope of the differences between what could be referred to as feudalism ‘proper’ and the variations inherent in Scottish feudalism, due in large part to the cultural divisions between Gaelic and Norman lordship; recently, however, this has changed. In the last twenty-five years, beginning with the publication of Jenny Wormald’s *Lords and Men in Scotland*, and other contributions since, Scottish historians have begun to look at the idiosyncrasies of the Scottish system.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Brown, “The Tyranny of a Construct,” 1088.

<sup>49</sup> Jenny Wormald, *Lords and Men in Scotland: Bonds of Manrent, 1442-1603* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1985).

Due to the comparative scarcity of Scottish sources, it is helpful to begin with the earlier English and continental models and ideas, from which Scottish historians acquired their foundation. One of the first to question the term feudalism was William Maitland, an English constitutional historian. In a series of lectures given between 1887 and 1888, he suggested that:

were an examiner to ask who introduced the feudal system into England? one very good answer, if properly explained, would be Henry Spelman [a seventeenth century English antiquarian] and if there followed the question what was the feudal system? a good answer to that would be, an early essay in comparative jurisprudence[...] If my examiner went on with his questions and asked me when did the feudal system attain its most perfect development? I should answer, about the middle of the last century.<sup>50</sup>

What Maitland alludes to was the fact that ‘feudalism’ was not a term in use during the so-called feudal age, but was instead coined in the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>51</sup> This has made defining feudalism more difficult as there are no references to contemporary ideas of it. While historians of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries were generally content to allow feudalism to refer to any number of medieval constructs, whether social, political, or economic, during the mid-twentieth century there was an increased interest in defining what feudalism meant.

One of the earliest attempts to define feudalism was made by Marc Bloch, co-founder of the *Annales* School, in his work *Feudal Society*.<sup>52</sup> Bloch, unlike others, neither argued for nor against the terms feudalism or feudal society, but believed the historian should treat them as merely “labels sanctioned by modern usage for something he has yet to define.”<sup>53</sup> The definition Bloch settles on is wide and nearly all encompassing. Feudalism was to him:

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<sup>50</sup> Frederic William Maitland, *The Constitutional History of England*, ed. H. A. L. Fisher (Cambridge, 1908), 142.

<sup>51</sup> It has since been proved by J. G. A. Pocock, however, that Spelman did not in fact use the term feudalism in his work. For further discussion see Brown, “The Tyranny of a Construct,” 1064.

<sup>52</sup> *Feudal Society* was published in English in 1961, however the French version, entitled *La Société Féodale*, was first published in 1939.

<sup>53</sup> Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society* Vol. 1, trans. L. A. Manyon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), xvii.



the supremacy of a class of specialized warriors; ties of obedience and protection which bind man to man and, within the warrior class, assume the distinctive form called vassalage; fragmentation of authority- leading inevitably to disorder; and, in the midst of all this, the survival of other forms of association, family and State.<sup>54</sup>

Bloch's definition of feudalism is wide-ranging and his approach to it is equally so.

Geographically, Bloch covers western and central Europe; however, in general, it is Bloch's approach to begin each of his regional studies with the simplest explanation before complicating the matter with the various geographical and societal particulars. As such, he often finds it prudent to begin with the most highly feudalized regions of the old Carolingian Empire, and then find parallels and variations in other regions of Western Europe. His approach is, at heart, comparative. Bloch provides a basic model, the former Carolingian state, and then compares and contrasts it to other situations. Although Bloch does not focus overly long on the origins of feudal society, he argues that it was largely a by-product of the conflict and chaos coming as a result of the tenth-century invasions of Muslims, Vikings, and Magyars. As the ability of the state and kin groups to protect their dependants decreased, the willingness of men to create other interpersonal bonds increased. Bloch argues, "the tie of kinship was one of the essential elements of feudal society; its relative weakness explains why there was feudalism at all."<sup>55</sup>

Writing roughly contemporarily to Bloch was François-Louis Ganshof. In his work, *Feudalism*, Ganshof defines and examines feudalism in its strictest sense: as a military and legal relationship between members of the aristocracy, what he refers to as "the narrow, technical, legal sense of the word."<sup>56</sup> To Ganshof it was important to separate feudalism from feudal society; Ganshof defines feudal society as:

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<sup>54</sup> Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society* Vol. 2, trans. L. A. Manyon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 446.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>56</sup> F.L. Ganshof, *Feudalism*, trans. Philip Grierson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), xvii. Like Bloch, Ganshof first published in French; *Qu'est-ce que la Féodalité* was published in 1944.

a development pushed to extremes of the element of personal dependence in society, with a specialized military class occupying the higher levels in the social scale; an extreme subdivision of the rights of real property... and a dispersal of political authority amongst a hierarchy of persons who exercise in their own interest powers normally attributed to the state.<sup>57</sup>

Feudalism, on the other hand, according to Ganshof refers only to the institutions that regulate the obligations and duties that exist between vassal and lord; the keystones of this legal relationship include homage, fealty, and the fief.<sup>58</sup> While Ganshof's definition of feudal society does not differ significantly from Bloch's, his approach sets him apart. By largely removing the institutions from their social context, Ganshof was able to isolate them in order to illustrate better the changes they underwent over time. The danger of this strategy, however, is that by removing them from their context Ganshof has sometimes neglected the reasons for their initial genesis and development.

Although approaching the matter from different perspectives and with different goals, both Bloch and Ganshof were attempting to reconcile the varying ideas of feudalism that had become increasingly confused during the three previous centuries. From the seventeenth century, scholars used the ideal of feudalism in a variety of often-conflicting ways: to describe a period of time, or a state of society, or to depict repressive, despotic, or tyrannical regimes, and general backwardness. Historians of England in particular, were contemptuous regarding the idea of feudalism except in those cases where it could be manipulated to demonstrate proto-democratic ideals. David Hume, for instance, describes the feudal constitution as "a mixture, not of authority and liberty [...] but of authority and anarchy" and the parliament as composed of "barbarians, summoned from their fields and forests, uninstructed by study, conversation, or travel; ignorant

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., xv.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., xvi.

of their own laws and history.”<sup>59</sup> Others such as Thomas Babington Macaulay and Henry Hallam shared similarly negative views, generally using ‘feudal’ as an adjective to denote any practice outdated and corrupt.<sup>60</sup>

Possibly the earliest writer to discuss the nature of feudalism specific to Scotland was the early seventeenth-century legal writer, Thomas Craig. His work *Jus Feudale* compared English and Scottish law concerning land rights. More out of necessity than design, Craig used feudal language to describe many aspects of Scots customs. The culture described by Craig, however, does not necessarily correspond directly with feudalism proper. Jenny Wormald credits Craig with being the first to discuss the concept of ‘bastard feudalism,’ an idea later developed by Charles Plummer, and emphasizes the importance that Craig placed on the personal bond between men within the feudal system.<sup>61</sup>

During the nineteenth century, several more volumes were written regarding the workings of feudalism within Scotland; of these, the work of Patrick Fraser Tytler may be the most important. Tytler widely condemned feudalism within Scotland, blaming the relations between men and their lords for the decay of the Scottish nation. In *The History of Scotland*, Tytler described “the feudal system, notwithstanding all the noble and romantic associations with which it has invested itself, as having been undoubtedly, in our country, a principal obstruction to the progress of liberty and improvement.”<sup>62</sup> Tytler particularly felt that the feudal system encouraged

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<sup>59</sup> David Hume, *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688* Vol. II (London: George Cowie & Co., 1823), 624.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England from the Accession of James the Second* Vol. II (Paris: Baudry’s European Library, 1834), 156, 209; Henry Hallam, *View of the State of Europe During the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1837), 64 ff.

<sup>61</sup> Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 11-12.

<sup>62</sup> Patrick Fraser Tytler, *The History of Scotland* (Edinburgh: W. P. Nimmo, Hay, and Mitchell, 1887), 253.

the nobility to act immorally and against king and country, in favour of following their feudal lord.<sup>63</sup>

By the early twentieth century a new aspect of the study of Scottish feudalism had been introduced: the idea of a unique origin. Early twentieth-century writers such as Hugh B. King argued that Scotland was unique among feudalized countries in that feudalism had not been imposed upon the population by “alien conquerors,” as was the case in England, but that it had developed out of the “native policy of an unconquered people and their patriarchal native princes.”<sup>64</sup> Unlike Craig, King differentiates between feudalism and the clan system of the Highlands by highlighting the discrepancy of what can be considered the primary ‘common tie’; a patriarchal extended family in the case of the clans and a shared interest in the land in the case of feudalism.<sup>65</sup> King further identifies two separate styles of tenure that he suggests had been conflated by historians in the past: military tenure and commercial tenure. Military tenure, he argues, was feudalism in its proper form in which superiors granted lands in return for military service to their vassals, while commercial tenure was simply a disguised sale of land, with the price converted into a perpetual annuity.<sup>66</sup> King whiggishly added that feudalism “was a form of serfdom, with a lack of independence tolerable by a liberty-loving people only while the age of violence lasted, because then deemed a military necessity and enforced as such.”<sup>67</sup>

The mid-twentieth century saw growth in the field of medieval Scottish history, with significant contributions by G. W. S. Barrow, A. A. M. Duncan and Alexander Grant.<sup>68</sup> In 1956,

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Hugh B. King, *A Short History of Feudalism in Scotland* (Edinburgh: William Hodge & Company, 1914), v.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 22-25.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>68</sup> In particular, see G. W. S. Barrow, *Feudal Britain* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd., 1956); Barrow, *Robert the Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* (London: Eyre Spottiswoode Ltd., 1965); Barrow, *Kingship and Unity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981); A. A. M. Duncan, *Scotland: The Making of the*

Barrow, one of the most significant contributors to the field, published *Feudal Britain*, a work that has been referred to as the first “genuinely even-handed study of medieval Britain.”<sup>69</sup>

Barrow’s early examinations of medieval Scotland, particularly in *Feudal Britain*, tend toward political analysis, largely ignoring intellectual, social, and economic aspects except where they have a direct influence on the political state.<sup>70</sup> As a result, Barrow’s work has been enormously influential on the study of Scottish feudalism. The paradigm presented by Barrow characterizes Scottish feudalism as a form of aristocratic land holding and ordering of power, which provided vassals with security of land tenure and title, and the lords with military service as necessary.<sup>71</sup> With a more straightforward definition than others, Barrow identifies four fundamental feudal features: first, the knight or other mounted and mailed warrior; second, vassalic commendation; third, land exchanged for service; and fourth, the castle or fortified residence.<sup>72</sup> All of these, he argues, were present in Scotland between 1124 and 1286. The immense amount of work done by Barrow on this subject has been instrumental in further analysis of the nature of feudalism in Scotland, particularly regarding the interplay between European or Anglo-Norman influence and the native Gaelic customs.

Barrow, like others, emphasizes that David I and his successors established feudalism in Scotland through the peaceful and gradual introduction of policy, not through military subjugation.<sup>73</sup> The question of the origin of feudalism in Scotland has had an important impact on its study, particularly since the mid-twentieth century. The general belief is that feudal

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*Kingdom* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1975); and Alexander Grant, *Independence and Nationhood: Scotland 1306-1469* (London: Edward Arnold, 1984).

<sup>69</sup> Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, eds. *Medieval Scotland: Crown, Lordship and Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), xiv.

<sup>70</sup> Sydney Painter, “Review: *Feudal Britain: The Completion of the Medieval Kingdoms, 1066-1314*,” *The American Historical Review* Vol. 63 No. 2 (1958): 385.

<sup>71</sup> G. W. S. Barrow, *Kingship and Unity: Scotland 1000-1306*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 50.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

systems of relations were adopted and put into practice by Scottish kings in the Middle Ages through a peaceful process; however, by whom and at what point remains under debate by scholars. King argued that feudalism had been “substantially introduced and gradually developed” between the reigns of Malcolm Canmore and Robert the Bruce, that is, 1058 to 1329.<sup>74</sup> While generally still within this larger window, scholars have also presented other dates for the feudalization of Scotland. R. L. Graeme Ritchie, for instance, argues for Scottish feudalism prior to 1124, the beginning of the reign of King David, who has often been considered to be the most Normanizing of the Scottish kings.<sup>75</sup> Barrow’s examination, on the other hand, refers almost entirely to David’s reign, the period from 1124 to 1153.<sup>76</sup>

One of the difficulties faced by Scottish scholars attempting to identify the importation of feudalism is a dearth of sources. Sources for the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Scotland are scarce and frequently foreign. For instance, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* refers to Malcolm Canmore becoming “the man” of King William and of Scottish kings “doing homage” to English rulers.<sup>77</sup> This is, however, far from conclusive proof of feudalism operating in Scotland in the eleventh century. The *Chronicle* was compiled by English monks and updated from within feudal England; the feudal language used by these scribes could easily be a translation of unfamiliar Scottish rites and qualifications into familiar terms.<sup>78</sup> Another important source rife with feudal language is John of Fordun’s *Chronica Gentis Scotorum* (*Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*). This is a fourteenth-century source, however, and it is possible that Fordun also translated older relations into what were for him modern words.

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<sup>74</sup> King, *A Short History of Feudalism*, 2.

<sup>75</sup> R. L. Graeme Ritchie, *The Normans in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1954), 160-175.

<sup>76</sup> G. W. S. Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1973), 279.

<sup>77</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Rev. James Ingram (London: Everyman Press, 1912), 1091, 1094.

<sup>78</sup> While Scots kings claimed with regularity that homage done to English kings was for holdings in England only, these qualifications do not appear in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

The problem with sources, however, is not unique to Scotland and lies behind much of the arguments of Brown and Reynolds regarding the unsuitability of both the term and the concept of feudalism. While Brown has argued that the term feudalism is entirely unsuited to both the academic understanding and pedagogical explanation of society during the Middle Ages, Reynolds has taken a different approach. In her work *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted*, Reynolds argues that the institutions we consider to be central to feudalism, particularly vassalage and the fief, cannot be found in the sources describing military culture of the early Middle Ages but instead only appear in the bureaucratic governments of the twelfth century and later.<sup>79</sup> While Reynolds' work has focused on France, in a recent article relating her work to Scotland she recommends that Scottish historians re-evaluate their sources in light of the questions she raised in *Fiefs and Vassals*.<sup>80</sup> She questions whether a re-evaluation of this sort might show that the changes in Scottish society and government were "the result rather of economic and demographic growth, and of increasingly systematic and literate government, law, and estate management than of anything one could call the introduction of 'military feudalism' based upon feudo-vassalic values."<sup>81</sup> It seems that Scottish historians may have anticipated Brown's suggestions and in many cases the study of feudalism in Scotland has been replaced by the study of lordship. This not only allows for the study of a greater variety of social conditions but also frees scholars from the ideological constraints of feudalism. In Brown's terms, it usurps the tyrant.

Jenny Wormald's *Lords and Men in Scotland*, published in 1985, may be seen as the first example of this new trend in Scottish studies. In this work, Wormald has relied on the normally

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<sup>79</sup> Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 257.

<sup>80</sup> Susan Reynolds, "Fiefs and Vassals in Scotland: A View from the Outside," *The Scottish Historical Review* Vol. 82 No. 2 (2003): 176.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 180-181.

neglected records of manrent, finding within them evidence of a different type of relationship than had been previously understood, which, though expressed in a similar language of lordship, was not in form the same as feudalism proper.<sup>82</sup> Manrent, she found, was a uniquely Scottish bond that she describes as a “personal relationship between lords and their men that was no longer dependant on material considerations.”<sup>83</sup> While Wormald’s work focuses largely on the later Middle Ages, *Lords and Men in Scotland* has played an important role in the shifting focus of Scottish scholars. In his review of Wormald’s work, Michael Lynch argues that Wormald deserves “unreserved congratulations for a work which has changed the understanding of late medieval and early modern Scotland.”<sup>84</sup> Wormald’s emphasis on the interpersonal nature of manrent, particularly evident in those cases, considering manrent involved no transfer of land or money, was of significant inspiration for further study of other bonds of lordship. Few books written within the last twenty-five years on the subject of Scottish lordship fail to reference Wormald’s groundbreaking work.

Wormald’s research into the ‘band of manrent’ has important implications for the study of lordship and the relations between pledged men even outside of the period of its use. In the mid-fifteenth century the term was liberated from what Wormald refers to as “literary obscurity” and, until the early seventeenth century, was the standard term in Scotland for the bond between a lord and his man.<sup>85</sup> Although etymologically equivalent to *homagium*, manrent came to signify a state of being, while homage remained specifically tied to an act.<sup>86</sup> The first reference to manrent, well within the period of its ‘literary obscurity,’ occurs in *The Bruce*, twice as

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<sup>82</sup> Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 14-33.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>84</sup> Michael Lynch, “Review: *Lords and Men in Scotland*,” *The English Historical Review* Vol. 105 No. 414 (1990): 131.

<sup>85</sup> Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 14.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.



*manredyn* and once as ‘manrent.’ In all three cases, however, it appears that this use was for stylistic purpose and the meaning strictly equivalent to homage.<sup>87</sup> In the early fifteenth century, other literary references to manrent appear in the work of Andrew Wyntoun and the *Buik of Alexander*. The first surviving bond of manrent was written in the Scots vernacular and is dated to January 18, 1442.<sup>88</sup> Although expressing similar requirements implied by an act of homage, for instance that the man remain “lele and trew” to his lord, the author of this document forever altered the meaning of manrent.<sup>89</sup>

In *Lords and Men*, Wormald charts the development of bonds of manrent through the fifteen and sixteenth centuries to their sudden collapse in the early seventeenth century. While Wormald cites a variety of factors that led to the failure of personal bonds, including an increased emphasis on legal contracts, which a bond of manrent was never intended to be, and the involvement of the government in local and regional affairs, it is clear that the decline of the usefulness of personal bonds is a complex matter.<sup>90</sup> Although not the focus of Wormald’s work, it must also be noted that the creation of these new personal bonds in the mid-fifteenth century indicates several things about medieval homosocial relations. First, that personal bonds between men continued to be an important and influential aspect of later medieval society, and second, that the traditional feudal bond was no longer sufficient.

A new and growing field of study in terms of Scottish feudalism is the investigation of lordship in the Celtic and Scandinavian regions of Scotland, which until this point were largely neglected. In *The Exercise of Power in Medieval Scotland, c. 1200-1500*, Steve Boardman and Alasdair Ross have presented a collection of essays discussing the experiences of ‘native’

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>88</sup> GD93/18. The *Dictionary of the Scots Language* includes a 1392 reference to *manredyn*, however, this appears to be used simply as a synonym for homage (s.v. *manredyn*).

<sup>89</sup> GD93/18; Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 17.

<sup>90</sup> Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 157-162.

lordship, hoping to dispel the suggestions of constant tension between ‘native’ and ‘Norman’ Scotland.<sup>91</sup> Barbara Crawford, Cynthia Neville, and R. Andrew McDonald have also been important contributors to this field with their work focusing on a variety of aspects of medieval lordship within Scotland. Crawford has centred her work on Scandinavian Scotland, investigating the relationships between the Scoto-Norman elite and their Scandinavian subjects, as well as their relations with both their Scottish and Scandinavian superiors.<sup>92</sup> These investigations involve understanding the plurality of identity, responsibility, and obligations on behalf of both the junior and senior partners in the relationship. Neville and McDonald’s work on lordship in Gaelic Scotland reveals similar complications with the added aspect of Anglicization.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, Crawford, Neville, and McDonald identify reciprocal influences between native and non-native populations. Neville and McDonald argue, for instance, “that the spread of new ideas was a nuanced process in which native custom gave way only slowly and only partly to innovation.”<sup>94</sup> Elsewhere, Neville stresses this process as one of accommodation, not assimilation, and emphasizes the role of Gaelic customs in the development of Scottish common law.<sup>95</sup>

Another approach taken in recent works is that of localized studies, in which a particular region or earldom is investigated in terms of the changing approaches to lordship over time.

Neville’s work on the earldoms of Strathearn and Lennox, and Richard D. Oram’s analysis of the

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<sup>91</sup> Steve Boardman and Alasdair Ross, eds, *The Exercise of Power in Medieval Scotland c. 1200-1500* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003).

<sup>92</sup> Barbara Crawford, *Scandinavia Scotland* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987), 51-65, 198-204; Crawford, “William Sinclair, Earl of Orkney, and his Family: A Study in the Politics of Survival,” in *Essays on the Nobility of Medieval Scotland*, ed. Keith Stringer (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1985), 232-251.

<sup>93</sup> R. Andrew McDonald & Cynthia J. Neville, “Knights and Knighthood in Gaelic Scotland, c. 1050 – 1300,” *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser. 4 (New York: AMS Press, Inc, 2007), 57-106.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>95</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 22.

earldom of Mar provide striking examples of this approach.<sup>96</sup> Oram's study of the earls of Mar focuses on the tensions between old, Gaelic or Celtic ideas and new feudal ideas; however, he dispels the myth that these operated as two distinct and opposing forces. Instead, he demonstrates that the conflict occurred within the family rather than against the crown and was not a case of 'Celtic' conservatives in opposition to 'feudal' revolutionaries.<sup>97</sup> Neville's work similarly establishes periods in Strathearn and Lennox in which Gaelic customs and European influences coexisted between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. She particularly emphasizes the importance of the incorporation of kin relations and Gaelic kin-based culture in the eventual strength of Strathearn and Lennox.<sup>98</sup>

In general, these more recent studies have provided a nuanced picture of medieval Scotland not possible within a strictly feudalized framework. Societal and regional studies have helped to demonstrate a variety of influences on and expressions of the lord-vassal relationship that have been previously suppressed for existing outside the strictly feudo-vassalic mould. Recent studies like those contained in Michael Prestwich's collection *Liberties and Identities in the Medieval British Isles* have also emphasized the role of lordship as "integral and important" and a primary factor in the creation of local identity.<sup>99</sup> These tactics have necessitated a shift in the methodological approach taken by these scholars. The variation in the expressions of lordship relations is not always evident in legal documents and land tenure records and, as a result, scholars investigating these areas have had to find new sources of evidence. Architecture and sigillographic interpretation have provided evidence of the adoption of new European customs

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<sup>96</sup> Cynthia J. Neville, *Native Lordship in Medieval Scotland: The Earldoms of Strathearn and Lennox, c. 1140-1365* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005); Richard D. Oram, "Continuity, Adaption and Integration: the Earls and the Earldom of Mar, c. 1150 – c. 1300," in *The Exercise of Power in Medieval Scotland c. 1200-1500*, 46-66.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>98</sup> Neville, *Native Lordship*, 226.

<sup>99</sup> Michael Prestwich, ed., *Liberties and Identities in the Medieval British Isles* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008).

and continued Gaelic influence upon society. Richard Oram uses the erection of castles in the earldom of Mar as evidence of the incorporation of “alien” practices in an area traditionally viewed as a bastion of Gaelic lordship.<sup>100</sup> In reference to the Doune of Invernochty, an important stronghold for the earls of Mar, Oram argues that the structure speaks of “familiarity with contemporary advances in military architecture and a willing acceptance of the physical projection of lordship in the vocabulary of an alien tradition.”<sup>101</sup> This environmental approach is characteristic of Oram’s work, in which he has also incorporated other factors such as climate change and the availability of natural resources into his examinations of lordship.<sup>102</sup> Neville and McDonald have also, in addition to the more commonly used chronicles and charters, incorporated the analysis of seals into their investigation of lordship. The sigillography of medieval Scotland, they argue, shows a cultural awareness of the importance of a mounted warrior in continental Europe; however, this is contrasted with the relative unimportance of knighthood amongst the native nobility.<sup>103</sup>

Over all, rather than entirely undermining the feudal model, the introduction of new approaches, sources, and interpretive techniques has expanded the field of scholarship and nuanced historians’ understandings of medieval Scotland. Historians no longer see Scottish feudalism exclusively as the wholesale importation of a foreign system of land management and political organization but instead in more complex terms. The majority of modern historiography has acknowledged the hybridity of the Scottish nation during the Middle Ages in relation to feudalism as well as other aspects. Rather than view the differences between Scotland and other

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<sup>100</sup> Oram, “Continuity, Adaptation and Integration,” 47.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>102</sup> See also Richard Oram and W. Paul Adderley, “Lordship and Environmental Change in Central Highland Scotland c. 1300 – c. 1400,” *Journal of the North Atlantic* Vol. 1 (2008): 74-84. I am indebted to Tyler Chamilliard of the University of Stirling for bringing my attention to this article.

<sup>103</sup> McDonald and Neville, “Knights and Knighthood,” 63.

kingdoms as shortcomings that must somehow be explained, modern Scottish historians embrace many of these differences and use them to explain the strengths and weaknesses of the medieval kingdom. This approach provides valuable information and insight into the workings of feudalism within Scotland and helps scholars reconcile the expression of feudal institutions and ideals within the limitations of the term. While this endeavour is far from complete, the efforts of the past twenty-five years create a more realistic and more useful understanding of Scottish feudalism as a political, economic, and social force.

The developments of the last quarter-century and indeed the perspectives that preceded them did not, however, develop autochthonously or without outside influence. As previously mentioned, Scottish scholars have from the beginning worked within an established idea of feudalism based upon the forms found in continental Europe, particularly in France, and in England. One of the approaches currently in vogue is the idea of British history, which theoretically incorporates the histories of England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland into an overarching story of Britain. J. G. A. Pocock, one of British history's greatest advocates, refers to it as the "plural history of a group of cultures along an Anglo-Celtic frontier and marked by an increasing English political and cultural domination."<sup>104</sup> He acknowledges, however, that English hegemony does not necessitate the abandonment of plural identities and concedes that these have historically played, and continue to play, important roles.<sup>105</sup>

Even prior to Pocock's suggestions, feudalism has had an interesting relation to the concept of British history. Barrow's *Feudal Britain* is sometimes incredulously cited for its even-handed treatment of the normally neglected kingdoms of Britain, containing wholly four out of

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<sup>104</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, "British History: A Plea for a New Subject," *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 47 No. 4 (1975): 605.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 605-606.

twenty-one chapters relating to Scotland specifically, and two more on Wales.<sup>106</sup> This attitude is rooted in the Anglocentric form previously expected of British history. However, perhaps it should not come as such a surprise considering that it is virtually impossible to discuss feudalism in Scotland without reference to feudalism in England or elsewhere in Europe. The simple fact of the matter is that the term ‘feudalism,’ whether representative of structures introduced by native princes, imposed by an immigrating Norman elite, or even existing naturally in the dependant bonds of Gaelic lordship, is a foreign idea, chronologically and geographically. Feudalism, as a seventeenth-century English innovation, has meant different things to different people and must be examined in this light.

The interpretation of feudalism in Scotland has been further transformed by a tendency amongst Scottish historians to Anglophobia. These scholars have frequently oriented their work in opposition to the general leaning of British history toward Anglocentrism. Comparing the history of feudalism in Scotland, and more generally the history of Scotland, to England has frequently served to over-emphasize the differences between the nations and under-represent the similarities. More often than not, even those aspects of institutions that historians concede to be more advanced in England have been reinterpreted to show the overall superiority of the Scottish state. For instance, Keith Stringer argues that:

[I]acking the English Crown’s superior bureaucracy and coercive might, [Scottish kingship] was more sensitive to the need for effective co-operation with ‘political society.’ And being more conscious of the limits to state power, it therefore avoided the humiliations that can often flow from hegemonic ambitions.<sup>107</sup>

This is only one of many examples in which a Scottish ‘weakness’ is actually portrayed as a ‘strength.’

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<sup>106</sup> G. O. Sayles, “Review: *Feudal Britain*,” *The English Historical Review* Vol. 75 No. 295 (1960): 329.

<sup>107</sup> Stringer, “Scottish Foundations,” 94.

The tendency to oppose Anglocentric histories with a Scotophilic approach can be easily seen in the early twentieth-century depictions of the origins of feudalism. In his preface, King claims that feudalism in Scotland is of particular interest because of its unique origin. King argues that in England and continental Europe, unlike Scotland, feudalism was introduced by an alien conqueror for the express purpose of “completing and maintaining the subjugation of the people.”<sup>108</sup> In the nearly sixty years between King’s work and the publication of Barrow’s *The Kingdom of the Scots*, the interpretation of the introduction of feudalism had been softened but its uniqueness remained of paramount importance. Barrow also compares the violent establishment of feudalism in England and Wales to its relative peaceful spread in Scotland. He suggests that this had more to do with the limited resources of the Scottish crown than any natural beneficence on the part of the king and population.<sup>109</sup> In this case at least, modern scholarship has increasingly recognized the complexity of the relationships involved and identified instances of both conflict and cooperation. Stringer, for instance, has in a more recent work acknowledged that any account regarding the relations between feudalized Scotland and the non-feudalized periphery “which fails to give due weight to tension and conflict as well as to peaceful integrative processes would be gravely distorted.”<sup>110</sup> The acceptance of increased complexity as well as occasional outright contradiction may be seen as one of the hallmarks of modern Scottish scholarship. Scottish historians, however, have not completely escaped the temptation to call attention to areas in which they feel Scotland has excelled, whether social, political, or economic.

As historians emphasize the importance of feudalism in medieval Scottish society they reinvent its conceptualization. In one sense, the study of lordship has largely replaced the study

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<sup>108</sup> King, *A Short History of Feudalism*, v.

<sup>109</sup> Barrow, *The Kingdom of the Scots*, 52-53; King, *A Short History of Feudalism*, 3.

<sup>110</sup> Stringer, “Scottish Foundations,” 94.

of feudalism, as the new term allows for a wider ideological framework. Where feudalism is referred to, it has become far narrower in definition and use, and no longer applies to the same range of ideas and possibilities as it did in the nineteenth and even early twentieth centuries. Furthermore, historians have re-evaluated the importance and understandings of feudal institutions, allowing them to be applied in situations that may not entirely represent feudalism proper but instead exhibit many of the same characteristics, as is the case in Gaelic regions.

Given the discrepancy between modern opinions regarding the nature of feudal society, its precepts, and expectations, it is not difficult to imagine that it was equally nebulous during the Middle Ages. Records of the interpersonal bonds incorporate a variety of language including exhortations to be faithful, loyal, and true, yet no explanation is given regarding what these behaviours specifically entail. A. A. M. Duncan has argued that by the thirteenth century feudal tenure in Scotland was essentially a legal fiction.<sup>111</sup> He suggests that although meaningful feudal relations were maintained in certain segments of the population, many more acts of homage and fealty occurred simply to disguise the outright sale of land or an irredeemable loan at a fixed rate.<sup>112</sup> In these instances, the performance of homage and the annual gifting of small items, such as gloves or spurs, acted simply as symbolic reminders of a real estate transaction and were not indicative of the deeply personal relationship usually associated with a feudal bond. When evaluating the nature of homosocial relationships in the Middle Ages, this tendency to express banal transactions in the weighty language of lordship has the potential to obscure the intention of the bond. As the purpose of this pretence was to disguise the transaction, records offer no indication that anything other than a traditional feudal pledge was made. This is one example

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<sup>111</sup> Duncan, *The Making of the Kingdom*, 408.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.



where feudalism acted as the normative framework within which men in medieval Scotland constructed their own realities.

The discrepancy between how elite men were ‘supposed’ to act according to contemporary prescriptive behaviours and how they actually interacted with one another is not always clear. Often, the real day-to-day exchanges that did not conform to prescriptive expectations were disguised with behaviours or words acting as convenient fictions, generally accepted by society as less than the ideal but not inappropriate. Nowhere is this truer than in the making and breaking of bonds of lordship. The historiographic discussions of the nature of feudalism have helped to shed light on the reasons for the development of these bonds and the forms they took, although, it is clear that at no time did feudalism actually work as modern historians have constructed it. Perhaps, as Maitland suggested, the truest expression of feudalism occurred only in the minds of the historians and antiquarians of the mid-eighteenth century. Regardless, the pledges of personal dependence that bound men together in the Middle Ages and appear everywhere in fictional and factual sources played an enormously influential role in governing medieval homosocial interactions.

### CHAPTER THREE: *HOMINIBUS ET AMICIS SUI*: DOCUMENTARY RECORDS AND MASCULINE INTERACTIONS

During the Middle Ages the personal obligations that existed between men, even within formal and contracted relationships, were more often than not implicitly understood rather than explicitly outlined. Formal contracts may require a lord to be ‘good’ and his vassal ‘faithful’ but rarely, if ever do medieval contracts explain these epithets. This was especially true in Scotland. Documentary culture was slow to develop in Scotland, particularly in Gaelicized regions where oral testimony was privileged over written testimony well into the thirteenth century.<sup>113</sup> As a result, fewer charters, writs, and other documentary sources were initially produced than in regions of continental Europe where Roman culture had instilled a strong faith in written records. Even allowing for the suggestion that only a portion of the documents originally written remain today, the extant documents raise more questions than answers. While the body of manrent contracts used by Jenny Wormald provides insight beginning with the later half of the fifteenth century, there is no comparable source collection prior to this period. As a result, the existing documents must be used cautiously and judiciously. Charters offer some of the best documentary evidence as to how men in medieval Scotland used social relationships and the role these relationships played in society. These sources, whether records of land conveyance or personal bonds, offer a glimpse into how men negotiated relationships with other men and the important social roles those bonds played; however, as will become evident, they provide only part of the picture.

The division between documentary and literary sources is artificial at best. For the purpose of this study, documentary sources are texts with a primary purpose of facticity.<sup>114</sup> These

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<sup>113</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 77.

<sup>114</sup> See the discussion in Gabrielle Spiegel, “Forging the Past: The Language of Historical Truth in the Middle Ages” *The History Teacher* Vol. 17 No. 2 (1984): 267-283, particularly 273ff.

contracts and charters are different from other sources because they provide records of agreed upon actions. As Neville argues, charters are an “ideal medium in which to preserve written accounts of actions done, promises offered and decisions effected in the courtroom.”<sup>115</sup> They were witnessed and legally binding contracts and, regardless of whether the terms were respected, stand on their own without authorial interference or observation. Those texts described throughout this thesis as literary sources, including epics, romances and chronicles, cannot offer the same level of facticity. The presence of an authorial voice, however, adds a level of appraisal not found in documentary sources, the implication of which will be discussed in more detail shortly.

As previously mentioned, there are significant limitations on the use of documentary sources as evidence of expectations of masculine interactions. For Scotland, the comparative scarcity of sources is only one of these difficulties. David I, whose rule ran from 1124 to 1153, was responsible for bringing about much of the political and social Normanization of Scotland, so much so that R. L. Graeme Ritchie refers to him as David ‘the Conqueror.’<sup>116</sup> The increasing reliance on written records, as opposed to oral transactions, began in the early years of David I’s reign; however, its widespread implementation was not immediate. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in particular there was significant tension between the more Normanized areas of Scotland and the native rulers who relied on traditional authority vested in the oral testimony of witnesses and specially trained poets and bards such as the *ollamh righ* or king’s master poet.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 17.

<sup>116</sup> Ritchie, *The Normans in Scotland*, 179-190.

<sup>117</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 74; Michael Newton, *Warriors of the Word: The World of the Scottish Highlanders* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2009), 91.

As they gained in popularity written documents including charters and briefs, equivalent to an English writ, not only communicated the will of the issuer in terms of positive commands or prohibitions but also acted as visible expressions of lordship and a growing concern over suzerainty.<sup>118</sup> Highly decorative charters were even displayed prominently in halls acting as “parchment counterparts of the powerful new castles erected as visible expressions of the crown’s colonizing efforts.”<sup>119</sup> The issuing of charters quickly became popular amongst the Normanized nobles of Scotland. Through the thirteenth century, Gaelic lords began gradually to embrace literate modes of thought, although not in the directly tactical ways their brethren in the south did. While southern magnates used legal documents to create and ensure alliances with both lay and ecclesiastic powers, Gaelic lords mostly issued grants and charters to churches and monasteries.<sup>120</sup>

In Scotland, the slow adoption of written records is compounded by the problem of missing documents, usually attributed to English depredations. Together these aspects limit the number of available Scottish sources. Edward I is accused of appropriating and systematically destroying hundreds of documents between 1291 and 1296, although whether or not this actually occurred is a matter of scholarly debate. Thomas Mackay Cooper, in the middle of the last century, advocated caution against blaming Edward for all the archival inadequacies of thirteenth-century Scotland. He suggests that there is compelling evidence that the apparently ‘missing’ records never existed in the first place.<sup>121</sup> Better documented is the loss of records during the years after Cromwell’s Commonwealth when, in 1661, one of two ships returning

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<sup>118</sup> G. W. S. Barrows, *The Charters of King David I* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1999), 9; Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 76.

<sup>119</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 76.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 77, 81.

<sup>121</sup> Thomas Mackay Cooper, *Select Scottish Cases of the Thirteenth Century* (Edinburgh: W. Hodge, 1944), xlvi.

appropriated records to Scotland sank in mid-voyage.<sup>122</sup> Likely included in the lost documents were the Register of the Great Seal, many sheriffs' accounts, and almost all late medieval records of the royal council and judicial acts of the Scots parliament.<sup>123</sup>

The un-centralized nature of Scottish government in the Middle Ages also helps to explain the comparative scarcity of extant material. The extreme regionalization of power structures is often cited as a defining characteristic of medieval Scotland and this is particularly evident in judicial processes.<sup>124</sup> Through the late Middle Ages, Scotland was far more accommodating of lordly justice than England, though the terms and extent of this accommodation varied from place to place and depended upon the relationship between the lord and king.<sup>125</sup> As a result, landowners carried out much of the day-to-day administration locally, keeping and maintaining their own records.<sup>126</sup> The highly localized and cooperative nature of Scottish justice suggests that most disputes were settled out of court, informally, or through lordly arbitration.<sup>127</sup> While this system worked relatively well and fairly in terms of dealing with most crimes, it was certainly not to the benefit of record keeping, as most documents were destroyed as soon as they were no longer required.<sup>128</sup>

In 1975, Alexander Grant undertook to collect all remaining documents produced by or for the lords of Scotland between 1314 and 1475.<sup>129</sup> Although still incomplete, his efforts provide an excellent understanding of what lordly documents are available today and, by

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<sup>122</sup> Alexander Grant, "Service and Tenure in Late Medieval Scotland, 1314-1475," in A. Curry and E. Matthew eds. *Concepts of Service in the Fifteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000), 147.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>124</sup> Grant, "Service and Tenure," 147-8; Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 14; Bruce Webster, *Scotland From the Eleventh Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 150-1.

<sup>125</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 13-14.

<sup>126</sup> Grant, "Service and Tenure," 147.

<sup>127</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 17.

<sup>128</sup> Grant, "Service and Tenure," 147-9; Alexander Grant, *Independence and Nationhood: Scotland 1306-1469* (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), 158-9.

<sup>129</sup> The discussion of this project, its limitations and boundaries may be found in Grant, "Service and Tenure," 145-179. Although this research presumably continues, there have been no publications regarding it since "Service and Tenure," therefore what follows is the discoveries to the 2000 publication of that work.

extrapolation, what was initially written. They also provide information regarding what types of documents were valued enough by their authors or beneficiaries to preserve. As of the year 2000, Grant had collected 2 061 texts, which he argues forms well over half of the extant documentation and possibly the great majority. The bulk of these records, 1 511 texts, chiefly consist of title deeds, 1 204 of which deal directly with land transfers. Of the remaining 307 title deeds, 103 are grants of rights, privileges, or favours; 74 documents grant annuities; there are 59 appointments to office; and 71 bonds of indenture. While the creation dates of these documents range from 1314 to 1475, many more exist from the latter part of the period than from the earlier. Of the 71 bonds of indenture, for instance, no fewer than 38 were written between 1442 and 1475, or 38 documents for 33 years.<sup>130</sup> This leaves only 33 documents of indenture to represent over a century between 1314 and 1441.

As Grant has shown, run-of-the-mill grants of land and privileges form the bulk of records remaining from late medieval Scotland. While these documents do not offer explicit expectations of behaviour, taken collectively they provide a picture of a “complex series of interconnected, overlapping personal relationships.”<sup>131</sup> Of these, kin and friendship are the most prevalent social bonds. While the presence of kin in matters of land holding is expected, the extensive role of friends in these areas is more surprising.

Prior to 1250, a nobleman, though never a king, frequently addressed his charters to *omnibus hominibus et amicis suis*, ‘to all his men and friends.’<sup>132</sup> The variation, *omnibus amicis*

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<sup>130</sup> This number has been reached by comparing Jenny Wormald’s extensive records in *Lords and Men*, to Grant’s totals. If the ‘lost’ records noted by Wormald, of which there are mention in other sources but no extant document, were included, this would potentially add another 13 texts to the post-1442 total. Grant, however, does not include any texts for which there is not a full or mostly full text available.

<sup>131</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 187.

<sup>132</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 188.

*et probis hominibus suis*, ‘to all his friends and good men’ was also common.<sup>133</sup> Keith Stringer argues that this may have been intended to evoke a spirit of “chivalrous fellowship” amongst the issuer and addressees that, though appropriate to the honour of barons or knights, was not for kings.<sup>134</sup> This sense of chivalric fellowship would in theory remind the participants of their social obligations in a feudal society and encourage them to respect and uphold the contract’s terms or endanger their sense of honour. The use of *amicis* in salutations appears with far less frequency after 1250 and is nearly banished from such clauses at this point.<sup>135</sup> In England, a similar tendency occurred in the twelfth century, whereby the use of *amicis* in salutations quickly disappeared. Stringer suggests that their use in Scotland through the first half of the thirteenth century is indicative of the continued emphasis on lord-man ties, while their corresponding disappearance in England, half a century beforehand, demonstrates a conventionalization of such relationships.<sup>136</sup>

Despite their disappearance from salutations, the presence of friends in charter making is still evident in Scotland post-1250. Dispositive clauses in particular show the influence of friends in matters relating to estate management.<sup>137</sup> A late thirteenth-century charter given by Robert of Mithyngby, for instance, discusses the role his friends played in the disposal of his lands. Although Robert was forced to sell his lands to the archdeacon of Glasgow in order to relieve his “great and extreme poverty,” he did so only after offering them to his nearest relations and

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<sup>133</sup> For examples of both versions and other minor variations see: *Liber S. Marie de Dryburgh: Registrum Cartarum Abbatie Premonstratenis de Dryburgh*, ed. John Spottiswoode (Edinburgh: Ballantyne and Hughes, 1847), nos. 8, 16, 68, 92, 150, 155, 225; *Liber S. Thome de Aberbrothoc*, Vol. I, eds. Cosmo Innes and Patrick Chalmers (Edinburgh: The Bannatyne Club, 1848), nos. 35, 37, 56, 58, 63, 70, 80, 89, 93, 94, 206.

<sup>134</sup> Keith Stringer, “The Charters of David, Earl of Huntingdon and Lord of Garioch: A Study in Anglo-Scottish Diplomatic,” in *Essays on the Nobility of Medieval Scotland*, ed. Keith Stringer (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1985), 81-2. Interestingly, in *Dryburgh Liber*, no. 16, the issuer is the countess, Ada de Warrenne, who also begins the grant *omnibus amicis et hominibus suis*.

<sup>135</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 188.

<sup>136</sup> Stringer, “The Charters of David,” 82.

<sup>137</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 193.

friends as per burgh custom: “[q]ue quidem terra oblata fuit propinquioribus parentibus meis et amicis in curia de Glasgu ad tria principalia placita anni et ad alia placita multociens secundum legem et consuetudinem burgi.”<sup>138</sup>

Friends also frequently appear in matters of arbitration and mediation. While in Robert of Mithyngby’s case the absence of friends who were able or willing to assist him was the deciding factor in the outcome, other instances exist in which the counsel and advice of friends (*consilio amicorum*) brought resolution.<sup>139</sup> These instances demonstrate the influence of friends and their role in establishing and maintaining good relations. In cases of feud or other open hostilities, the presence of family and good friends was even more valuable, assisting to re-establish peaceful relations along with heads of kin groups and local leaders.<sup>140</sup> These men involved themselves in courtroom activities and lobbied on behalf their friends and kinsmen on the understanding that “men needed other men to speak for them [and] give them support.”<sup>141</sup>

In addition to the significance of friends, charters also provide insight into the role kin played in the acquisition and disposal of property. Friends and kin also appear in the witness lists authenticating charters, sometimes with their relationship to the issuer or recipient explicitly labelled.<sup>142</sup> One twelfth-century courtier, Hugh de Morville, witnessed no fewer than 113 royal acts made between 1114 and 1162. His consistent presence in these records indicates not only

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<sup>138</sup> “XIII: Conveyance of land from Robert of Mithyngby to the archdeacon of Glasgow (1280-90),” *Charters and Documents relating to the City of Glasgow 1175-1649: Part 2* ed. and trans. J.D. Marwick (1894), 17-19. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=47943> Date accessed: 20 June 2011; “Which land was offered to my nearest relations and friends, in the court of Glasgow, at three head courts of the year, and at other courts often, according to law and the custom of the burgh.” See also *Paisley Register*, 382-3.

<sup>139</sup> *Cambuskenneth Register*, no. 94, 104.

<sup>140</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 193.

<sup>141</sup> Jenny Wormald, “Bloodfeud, Kindred and Government in Scotland,” *Past and Present* No. 87 (1980): 69, 87.

<sup>142</sup> For instance see GD40/1/2, where one witness is named as “*Henrico comite filio meo*”; see also, Dauvit Broun, “The Presence of Witnesses and the Writing of Charters,” In *The Reality of Charter Diplomacy in Anglo-Norman Britain: Studies by Dauvit Broun, John Reuben Davies, Richard Sharpe and Alice Taylor*, ed. Dauvit Broun (forthcoming), 235-288; G. W. S. Barrow, “Witnesses and Attestation of Formal Documents, Twelfth to Thirteenth Centuries,” *Journal of Legal History* Vol. 16, No. 1 (1995): 1-20.



proximity to court, but also an enduring personal relationship to David I and his heirs.<sup>143</sup>

Returning to Robert of Mithyngby, his charter explicitly states that Robert's heir, in this case his daughter Agnes, consented to the disposal of his lands and the terms of the charter naturally bind her and her heirs to the agreement as well. Richard's brother Walter is also mentioned in the charter as having consented and assented, though it is unclear to what extent the "*consensu et voluntate*" of Agnes and Walter represent reality or simply legal protocol; the inclusion of this clause certainly protected the purchaser if the alienation was later challenged.

By appealing to the consent of friends and kin, issuers increased the strength of their charters and widened their personal network to include not only blood relations, but also a group composed of friends and allies.<sup>144</sup> These *amici* provided support—both legal and moral—and counsel, and acted in complementary and supplementary ways to traditional kin relations. Wormald has argued that friendship, as it was conceived of in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was structured almost entirely on an ideal of kinship that simply did not exist. She states that the "support given to friends and neighbours, be they kin or not, was understood entirely in terms of the obligations of kinship," invoking an older belief that in times of trouble, only family could be counted on.<sup>145</sup> Recently, Neville has countered this, arguing that in late medieval Scotland, social bonds were both sufficiently flexible and fluid to extend beyond conceptions of real or fictive kinship and to embrace a wider variety of personal relationships.<sup>146</sup> Based upon the evidence provided by land grants it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine in what terms medieval Scots conceived of social relationships like friendship beyond the fact that they were important. While sources that speak of the "counsel of friends" very probably do

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<sup>143</sup> Barrow, "Witnesses and Attestation," 7-8.

<sup>144</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 193.

<sup>145</sup> Wormald, "Bloodfeud, Kindred and Government," 71; Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 86.

<sup>146</sup> Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 198.

include kin amongst the *amici* they discuss, there is no indication whether it is a result of overlapping and interconnected bonds or a kin-based conceptual framework.

Another form of documentary evidence to consider are the bonds of obligation made between men. While these may incorporate other aspects, such as land transactions or rights, the central theme of these documents is the personal obligations of the subjects. Bonds of fealty, by far the most common of this type of exchange, are, however, conspicuously absent from the documentary record. While there are some examples from continental Europe concerning the pledges made during homage these are certainly exceptions.<sup>147</sup> Where phrases such as fealty and homage do appear in documentary sources it is in records of land transaction. One example of this from the mid-fourteenth century occurred when Robert of Erskine gave homage to the Earl of Mar and in exchange received the lands of the lordship of Garioch, namely Balehaghirdy, Bundys, Knockynglas, Inneralmusy and its mill, half of the land of Dromdornach, Petskurry, Petbey, Pettochery and Newlands.<sup>148</sup> The charter describes precisely which lands Robert was to receive, access to specific pasture and even rent in the amount of four marks sterling to be paid by the abbot. All that is given in regards to Robert's part, however, is that he is to provide

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<sup>147</sup> The most well known of these is the charter of homage and fealty between the viscount of Carcassonne, Bernard Atton, and Leo, the abbot of St. Mary of Grasse given in 1110, the text of which is much more specific in terms of duties and expectations than most sources available. In great detail Bernard Atton pledges that: "I will defend thee, my lord, and all thy successors, and the said monastery and the monks present and to come and the castles and manors and all your men and their possessions against all malefactors and invaders, at my request and that of my successors at my own cost; and I will give to thee power over all the castles and manors above described, in peace and in war, whenever they shall be claimed by thee or by thy successors. Moreover I acknowledge that, as a recognition of the above fiefs, I and my successors ought to come to the said monastery, at our own expense, as often as a new abbot shall have been made, and there do homage and return to him the power over all the fiefs described above. And when the abbot shall mount his horse I and my heirs, viscounts of Carcassonne, and our successors ought to hold the stirrup for the honor of the dominion of St. Mary of Grasse; and to him and all who come with him, to as many as two hundred beasts, we should make the abbot's purveyance in the borough of St. Michael of Carcassonne, the first time he enters Carcassonne, with the best fish and meat and with eggs and cheese, honorably according to his will, and pay the expense of shoeing of the horses, and for straw and fodder as the season shall require. Alexandre Teulet, ed., *Layettes du Tresor des Chartres*, trans. E.P. Cheyney in *University of Pennsylvania Translations and Reprints* Vol. 4, No. 3 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1898), 18-20.

<sup>148</sup> GD124/1/110.

homage and service as pertains to the lands. Only eight years earlier, Robert similarly gave homage to the future King Robert II, at the time High Steward, for *superius dominium* of Erskine, the only terms applied to Robert were that he provide due and customary service and three suits at the granter's court.<sup>149</sup> Although these documents provide evidence of a transaction, in most cases only the outcome is provided—a record of the land exchanged—while the personal obligations of these bonds are left out entirely.

Another charter combining both a land transaction and the acknowledgement of a personal bond is available for the same Robert Erskine, dated 1363. In this document, Robert is awarded the lands of Craggorth, near Stirling, for the faithful counsel and affectionate friendship (*fideli consilio et amictia affectuosa*) shown to Sir William More, lord of Abercorn.<sup>150</sup> It is entirely possible that this is one of those instances of which A. A. M. Duncan warns: the sale, or in this case rental, of land disguised as a feudal transaction.<sup>151</sup> This possibility is supported by the terms of the charter—that Robert received the land for twenty shillings sterling annually for the term of his life. Acting as a counter to this possibility is the usage of the phrase *amicitia affectuosa*; in this case, the superfluous *affectuosa* may well be indicative of a special relationship between More and Erskine. Contrarily, *affectuosa* could signify nothing more than a scribe's editorial license.<sup>152</sup> While this charter leaves open several possible interpretations, it is consistent with others in its vagueness.

Even in examples where the personal obligations themselves are the content of the bond, as for instance with bonds of friendship, the terms are frustratingly unclear. In 1373, Robert Erskine renewed his relationship with the Stewarts of Scotland, this time forming a bond of

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<sup>149</sup> GD124/1/407.

<sup>150</sup> GD124/1/516.

<sup>151</sup> Duncan, *The Making of the Kingdom*, 408; see also p. 35 above.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Neville, *Land, Law and People*, 189, on Maoldomhnaich and Gille Brigte.

friendship with Robert II's son, the Duke of Albany.<sup>153</sup> Wormald suggests that this bond was part of Erskine's reward for opposition to the Earl of Douglas' claim to the throne after the death of David II, and there is no reason to suspect otherwise; however, with this bond Albany tied himself very closely to Erskine.<sup>154</sup> The bond promises "*consilium auxilium favorem et tutelam*" and furthermore, that Erskine will find Albany a good, faithful, kind, and affectionate lord.<sup>155</sup> Whether or not this bond was the reward for Erskine's actions against Douglas, these were not promises to be taken lightly, particularly as they were sworn on the gospels in the presence of Robert II and the Earl of Carrick, the future Robert III.

Charters such as those examined here provide important and valuable glimpses into the elite social spaces of late medieval Scotland. They indicate the vital role friends and kin played in matters of land management and disposal, as well as in arbitration and mediation. Other charters offer evidence of the significance of formal personal bonds including the performance of homage and oaths of fealty or bonds of indenture or friendship. These documents are often highly specific in matters of rents owed and owing, land boundaries and descriptions, and the parties involved; however, they offer little to no evidence of the personal rights and obligations connected with these relationships. When descriptions of obligations do appear, they are given in only the most general terms. 'Counsel,' 'service' and 'favour' offer vague ideas of expectations, but no concrete prescribed or proscribed behaviours. Similarly, there is no definition of what it meant to be a good, faithful, kind, and affectionate lord. The documentary sources discussed above simply do not provide answers to these questions. Gerd Althoff argues that in order to understand the interactions of medieval society, what he describes as "group life," we must

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<sup>153</sup> GD124/7/1. Although he only became Duke of Albany in 1398 and at the creation of this document was the Earl of Fife and Menteith, for simplicity's sake and to avoid confusion with John Stewart who became Robert III, I adhere to convention and refer to Robert Stewart as the Duke of Albany.

<sup>154</sup> GD124/7/1; "[C]ounsel, service, favour, and protection," Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 39.

<sup>155</sup> GD124/7/1. The charter text reads "*bonus dominus fidelis benignis et affectuosus*."

accept the unspecific nature of these bonds.<sup>156</sup> While this vagueness would be unacceptable in a contract today, Althoff suggests that,

in the early and high middle ages there was an unshakeable and, what seems to us, naïve belief that everybody knew what rights and obligations applied in any given situation. However, this may have been less the result of a naïve belief in the existence of such consensus than a simple inability to construct theoretical norms of behaviour.<sup>157</sup>

Although Althoff refers to it as a naïve belief, there was a certain amount of consensus apparent during the Middle Ages as to what constituted appropriate and inappropriate behaviour within social relationships. While it certainly did not exist on a universal scale, or even on a European scale, the examination of a variety of literary sources shows that in medieval Scotland there was consensus when it came to what actions deserved praise or condemnation within social bonds. The analysis of these sources helps us to understand what it meant to be good, faithful, and kind in medieval Scotland.

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<sup>156</sup> Gerd Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers: Political and Social Bonds in Early Medieval Europe*, trans. Christopher Carroll (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 9.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THREE WALKS IN THE MEDIEVAL WOODS: LITERARY RECORDS AND MASCULINE INTERACTIONS

If documentary records cannot be relied upon on their own to provide a comprehensive explanation of the obligations, rights, and responsibilities of medieval relationships, literary works are a logical supplement. Their accounts and stories allow us to flesh out the understandings provided by other sources because of their verbosity and representative qualities. Chronicles and other literary sources provide information regarding contemporary values and prejudices, and through their narrative structure emphasize and expand qualities—both positive and negative—to highlight.<sup>158</sup> There are three major Scottish narrative texts that survive from the fourteenth century: John Barbour's *The Bruce*, written in the 1370s; John of Fordun's *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, dating from the mid-1380s; and a poem, the *Liber Extravagans*, included in Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon* (1440) but which has been dated to 1306 or earlier. This chapter will examine how these texts describe and represent male relationships among Scots in the later Middle Ages. Together, they provide an indication of how medieval Scotsmen conceived of their homosocial relationships and the unwritten rules that governed them. Each of these sources is worthy of much greater analysis than is possible within the constraints of this study. To assist with comparison and limit the texts to a manageable size, the main force of my analysis will be on the presentations of the Wars of Independence and the men who participated in them.<sup>159</sup> This results in a smaller group of historical actors under consideration and allows for greater comparison among their representations.

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<sup>158</sup> Sophia Menache has written an interesting article regarding these qualities in chroniclers in particular. See, Menache, "Chronicle and Historiography: The Interrelationship of Fact and Fiction," *Journal of Medieval History* Vol. 32 (2006): 333-345.

<sup>159</sup> This has significant implications regarding Fordun's *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*. The *Annals* portion of *Chronica*, also known as *Gesta Annalia I* and *Gesta Annalia II*, have, relatively recently, been attributed to the work of another writer, and as a result, it is the work of this author that will be analyzed in this chapter. See below, p. 60ff.

In this study, the factor determining whether a source should be classified as either documentary or literary is the presence of an authorial voice. In medieval texts this voice often announces itself and recognizes its own presence within the text, usually in the form of a first-person declaration. In the *Liber Extravagans*, for instance, the narrator states, “*Actenus hec dicta scrivi per cronica scripta. / Amodo que novi scriptis describere vovi.*”<sup>160</sup> The narrator of *The Bruce* similarly declares his intentions, “Tharfor I wald fayne set my will / Giff my wyt mycht suffice thartill.”<sup>161</sup> While not necessarily required, it is a common feature of medieval texts and adds a level of apparent veracity and accountability to the reader. In the narrative theory presented by Umberto Eco in *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, this authorial voice is considered a narrative strategy employed by the model author.<sup>162</sup>

Eco’s theory revolves around the presence of four entities that exist in any narrative work: the empirical reader, the model reader, the empirical author, and the model author. The empirical reader is whoever happens to read the text. There is no external law dictating how a text is read or interpreted by empirical readers, and because of this, the empirical readers may use a text as “a container for their own passions, which may come from outside the text or which the text may arouse by chance.”<sup>163</sup> The model reader, on the other hand, is an ‘ideal’ reader, one who not only collaborates with the text, but is created by it.<sup>164</sup> Similarly, while the empirical author is not strictly bound by rules governing the creation of a text, the model author is restrained by the laws set by his creator. While the model author may declare themselves openly, as in the *Liber Extravagans* and *The Bruce*, a strategy Eco describes as “explicit and [...]”

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<sup>160</sup> *Liber Extravagans*, eds. Dauvit Broun and A. B. Scott, in Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. D. E. R. Watt (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1994), ln. 185-6; “up to this point I have learned everything I have mentioned from written chronicles. From now on it is my intention to put down in writing what I myself have learned.” All translations provided are from this edition unless otherwise noted.

<sup>161</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, l.111-12; “Therefore I am firmly resolved, if my wits are up to it...” (46).

<sup>162</sup> Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

shameless,” they may also act on the text in subtler ways.<sup>165</sup> In all of the sources considered here, the model author periodically speaks out in a first-person narrative, but this does not preclude a more deft manipulation of the text in other ways.

Eco’s sustained metaphor of a forest illustrates this concept nicely: the woods, its contents, and its boundaries are set by the empirical author, within which the model author guides the model and empirical readers. It is up to the empirical reader whether to follow the path laid out before them or to take another route. These choices occur constantly throughout the text, even at the level of each sentence.<sup>166</sup> The empirical reader is, Eco argues, also responsible for filling in pieces of information left out of the text, which he describes as “a lazy machine asking the reader to do some of its work.”<sup>167</sup>

One of the strengths of Eco’s approach is the distance it allows the texts from their empirical authors.<sup>168</sup> While it is possible to know something about the authors of *The Bruce* and the *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, the same cannot be said for other texts. Much of what is known about Barbour and Fordun is speculative and compiled from records that are at best incomplete. The lack of an identifiable empirical author for the *Liber Extravagans* or *Gesta Annalia* certainly does not negate the value of their narrative. Eco’s emphasis on the model author allows an empirical reader to distil meaning and intention without involving an empirical author at all. The model author, Eco, writes, “is a voice that speaks to us affectionately (or imperiously, or slyly) that wants us beside it. This voice is manifested as a narrative strategy, as a set of instructions

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 17. In modern texts the model author’s presence tends to be subtler, though always present. Eco writes “the model author acts and reveals himself even in the most squalid pornographic novel, to tell us that the descriptions we are given must be a stimulus for our imagination and for our physical reactions” (*Six Walks*, 17).

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>168</sup> Eco phrases it even more strongly writing, “I’ll tell you at once that I couldn’t really care less about the empirical author of a narrative text (or, indeed, of any text) [...] The possible hermaphroditism of the Mona Lisa is an interesting aesthetic subject, whereas the sexual habits of Leonardo da Vinci are, so far as my ‘reading’ of that painting is concerned, mere gossip” (*Six Walks*, 11).



which is given to us step by step and which we have to follow when we decide to act as the model reader.”<sup>169</sup> The benefit of choosing to act as the model reader and not, as it were, taking another path through the forest, is that it allows the reader to experience a text as intended. From the perspective of this study this permits the distillation of normative expectations.

While Eco uses only literary fiction as examples in *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, all of the sources selected for this chapter fit his model of narrative theory, despite their non-fictional qualities. Eco’s final chapter, “Fictional Protocols,” questions the distinction of natural and artificial narrative used by theorists such as Theun A. van Dijk, who see substantial differences between the two types of narrative, relating natural narrative to non-fiction and artificial to fiction. Van Dijk defines natural narrative as occurring in day-to-day conversation and describes it as based upon a “model of experience” and having a “practical function.”<sup>170</sup> Artificial narrative, on the other hand, van Dijk defines as having a constructed nature and occurring in only specific “story-telling” circumstances.<sup>171</sup> In “Fictional Protocols,” Eco tweaks these definitions before tearing down entirely the walls that divide them. He suggests that natural narrative describes events that either actually occurred or that the speaker believes to have actually occurred, while artificial narrative tells true things about a fictional universe or pretends to tell the truth about the actual universe.<sup>172</sup> While Eco uses modern examples to dispel these distinctions, they also become immediately apparent when applied to medieval texts.<sup>173</sup> Epic poems, like Barbour’s *The Bruce* are strewn with indicators of factual accuracy. The narrator of *The Bruce*, for instance, claims to record “not bot suthfast thing,” and references a variety of oral

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>170</sup> Theun A. van Dijk, “Action, Action Description and Narrative,” *New Literary History* Vol. 6, No. 2 (1975): 285-286.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>172</sup> Eco, *Six Walks*, 120.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 120-140.

sources to back up his accounts.<sup>174</sup> The text's model author does everything possible he can to indicate that this is a factual recounting of historic events, and Barbour's contemporaries were certainly willing to cede to this him. So far, this fulfils both van Dijk and Eco's definition of a natural narrative. Still, it cannot be said that *The Bruce* was not consciously constructed on a specific model—that of a chivalric romance—though at times the narrative rebels against and even rejects this template.<sup>175</sup> The text also contains what Eco refers to as “textual signals of artificiality,” calling itself a “story” and a “romanys.”<sup>176</sup> *The Bruce*, then, complies with the characteristics of both a natural and artificial narrative; if anything, a natural narrative is part of the artificial construction of medieval epics.

The lack of differentiation between natural and artificial narrative in medieval texts means that they are particularly suited to Eco's narrative theory. Due to the fact, however, that medieval literature makes extensive use of historical figures, not purely fictional beings, it is important to add another layer of consideration.<sup>177</sup> To this end, I argue for the inclusion of two other entities: a model character and an empirical character. According to theorist Mieke Bal, a character is a “complex semantic unit” with “distinctive, mostly human characteristics.”<sup>178</sup> In *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative*, Gerald Prince further defines characters based upon two principles: first, that the figure is anthropomorphic and engaged in human activities such as speech; second, that the character is “foregrounded at least once in the narrative rather than relegated to the background and made part of a general context and setting.”<sup>179</sup> In

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<sup>174</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.13, l.446.

<sup>175</sup> See for instance, A. M. Kinghorn, *The Chorus of History: Literary Historical Relations in Renaissance Britain* (London: Blandford Press, 1971), 29ff; McKim, “John Barbour's Heroic Ideal,” 28-70; Sonja Vähjunker (Cameron), “A Study of the Career of Sir James Douglas: The Historical Record *versus* Barbour's *Bruce*,” PhD diss. (University of Edinburgh, 1992), 2-24; Barrow, *Robert the Bruce*, 432.

<sup>176</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.36, l.446.

<sup>177</sup> Eco alludes to this complication but does not propose a solution, see *Six Walks*, 120-21.

<sup>178</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 112-3.

<sup>179</sup> Gerald Prince, *Narratology: The Form and Functioning of Narrative* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1982), 71.

much the same way as the model reader and author are governed by the decisions of the empirical author, so too is the model character. In this manner, the empirical characters, who lived, breathed, and acted, are distanced from their textual presentation. This distinction permits variation in the depiction of characters as, for instance, occurs for the character of Robert the Bruce in the *Liber Extravagans* and *The Bruce*. It also lessens the necessity to account for every textual departure from the historical record and allows the narrative itself to remain the focus.

In this chapter, Eco's narrative theory acts as an organizational framework within which texts may be placed and analyzed. By seeking to identify the model author, reader, and characters it is possible to understand better how these texts represented, shaped and were informed by normative expectations in the Middle Ages. Gabrielle Spiegel expands on this characteristic in "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," where she argues that texts both mirror and create social realities.<sup>180</sup> For people in the Middle Ages, literature was expected to entertain and to educate, particularly by providing models of conduct, both of what should be imitated and of what should be avoided.<sup>181</sup> For young, aristocratic males, reading or, what was more likely, listening to accounts from chronicles and poems formed a substantial part of their education; these works acted in a normative fashion affecting the values, mentalities, and aspirations of elite males.<sup>182</sup> At the same time, these texts bear the marks of the culture that created them and acted to display and to distribute contemporary values.

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<sup>180</sup> Spiegel, "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages," 77.

<sup>181</sup> McKim, "John Barbour's Heroic Ideal," 30.

<sup>182</sup> Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 26-27. See also the discussion of text and the suppression of emotion in Andrew Taylor, "Chivalric Conversation and the Denial of Male Fear," in *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities*, ed. Jacqueline Murray (New York: Garland, 1999), 180-3.

## *The Liber Extravagans*

The earliest of the texts discussed here also has the most complicated provenance. The *Liber Extravagans* appears as part of Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon*, itself a continuation of John of Fordun's *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*. Recently, however, Dauvit Broun and A. B. Scott have argued that despite impressions, Bower was not its original author but that he preserved and expanded a much older source.<sup>183</sup> By analyzing the text of the *Liber* and specifically the political nature of its first poem, Broun and Scott have assigned a tentative creation date between 1304 and 1306. They have also confidently indicated where Bower has added parts to the text and which parts are original, as well as the initial author's source material, most of which is no longer extant.<sup>184</sup>

The *Liber* consists of a prose prologue, a genealogical summary, and three short poems, all written in Latin. The poems have come to be known as "The Scottish Poem," "The English Poem," and "The Poem on the Norman Conquest." The modern editors argue that it is possible to think of the second and third poems as supplemental to "The Scottish Poem," a claim borne out by the differing lengths of each section. "The Scottish Poem" forms the majority of the text and consists of 352 lines, while "The English Poem" and "The Poem on the Norman Conquest" account for only 73 lines each.<sup>185</sup>

"The Scottish Poem" offers commentary on the early years of the Wars of Independence and the greatness of the Scots people, including their creation story and the history of the Scottish kingdom. The prologue states:

*Adam primevum non incipiam numerare*

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<sup>183</sup> *Liber Extravagans*, 59.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-61.

<sup>185</sup> *Liber Extravagans*, 59.

*quomodo nec dicam Noe cepit generare.  
hoc genus a Japheth eius nato juniore.  
Quamvis descendat, referam tamen a propiore  
per quem dicatur stirps hec et magnificatur.*<sup>186</sup>

The man referred to is the eponymous ancestor of the Gaels, known as Gaythelos (or *Gàidheal*) Glas. By beginning the account from Gaythelos Glas, instead of Adam or Noah, the author encourages the model reader to emphasize the differences between the Scots and the English, and subsequently the Scots' greatness.

The first half of the poem discusses the genealogy of the Scots, the accuracy of which, the narrator asserts, derives from ancient chronicles.<sup>187</sup> For the second half of the poem, however, the narrator claims "*reliquorum sum quia testis.*"<sup>188</sup> This is certainly a narrative strategy employed for believability; however, Broun and Scott also call it "hypersceptical" to consider this only as empty rhetoric, especially given the detailed knowledge of the events in this portion of the text, particularly from 1291 to 1296.<sup>189</sup> Alexander Grant has used the 'first-hand knowledge' provided by the text as evidence of political sentiment during the first years of the fourteenth century.<sup>190</sup>

Here, however, the question is how male relationships are represented. The heart of the *Liber* is the assertion of the independence of the Scots and their superiority over the English; because of this and the text's brevity, there is not a great deal of discussion regarding individual male interactions. Despite this, the *Liber* provides some further indication of what was valued and what was abhorred in a man in medieval Scotland.

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., ln. 10-14; "I shall not begin by counting in Adam, our primal ancestor, / nor shall I relate how Noah was the first begetter / of this race through his younger son Japheth. / Though it descends from him, yet I will trace it from someone more particular, / through whom this stock is set apart and exalted."

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., ln. 5-6.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., ln. 6; "I am myself witness to the rest."

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>190</sup> See Alexander Grant, "The Death of John Comyn: What Was Going On?," *The Scottish Historical Review* Vol. 86, No. 2 (2007): 176-224.

Alexander III is the first figure to receive significant treatment. Not coincidentally, he is also one of the first men discussed within the living memory of the narrator. Alexander is described as “*grato, largo miteque beato*” or gracious, generous, mild, and successful, epithets that are, at least slightly, more specific than good, faithful, and kind.<sup>191</sup> In discussing the aftermath of Alexander’s death, the author lapses into uncharacteristic eloquence: he writes “*post mortis morsum vertit dilectio dorsum: finitur vita finit et amor ita,*” bemoaning the treatment of Alexander’s memory.<sup>192</sup>

While Alexander is portrayed as a hero, Edward I is certainly the villain of the poem. In contrast to Alexander, Edward is described as treacherous and greedy. In a tongue-in-cheek passage, Edward is described as “*in tribus est cupidus qui rex est dictus iniquus: / scilicet in mediis, minimis simul atque supremis.*”<sup>193</sup> Edward is further portrayed as breaking promises, engaging in immoral battles, and shamefully leading off the Scots magnates.<sup>194</sup> Interestingly, the text blames Edward for the behaviour of the Scots nobles. In instances where Scottish behaviour is condemned, these figures are simply alluded to, but remain nameless. The certain man “*qui semper erit sine laude*” at the siege of Berwick, for instance, could refer to any of three men, the earls of Angus, Carrick, or Dunbar.<sup>195</sup>

Throughout the text, Scottish nobles are portrayed ambiguously. Broun and Scott describe the text as pro-Balliol, while Grant states instead that it is simply “anti-Bruce,” a small but important distinction.<sup>196</sup> It is true that while the author seems to regard Balliol as the lawful

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<sup>191</sup> *Liber Extravagans*, ln. 193.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, ln. 204-5; “After Death’s savage bite, affection turns its back: love ends with the end of life.”

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, ln. 265-6; “The king who is said to be unjust is greedy in three respects: in matters of very small, of medium, and of the highest degree.”

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, ln. 304, 282, 296.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, ln. 279; “Who will be decried forever,” 117.

<sup>196</sup> Grant, “The Death of John Comyn,” 205.

king, he is not portrayed as a faultless ruler but instead as an unsatisfactory one.<sup>197</sup> Grant argues that part of the dissatisfaction with Balliol was due to his identification as Edward's vassal and subject. The *Liber* goes so far as to suggest that Balliol was a foreign king ruling in Scotland, a concept the text vehemently condemns.<sup>198</sup> The portrayal of Robert the Bruce is similarly conflicted, though less prominently. For instance, the man whose behaviour at the Siege of Berwick will be 'decried forever' could well refer to the Bruce. Further, the name of this man is suppressed "*ne fraus iteretur*," an indication, the editors argue, that the narrator is speaking of Bruce.<sup>199</sup> Broun and Scott use the ambiguity towards Bruce to help date the work to the early fourteenth century, arguing that it must have been written before Bruce was crowned in 1306, but after Balliol's deposal in 1296. Quoting G. W. S. Barrow, they argue that the *Liber's* author "had made the essential leap from Balliol to Bruce," and was prepared to consider the Bruce as the best hope for an independent Scotland.<sup>200</sup>

The *Liber*, including "The Scottish Poem," "The English Poem," and "The Poem on the Norman Conquest," has little direct information regarding masculine interactions, aside from encouraging Scottish animosity towards the English. The marked tendency of the text towards ethnocentrism, and Scottish social and political superiority are indeed two of its defining characteristics. This quality appears not only in "The Scottish Poem," but also "The English Poem" and "The Poem on the Norman Conquest" which, respectively, discuss the kings of England from 763 to Edward I's reign, and the events and motivations of the Norman conquest of 1066. Unfortunately, the few explicit mentions of social obligations appear in those sections

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<sup>197</sup> *Liber Extravagans*, ln. 242-4; Grant, "The Death of John Comyn," 205.

<sup>198</sup> Grant, "The Death of John Comyn," 205-6; *Liber Extravagans*, ln. 260.

<sup>199</sup> *Liber Extravagans*, ln. 281; "Lest damage be renewed."

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.; G. W. S. Barrow, *Robert the Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* (London: Eyre Spottiswoode Ltd., 1965), 131. The most pro-Bruce aspects of the text (ln. 245-60) are almost certainly additions by Bower (*Liber Extravagans*, 116-7).

Broun and Scott highlight as almost certainly Bower's fifteenth-century additions. One such instance appears in the section justifying William Wallace's rebellion with the argument: "*non servanda vides est ubi fracta fides.*"<sup>201</sup> An exception to this is the frequent references to the importance of kin, particularly in regards to political legitimacy; genealogy as an indicator of legitimacy appears throughout all three poems and reflects contemporary thought on the issue. The first 185 lines of "The Scottish Poem" serve to justify self-rule in Scotland based upon an unbroken line of descent, set apart and exalted.<sup>202</sup> Genealogical claims are also used in "The Poem on the Norman Conquest" to argue that the Scots were the rightful heirs to the English throne through St. Margaret, a line of argumentation dating to the late twelfth century.<sup>203</sup> The importance of bloodlines is further emphasized in "The English Poem:"

*Nunc dicam breviter istorum quis genuit quem,  
ut pateat qui vi regnavit, quis velut heres,  
Illos non referam qui quemquam non genuerunt,  
sed tantum qui se generando sustinuerent.*<sup>204</sup>

With this statement, the *Liber* makes clear the association of political legitimacy with genealogy, the importance of children in maintaining this legitimacy, and, implicitly, the illegitimacy of foreign rule in Scotland.

Applying Eco's narrative framework highlights the textual strategies used to direct the model reader. At times, these narrative strategies are direct and forceful. At one point the reader is told: "[s]i justus fueris, sic respondere teneris," implying that only someone unjust (or English—one and the same according to the *Liber*) would disagree.<sup>205</sup> In other instances, the

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<sup>201</sup> *Liber Extravagans*, ln. 311; "When you see an agreement broken, you must not keep it."

<sup>202</sup> See, *Liber Extravagans*, ln. 22, 14.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., ln. 451ff. The earliest expression of this argument appears in Adam of Dryburgh's *De tripartite tabernaculo* written in 1180 (*Liber Extravagans*, 124).

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., ln. 396; "Now I shall briefly relate which of them fathered whom, / so that it might be clear who ruled by force and who as [lawful] heir. / I shall not mention those who did not father any offspring, / but only those who maintained their line by producing children."

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., ln. 471; "If you are fair-minded, you are bound to reply in the following terms."



reader is directed more gently, through mentions of the ‘royal Scots’ and ‘true kings.’ The end message, however, remains the same: the legitimacy of Scottish home-rule, the justification of Scottish rebellion, and the superiority of the Scots people. In terms of model characters, Alexander III is the hero to Edward I’s villain, and represents a normative force within the text. Alexander was all that a good king should be: “*grato largo miteque beato*.”<sup>206</sup>

### ***Gesta Annalia II***

In the 1380s, John of Fordun undertook to write the history of the Scots, tracing the birth of the Scots people, the creation of their kingdom, and their development from the earliest times through to his own day. The result, the *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, has been called “the first detailed and systematic history of Scotland,” and Fordun himself presented as “the father of Scottish history.”<sup>207</sup> Until recently, the whole of the *Chronica* was attributed to Fordun. It is now clear, however, that chronologically Fordun’s work goes no further than the death of David I in 1153 and that the chapters covering the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have an altogether different authorship.<sup>208</sup> The portions of the work for this period have been divided into two different records: *Gesta Annalia I* (*GAI*) and *Gesta Annalia II* (*GAI*). The text known as *GAI* begins with a recitation of Saint Margaret’s genealogy and continues to February in the year 1285, when an embassy travelled to France for the purpose of acquiring a new wife for Alexander III.<sup>209</sup> There was originally a division between this entry and the subsequent announcement of Alexander’s betrothal to Yolande de Dreux, though lost by modern editing,

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid., ln. 193. See above, p. 57.

<sup>207</sup> John of Fordun, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. William F. Skene, trans. Felix J. H. Skene. (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872), lxxviii [*Chronica*, i], all translations appear from this edition unless otherwise noted; for Latin text see, John of Fordun, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. William F. Skene, (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1871) [*Chronica* ii]; Dauvit Broun, *Scottish Independence and the Idea of Britain: From the Picts to Alexander III* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 215.

<sup>208</sup> Broun, *Scottish Independence*, 6, 175.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 175.

consisting of a dossier of documents related to Scottish independence. These factors have led Dauvit Broun to the conclusion that *GAI* was produced soon after February 1285, while *GAIL* was added much later, likely around 1360.<sup>210</sup> This discovery has allowed the reclassification of *Gesta Annalia* as truly contemporary rather than nearly contemporary.

*GAIL* details the events from 1285 to the 1360s, including a discussion of the Great Cause and the Wars of Independence, possibly derived from a Saint Andrews' source ending in 1363 and written by Thomas Bisset, prior of Saint Andrews.<sup>211</sup> As with the *Liber Extravagans*, certain particularly pro-Bruce passages of *GAIL* may indicate later additions as they contrast with what Broun describes as the “non-committal posture” elsewhere in the text.<sup>212</sup> The ultimate message of this text is one very familiar to medieval Christian thought, namely the evils brought about by social discord and the importance of peace and good will.<sup>213</sup> The church and God's will also play a particularly prominent role not seen in the *Liber* or *The Bruce*; here, the success of a ruler is explicitly indicative of God's favour and suffering indicative of His displeasure. *GAIL* attributes Bruce's victory at Bannockburn, for instance, to “*non in multitudine populi sed in Domino Deo spem ponens*.”<sup>214</sup> Similarly, English losses in 1311 were attributed to God's righteous judgment of the faithless English nation.<sup>215</sup>

As with the *Liber*, masculine familial relationships are primarily used to assert or prove legitimacy. *GAIL* provides a genealogy of the kings of Scotland from Malcolm III down to Balliol and Bruce. Rather than assert that one claim was more suitable than the other, *GAIL* declares, “[*h*]is visis, viri periti quaerant et investigent, quis litigantium jura habeat potiora,”

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Grant, “The Death of John Comyn,” 189, n. 52; Broun, *Scottish Independence*, 217.

<sup>212</sup> Broun, *Scottish Independence*, 217.

<sup>213</sup> Grant, “The Death of John Comyn,” 194.

<sup>214</sup> Fordun, *Chronica, Gesta Annalia* [GA] CXXI; “King Robert, putting his trust, not in a host of people, but in the Lord God.”

<sup>215</sup> Fordun, *Chronica, GA*.CXXVII.

illustrating the non-committal attitude commented on by Broun.<sup>216</sup> The inability of the nobles, in particular, to unite behind one of the claimants is presented here as one of the greatest hardships faced by the Scots and responsible for exposing the people to English depredations.<sup>217</sup> One important relationship described in paternal terms, though non-familial, exists in the text between God and His children. God is said to be responsible for providing a champion—Robert the Bruce—to defend the Scots, in “*paternae pietatis*.”<sup>218</sup>

The other common theme presented by *GAI* is the danger of false friendship between men. Edward I, in particular, is portrayed as a false and deceitful friend, encouraging the Bruce in a “*fictam amicitiam*” (sham friendship) and breaking promises to the Scots.<sup>219</sup> Some of the hazards Bruce is said to have encountered, alongside hunger and danger are “*falsorum fratrum insidias*”—the snares of false brothers.<sup>220</sup> These sham friends and false brothers are used to further emphasize the destructive power of discord, the claim that lies at the heart of the narrative. The author reinforces this by claiming “[e]t est notandum, quod nunquam vel raro legitur, ab Anglicis Scotos fuisse superatos, nisi invidia procerum, vel fraude et deceptione indigenarum, ad aliam partem se transferentium.”<sup>221</sup> This emphasis on friends and brothers, both true and false, also serves to highlight the significance of homosocial bonds and their societal importance. *GAI* presents John Comyn as one of these false friends, offering an account of the pledge between Comyn and Bruce whereby one would take the crown, the other their combined lands. Though the pledge they made was to be an “*indissolubilis amicitiae et pacis foedera*” (indissoluble treaty of friendship and peace) for the deliverance of the Scottish nation, Comyn

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., *GA*.LXXIX; “now having seen this, let skilled men seek and trace which of the suitors had the stronger right.”

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., *GA*.XCII.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., *GA*.CXII; “His fatherly goodness.”

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., *GA*.CXIII.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., *GA*.CXII; Felix Skene translates this as “the snares [...] of false friends.”

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., *GA*.CI; “[a]nd it is remarkable that we seldom, if ever, read of the Scots being overcome by the English, unless through the envy of lords, or the treachery and deceit of the natives.”

betrayed Bruce to Edward.<sup>222</sup> This depiction of Comyn as “*fide violata, et juramenti religione neglecta*” works as a narrative strategy, reminding the model reader of the main message: the danger of social discord.<sup>223</sup> While amicable love and true friendship do appear in the narrative, they are far from common and suborned to the necessity of presenting social discord as a constant and ever-present danger.

In *GAI*, kings are successful when they maintain social order. Thus, Alexander and Bruce are praiseworthy, Balliol somewhat less so. Alexander in particular is lauded for this quality: “*eo quod recte se rexit et suos, jus suum unicuique tribuens, et si quos de suis aliquando habuit rebelles, tanto rigore disciplinae eorum repressit insanias, ut misso fune in collo, ad suspendium parati, si suae placitum esset voluntati, suo subderetur imperio.*”<sup>224</sup> This presentation is hardly the *Liber*’s ‘mild’ king. If *GAI*’s message is the danger and divisiveness of discord, its priority is the triumph and protection of the Church, which can be assured only through peace.

### ***The Bruce***

The importance of *The Bruce* as a work of literature cannot be overstated. It is the earliest narrative source available for the life and deeds of King Robert I and the oldest extant poem in any form of Older Scots.<sup>225</sup> The text has a unique status amongst fourteenth-century Scottish writings in terms of language, style, and content.<sup>226</sup> *The Bruce* occupies a very different position

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., *GA*.CXIII; for a discussion of the historicity of Bruce and Comyn’s crown-for-land pact see Grant, “The Death of John Comyn, 194ff.

<sup>223</sup> Fordun, *Chronica*, *GA*.CXIII; John “broke his word; and, heedless of the sacredness of his oath...”; Grant prefers “the sanctity of the oath,” see, “The Death of John Comyn,” 196 n. 91.

<sup>224</sup> Fordun, *Chronica*, *GA*.LXVII; “he rules himself and his people aright, allowing unto each his rights; and if, at any time, any of his people rebelled, he curbed their madness with discipline so unbending, that they would put a rope round their necks, ready for hanging, were that his will and pleasure.”

<sup>225</sup> Nicola Royan, “A Question of Truth: Barbour’s *Bruce*, Hary’s *Wallace* and *Richard Coer de Lion*” *International Review of Scottish Studies* Vol. 34 (2009): 75.

<sup>226</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, 4.

in Scottish literature than either the *Liber Extravagans* or *Gesta Annalia II*. In the most obvious ways, it is both much longer and more detailed. It also represents a more consciously fictionalized account of the Wars of Independence, following, as it does, in the footsteps of the great medieval epics and romances like the *Chanson de Roland* and the work of Chrétien de Troyes. John Barbour's *The Bruce* was written in the 1370s about the Scottish Wars of Independence, some forty years after the events it describes, in order "That it lest ay furth in memory/ Swa that na tyme of lenth it let/ Na ger it haly be foryet."<sup>227</sup> The text of the poem was written in the Scottish vernacular, known at the time as Inglis, in rhyming octosyllabic couplets, demonstrating Barbour's familiarity with contemporary English and Anglo-Norman narrative poetry.<sup>228</sup> A. A. M. Duncan, the most recent editor of *The Bruce*, claims that though the poem's metre was from Middle English romances, "otherwise its inspiration was native to Scotland, the ethos and literature of the successful war of 1306-27."<sup>229</sup> The poem was widely copied in the fourteenth century and used—with or without credit—by a number of authors. Portions appear in Andrew Wyntoun's *Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland* (c. 1410), *The Buik of Alexander* (1438), Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon* (1447) and Blind Hary's *Wallace* (c. 1477), all before the two surviving manuscripts were written, the first in 1487, the second in 1489.<sup>230</sup> It was among the first printed Scottish documents and was set to the press in 1571.<sup>231</sup> *The Bruce* has played such an important role in Scottish identity that R. James Goldstein calls it "the most impressive work of national ideology produced in Scotland before the novels of Sir Walter Scott."<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.14-16; "So that it will be remembered for ever in [people's] memories, [and] so that the passage of time will not impair it, nor cause it to be altogether forgotten" (46).

<sup>228</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, 4; Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland*, 133.

<sup>229</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, 6.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland*, 141.

Although relatively little is known about Barbour's life, his role as archdeacon of Aberdeen, a position he held for nearly forty years, makes it possible to give some account of his career.<sup>233</sup> Barbour was born around 1320 and died in 1395, and although he never rose above the position of archdeacon, was active in scholastic and political realms, studying at Oxford and Paris. The editor of a nineteenth-century version of *The Bruce*, W. W. Skeat, suggests that Barbour may have undertaken such studies motivated more by a love of learning than by desire for professional advancement.<sup>234</sup> Barbour's education is evident throughout the work in his extensive reference to classical battles and mythology. He was also clearly familiar with contemporary French literature as evidenced by his *exempla*, many of which were drawn from French sources such as the *Roman d'Alixandre*.<sup>235</sup> Barbour's position within ecclesiastical and court structures, where he was considered something of an 'official' poet, also conveyed extrinsic authority to his work.<sup>236</sup> While the primary audience would likely have been the royal court and nobility, Barbour's use of the vernacular made *The Bruce* accessible to "every Inglis-speaking Scot who came within hearing distance."<sup>237</sup>

There is long-running debate regarding the factual accuracy of the poem and its author's intentions. This is further complicated by Barbour himself, who refers to his work as a romance while maintaining his intention to record "nocht bot suthfast thing."<sup>238</sup> Literary critic A. M. Kinghorn has argued that although Barbour and his subjects were near contemporaries, there is no evidence to suggest that the representations of Robert the Bruce and James Douglas, or any other character, are more than simple literary creations of the poet's imagination.<sup>239</sup> Kinghorn

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<sup>233</sup> See McKim, "John Barbour's Heroic Ideal," 1-11.

<sup>234</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, ed. W. W. Skeat (Millwood: Kraus Reprint, 1973), xxx.

<sup>235</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, (Duncan), 4; see, for instance, I.529-36, X. 706-19, XII.303-11.

<sup>236</sup> Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland*, 140-1.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>238</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.446, I.36; "Nothing but the truth" (46).

<sup>239</sup> Kinghorn, *The Chorus of History*, 29.

suggests further “no second-hand knowledge of the intimacies of a hero’s personal life is needed for the creation of such a character in a literary work. His virtues, prowess and the goals to which he aspires are constructed according to a formula, that of a chivalric romance.”<sup>240</sup> From this perspective, there is little choice other than to accept that *The Bruce* can only be treated as a make-believe story and little more than convenience that the heroes were, at one point, real men.

In contrast, historian G. W. S. Barrow, has suggested that Barbour’s version of events and of the men he describes may actually be credible. Barbour, he argues, was a particularly careful recorder of names, personalities, and other details important to the recreation of a largely accurate account.<sup>241</sup> Barrow, while arguing that Barbour should be considered as a biographer rather than a romancer, nonetheless cautions the reader to remember that for Barbour, “Bruce was the hero of a work of art. Consciously or unconsciously, he emphasized the chivalrous qualities in Bruce, and in Douglas, his other hero.”<sup>242</sup> This is certainly an important consideration to keep in mind. It is not, however, unique to *The Bruce*, to romances, or to virtually any other medieval historical account. Barbour, in his introduction, acknowledges the multipurpose nature of his work as a combination of entertainment, tribute, and edification:

Storys to rede ar delatibill  
Suppos that thai be nocht bot fabill,  
Than shuld storys that suthfast wer  
And thai war said on gud maner  
Have doubill plesance in heryng.  
The first plesance is the carpyng,  
And the tother in the suthfastnes  
That schawys the thing ryght as it wes,  
And suth thyngis that ar likand  
Till mannys heryng ar plesand.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Barrow, *Robert the Bruce*, 432.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 431.

<sup>243</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.1-10; “Stories are enjoyable to read, even if they are only fables, so stories that are true, if spoken well, should give double pleasure in the hearing. The first pleasure is in the reciting, and the second in the truthfulness that reveals things just as they were, [for] true events that are pleasing are entertaining to the hearer” (46).

Barbour then proceeds to suggest that the men in his account, particularly Bruce and Douglas, should be remembered for their great deeds and held up as models for the current and future generation to emulate.<sup>244</sup>

Whether *The Bruce* is seen as a work of fiction or an accurate recreation of men and battles, Barbour's purpose for writing is clear. He wrote to create a record of events for the sake of remembrance and to emphasize the praiseworthy and imitation-worthy behaviour of two men in particular—Robert the Bruce and James Douglas. The prominence of Robert the Bruce in the account makes sense both in the context that he was King of Scotland at the time and the main impetus behind the continued fighting, and in the likely desire of Barbour to please his own king, Robert II, with tales of his grandfather's valiant deeds.<sup>245</sup> The reason for the prominence of James Douglas is, however, less clear, but will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Temporarily setting aside the matters of *The Bruce*'s historical accuracy and the context of its creation and applying the lens of Eco's narrative theory permits a more detailed evaluation of the narrative strategies at play and the normative features of the text. This also allows a clearer contrast between the empirical characters and the model characters as represented in *The Bruce*, a distinction even more necessary here than in the sources discussed above. Here, model characters are given extensive dialogue, thoughts, and feelings, and are provided with well-rounded and whole personalities. In her PhD thesis and later published works, Sonja Cameron has sought to compare Barbour's depiction of James Douglas with the available historical evidence regarding his career. In her estimation, Barbour was "demonstrably prepared to tamper with historical details, but his account remains accurate in general terms, amplifying rather than

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., I.17-33.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 14.



radically reinterpreting the historical Douglas' personality traits."<sup>246</sup> Whether all of the presented personalities match those of their empirical counter-parts is impossible to know; however, as anthropomorphized narrative strategies, this is unimportant.

Robert the Bruce, "brave in heart and hand" is the titular hero of the text and the narrative revolves around his efforts and actions, both in defeat and in success.<sup>247</sup> The Bruce first speaks at line 157, setting the tone for his actions throughout the work. In response to Edward's offer to make him king on the condition that he recognize Edward as his liege lord, Bruce replies:

'Schyr,' said he, 'sa God me save  
The kynryk yharn I nocht to have  
But gyff if fall off ryght to me,  
And gyff God will that is sa be  
I sall als freely in all thing  
Hald it as it offeris to king.'<sup>248</sup>

Here and throughout the text, Bruce is characterized as just, brave, chivalrous, and absolutely unwilling to compromise the independence of Scotland. Anne McKim argues that these and other traits delineate Bruce as the ideal king, and certainly his role as king is central to the narrative.<sup>249</sup> Bruce's normative role in the text, however, is both more and less. The qualities that make Bruce worthy of imitation are not strictly kingly qualities, but the same masculine qualities desirable in all men. In *The Bruce*, Robert is a great king because he is a great man. He becomes king "as God will that is sa be" but the qualities celebrated in him and praised by his men are those of any good superior—king or lord.

This is most evident in the accounts of battles where Bruce not only strategized but also personally led his men, encouraging them to acts of valour by example. In the account of the

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<sup>246</sup> Våthjunker (Cameron), "A Study of the Career of Sir James Douglas," abstract.

<sup>247</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.28.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid., I.157-161; "'Sir' said [Bruce] 'as God save me, I do not hanker after the kingdom, unless it falls rightfully to me. And if God will that it be so, I shall hold it as freely in all things as is proper to a king'" (54).

<sup>249</sup> McKim, "John Barbour's Heroic Ideal," 176-236.

Battle of Methven, for instance, Bruce notices part of his army losing ground to the English and joins them calling “On thaim, on thaim, thai feble fast” while attempting to drive back the English forces himself.<sup>250</sup> During an attack by the Lord of Lorn, Bruce’s defence of his men is described as “worthely vasselage,” which the editor translates as “bold courage.”<sup>251</sup> More specifically, “worthely vasselage” means the bold courage of a knight or a vassal.<sup>252</sup> Thus, Bruce not only protected his men in battle, he defended them as a man should defend his lord. This is not the only occasion where the Bruce displays behaviour better suited to a vassal than king. At the Battle of Bannockburn, Bruce kills an English knight, Sir Henry de Bohun, who thought to attack Bruce directly. Although Bruce was victorious, cleaving the man nearly in two, his men later upbraided him for taking such a risk, particularly as Robert had not been appropriately armed or mounted: “For thai said weill it mycht haiff bene / Cause off thar tynsaill everlkan.”<sup>253</sup> This incident foreshadows the success of the Scots—a force much smaller than the English and lacking proper resources, but bold and mobile—it also serves of an example of Bruce’s rejection of the kingly necessity of avoiding unnecessary personal risk.

At the end of the poem, Bruce falls ill and dies. In eulogizing him, his men provide a reckoning of the man they have lost:

‘All our defens,’ thai said, ‘allace  
 And he that all our comford was  
 Our wit and all our governing  
 Allace is brocht her till ending.  
 His worschip and his mekill mycht  
 Maid all that war with him sa wycht  
 That thai mycht never abaysit be  
 Quhill forouth thaim thai mycht him se.  
 Allace! Quhat sall we do or say,  
 For on lyff quhill he lestyit ay

<sup>250</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, II.387; “On them, on them, they are failing fast.”

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., III.57, 114.

<sup>252</sup> Dictionary of the Scots Language, s.v. vassalage.

<sup>253</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, XII.94-5; “For it could well have been the cause of each of them losing [everything]” (452).

With all out nychtbouris dred war we,  
And intill mony ser countre  
Off our worschip sprang the renoun  
And that wes all for his persoune.<sup>254</sup>

The values highlighted in this passage show desirable masculine qualities, such as wisdom, strength, and valour. Here, Bruce is described in exclusively personal terms: he was their comfort and their wisdom, their leader, but nowhere is he described as their ‘king.’ While they mourn the loss of his generosity, strength, wisdom, and honesty, it is his “gret cumpany” they miss the most.<sup>255</sup>

Of all of the men described by Barbour, one—Edward Bruce—most obviously upholds the principles of chivalry. Edward, however, is not one of the heroes of *The Bruce*. Despite his “gret yarnyn... / All tymys to do chevalry,” Edward is depicted as ambitious and vain.<sup>256</sup> His greatest sin according to *The Bruce* is a lack of prudence, which is particularly evident in comparison to his brother Robert. In Book IX, direct comparison is made between the two Bruces:

Had he [Edward] mesure in his deid  
I trow that worthyar then he  
Mycht nocht in his tym fundyn be  
Outakyn his broder anerly,  
To quham into chivalry  
He [Robert] governyt sa worthily  
That he oft full unlikely thing  
Brought rucht weill to gud ending.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, XX.273-286; “‘Alas!’ they said, ‘all our defence, he who was our comfort, our wisdom, and who led us all, has been brought to an end now. His valour and his mighty strength made all who were with him so brave that they could never be defeated as long as they saw him before them. Alas! What shall we do or say? For as long as he lived we were feared by all our foes, and in many different countries the flame of our valour spread, and all because of one person—him!’” (756).

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., XX.269-271.

<sup>256</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, IX.588-9; McKim, “John Barbour’s Heroic Ideal,” 230.

<sup>257</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, IX.666-76; “If he [Edward] had had moderation in his deeds I believe that a worthier [man] than he could not be found in his time, apart only from his brother, to whom, in chivalry, none was equal in his day. Because [the king] always behaved with moderation, and, with great wisdom, governed his chivalry so worthily that he often brought an unpromising situation right well to a good conclusion” (354).

Despite Edward's faults, the text does not depict him as anything other than a masculine figure. His impulsivity and rashness make him less heroic, not less masculine.

As a narrative strategy, Edward acts as a counterpoint to Robert both explicitly, as in the example above, and implicitly, serving to emphasize Robert's greatness. The depiction of Edward also underlines the superfluity of Robert's personal characteristics—his generosity, bravery, wisdom and kindness—in a king, as the model reader would be aware that Edward was heir to his brother, barring the birth of legitimate sons to Robert.

While the setting of *The Bruce* is the struggle for autonomy during the Scottish Wars of Independence, the subject of the work is the greatness of the men who fought in these battles. Although it is common to depict heroes as ideals of a type, ideal knights or ideal kings, the qualities that are strongly emphasized in these men are similar, regardless of their social role. This will become even more evident in the next chapter with the discussion of *The Bruce's* representation of Sir James Douglas.

## CHAPTER FIVE: “THAT IN HIS TYME SA WORTHY WAS”: THE CASE OF GOOD SIR JAMES, LORD OF DOUGLAS

John Barbour’s poem *The Bruce* provides a case study of the fourteenth-century noble Sir James Douglas. Douglas is Barbour’s only primary character treated from childhood to death. While *The Bruce* is ostensibly about Robert the Bruce’s struggle for Scottish independence, James Douglas’ role in Barbour’s narrative outweighs and distorts Douglas’ actual importance during the period. This, I argue, is a sign that James Douglas played an important prescriptive role, embodying how men ought to behave. Although in many cases this modelling is closely related to notions of courtly chivalry, the two are not synonymous. An examination of Barbour’s portrayal of Douglas, particularly his interactions with other men, illustrates Scottish masculine norms.

The dual-biographical nature of *The Bruce* requires the complex incorporation of two interwoven narrative strands—one that follows Bruce and the other Douglas.<sup>258</sup> The Douglas family, though powerful in Scotland in the 1370s, was not equal to demanding a place for their ancestor in Barbour’s work.<sup>259</sup> Although the Douglasses were, by the mid-fifteenth century, one of the most powerful families in Scotland, during the fourteenth century they were relatively minor barons, though well connected.<sup>260</sup> Despite this, Douglas receives significantly more treatment than any of the other nobles, and his name is frequently linked with that of the king. In the introduction of the work, Barbour devotes twice as many lines to Douglas as to the Bruce, foreshadowing his prominence throughout the work.<sup>261</sup> Such an elaborate storyline makes sense only in the context that Douglas’ story had certain desirable characteristics that made it worth emphasizing. While on the surface this may amount to little more than an adherence to chivalric

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<sup>258</sup> McKim, “John Barbour’s Heroic Ideal,” 14.

<sup>259</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, 14.

<sup>260</sup> Michael Brown, *The Black Douglasses* (Phantassie: Tuckwell Press, 1998), 9, 12.

<sup>261</sup> McKim, “John Barbour’s Heroic Ideal,” 123.

conventions, Barbour's Douglas demonstrates other masculine characteristics expected of noblemen in medieval Scotland.

Like many traditional poetic heroes, Douglas possessed exceptional characteristics from youth, which stood him in good stead through difficult times. According to Barbour, Douglas:

thocht weill he was worth na seyle  
That mycht of nane anoyis feyle,  
And als for till escheve gret thingis  
And hard travalys and barganyngis,  
That suld ger his price doublyt be.<sup>262</sup>

The discussion of Douglas' childhood and youth also demonstrates medieval understandings of the transition from boyhood to manhood. This occurs primarily through his relationships with William Douglas, his father, and William Lamberton, the bishop of St. Andrews, who fulfils a paternal role after taking James as his squire.

William Douglas' role in *The Bruce* is brief; Barbour mentions his final imprisonment by King Edward, but makes no mention of his two previous arrests because of rebellion against the English crown between 1290 and 1296.<sup>263</sup> While his father was in prison Douglas lived as an exile in Paris "And levyt thar full sympylly."<sup>264</sup> At William's death, Douglas' patrimony was confiscated and bestowed upon an English magnate, Robert Clifford.<sup>265</sup> Soon after, Douglas returned to Scotland in the hopes of that he "Mycht wyn agayn his heritage / And his men out off

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<sup>262</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.303-307; "He thought [that a person] was deserving of no good fortune who couldn't put up with vexations; and also [he meant] to achieve great things, hard struggles and combats, which should cause his reputation to be doubled" (60).

<sup>263</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.280-290; Brown, *The Black Douglasses*, 13-15.

<sup>264</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.331; "Living there quite simply" (62).

<sup>265</sup> The identity of the Englishman is given only by Barbour. A. A. M. Duncan has suggested that although there is no evidentiary support for this, Barbour is likely correct (60). Others, including Brown, have also taken Barbour as correct (15).

all thryllage.”<sup>266</sup> The redemption of his patrimony and the vengeance for his father’s death provide Douglas with significant motivation throughout the poem. Barbour claims that,

Hys fadyr dede he vengyt sua  
That in Ingland I underta  
Wes nan off lyve that hym ne dred,  
For he sa fele off harnys sched  
That nane that lyvys thaim can tell.<sup>267</sup>

The desire to avenge his father is not Douglas’ sole motivation, and other factors such as his feudal obligations also come into play; however, loyalty to his father’s memory and the protection of his heritage remain frequent themes. William Douglas was dead by 1299 and as James had been born no later than 1289, he was still a relatively young boy at his father’s death.<sup>268</sup> As a result, much of the period of James’ education occurred while in the service of William Lamberton, the bishop of St. Andrews.

Under Lamberton’s tutelage, Douglas trained as a squire and joined Lamberton’s household and entourage, allowing him the opportunity to absorb masculine norms expected of his class despite the early loss of his natural father. For a young boy hoping to regain his inheritance, an association with Lamberton was an ideal situation. Despite earlier rebellions, Lamberton had made peace with the English and even managed to acquire Edward’s trust.<sup>269</sup> I. M. Davis has argued that, “James could hardly have been better placed than with Lamberton. Mediaeval bishops exercised in their temporalities all the powers of great lay lords, and the secular training of boys entrusted to them would have matched that to be had in an earl’s household.”<sup>270</sup> Ruth Mazo Karras has identified the training undergone by squires to be a period

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., I.351-352; “Whether he without any difficulty he could recover his heritage, and [take] his men out of thralldom” (62).

<sup>267</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.291; “He so avenged his father’s death that there was no-one alive in England, I guarantee, who did not fear him, for he cleft the skulls of so many that none alive can tell of them” (60).

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 60 n. 288.

<sup>269</sup> Brown, *The Black Douglasses*, 15.

<sup>270</sup> I. M. Davis, *The Black Douglas* (London, 1974), 10.

of education and indoctrination into the skills and behaviours later expected of them as knights. According to Karras, squires listened to romances that they were expected to emulate, developed military skills, and learned courtly manners.<sup>271</sup> Lamberton involved himself in the political affairs of his ward, approaching Edward about returning the Douglas lands to James. Edward, however, was unwilling to revoke the lands from Clifford, whom he felt had served him faithfully, in order to install the son of an enemy who was unrepentant to his death.<sup>272</sup> While Davis and McKim emphasize the didactic nature of James' term as a squire, Barbour's text also suggests an important emotive relationship. While James was in Bishop Lamberton's service,

All men lufyt him, for his bouté,  
For he wes off full fayr effer  
Wys curtais and deboner.  
Larg and luffand als wes he,  
And our all thing luffyt lawté.<sup>273</sup>

Douglas' relationship with his father and Bishop Lamberton demonstrates several important characteristics of masculine relationships. In both instances, Douglas, as the inferior in the relationship, owed specific and tangible duties to his superior. In the case of Lamberton, Douglas was responsible for carrying "His knynys forouth him to scher," and other duties typical of a squire.<sup>274</sup> Had his father survived, it is conceivable that Douglas would have performed a similar function for him, training as a squire in the Douglas household.<sup>275</sup> He was also responsible for less tangible psychological obligations, the most important of which was loyalty, the same quality praised in Bruce.<sup>276</sup> Inserted into the discussion of Douglas' youth and education is Barbour's sermon on loyalty. He writes:

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<sup>271</sup> Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 29.

<sup>272</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.407-444.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., I.360-364; "All men loved him for his generosity, for he was of really good conduct, wise, courteous and debonair, and also generous and affectionate; above everything he loved loyalty" (62).

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., I. 356; "Carry his knives before him for cutting" (62).

<sup>275</sup> Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 29.

<sup>276</sup> See above, p. 68-70.



Leawté is to luff gretumly,  
 Throuch leawté liffis men rychtwisly.  
 With a vertu and leawté  
 A man may yeit sufficyand be,  
 And but leawté may nane haiff price  
 Quether he be wycht or he be wys,  
 For quhar it failyeys na vertu  
 May be off price na off valu  
 To mak a man sa gud that he  
 May simply callyt gud man be.<sup>277</sup>

Barbour uses this to preface his description of Douglas' person and character, the foremost quality of which is, naturally, his loyalty and hatred of treachery. James' love of loyalty is a common theme throughout *The Bruce* and is his most highly praised quality. This has important implications for his relationships to his lord, Robert the Bruce, and to his men, although he also demonstrates great loyalty to Lamberton. Douglas also shows concern for his other psychological obligations, such as the reputation of both his father and the bishop, and takes care to protect that reputation, possibly at the expense of his own. In one instance, after hearing of the Bruce's struggles with the English, James approaches Lamberton for permission to join him. Concerned that Douglas' actions may appear disloyal to the English, Lamberton advises Douglas to steal a horse and pretend to flee the bishop's household. He tells Douglas, however, to take "Ferrand my palfry/ For thar is na hors in this land/ Sa swyht na yeit sa weill at hand," and provides him with spending money, an indication of his support, though it may not be expressed openly.<sup>278</sup> In this case, Douglas risks being labelled a thief in order to protect the bishop from English accusations.

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<sup>277</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.365-374; "Loyalty is to love wholeheartedly, by loyalty men live righteously. With but one [other] virtue and loyalty a man can still be adequate, but without loyalty he is worthless, even if he is valiant and wise, for [where] loyalty is lacking, no virtue is of [sufficient] price or value to make a man so good that he can be called simply 'a good man'" (64).

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., II.118-120; "...Take Ferrand, my palfrey because there is no horse in this land so nimble and so well-trained" (84).

The experiences of Douglas' childhood are indicative of the liminal state experienced by young men. It was not until his father died and Douglas 'escaped' Lamberton's influence that he was able to engage in his own political destiny. This suggests Barbour saw Douglas' decision to leave Lamberton as indicative of a new masculine state that marked his emergence from liminality. Throughout the discussion of his childhood, Douglas is referred to exclusively as "James of Douglas" or "squier James of Douglas." After Douglas leaves Lamberton, Barbour begins to call him "the Douglas," an honorific implying that although the Douglas lands were still in the hands of the English, James Douglas' patrimony would soon be returned to him.

While *The Bruce* contains several important messages including discussions of patriotism, freedom, and autonomy of rule, it is ultimately a story of war and of the relationships among men that underlay the fighting: feudal relationships.<sup>279</sup> Directly upon leaving Lamberton, Douglas entered into the service of Robert the Bruce, forming the primary feudal relationship in the poem.<sup>280</sup> Barbour's description of the meeting of the Douglas and the Bruce is replete with feudal terminology and ideals. On arrival, Douglas "lowtyt him ffull curtasly," or bowed courteously to him.<sup>281</sup> Douglas then informs the Bruce of his desire to,

mak homage  
Till him as till his rychtwis king,  
And at he boune wes in all thing  
To tak with him the gud and ill.<sup>282</sup>

Accepting Douglas' pledge, the Bruce "resavyt him in gret daynté / And men and armys till him gaff he."<sup>283</sup> This exchange is representative of any feudal bond, rooted in mutual benefit. In return for Douglas' commitment and loyal service to the Bruce, he receives from the Bruce

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<sup>279</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, 13. For an interesting, Marxist interpretation of Barbour's themes, see Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland*.

<sup>280</sup> McKim, "John Barbour's Heroic Ideal," 130.

<sup>281</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, II.154. McKim emphasizes that this is matter of obeisance, more than simply courtesy (130).

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., II.158-161; "And that he had come to do homage to him as to his rightful king and that he was ready to take good and bad with him in everything." (86).

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., II.163-164; "He received him with great joy, and gave him men and arms" (86).

“remunerative recognition” of his service.<sup>284</sup> In addition to the social obligations of such a relationship, Barbour also discusses the psychological obligations. Once again, the expectation of loyalty is foremost among these, although other qualities are mentioned as being characteristic of James and Robert’s relationship. Barbour writes:

Thusgat maid thai thar aquentance  
That never syne for nakyn chance  
Departyt quhill thai lyffand war.  
Thair frendschip woux ay mar and mar,  
For he servyt ay lelely,  
And tother full wilfully  
That was bath worthy wycht and wys  
Rewardyt him weile his service.<sup>285</sup>

Barbour’s construction of loyalty and its connection with masculinised love stresses the very personal relationship Barbour sees as underlying the tie between lord and vassal. The primary emphasis on Douglas’ part is the continuation of his loyalty, ultimately leading to a more personal friendship with the king. Throughout the poem Barbour associates loyalty with love: loyalty is to “luff gretumly” or love wholeheartedly and Douglas’ loyalty was such that nothing could “Stunay hys hart.”<sup>286</sup> While McKim and Walter Ullman deny the institutional aspect of this bond in preference to the personal, it is more appropriate to conceive of it as both institutionalized and intensely personal.<sup>287</sup>

Douglas’ friendship with the Bruce takes on even greater significance in the last books of the poem where Douglas is marked out among the other lords for special duties. Along with Thomas Randolph, earl of Moray, Douglas was made responsible for escorting David, Bruce’s

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<sup>284</sup> McKim, “John Barbour’s Heroic Ideal,” 130.

<sup>285</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, II.167-174; “That’s how they made each other’s acquaintance, [men] who never afterwards disagreed for any reason, as long as they lived. Their friendship increased more and more all the time, because [Douglas] always served loyally, and [Bruce], who was worthy, brave and wise, with a good will rewarded him well for his service” (86).

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., I.365, I.299.

<sup>287</sup> McKim, “John Barbour’s Heroic Ideal,” 142; Walter Ullman, *The Individual and Society in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), 65.

heir, and his betrothed Joan, to their wedding and was given the guardianship of David should he inherit while underage.<sup>288</sup> Even more telling of their personal relationship is Douglas' final task in which he is charged with carrying the Bruce's heart against the infidels. The Bruce does not ask Douglas directly, but instead has his men select:

ane  
That be honest wis and wicht  
And off his hand a noble knyght  
On Goddis fayis my hart to ber  
Quhen saule and cors disseveryt er...<sup>289</sup>

Ultimately, their choice of Douglas satisfied the king who had desired Douglas to carry his heart from the start because of his "bounté" and "worschip," or generosity and bravery.<sup>290</sup>

It is in Douglas' relationship with his lord, Robert, that Barbour's most desirable masculine characteristics are clearly manifest. Douglas is infinitely loyal, with a requisite sense of love and devotion, as well as generous and brave. While other knights in the Bruce's entourage share similar qualities, they are not so prevalent, nor so balanced.<sup>291</sup> Edward Bruce and Thomas Randolph, for instance, though admirable knights in their own right, are not unreservedly heroic in Barbour's view.<sup>292</sup> Randolph sacrificed his loyalty to the Bruce in return for his life when the English captured him at the Battle of Methven, while Edward Bruce is "prey to the vanity whose achievements must be recognizably those of a personal prowess."<sup>293</sup>

Thus far, the characteristics emphasized in Barbour's work as important attributes of elite men are well within the conceptual understanding of courtly chivalry. In Douglas' relationships with his own men, however, Barbour demonstrates ideals that exist outside traditional chivalry.

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<sup>288</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, XX.68-74, 143-152.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., XX.192-196; "...one who is honest, wise and brave, and a noble knight in his deeds, to carry my heart against God's enemies when body and soul have parted" (752).

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., XX.222, XX.223.

<sup>291</sup> McKim, "John Barbour's Heroic Ideal," 172.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>293</sup> Davis, *The Black Douglas*, 46. Randolph's betrayal after Methven is described by Barbour at II.466 while an example of Edward's vanity can be found at XII.500ff.

The relationship between Douglas and the men of Douglasdale forms the second most important feudal bond in the text.<sup>294</sup> One of Douglas' stated reasons for returning from France was the hope that he might get "his men out off all thryllage."<sup>295</sup> Even before possessing a 'legal' claim to the men or receiving their homage, Douglas conceives of them as his men due to his position as his father's heir.<sup>296</sup> On his first arrival in Douglasdale after his father's death, Douglas approaches a man by the name of Thomas Dickson who "had bene till his fadyr leyll, / And till himself in his youthed / He haid done mony a thankfull deid."<sup>297</sup> Dickson contrived to have the loyal men of the area "mak him [Douglas] manrent everilkane, / And he himself [Dickson] first homage maid."<sup>298</sup>

The contract between Douglas and his sworn men is identical to the contract between Douglas and the Bruce.<sup>299</sup> In return for their loyalty and service, Douglas is expected to compensate them. Douglas, as their pledged lord, also has the responsibility to offer them his protection and to ensure their welfare. In an attempt to do this, Douglas stages what is known as the 'Douglas Larder' to free them from their English overlord. Douglas and his men invaded Douglas castle on Easter Sunday, concealing themselves in the Easter procession.<sup>300</sup> Fierce fighting ensued after a supporter prematurely gave away Douglas' presence, but Douglas and his men eventually took the castle. From Barbour's account it soon becomes apparent that Douglas did not intend to hold the castle against further English invasions. After collecting the moveable

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<sup>294</sup> McKim, "John Barbour's Heroic Ideal," 131.

<sup>295</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.352. "His men out of thralldom" (62).

<sup>296</sup> McKim, "John Barbour's Heroic Ideal," 131.

<sup>297</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, V.276-278.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., V.296-297; "Each to do him homage; [Dickson] himself did homage first" (204). Interestingly, this is the first recorded use of manrent, appearing in the earliest surviving manuscript MS C, written 1487. A full discussion of manrent and Barbour's use of the term, though interesting, are outside the frame of this paper. For further discussion see Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 15-16. Also, above p. 26-8.

<sup>299</sup> McKim, "John Barbour's Heroic Ideal," 131.

<sup>300</sup> Barbour's account begins at V.303 and continues through V.462.

goods and taking prisoners, James brought the captives to the wine cellar along with the excess food they did not intend to take. What followed is worth recounting in full:

Rycht tharin gert he heid ilkane,  
Syne off the tounnys the hedis outstrak.  
A foul melle thar gane he mak,  
For meile and malt and blud and wyne  
Rane all togidder in a melly  
That was unseemly for to se.  
Tharfor the men off that counter  
For sua fele thar mellyt wer  
Callit it 'the Douglas lardner.'  
Syne tuk he salt as Ic hard tell  
And ded hors and fordid the well,  
And brynt all outakyn stane.<sup>301</sup>

Following this act of vengeance Douglas retreated from the castle, leaving it to be regained by Clifford. Barbour does not portray Douglas' retreat as cowardly or craven, but eminently pragmatic and heroic. Douglas' reason for abandoning the castle, according to Barbour, was that he thought it pointless to remain in a situation where they would likely be besieged, lacking supplies, warriors, or chance of relief.<sup>302</sup> Furthermore, Barbour states that Douglas "chesyt furthwart to travail / Quhar he mycht at his larges be / And sua dryve furth his destané."<sup>303</sup> The pursuit of his destiny—and though unstated, the desire to continue to aid Bruce—were sufficient motivation for Douglas to relinquish his hold on the castle.

Douglas' willingness to abandon his hard-won gains runs contrary to courtly chivalric conventions, as evidenced by ritualized events such as the *pas d'armes*, in which a knight would defend a spot against all challengers for a period of time.<sup>304</sup> In Barbour's depiction of ideal

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<sup>301</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, V.403-413; "[Then] he had the prisoners whom he had taken beheaded there every one; then he struck the heads off the barrels [of wine]. He made a foul concoction there, for meal and malt and blood and wine all ran together into a mush that was disgusting to see. Therefore the men of that country, because so many things were mixed there, called it 'the Douglas Larder.' Afterwards he took salt, as I heard tell, and dead horses and polluted the well, then burned everything apart from stonework" (210).

<sup>302</sup> Ibid., V.422-24.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., V.426-28; "He chose to journey on where he could be at large and so pursue his destiny" (210).

<sup>304</sup> Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 26.

masculine attributes, however, prudence plays a prominent role, particularly in situations where the lives or welfare of one's pledged men are at risk. Barbour provides several examples in military contexts where Douglas counsels prudence against the desires of other commanders. In one such situation, when Randolph encourages the Scots to engage a much larger force, Douglas' response, though complimentary to Randolph, is to exercise restraint:

‘Schyr, lovyt be God,’ he said again,  
‘That we haiff sic a capitayn  
That sua gret thing dar undreta,  
Bot, be saynct Bryd, it beis nocht sua  
Giff my consaill may trowyt be,  
For fecht on na maner sall we  
Bot it be at our avantage.’<sup>305</sup>

During the same encounter, Douglas exhibits other characteristics that make him a good lord and commander, including resourcefulness and attentiveness. Douglas is also unafraid to act with deception in order to provide his men with a better chance. The speech quoted above continues: “For methink it war na outrage / To fewar folk aganys ma / Avantage quhen thai ma to ta.”<sup>306</sup> In this instance, Douglas created the impression by building up their bonfires that the Scottish force was preparing to do battle the next day. During the night, however, Douglas moved the entire Scottish host to a new position, strong enough that the English dared not attack.<sup>307</sup>

Barbour displays obvious delight at his hero's ability to manipulate his enemy and disadvantageous situations, dwelling on the incidents designed to display his skill and cunning.<sup>308</sup> It is evident that to Barbour these qualities are strengths, rather than weaknesses or defects. From a modern perspective, these seem practical strategies to engage larger and better

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<sup>305</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, XIX.299-308; “‘Sir, God be praised,’ [Douglas] responded, ‘that we have such a commander who dares to undertake such serious business. But by St Bride, it won’t be like that if my advice is listened to. For we shall not fight in any way except from an advantageous [position]. I think it isn’t foolish for an inferior force to seize an advantage against more [men] when they can’” (714).

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., XIX.306-308; “‘I think it isn’t foolish for an inferior force to seize an advantage against more [men] when they can’” (714).

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., XIX. 485-523.

<sup>308</sup> McKim, “John Barbour’s Heroic Ideal,” 70.

armed forces; however, these are not qualities medieval people equated with courtly chivalry. Douglas' "bounte" is always tempered by his reason—a desirable quality in a lord, but less so in the hero of a romance. It is interesting to note, however, that Douglas does allow himself to be swayed by passion twice in the poem, and in both cases was prompted to do so by his loyalty to a friend.<sup>309</sup> This overwhelming emphasis on loyalty to other men, more so than to women or to ideals, draws *The Bruce* even farther away from the conventions of traditional romances and courtly chivalry.

Barbour's *The Bruce* embodies many of the elite social mores and intellectual presuppositions of medieval Scotland. Through his work, the poet expresses a variety of themes important and prevalent during the period corresponding to the Scottish Wars of Independence. In Scotland, the fourteenth century was a period of political turmoil, burgeoning nationalism, and increasing concern with the question of freedom. While Barbour demonstrates a concern with these topics, the ultimate subject of his poem is war and the men who fight in it. As such, Barbour's work provides an opportunity to examine the normative values assigned to elite men such as James Douglas.

Barbour possessed the stories of several men from which to construct a heroic tale, men of higher standing or greater prominence than Douglas. He focused instead on the story of a middling nobleman, employing a complex, alternating, and interweaving narrative structure in order to relate his tale. The dual-biographical nature of the account places further emphasis on Douglas, separating his experiences from those of the other knights. Douglas quickly emerges as Barbour's ideal knight, a man that was "in his tyme sa worthy was / that off hys price and hys

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<sup>309</sup> Ibid., 174-175.



bounte / In ser landis renownyt was he.”<sup>310</sup> Douglas possesses a variety of qualities, both social and psychological, that Barbour emphasizes as ideal. Douglas is deferential to his superiors and concerned with their reputation. He serves his lord faithfully, honestly, bravely, and without reservations. For his men, he willingly sacrifices himself to present them with their best chance in battle; displaying devotion, cunning, and skill. These characteristics, however, are tempered by prudence and a reluctance to take unnecessary risks. In all of these relationships, Douglas shows a willingness to subordinate his own reputation for the good of his guardian, his lord, or his men. Douglas’ greatest strength, however, is his capacity for loyalty, a quality that Barbour praises above all others. “Through leawté liffis men rychtwisly,” is the motto of both Douglas and Barbour.

It is important to remember that the characterization of James Douglas in *The Bruce* does not necessarily represent the character of Douglas in the flesh. In order to be palatable to the intended readership, though, the characteristics ascribed to Douglas had to be plausible, grounded in social reality, and reflective on some level of masculine cultural norms. The characterization of Douglas in *The Bruce* is an important tool to understand late medieval Scottish gender norms. Barbour’s conscious structuring of his model characters allowed him to emphasize their positive qualities and to suppress or minimize those that were undesirable. As a result, it is possible to identify valued characteristics that aristocratic boys and men would have been encouraged to emulate. The examination of Douglas’ portrayal through the text offers insight into elite normative masculinity in Scotland during the later Middle Ages.

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<sup>310</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, I.31-33; “That in his time was so worthy that for his generous qualities he was famed in distant lands” (46).

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined how noblemen in medieval Scotland conceived of their relationships with other men and the obligations these relationships entailed. The focus of the investigation, however, has not been on the actual behaviours of medieval men, but instead on the normative expectations prevalent in Scotland in the later Middle Ages. An analysis of normativity provides insight into how society thought people ought to behave, rather than how they actually did. This understanding can be used to help explain the behaviours and reactions of medieval peoples, particularly when they run contrary to modern expectations. One difficulty in identifying normative behaviours is distinguishing between ideals and norms. While they often overlap, a distinctive difference between the two is that an ideal behaviour cannot be achievable by everyone. A norm, however, is a realistic expectation, though not everyone will adhere to it. Thus, while *The Bruce* portrays James Douglas as an ideal knight, Douglas also exhibits normative behaviours expected of all noblemen, and possibly even of all men. Indications of normative expectations are found in a variety of sources, both documentary records, such as charters and grants, and literary sources, including chronicles, epics, and romances. Literary records are an especially rich source of information because authors are able to portray people and events in a variety of ways. In particular, they can highlight desirable traits and emphasize transgressive qualities. Narrative structure itself encourages the presentation of events in terms of protagonists and antagonists, further emphasizing value judgements regarding actions and behaviour. The sources discussed here—both documentary and literary—show an understanding of male homosocial relationships in medieval Scotland that is relatively homogeneous.

Literary sources provide a natural complement to documentary records. More than simple accounts of transactions or agreements, literary sources provide dialogue, explain motivation,

and offer commendation or condemnation depending on the circumstance. Despite their fictive qualities, these texts allow historians to ‘flesh-out’ real actions and historical records by illustrating norms and ideals. The values demonstrated in the brief analyses of the *Liber Extravagans*, *Gesta Annalia II*, and *The Bruce* provide useful information regarding the expectations of homosocial relationships among medieval Scottish noblemen. Umberto Eco’s narrative framework is helpful in this regard because of the separation it permits between model and empirical aspects of the text. While it is not always possible to identify the empirical author of these texts and the empirical readers change over time, Eco’s narrative theory emphasizes the importance of the model author and reader—both constant figures. The addition of a model and empirical character dichotomy makes Eco’s theory particularly appropriate for texts that fictionalize actual events, allowing for further separation between the historical figures and an author’s presentation of them.

Medieval literature was intended to educate and to entertain. Chivalric literature and chronicles formed a significant portion of a young nobleman’s education and the portrayals within these texts helped to shape their values, ideals, and attitudes as they became men. Late medieval household texts encouraged squires to immerse themselves in chivalric stories and in “talkyng of cronycles of kinges.”<sup>311</sup> Andrew Taylor argues that the continued discussion of the texts amongst young men, not just listening to the primary recitation of the story, was particularly important because it allowed young men the opportunity to reconcile different branches and accounts of chivalry and prepare for real world experiences.<sup>312</sup> While providing appropriate role models for emulation is an explicit concern of *The Bruce*, it is tacitly present in all medieval accounts, including *Liber* and *GAIL*.

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<sup>311</sup> “The household book of Edward IV,” *English Historical Documents: 1327-1485*, ed. Alec R. Meyers (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1969), 128-9.

<sup>312</sup> Taylor, “Chivalric Conversation,” 173.

What do these texts illustrate about homosocial relationships in medieval Scotland? This study began by discussing the difference between formal and informal relationships, and it is useful to return briefly to these distinctions. Informal relationships required no official recognition in order to activate the obligations associated with them. The primary informal bond is related to familial ties and includes paternal, filial, and avuncular relations. In most cases, friendship may also be classified as an informal bond; however, there are instances of formal bonds of friendship, such as the bond made between Robert Erskine and the Duke of Albany. Formal bonds, on the other hand, required official recognition through document or ceremony. The most common of this type of relationship was a bond of fealty, connecting lord to man. In analyzing medieval Scots' relationships, it is vitally important to recognize that these feudal bonds existed to the very top of the social hierarchy. Thus, the bond between the king and his nobles was conceived of in much the same way as a pledge between higher and lesser nobility.

Documentary sources offer some insight into the importance of male relationships, their uses, and the negotiations of their terms. The presence of friends and kin in matters of land disposal and conveyance, for instance, demonstrates the high regard and importance of these roles. The consent of family members, in particular, was so important in land alienation that phrases like *consensus et voluntate* became generic clauses designed to protect purchasers from later challenges. Kin were also expected to provide counsel and support, and to assist in matters requiring mediation; their advice, at times, meant the difference between war and peace.

Literary sources also emphasize the value of kin. Of the three literary texts examined, familial relationships are structured in very similar ways in two. Both the *Liber* and *Gall* show familial ties as being related primarily to inheritance and legitimacy. Genealogical claims are used to stress the right of a person or peoples to governance. They are also used to emphasize the

distinctiveness of the Scots people and the illustriousness of their heritage. The third text, however, approaches the matter of familial ties differently. In *The Bruce*, these ties appear to have a more personal importance. James Douglas, in particular, is shaped and guided by his relationships with two paternal figures: his biological father, William Douglas, and his foster father, William Lamberton. These relationships and Douglas' concern for the reputation of both his biological father and foster father encourage various actions such as the apparent theft of Lamberton's horse or taking of Castle Douglas. Douglas, in turn, is asked to act in lieu of a father to the Bruce's son, David, escorting him to his wedding and acting as his guardian.

The evidence in documentary texts suggests that *amici* and kin were similarly relied upon for advice and assistance, and similarly charged with upholding order amongst their relations. While the importance of friendship in medieval Scotland is apparent in charters and grants, the way that medieval men conceived of their friends is much less clear. In Chapter Three, two modern perspectives on medieval friendship were presented: the first, from Wormald, that friendship in medieval Scotland was conceived of exclusively in terms of kin-relations; and second, from Neville, that the understanding of friendship was largely divorced from expectations of kin. Part of the disparity between Wormald and Neville is due to what they see as the traditional definition of 'friend.' Wormald traces the equivalence of friend and kin to a French cartulary quoted by Marc Bloch that spoke of "his friends, that is to say his mother, his brothers, his sisters and his other relatives by blood or by marriage."<sup>313</sup> Neville has highlighted a refashioned understanding of friendship beginning in the thirteenth century, but one based closely upon classical ideals.<sup>314</sup> The influence of Cicero's definition of friendship was

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<sup>313</sup> Wormald, *Lords and Men*, 86. Bloch, *Feudal Society* i, 123-4.

<sup>314</sup> See also, Brian Patrick McGuire, *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience, 350-1250* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

particularly influential although not exclusively. According to Cicero, “friendship is nothing else than an accord in all things, human and divine, conjoined with mutual goodwill and affection.”<sup>315</sup>

The content of personal bonds indicates that the Ciceronian definition of friendship is, at a minimum, applicable here, if not the entire medieval Scottish understanding of friendship.

Bonds of fealty, for instance, commonly required both parties to hold each other’s enemies as their own and to prioritize each other’s welfare. Provisions acknowledging the “*fideli consilio et amicitia affectuosa*” further emphasize a Ciceronian conceptualization.<sup>316</sup>

Both *Gall* and *The Bruce* demonstrate a particularly strong emphasis on the importance of friendship, though from opposite perspectives. *Gall* warns of the danger of false friends and the havoc they can wreak, while *The Bruce* presents examples of strong and devoted friendships that even death cannot end. The ideas of friendship presented in these works incorporate both Wormald’s and Neville’s definitions. *Gall* warns of the “*falsorum fratrum insidias*,” but neither John Comyn nor Edward I were technically ‘brother’ in blood or marriage to Robert Bruce. This demonstrates at least a linguistic conflation between the ideas of kin and friend and serves to emphasize the betrayal Bruce experienced. In *The Bruce*, the ideal of friendship is held even above kinship; a true friend is all that kin is and more. For Robert the Bruce, his brother Edward is his closest biological relation. The narrative, however, does not set Robert alongside his brother Edward, but his friend Douglas. The qualities both texts emphasize in a good and true friend are loyalty, honesty, valour, and integrity, while false friendship is characterized by betrayal and deception.

Unfortunately, the terms governing personal bonds in documentary sources, such as bonds of fealty or friendship, are frustratingly vague to modern eyes. Promises to be a good,

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<sup>315</sup> Cicero, *Laelius De Amicitia*, trans. W. A. Falconer (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Libraries, 1923), 6.20.

<sup>316</sup> GD124/1/516.

faithful, kind, and affectionate lord or for a vassal to offer counsel and aid indicate the importance of these bonds, but do not provide the specifics of their personal obligations. To medieval Scots, these obligations did not have to be detailed explicitly, as they were largely tacitly understood. This is not to say, however, that obligations were always respected or that the contracts were always entered in good faith, but that there was a common understanding regarding what actions or behaviour would transgress the expectations of the bond.

The primary homosocial tie in all three literary texts is feudal bonding. The relationship between lord and man is not only the most important social bond, but also the most important martial bond, and in a society that closely associated violence with lay masculinity, this has far reaching effects. Many scholars have made the connection between violence and medieval concepts of masculinity, though it is certainly not the only defining quality.<sup>317</sup> In his discussion of symbolic violence, Pierre Bourdieu generalized that “manliness must be validated by other men, in its reality as actual or potential violence.”<sup>318</sup> All three texts contain accounts of gruesome violence. Where the perpetrators are Scots, these acts are lauded as heroic or even God-sent, as seen in the depiction of the Bruce as God-sent vengeance against the English in *Gall* and *The Bruce*’s account of the Douglas Larder.

Large-scale violence in Scotland during the thirteenth and fourteenth century was powerfully feudal in nature and conflict between England and Scotland revolved around competing claims of homage and suzerainty. The literary texts discussed here are careful to distinguish between John Balliol, who pledged himself to Edward I, and Robert Bruce, who refused to exchange homage for kingship, regardless of the historical facts of the matter. In *Robert the Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, G. W. S. Barrow reminds us that,

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<sup>317</sup> Within a medieval context see: Karras, *From Boys to Men*, 20ff; Taylor, “Chivalric Conversation,” 169-187; Richard Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 129-160.

<sup>318</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 52.

“[i]t cannot be said too often that Scotland in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was an intensely feudal and conservative kingdom.”<sup>319</sup> These feudal structures strongly affected normative expectations of masculinity. In its most basic form, feudal values were themselves normative. Lordship was a key component of noble identity; men were lords or vassals, or, more commonly, both. The normative expectation of a feudal relationship was that it was entered into honestly, without intent to deceive or mislead. These relationships incorporated tangible and intangible obligations both upwards, from man to lord, and downwards, from lord to man.

Beginning with the obligations owed from vassal to lord, documentary records provide the two most tangible commitments: counsel and military service. Literary sources, however, offer indications of the less tangible requirements of these bonds. James Douglas, in *The Bruce*, most clearly illustrates these expectations: Douglas is “honest wis and wicht / And off his hand a noble knycht.”<sup>320</sup> His generosity, bravery, wisdom, and valour distinguish him over the rest of Bruce’s men. Thomas Dickson of Douglasdale also distinguishes himself as a good example of a faithful vassal for his loyalty and willingness to sacrifice. While Douglas and Dickson may represent the ideals of these roles, it is only in the extent they fulfil them. Generosity, bravery, wisdom, valour, loyalty, and sacrifice are all normative expectations in vassal.

In reversing these roles, it is clear that there were similar expectations from a lord to his men. Regarding king-vassal relationships, all three texts single out two specific men who exemplify the desired traits: Alexander III and Robert Bruce. The qualities they epitomize include wisdom, valour, fairness, generosity, and largess, and both are portrayed as good leaders. Bruce is particularly praised for his ability to motivate and inspire his men in battle.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Barrow, *Robert the Bruce and the Community of the Realm*, 380.

<sup>320</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, XX.193-4; “Honest, wise and brave, and a noble knight in his deeds” (752).

<sup>321</sup> Barbour, *The Bruce*, II.387, XX.269-271; Fordun, *Chronica*, i. 333-334.



Other important normative characteristics appear when considering wider lord-vassal relationships, rather than just those between the king and his direct vassals. Perhaps the most striking of these is the emphasis on prudence and caution. This is particularly explicit in *The Bruce*, though evident in the *Liber* and *Gall* as well. In *The Bruce*, Robert and Douglas are praised for their ‘measure’ and reason, traits that do not necessarily equate with traditional chivalric values, while Edward Bruce is criticized for his more traditional adherence to these values.<sup>322</sup> This may be a result of the author’s desire to present the social realities of Scotland’s war against their much better supplied and armed southern neighbours. From a modern perspective the guerrilla tactics that often characterized Scotland’s successes against England certainly make sense; however, these ambushes, disguises, and nighttime attacks are not tactics normally expected in chivalric literature. That these ‘slychty’ approaches are orchestrated and implemented by the text’s heroes, particularly in *The Bruce*, suggests that they are part of ‘right’ warfare and not at all at odds with moral rules of combat.<sup>323</sup> For lords, normative expectations included nearly all of the same qualities of a vassal: generosity, bravery, wisdom, valour, and loyalty. It was also important, however, that they be just and that they protect the men who served them. This emphasis on protection helps to explain the justification of ‘slychty’ warfare.

The analyses of a variety of documentary and literary texts have shown the importance of homosocial bonds in Scotland during the later Middle Ages. Whether a formal or informal bond, each tie held with it a number of inter-personal obligations. While the texts discussed cannot

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<sup>322</sup> For an excellent discussion of this tension see Sonja Cameron (Väthjunker), “Chivalry and Warfare in Barbour’s *Bruce*,” *Armies, Chivalry and Warfare in Medieval Britain and France: Proceedings of the 1995 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Matthew Strickland (Stanford: Paul Watkins, 1998), 13-29; also, also, Matthew Strickland, “A Law of Arms of a Law of Treason? Conduct in War in Edward I’s Campaigns in Scotland, 1296-1307,” in *Violence in Medieval Society*, ed. Richard Kaeuper (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), 39-77.

<sup>323</sup> In *The Bruce*, the Earl of Moray accuses Bruce of fighting with “cowardy” and “slycht” (IX.752) in his justification for betraying the Scots. In this passage, “slycht” is clearly intended to be an insult; the *Dictionary of the Scots Language* defines “slycht” as “guile, trickery, strategy as opposed to strength of force—a perfect characterization of how the Scots fought, and won.

provide significant evidence regarding how men actually interacted with each other, they do offer important indications of how men conceived of their social relationships and the obligations they entailed. Documentary sources demonstrate the uses of social bonds and the ways that family, friends, and feudal relations were called upon for aid and support. Literary records offer evidence regarding the personal characteristics and qualities desired in a brother, or a friend, or a lord, and help to create an idea of how a man who successfully fulfilled these requirements would act. Together, this begins to provide a picture of the normative expectations of noblemen in medieval Scotland.

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