

**A QUESTION OF TRUTH: BARBOUR'S *BRUCE*,
HARY'S *WALLACE* AND *RICHARD COER DE LION***

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How do we define *Bruce*? It is the oldest surviving poem of any length in any form of Older Scots; it is also the earliest surviving extensive narrative source for the life and deeds of Robert Bruce, King of Scots. It is, thus, both a literary and a historiographical landmark; it might also be described as anomalous, however, since the most frequent critical question asked of it is whether it is best regarded as romance or as history. While it might be argued that such a question arises primarily from modern concerns with taxonomy, nevertheless while the poem constantly foregrounds matters of truth and 'suthfastness', it also associates Bruce and his confederates with romance figures, and illustrates heroic character with almost superhuman deeds. Away from the purely taxonomic question, then, we are presented with a further question: what models did Barbour have in writing and his original audience – the court of Robert II – have in reading the poem? Hary's *Wallace* raises the same questions: although its literary influences are easier to identify, it crosses the same generic boundaries, yet was composed in a different context. Because of its status as the first identifiable Older Scots poem, any search for models for *Bruce* necessitates a search outwith Scotland.¹ Even after moving beyond Scotland, however, it becomes apparent that the peculiarities of Barbour's subject matter and approach mean that obvious models are scarce; indeed, the occasional critical practice of reading *Bruce* as Hary's only model and the regular omission of *Bruce* and *Wallace* from discussions of

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insular romance and *chanson de geste* suggests their individuality.² The exploits of a very recent king in government as well as in conflict are not often to be found in romance, while the carefully arranged structure of *Bruce*, its interweaving narratives of Bruce and Douglas and the recurrent use of romance motifs is not common in chronicle or historiography, even Andrew of Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle* (concludes 1408).

Tempting though it is to assume that these poems are simply peculiarly Scots, to do so denies them their place in British literature. A survey of English romances, moreover, reveals what appears to be an English equivalent: *Richard Coer de Lion*. It is also a hybrid poem about a recent king and military leader. The particular combination of history and romance is why *Richard Coer de Lion* looks so very promising as a comparison with *Bruce* and *Wallace*. Like *Bruce*, it addresses the exploits of a real king; Richard is a national hero, just like Bruce; he is a warrior king – probably essential for a figure in any form of romance – but also known as a good king. Both works are concerned with national identity, both with leadership; both use romance tropes to enrich their hero. Other features of *Richard Coer de Lion* are more akin to *Wallace*: the extreme violence and the demonization of the enemy are most obvious. In bringing the three texts together, the following questions present themselves: how do the texts represent historical figures and recorded events alongside imagined ones; how do they present kingship and nationhood; and what reaction do they seem to expect from their audiences.

Of the texts, *RCL* is the oldest. Its first version was probably composed within a century of Richard's death, and if the Anglo-Norman source to which the writer alludes did exist, then than must be even earlier.³ Its first surviving witness, the Auchinleck Manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Advocates MS 19.2.1), dates from the 1330s. *RCL* has a troubled textual history: from its nine witnesses, seven manuscripts and two prints by Wynkyn de Worde, its editor, Karl Brunner, argues that it has two main versions: (b), the earlier, less fabulous, form and (a) a much longer, later, form. Form (b) is what appears in the Auchinleck manuscript, and in three other manuscripts (D, A, H).⁴ Form (a) appears to grow from (b), although Brunner places the split early on in the poem's recensions, and is loosely dated to the end of the fourteenth or beginning of the fifteenth century.⁵ Form (a) contains

all the fantastic and the shocking episodes, the devil mother, the tournaments and the cannibalism. Even form (b), however, is various: Bodleian Library, Oxford, Douce MS 228, for instance, which Brunner identifies as a (b) version, contains the accounts of the tournaments and the lion-slaying. The implication of these various versions is that at least two writers, and probably more, contributed to the final poem, adding episodes as each saw fit. Even the Auchinleck version, early as it is, might not represent a single-authored text, since its tail rhyme introduction differs from the core form of the poem. Nevertheless, the dating of the recensions means that it is possible that both Barbour and Hary might have been acquainted with one or other version of *Richard Coer de Lion*. The point of this essay, however, is not to posit that the English text is in any sense a direct model for the Scottish poets; rather, it is to note and to explore the shared practice of romanticising these figures of national importance, and to consider the implied tolerance of such a practice by a varied audience, including those with familiar with a plainer chronicle tradition. In so doing, it should be possible to see more clearly what is peculiar to each text and what is generic, and thus be able to read the material with greater subtlety.

In contrast to that of *RCL*, both the Scots poems have relatively stable texts. *Bruce* is internally dated around 1375; it is cited as a reliable source for Bruce's life by both Andrew of Wyntoun and Walter Bower in the *Scotichronicon* (the major chronicle of late medieval Scotland, c.1449), within fifty years of its first composition.⁶ Its earliest surviving witnesses date from about a century after its composition. The Edinburgh MS (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS 19.2.2), written in 1489, is generally held 'to preserve a more archaic state of the language' than does the Cambridge manuscript (St John's College, Cambridge MS G23), written in 1487, and although there are the usual variations both between the manuscripts and also the early prints, the variations are nothing like as substantive as the changes in *RCL*.⁷ Hary's poem is dated c.1476-78;⁸ its only extant manuscript was written in 1488 by the same scribe who wrote one of the manuscripts of *Bruce*. *Wallace* had a more immediate and more significant career in early print, as fragments remain of a Chepman and Myllar print, and there were several other prints throughout the sixteenth century

(in contrast to the solitary sixteenth-century print of *Bruce*).

RCL, particularly the (a) version, is often described as a 'popular' romance.⁹ If this term is taken to mean 'finds a wide and diverse audience', then the same description can easily be applied to *Wallace* as well, since the sheer number of its prints in the sixteenth century suggests an enthusiastic readership and a clear preference for *Wallace* over *Bruce*. That is probably for quite prosaic reasons: firstly, the language of Barbour's poem would be less familiar to readers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and secondly, prior to Pinkerton's edition of the eighteenth century, it had fewer structuring devices in the form of book divisions, and their absence makes the poem unwieldy. However, 'popular' in this context seems also to carry connotations of 'unsophisticated' and 'uncourtly'. With regard to *RCL* (a), it is attached to the poem's evident pleasure in extreme violence and fictitious episodes such as Saladin's horse and Richard's demon mother, and in discussions of *Wallace*, to the poem's demonization of the English and Wallace's obsession with killing them. Juxtaposed with such attractions, however, must be the literary sophistication of Hary's poem: its form, its intertextuality, and its other cultural allusions.¹⁰ While internal evidence from the poems also suggests that *RCL* (the (a) version) and *Wallace* were composed with a similar gentry or lairdly audience in mind, in contrast to Barbour's courtly context, still Hary clearly expected some of his audience at least to relish recent literature as much as bloodthirstiness.¹¹

All three poems deal with a real historical figure of the imaginable past; obviously Wallace is further away for Hary than Bruce is for Barbour, and the first form of *RCL* is much closer to its subject than the later ones. They have some formal similarity: all are largely written in couplet, four-stress for *RCL* and *Bruce*, five-stress for *Wallace*. The Auchinleck recension of *RCL* has a tail-rhyme introduction, suggesting its association with romance in the mind of the scribe.¹² *Wallace* contains both rhyme royal and a nine-line stanza, evoking Chaucer, and possibly also later fifteenth-century English and Scottish writers.¹³ Like *Bruce*, *RCL* has also been subjected to the question of genre. Some parts of *RCL* are close to chronicles such as Roger of Howden, others are clearly fantastical, but because of *RCL*'s textual history, the question can be dodged – the (b) version is described as

chronicle, the (a) version romance.¹⁴ This escape is not applicable to either *Bruce* or *Wallace*. *Bruce* is a cited source of several avowedly historical accounts of the reign, and it is still treated as more historical.¹⁵ *Wallace* is now considered to be mostly fiction,¹⁶ although that is not the way the text presents itself. In the introduction to his edition, McDiarmid notes that most of the historiographers of the sixteenth century treat Hary's poem as a historical source, omitting the more outrageous incidents but keeping the main intent of Hary's work, to glorify Wallace.¹⁷ The opening of *Wallace* plays to this:

Our antecessowris that we suld of reide
And hald in mynde, thar nobille worthi deid
We lat ourslide throw werray sleuthfulnes,
And castis ws euir till vthir besynes.
Till honour Ennymyis is our haile entent. (*Wallace* I.1-5).¹⁸

The first words force the reader to an identification by blood with the narrator and his hero, and stresses essential knowledge of their actions, thus presenting the poem as historical. The definition of 'us' is to be inferred, for the poem goes on to define the enemy – those of Saxon blood, i.e. the English – before Scotland is mentioned. The poem presents itself as work, not recreation, as a driving act of remembrance; the generic word used is 'parable' (16), with implications of moral significance. In contrast, *RCL* and *Bruce* use the word 'romansys'. The OED cites these poems as early examples of the definition: 'A tale in verse, embodying the adventures of some hero of chivalry, esp. of those of the great cycles of mediæval legend, and belonging both in matter and form to the ages of knighthood'.¹⁹ There is nothing in that definition which insists on the text being fictive, or even frivolous, but Hary's rejection of the term seems significant in the light of the other texts. The opening to *RCL*, which appears in the Auchinleck recension as well as the fuller narratives, presents its hero as one of romance:

It is ful good to here in ieste
Off his [Richard's] prowesse and hys conqueste.
Ffele romaunes men maken newe,
Off goode kynȝhtes, stronge and trewe;
Of here dedys men rede romaunce,
Bope in Engeland and in Ffraunce. (*RCL* 5-10).²⁰

Here there is no emphasis on utility. The ‘goodness’ of the poem rests in the quality of the subject, and as the victims of Richard’s prowess and conquest are not identified at this point, the poem does not open as a call to arms, unlike *Wallace*. There is a further reference to romance towards the end of the poem, where Richard’s deeds are notable for their valour:

Now herkenes of my tale sob,
 Powȝ J swere ȝow none op!
 J wole rede romaunce non
 Off Pertenoþe, ne of Ypomadon ...
 I wene neuere, par ma fay,
 Pat in þe tyme off here day,
 Dede only off hem so douȝty dede
 Off strong batayle and gret wyȝthede
 As dede Kyng Rychard ... (*RCL* 6723-39).²¹

Richard is thereby exalted as superior to other romance heroes, for his deeds are greater: he is one step further than fiction. In his use of the term ‘romanys’, Barbour follows the same approach (II: 46). The most famous reference, in the passage after Robert’s murder of his rival John Comyn at the altar in Greyfriars Kirk in Dumfries, insists that an account of Robert’s life must necessarily surpass anything usually read in romance, since excommunication and forfeiture are so extreme that rehabilitation and success are almost impossible (II: 43-8).²² This is at odds with the view in *RCL*. Richard conforms to a successful romance type, distinguished both as general and fighter, and his patrimony and identity are never in doubt. On the other hand, Bruce’s fortunes, according to Barbour, reach a lowness (excommunication, as well as the loss of possessions, rank, supporters and family) usually untried in romance, and only his deeds entitle him to the throne, to give his land its liberty, and to raise his status to a point appropriate to a king. Barbour both elicits and denies comparison between Robert and other heroes of romance, including Richard.

The evocation of other romance heroes and narratives is used in all three texts. In *RCL*, the first comparisons occur within the first twenty-four lines, present in the Auchinleck recension: Richard is compared to Roland, Oliver, Alexander,

Charlemagne, Arthur and Gawain, Turpin and Oger Daney, finishing with Hector and Achilles. Presumably, they are arranged in this order to prioritise previous fighters against the non-Christian world; in finishing with the Troy narrative, the reader is of course also taken to the Levant and the area of the crusades. As Finlayson notes, details of any of these heroes, many of whom also appear in lists of the Nine Worthies, might have been found in chronicles as well as in romances, but the poem places them as romance figures, and thus Richard in the same context.²³ Another similar list begins the narrative of the battle of Jaffa, indicating that Richard's battlehardiness overtakes that of Ypomadon, Bevis and Hector (6753-6742). This strengthens Richard's position as an English hero, further underlined by the references to Bevis and Guy, romance as opposed to chronicle figures.²⁴

Barbour compares Bruce to various figures, including Alexander, Arthur, even Etioles. Bevis and Guy are conspicuous by their absence; there is, on the other hand, a list combining classical and Celtic heroes (*Bruce* III: 61-93). As well as lists, there are also extended comparisons in *Bruce*, such as the one of James Douglas to Hector (*Bruce* I: 403). Designed to identify Douglas as the second hero in the text and doing so before a detailed introduction to the main hero, this opens up a more complex narrative structure than we find in *RCL*, not least because it underlines Robert's regality. Douglas's prominence in the *Bruce* must be a reflection of political circumstance at the time of composition, as neither *RCL* nor *Wallace* has quite such prominent supporting heroes. The Douglasses had been resistant and possibly hostile to Robert II's accession; the *Bruce* figures their ancestor as the distinguished but entirely loyal knight, important to Robert's success but as a liege not a rival.²⁵ If Douglas is to be Hector, then Robert must be Priam, must be king: that is a less immediately heroic role, but an essential view of Robert as king first before knight. The most common comparison in *Bruce* is to Alexander.²⁶ Since Alexander is a conqueror, rather than a defender of established boundaries, this is not an obvious choice, unlike in *RCL*, where the juxtaposition with Charlemagne brings together war in Asia Minor and war with the pagan (*RCL* 6611, 7082). Nevertheless, quite possibly with particular political point, Barbour uses Alexander in lists, and in extended episodes. For example, the taking of

Edinburgh castle is compared extensively to the taking of Tyre by Alexander's men (*Bruce* X:704-738), thereby both stressing the courage of the Scots, but also implying, since Bruce is not actually in the castle unlike Alexander, that the Scots' duty is to the concept of Scottish independence rather than Bruce in person. Occasionally, the evocation of Alexander is inter-textual: at Bannockburn, part of Bruce's speech is against the taking of booty, a section which McDiarmid, a recent editor of the poem, links to the *Roman d'Alixandre*.²⁷ References to romance heroes disappear from *Bruce* after the battle of Bannockburn.²⁸ Where Barbour seeks comparisons after that point, he finds them in history, for instance a story of Pyrrhus and Fabricius (XX: 531-78).²⁹ We might infer therefore that Barbour sees a distinction between Bruce's rise to the kingship and his exercise of it, in short that his hero and our understanding of him must change; no such development is expected of Richard, for he remains on the battlefield virtually until the end of his story.

If romance references decline as *Bruce* continues, in contrast, the opening to *Wallace* is markedly free of such associations. In fact, references to similar romance figures do not begin to occur until book 7, after the halfway point in the poem. *Wallace* frequently evokes *Bruce*, and some of these references might fit that pattern. For instance, the association of Wallace with Alexander in book 11 (shortly after a mention of Bruce), as part of the account of the battle of Falkirk, might well be intended to subvert Barbour's use of Alexander, for in *Wallace* Bruce changes sides at Falkirk and causes the Scots' defeat. Elsewhere in the poem, these comparisons are used more simply, to provide an understanding of his betrayal – attributed to covetice (XII: 840) – or to claim Wallace's status as a legitimate leader rather than a rebel (for example, X: 1241-6). As in *Bruce*, the change in the pattern of romance references in *Wallace* must indicate something about its hero. Book 7 sees the Barns of Ayr incident, where Wallace takes revenge on the slaughter of his uncle and associates, by burning the barn with the English soldiers inside; this is an escalation of previous violence and marks a change to Wallace being a leader of men rather than an isolated fighter. This reverses Bruce's trajectory, for being recognised as a leader makes Wallace less secure rather than more, in contrast to Bruce's successful assertion of power at Bannockburn. Similar mirroring occurs in other

features of the poems: whereas *Bruce* begins with an act of betrayal, *Wallace* finishes with one; where Bruce achieves kingship, Wallace rejects the offer. In both cases, the romance trope is used to indicate a change in perception of the hero, different from the English text, where Richard's character – in all versions – is constant throughout the poem. Only Barbour, however, is at all interested and equivocal about the nature of his text. Hary is resolute in his appeals to authority, embedding the romance implicitly in form and technique; the writers of *RCL* seem untroubled by issues of fiction. Barbour's opening foregrounds the truth of his poem: not necessarily fact, but nevertheless suggesting a contrast with entirely imagined fiction.

All three texts, therefore, evoke romance through comparison and cross-reference, and all work on the same assumptions regarding the status of their heroes. Of the three, *RCL* seems the least conscious of its liminal status between romance and history, and certainly compares its hero freely and directly with other, less firmly historical, figures; this lack of self-consciousness is typical of the poem, and will be evident in the rest of this discussion. Barbour makes some of his anxieties about truth and fiction explicit, and seems to expect his audience to negotiate them with him. Hary's manipulations are implicit, designed at least in part to celebrate his hero over Barbour's. For the writers of *RCL*, there is no comparable model, or anxiety of influence, to use Harold Bloom's phrase; so their easy deployment of such intertextuality is not an immediate indication of a lack of sophistication but rather evidence of how acceptable their presentation of Richard was to the poem's audience.

Fighting and warfare

All the texts are concerned with real warfare; only the later versions of *RCL* have space for recreational fighting. The key focus of *RCL* is crusading, which in effect articulates English national identity against two contrasting enemies, the Saracens and the French. The core, then, concerns Richard as military leader; what might be termed the peripheral narratives function to make him more of a romance hero and less of a chronicle king. Such narratives are found in the later recensions, and include of course his demon mother, his anonymous participation in tournaments and his lion-slaying

(*RCL* 74-234; 265-584; 1051-1118). All of these demonstrate his intrinsic and individual distinction, rather than simply his patrimony. When Richard is portrayed as a king, he is a king at war outwith his realm; by and large, we do not see him governing or indeed particularly concerned with England's well being. Instead, he is opposed, both as an individual and as a typical Englishman, to other figures, notably Saladin and Philip Augustus. Richard's encounters with Saladin and his Saracens are much explored.³⁰ As Muslims, they are figured as entirely alien: Christianity is as much an identity as it is a faith. For instance, when Richard proposes the crusade, he describes the conquest of the Holy Land thus:

Ierusalem and þe croys is lorn
 And Bethleem, þere Ihesu Cryst was born.
 Þe Crystene knyȝtes be hangyd and drawe;
 Þe Sarezynys haue hem now jslawe,
 Crystene men, chyldren, wyff, and grome.
 Wherefore þe lord, þe Pope of Rome
 Is agreuyd and anoyyd
 Þat Crystyndom is þus destroyyd.
 Ilke Crystene kyng he sendes bode
 And byddes in þe name of Gode
 To wende þedyr, wiþ gret hoost.
 Ffor to ffelle þe Sarezynys bost. (1359-70).³¹

These lines are saturated with references to Christian peoples, and ally 'ilke Crystene kyng' with the people of Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Christendom is treated as a kingdom and the believers as its people, so supporting them becomes the duty of a medieval king. There is also perhaps a slight class element: the knights, Richard says, were 'hangyd and drawe'. Barbour too becomes exercised over this method of execution as inappropriate for Scots knights (IV: 27-35, IV: 320-334), although he suggests that Edward I's lack of mercy on his deathbed is even more extraordinary. For Barbour, however, the point is that the English fail to treat the Scots as they should, whereas in *RCL*, the Saracens are entirely ignorant and barbarian. Although as Finlayson points out, Richard and Saladin never met outwith romance, they become figureheads of their faiths, and therefore – in the freedom that romance permits – they necessarily oppose each other in this context.³²

That the Christians win with angelic assistance, is a foregone conclusion.

The contest with the French, on the other hand, is much less certain. The French, fellow-Christians, are meant to be fighting with the English against the pagan enemy. However, at various points, they either are openly at war with the English, as at Messina (1765-1999), or else prone to betray them as at the siege of Babylon (5382-5480). King Philip thereby becomes a symbol of what Richard is not: a leader susceptible to bribery; one distracted from the main task in hand; one vulnerable to pride. He is thus more dangerous than the Saracens, for he is a perversion of knightly qualities and a more direct threat to English identity, since if being Christian is not a guarantee of worthiness and honour, then failure is much more likely.

Bruce and *Wallace* share a setting: the wars take place on home turf and are reactive to English aggression. Yet in each of the Scots poems there are equivalent enemies. The Saracens are the English, explicitly linked as so in *Wallace*. In both poems, the equivalents to the French are internal enemies: for Bruce, it is the rival Comyn faction, for Wallace it is the Scots nobility. Hary therefore introduces an element of class absent in the other two, and consequently generalises the threat. The nobility would have disapproved of any not of their number, while the Comyn-Bruce feud was particular to them.³³

The crucial distinction between the Scots and the English romances here is probably the site of the conflict. The war with the Saracens, no matter how fruitful for discussions of national identity, happens at a distance, and thus has more diffuse effects on the English-speaking audience for the poem. In contrast, the ramifications of the Wars of Independence, and the ongoing tensions between the various Scottish noble houses mean that Barbour's description of Bruce's behaviour might have significant implications for the current political situation. Even for Hary, the embedded attitudes to the English reflect his contemporary situation, in a way that descriptions of the crusades in *RCL* do not. In consequence, the Scottish poems have a sharper edge to some of their comments: Barbour's account of Bruce's treatment of the Comyn's Buchan lands for instance (see the account of the burning of Buchan IX: 295-310), does not present Bruce as a model of chivalry; the social tension between 'old' nobility

and rising gentry in *Wallace* may reflect the concerns of Hary's patrons.

Birth and origins

With the emphasis on origin and family, birth is thus crucial to all three poems. Richard's demon mother both plays into myths about his father's ancestry and also into certain romance tropes; by erasing Eleanor of Aquitaine, the poem can also ignore Richard's French holdings, and figure the French king as a contrasting mirror to Richard rather than a rival landholder. Bruce and Wallace are resolutely earth-bound, it is true, but their origins are just as carefully worked. Bruce's genealogy is essential to his claim to the throne; however, his youth is problematic in that he spent several periods enfeoffed to Edward I. Barbour records the crisis of inheritance, and Edward I's offer of the throne to Robert Bruce, Earl of Carrick, without mentioning directly his relationship to the poem's hero (grandfather). The story of the future king begins with the murder of Comyn, where Bruce is forced into seeking the crown. In between these episodes, however, Barbour embeds his introduction of James Douglas. This introduction addresses both the issue of patrimony, for Douglas seeks his father's lands and his own inheritance, and also the trials of the romance hero, as Douglas has a brief interlude as unburdened young knight in Paris, the equivalent of Richard's tournaments. Bruce, however, is never separated from the cause of 'fredome' and the crown, and never without responsibilities.³⁴

Wallace takes this even further. Wallace has no identity beyond the struggle for Scottish independence. His genealogy is this: 'His forbearis .../Of hale lineage and trew lyne of Scotland' (I: 21-2) ('His forebears were wholly Scots'). His childhood is marked by the loss of Scotland, and even as a young man, he broods upon the situation:

Will3ham Wallace or he was man of armys
Gret pitte thocht that Scotland tuk sic harmys.
Mekill dolour it did hym in his mynd
For he was wys, rycht worthy, wicht and kynd. (I: 181-4)³⁵

Before Wallace is a warrior, even, he is a patriot. His innate chivalric qualities require him to grieve for his homeland,

rather than for himself. Not for him the traditional romance hero's quest for identity or for his patrimony, or indeed for his lady. All of these common romance features are subordinated to the Scottish cause: the English murder of his lady and of his uncle push Wallace towards ever more extreme action; he is tempted with the crown and thus the gaining of an earned identity, but rejects it; and his rank is denied by the method of his execution. It is, in some sense, an inversion of a more common romance trajectory, and open to readings concerned with class as well as with national identity. It is fair to say that the Scots poems present more complex heroes, particularly in terms of narrative development: this doubtless results as much from the all too evident direct effects of the Wars of Independence on fourteenth and fifteenth century Scotland; Richard's crusades were more removed in time and space when the romance was revised and reworked.

As individual combatants, however, all three men are distinguished. Leaving aside Richard's tournament successes, he is still an outstanding fighter on the battlefield. To take only one example, where Richard is moved by the death of Jacques de Nye, he responds by killing. Beginning with the lance, he kills twelve kings:

Pe pryttenep to þe chyn he kerff,
 Pe launse barst, þe Sarezyn sterff.
 Hys ax on his ffore-arsoun hyng,
 Anon it took Richard oure kyng.
 Some he smote on þe schuldyr-bon,
 And karff hym to þe sadyl anon;
 And of som he pared so þe croune,
 Pat helme and hed fel adoune. (*RCL* 5089 – 5096).³⁶

His total that day was one hundred; the poem is careful to ascribe that figure to the French, so as not to be accused of exaggeration (*RCL* 5100). It is an example of extreme violence, justified both by the identity of his opponents, but also in response to the death of a follower. Such personal success on the battlefield is replicated throughout the poem and is recounted without judgement or other comment. Such glorification of violence can be found also in *Wallace*: to take only one example, here he is, fighting off pursuants after a difficult skirmish:

Befor him come feyll stuffyt in fyne steill.
 He straik the fyrst but baid in the blasoune,
 Quhill hors and man bathe flet the wattir doune.
 Ane othir sone down fra his hors he bar,
 Stampyt to grounde and drownyt with-outyn mar.
 The thrid he hyt in his harness of steyll
 Throw-out the cost; the sper to-brak sumdeyll.
 The gret power than efftir him can ryd.
 He saw na waill no langar thar to byd.
 His burnyst brand braithly in hand he bar.
 Quham he hyt rycht thai folowit him no mar. (V: 266-76).³⁷

Although on the back foot, Wallace manages to account for some twenty men in his flight. Like Richard, he begins with a spear and then breaks it, and moves on to a sword, the 'burnyst brand' which is his loyal companion throughout. There is a neat balance here between detail and general statement. The patterns of single combat are consistent across these texts. In both cases, the hero is too strong for his first weapon, but manages to continue the fight and demonstrate his strength. This episode follows a skirmish; earlier in the narrative, Wallace also succeeds in battles against odds (e.g. I: 210-32).

Barbour's narrative also shows Bruce as a warrior, both in repeated battles against odds and on the battlefield (e.g. VII: 111-232; VII: 511-6420). His most celebrated encounter attracts criticism from his followers. At Bannockburn, he is confronted by Henry de Bohun, who seeks to win the battle by killing the opposing king. Bruce does not flinch from the challenge, but merely rises in his saddle, swings his axe and slices his opponent from head to chin, reminiscent of Richard's smiting 'on the schuldyr-bone'.³⁸ There is no doubt that this is a great achievement; however, Bruce's followers are not convinced:

Ye lordis off his cumpany
 Blamyt him as yai durst gretumly
 Yat he him put in auentur
 To mete sa styth a knycht and sture
 In sic poynt as he yan wes sene
 For yai said weill it mycht haiff bene
 Cause off yar tynsaill everilkan.

Ye king ansuer has maid yaim nane
Bot menynt hys handax schaft yat sua
Was with ye strak brokyn in twa. (XII: 89-98).³⁹

Bruce's reaction here, to lament his broken axe, reflects the broken weapons of *RCL* and *Wallace*. The criticism, on the other hand, is very different territory. Barbour's hero is condemned for an action that could lead to significant harm ('tynsail') for his followers; Richard and Wallace, however, attract nothing but praise for their physical engagement in conflict. Barbour presents kingship and leadership in a different light from the other poets, indicative perhaps of his ambivalent attitude to romance. All three heroes at some level embody their followers and their national identity: Richard is the quintessential Christian and English knight, Wallace is nothing without the struggle, Bruce's interplay with the Scottish cause is well understood.⁴⁰ However, Barbour's presentation here suggests a layered view of that interplay: it is not simply Bruce as heroic warrior, but as king. Without their leader, the Scots would immediately be without a battle plan; assuming he survived, they would then be left with Edward Bruce as heir, which, given Edward Bruce's subsequent career in Ireland, would not have been satisfactory. Bruce therefore is not merely an embodiment of the Scots' struggle, but also their protector. Nevertheless, Bruce's complaint still affirms his heroic status; Barbour neatly demonstrates the tension between his roles.

Again here the Scottish poems offer a more nuanced narrative, here in their presentation of individual identity. In *RCL*, Richard is composed of standard tropes: supernatural ancestry, distinction gained first by individual achievement and then by military might, and very little evidence of self-doubt in any of its components. There is certainly no sense of his realm choosing him, or actively following his command; his entitlement to their loyalty is totally assumed. For Hary, Wallace is identified with the struggle from the very beginning; he is also a chosen figurehead by at least some of his countrymen. Although Wallace the individual is apparently initially effaced by Hary's total association of him with the resistance to the English, this effacement is problematised during the poem by such events as Wallace's marriage. There is no doubt that Wallace is a great champion, but Hary

implicitly communicates some of the personal pain. Again, with the Bruce, Barbour presents him as struggling to combine roles as king and as knight; he also has to balance family honour with his kingly status. As a result, in the Scottish texts, the relationship between national and individual identity is more complex than in *RCL*; Bruce and Wallace have to work harder to justify their positions.

Extraordinary Violence and Divine Justification

Violence on the battlefield or in other combat is common in romance as well as chronicle, and is acceptable enough. More shocking – at least to modern readers – and consequently the more discussed, are those episodes in *RCL* involving anthropophagy, where Richard eats Saracens, firstly unwittingly (the Saracen flesh substitutes for English pork), and then as a gesture of intimidation (the heads of hostages are served to Saracen ambassadors).⁴¹ The import of these narratives is generally seen as an expression of power, where ‘territorial digestion so felicitously accompan[ies] alimentary digestion.’⁴² Heng describes these episodes as a joke, self-consciously so extreme that they can only work in fiction and part of the political logic of the poem; McDonald argues that they are driven by the notion of hunger, and that the whole poem is dependent on images of eating.⁴³ Heng’s view is justified by the absence of condemnation for Richard’s actions in the text: we are invited to share his laughter at the original discovery, and to appreciate the wit of the second occurrence. Even so, the lack of moral discomfort in the narration is disconcerting, particularly when considered with the other episode of extraordinary eating, the lion’s heart. Like the anthropophagy, this has elements of incorporation, but of very different kinds. It is symptomatic of the multiple hands involved in composing the poem that there is no coherent approach to these acts of consumption, even though food is clearly important in all redactions.

Given the bloodthirsty nature of *Wallace* and its consistent dehumanising of its foes, we might expect joyful consumption of English soldiers. This does not happen, but instead there occurs a most telling incident, one which is sympathetic to Heng’s analysis of *RCL*, turns the image back on the Scots rather than on the English Other. In book XI, after the battle of Falkirk, after Bruce has been rebuked by Wallace for

changing sides and swinging the outcome, Bruce returns to the English stronghold.

To souper set as Bruce at the palȝoun
 So entryt In and saw wacand his seit.
 No wattir he tuk bot maid him to the meit.
 Fastand he was and had beyn in gret dreid.
 Bludyt was all his wapynnys and his weid.
 Sotheroun lordys scornyt him in termys rud.
 Ane said, "Behald, ȝon Scot ettis his awn blud."
 The king thocht Ill thai maid sic derisioun.
 He bad haiff watter to Bruce off Huntyntoun.
 Thai bad hym wesche. He said that wald he nocht:
 "This blud is myn. That hurtis most my thocht."
 (XI: 530-40).⁴⁴

Richard's extraordinary consumption in the *RCL* is positive.⁴⁵ In the case of the lion's heart, it foregrounds his individual strength, and also the incorporation of leonine power into his body. With the Saracens, his military and regal powers are celebrated. Hary's depiction of Bruce here inverts that symbolism: consumption is still, at one level, a symbol of power, but instead of being absolute, it has been deployed for the benefit of another (Edward I), and is of course self-destructive.⁴⁶ The precise cause of Edward's discomfiture is unclear. He might legitimately read the symbolism as exactly like that of Richard's literal consumption, since the blood is that of his enemies: the title he uses for Bruce (of Huntingdon, lands held of him) would support this. Equally, however, he might read as Bruce does, and be concerned about Bruce's future loyalty. Bruce's act of consumption is turned on himself and on his people, directly opposing Richard's act. The effectiveness of this episode is not diminished by its more limited anthropophagy, but rather enhanced by the inferences which the reader brings.

There are no such graphic accounts of the literal consumption of human flesh in *Bruce*; yet the metaphoric resonances still exist. There is no doubt that Barbour was aware of the horrors of war, but he rarely engages with the alienation of the enemy necessary for the kind of episode present in *RCL* or *Wallace*. One exception to this is the episode known as the Douglas Larder (V: 218-428).⁴⁷ In this part of the narrative,

Douglas is seeking to reclaim his patrimony, his initial motive for joining Bruce's campaign. He goes secretly, but, once his identity is known, he is joined by those men who owed feudal duty to his father, and collects a respectable force. To regain Douglas Castle, Douglas ambushes the garrison on Palm Sunday, killing or capturing most of them in the chancel of St Bride's church. Douglas and his men then take their prisoners back to the castle, loot all the moveable possessions, and enjoy the dinner which had been prepared for the garrison. Douglas renders the castle uninhabitable, by mixing on the floor of the wine cellar the unmoveable foods (quheyt and flour and meill and malt: V. 398) with the blood of his beheaded prisoners:

A foul melle yar gane he mak,
For meile & malt & blud & wyne
Rane all to-gidder in a mellyne
Yat was wnsemly for to se. (V: 404-7).⁴⁸

Barbour's moral approach to this episode is complex. Douglas's motive, to investigate the state of his patrimony, is legitimate. The first part of his assault, the ambush in a church chancel on a holy day, passes without critical comment: indeed, the chancel is presented as a legitimate battleground ('Bot yai the chansell sturdely/ held' (356-7), in contrast to the high altar (the site of Bruce's murder of Comyn (II: 35)).⁴⁹ Only the method of spoiling the stores attracts disapprobation – 'a foule melle ... yat was wnsemly for to se'. The unseemly-ness is surely metaphoric as well as literal: the ingredients of this 'melle' are reminiscent of those of the mass, meal, flour, wine, held together with blood. The bearing of palms is the foregrounded feature of the ambushed church rite; this destructive spread replaces the unmentioned mass.

Strategically, as a means of rendering the castle unuseable, Douglas's actions are correct if unsuccessful and his testing of local loyalty is also proven worthwhile. The act that dehumanises his enemies, of turning their blood into food, is criticised, more harshly by the absence of other comment. There are key differences here between the narratives in *Bruce* and *RCL*: where *RCL* attributes the command to slaughter prisoners to its central hero, in *Bruce* it is attached to Douglas. The resulting treatment of the dead is more similar. The Saracens' heads are crucial for the sensation and humiliation; the English heads

are removed in order to create an ugly unsacramental mess. What makes the Douglas Larder more striking is that, as Goldstein notes, *Bruce* is not as overtly godly as Barbour's rank as Archdeacon might suggest.⁵⁰ The text is far from secular, but God's grace is not displayed through visions and interceding angels. Barbour's Bruce is an earthbound Christian, who makes careful provision for his soul at the end.

Richard and Wallace are structured differently. Of course, Richard is a holy fighter for most of the poem, necessarily on the side of God. This doubtless is why the poem does not condemn his anthropophagy. Furthermore, divine intervention appears at crucial points. For instance, when Richard is desperate, as more of his men are dying of heat than by wounds inflicted by the enemy, 'on hys knees he gan doun falle/ Help to Jhesu he gan calle/ For loue of his modyr Mary' (4885-7). Immediately, he sees St George, who 'Al that he mette in that stounde/ Hors and man [...] he felde to grounde' (4893-4). This is not merely a vision, but a physical intervention, by a saint associated firmly with crusading, although only later with England.⁵¹ The poem refers to its authority for this vision ('And as I fynde in his story' 4888), but such assurance not required for the vision Richard receives, warning him about the enchanted horse he is given by Saladin (5550). This inconsistency indicates the different natures of these events: George's intervention is recorded in various chronicles, so an authority does exist, while Saladin's horse is a later insertion, for which the writer did not consider the invention of an authority necessary.

Richard's campaign is unambiguously – at least for his contemporaries and indeed for writers and readers of the poem – against God's enemies, hence the absence of any moral comment on the king. Hary aligns Wallace's campaign with divine will, demonising the English in a manner foreign to Barbour. Furthermore, in a manner reminiscent of *RCL*, Wallace experiences a vision. Wallace dreams of an old man, who gives him a sword, and then takes him to a mountain top from which he sees 'a felloun fyr/ Quhilk braithly brynt on breid throu all the land/ Scotland atour fra Ros to Sulway sand' (VII. 86-8: a fierce fire which burnt widely throughout Scotland from Ross to Solway sand)). Then a queen gives Wallace a red and green staff, touches his face with sapphire and tells him that he will free his people for little earthly

reward but 'lestand blys' (VII.104). When Wallace seeks interpretation of this from a clerk, the old man is identified unequivocally as St Andrew. The clerk is uncertain whether the queen is either Fortune or the Virgin Mary, but decides, in view of her brightness, that she was the Virgin. He interprets her symbols as signifying rule, courage and bloodshed (the wand), 'lestand grace' (the sapphire) and Scotland (the book). The initial uncertainty is curious, since the queen's promise of 'lestand blys' (echoed by the 'lestand grace' of the sapphire) cannot come from Fortune, whose defining quality is her changeability. The vision underlines Wallace's ultimate fate and worldly failure, but still confirms Wallace as liberator of the Scots, authorised by the divine, and thus to justify his violence as equivalent to that of a crusader. That there is no contradiction in the view of the poet between being a devout Christian and killing Englishmen is evident in the final scenes of the poem. Firstly, before the account of Wallace's death, Hary records the near-death vision of a monk of Bury, in which Wallace is admitted to heaven, despite being 'a gret slaar of men' (XII: 1278); the monk takes exception to this, but is informed that because Wallace's cause is 'rychtwys', 'in hewyn he sall that honour haue' (XII: 1288). Hary claims Wallace to be as much a martyr as the English saints 'Osuald, Edmunt, Eduuard and Thomas' (XII: 1308). Wallace endures his fatal torture while reading the Psalms, having just told a clerk that his only regret was not having killed enough Englishmen (XII.1385).⁵² In its absolute certainty regarding Wallace's approval by heaven, *Wallace* is markedly different from both *RCL* and *Bruce*. Richard ends his crusade on a truce, and dies quite abruptly on a worldly campaign. Bruce dies in his bed, making due legal and moral provision for the future of his soul and his kingdom. In the cases of the kings, their deaths are not a defining feature of their identity, although clearly important in illustrating Bruce's growth as a ruler. For Wallace, his death is the summation of his achievements, even to the recognition of heaven.

Although derived from the slightly more sober account in *Scotichronicon*, Wallace's death is far more dramatic and holy than that of the historical crusader, Richard's.⁵³ As a result, we are invited to see Wallace's campaigns as crusades, rather than simply political conflicts. *RCL* in contrast assumes the audience's perception of Richard as a Christian repelling

heathens, and does not raise his hero to heavenly heights. Beyond the questions of literary sophistication raised by these differences, it is also possible to see the Scots poems as intending urgently to persuade rather than simply entertain. No opinions would really be changed by *RCL*: instead, it reinforces the assumptions of its audience, albeit by extreme and repellent narrative. The Scots texts, on the other hand, appear more aware of dissent: Barbour addresses that by means of careful presentation and some admission of failure and wrong-doing, Hary by dramatic sanctification.

Betrayal

Godly support does not prevent intimate and devastating betrayal. For Wallace and for Richard, it occurs at the end of their stories; for Bruce, it occurs twice, once at the beginning, and then again towards the end. The full horror of Wallace's surrender to Edward I by Sir John Menteith is set up from book 7 of the poem onwards. Wallace is godfather to Menteith's children and so ranks as a spiritual as well as a military intimate. He is led to betrayal through 'cowatice' according to the poem's interpretation, and it is true that Amer de Vallance has been provided with money with which to bribe him (XII: 789-90). However, de Vallance presents a different reason to seduce Menteith:

Then Wallang said, 'And thow weill wndyrstud
Gret neid it war; he spillis so mekill blud.
Off Crystin men puttis saullis in peraill.
I bynd me als he sal be haldyn hail
As for his lyff and kepyt in presoun.' (XII: 813-17).⁵⁴

Leaving aside Menteith's folly, conscious or not, in accepting the word of someone urging him to treason, still de Vallance puts forward a moral reason for surrendering Wallace. In flat contradiction of Wallace's vision, the slaughter puts Christian souls in jeopardy; Wallace damages the realm as much as providing for it. As readers we are clearly meant to discount this as sophistry, since the text laments the motivation of *covetice* for some twenty lines and also consistently refers to Menteith's actions as treason. De Vallance himself is a deeply duplicitous and therefore unreliable speaker. Nevertheless, this comment opens the possibility of an alternative reading of

Wallace's behaviour, if only then to close it down again. The drive of the text is to pity, for Wallace, for Scotland, but to leave the seeds there suggests a little bit of discomfort on Hary's part.

Covetice is also the avowed motive for Bruce's second major betrayal, a plot led by William, lord Soulis. Those identified as participants can mostly be linked to Comyn affinity, so Barbour is perhaps here deliberately ignoring the tensions still present in post-Bannockburn Scotland. Soulis, however, had served Robert militarily after Bannockburn, and might have been thought safe enough. The motive Barbour ascribes is for Soulis to reign in Robert's place (*Bruce* XIX: 9-10): a motive directed towards personal power rather than simple money, as Menteith. There is, however, no alternative view, no sense that Soulis would be a better king, or that Robert is destructive; the window of unease evident in *Wallace* is not so in *Bruce*.

This episode is clearly not the dramatic betrayal that starts the poem, but instead it marks clearly how far Robert has travelled, and the difference between knight and king. Instead of private revenge at the altar of Greyfriars, Robert here is able to enact retributive justice, supported by his other lords and witnessed by the people. Indeed, the most significant feature of this episode is its display of Robert's kingliness, both his refusal to be moved by his personal knowledge of the conspirators, and his generosity to Ingram de Umfraville, repelled by the execution of Sir David Brechin. According to Umfraville, the execution of such a noble man means that he needs to leave Robert's affiliation: Robert grants his peaceful departure, allowing him to dispose of his land (XIX: 87-121). Barbour describes Robert as acting with generosity, bounty and courtesy, a far cry from his behaviour towards Comyn at the start.

Richard's betrayal at the end of *RCL* is by far the most intimate of the three, by his brother John. Richard hears the news twice before he begins to act. At first, Richard refuses to believe the news: 'I ne may leue it ffor no need/ that Jhon my brother wil do this dede' (6354-5). When the second message arrives, Richard decides to take his 'preuy meyne' (personal army) into England to defeat this threat, but before this happens, he deals with more Saracen onslaught. The actual return is muted, contained within a single couple: 'Kyng Richard doughty off hand/ turnyd homeward to Yngeland' (7201-2). In one reading, emphasising the nature of crusade,

his reluctance to return to England is appropriate for such a Christian king; in another reading, it is surprising that Richard shows little interest in the realm which determines his identity. The ending indeed is rather flat. Richard's accusation that his brother is 'devil-gat' does not apparently evoke Richard's own origin deliberately, so the implication of that descriptor is unclear. Striking also is the lack of romance context for this betrayal. Both Barbour and Hary contextualise the betrayal by lists of other romance heroes brought down for the same reasons or in the same way; despite the potential of the Arthurian precedent here, *RCL* fails to take it up. Heng argues that Mordred is implicit in the unique naming of Richard's captor as Mordard, yet this later potential and hugely weighted parallel is ignored.⁵⁵ While Richard's return to England does not bring about his death, nor indeed bring about the collapse of national government, it marks the end of a period of fighting glory; stressing the potential parallel might have given cover to Richard's less glorious end. Since the earlier versions of *RCL* do not award Richard a demonic mother, nor name the king of Germany, the failure of the poem to explore fully such references may be attributed to the multiple revising hands; nevertheless, these literary failures make it less satisfying than either of the Scots poems.

Comparing these poems does not and cannot demonstrate that the Scots writers knew any version of *Richard Coer de Lion*. What does emerge is that these three poems all push at the boundaries of romance and chronicle, but in different ways. *Richard Coer de Lion* does so almost accidentally, for many of the romance features are the result of the layers of composing intervention, rather than the vision of a single poet; those hands are also evident in the failures to carry through romance tropes, or to make the most of the opportunities presented. In contrast, the Scots poets seem entirely aware of their generic transgressions, so that Hary presents an ostensibly authorised piece constructed with romance references, and Barbour offers romance as an explanation for the extraordinary nature of his history. Barbour's equivocations in particular require us to consider what benefit accrues if these texts are considered as romances, rather than as chronicles. The most straightforward answer is presumably that romance is, or is perceived to be, more entertaining to read; however, the complex negotiation evident particularly within the Scots texts

suggests that that cannot be the whole story. While clearly medieval audiences were more than willing to tolerate some degree of fiction in their history, nevertheless issues of truthfulness are never far from the writers' and presumably the audience's minds. Part of the appeal of these works must be that romance allows for a heightening of events not always permissible in history-writing, an exaggeration of deeds and glory, and an elimination of tiresome imperfections; it also allows concentration on a few figures, without the distracting references to famines, plagues and popes that litter chronicle.⁵⁶

Together, these enable a way of reading whereby pleasure in the stories of the heroes can allow the transmission of larger themes. In all three poems, a key theme is national identity. English identity, as portrayed in *RCL*, is aggressive, is associated with the hero not with the territory, or even necessarily with the people; the location allows it to be God-supported and unchallenged. The Scots poems in contrast present a defensive and threatened identity, one entirely bound up with people and place, and seek to persuade their audience of the truthfulness of their particular vision. In the case of *Bruce*, this persuasive element has been designated 'Brucean ideology'; Barbour's success can be gauged from the pervasiveness of this view. Hary is more extreme, by removing approval of Wallace's actions from this world to the next. However, both Barbour and Hary suggest that the Bruce and the Wallace develop as characters and as leaders, something not given to Richard. Nevertheless, the poems clearly share certain assumptions about the glorification of historical heroes, and what aggrandizement would be acceptable to an audience: certain supernatural and superhuman elements, whether in origin or behaviour, some illustration of divine support for the hero and his cause; and a demonstration of the symbolic value of the hero for national identity. The Scots poems offer a more coherent and sophisticated treatment. This is not a matter of national origin: to suggest that would be crass. Instead, we can attribute the differences in part to individual composition, political circumstances, intended audiences, and indeed the developments in literary art. Reading the poems in juxtaposition, however, allows us to see and to admire the art which Barbour and Hary put into service in their poems, where metaphor can even triumph over anthropophagy.

NOTES

¹ There are of course the hints in Andrew of Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle* of earlier verse. See *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. F.J. Amours, 6 vols. Scottish Text Society, 50, 53, 54, 56, 57, 60 (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1902-1914), V: pp. 144-5. See also M.P. McDiarmid and J.A.C. Stevenson, eds., *Barbour's Bruce*, Scottish Text Society 4th Series 12, 13, 15 (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1980-85), vol. 1, pp. 14-16. This edition is the standard text of the poem, and all references to *Bruce* in this essay are to this edition, and in the form of book and line numbers embedded in the text.

² Guides to romance in English rarely mention these poems. In Scottish criticism, they are placed with romance in *The History of Scottish Literature* (1988); in the *Edinburgh History of Scotland*, they are again discussed most fully with historiography, but also briefly with court poetry. See M.P. McDiarmid, 'The Metrical Chronicles and Non-Alliterative Romances,' in R.D.S. Jack, ed., *The History of Scottish Literature, vol. 1: Origins to 1660* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), pp. 27-38, and Nicola Royan with Dauvit Broun, 'Versions of Scottish Nationhood, c.850-1707' and Sally Mapstone 'Older Scots Literature and the Court,' in *Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature, vol. 1: From Columba to the Union (1707)*, ed. Thomas Owen Clancy and Murray Pittcock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 168-83 and pp. 273-285 respectively. Tolmie also notes the problem of genre: Sarah Tolmie, 'Sacrilege, Sacrifice and John Barbour's *Bruce*,' *IRSS*, 32(2007): 7-32, p. 9. But see R. James Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland: Historical Narrative in Medieval Scotland* (Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), pp 134-8 for a less troubled view.

³ The most recent edition is still is K. Brunner, ed., *Richard Löwenherz* (Vienna and Leipzig: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1913). All references to the poem will be to this edition.

⁴ In his edition, Brunner presents a composite text including the (a) material.

⁵ Brunner, *Richard Löwenherz*, pp. 30-2; John Finlayson, 'Richard Coer de Lion: Romance, History or Something in Between?' *Studies in Philology*, 87.2 (1990):156-80, pp. 159-61, notes that the longer version is most likely a later accretion to the original text.

⁶ For references to Barbour as a source, see Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, gen. ed. D.E.R. Watt, 9 vols. (Aberdeen and Edinburgh: Aberdeen University Press and Mercat Press, 1987-1998), vol. 6, pp. 380-1, and Wyntoun, *Original Chronicle* vol. 5, pp. 350-1, 354, 367. The various recensions of the *Original Chronicle* vary in how much detail they include about Bruce and how much they refer to Barbour.

⁷ See McDiarmid and Stevenson, eds., *Barbour's Bruce* vol. 2: pp. ix-xii.

⁸ See R. James Goldstein, "I will my proces hald": making sense of Scottish lives and the desire for history in Barbour, Wyntoun and Blind Hary' in *A Companion to Medieval Scottish Poetry*, ed. Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams (Cambridge: Boydell, 2006), pp. 35-48, p.35.

⁹ See Derek Brewer, 'The popular English Metrical Romances' in Corinne Saunders, ed., *Blackwell's Companion to Romance* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 45-64; also Suzanne Conklin Akbari, 'The Hunger for National Identity in *Richard Coer de Lion*,' in Robert M. Stein and Sandra Pierson Prior, eds., *Reading Medieval Culture: Essays in Honour of Robert W. Hanning* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 198-230, esp. p. 200, and Nicola McDonald, 'Eating People and the Alimentary Logic of *Richard Coer de Lion*,' in Nicola McDonald, *Pulp Fictions of medieval English: Essays in Popular Romance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 124-50.

¹⁰ Most obviously, Hary uses Chaucerian forms, but also evokes *Troilus and Criseyde* in particular when describing Wallace's experience in love. See M.P. McDiarmid, *Hary's Wallace*, 2 vols., Scottish Text 4th Series 4 and 5 (Edinburgh, Scottish Text Society, 1968-9), vol. 1, pp. 91-92, book V: 579-641, pp. 108-111, book VI, lines 1-104 (hereafter references to the text of *Wallace* will be by book and line numbers, and embedded in the text). For discussion of these habits, see, among others, Felicity Riddy, 'Unmapping the Territory: Blind Hary's *Wallace* in Edward J. Cowan, ed., *The Wallace Book* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2007), pp. 107-16, esp. pp. 107-8 and R. James Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland*, pp. 254-62.

¹¹ The original audiences for each poem can be inferred from their content. The descendants of the Lincolnshire knights, Thomas Moulton and Fulk D'Oilly, Richard's main supporters in the late versions of *Richard Coer de Lion*, were probably patrons of the reviser (Finlayson, 'Romance, History,' p. 166). Hary identifies his sponsors at the end of the poem (XII: 1439-1448); his poem as a whole reflects their likely political views in the 1480s (see Mapstone, 'Older Scots Literature and the Court,' pp. 277-8). Barbour is much

associated with the court of Robert II and seems to have been commissioned by him to write another poem: see Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland*, pp. 138-43 and for the political context, Stephen Boardman, *The Early Stewart Kings: Robert II and Robert III 1371-1406* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1996), pp. 58-61.

¹² See Rhiannon Purdie, *Anglicising Romance: Tail-Rhyme and Genre in Medieval English Literature*, (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 100-1, 105-6.

¹³ See *Wallace* II: 171 – 359 (nine-line) and VI: 1-104.

¹⁴ See Finlayson, 'Romance, History,' pp. 158-61. More recent critics have less hesitation in describing it as a romance.

¹⁵ As well as Bower and Wyntoun, later historiographers also use Barbour's text as a source and some even refer to the poem: for instance, John Bellenden cites 'the Brucis book' when describing Douglas in *The Chronicles of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Thomas Davidson, c.1540, book 14, chapter 8; Edinburgh: 1821, p. 383), although the five-stress couplet quoted cannot in fact come from *Bruce*. Recent work on Robert I also refers to the *Bruce*: see Geoffrey Barrow, *Robert I and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* 4th edn. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005) and also Alexander Grant, 'The Death of John Comyn: What Was Going on?' *Scottish Historical Review*, 86.2 (2007): 176-224.

¹⁶ For a straightforward dismissal, see Edward J. Cowan, 'William Wallace: "The Choice of the Estates"' in Cowan, ed., *The Wallace Book*, pp. 9-25, and pp. 11-12; for a nuanced discussion of the appeal of the poem, see Graeme Morton, *William Wallace: Man and Myth* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2001), pp. 33-66.

¹⁷ See McDiarmid Introduction to *Hary's Wallace*, pp. xix-xxxiii.

¹⁸ Transl: 'We let the noble deeds of our ancestors, that we should read about and remember, fade through sloth, and attend to other occupations. Honouring enemies is our whole intent.' All translations are mine.

¹⁹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn., under 'romance'.

²⁰ Loose transl: 'It is good to hear in sport of Richard's prowess and conquest. Men compose many romances of strong, true and good knights. Of their deeds, men read romance, both in England and France.'

²¹ Loose transl: 'Now listen to my true take, though I swear no oath. I don't want to read romance of Pertenope, or Ypomadon ... I know of none in their day who did such great deeds as King Richard.'

²² While there is a pattern in some romances for the hero to lose everything, usually the result of sin, and then regain it through penance, Bruce's fate is both arguably harsher by being real (excommunication, harsh imprisonment of wife and daughter, execution of his brothers) and also different since his first triumphant rehabilitation is earthly, only displaying God's favour indirectly. See Andrea Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights: A Study of Middle English Penitential Romances* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), esp. pp. 196-8.

²³ Finlayson, 'Romance, History,' pp. 156-8. A Scottish poem on the Nine Worthies, now only found in two chronicle manuscripts, adds Bruce as a tenth Worthy; this poem has previously been attributed to Barbour, but that attribution is no longer secure. For the attribution, see R.L. Graeme Ritchie, ed., *The Buik of Alexander* 2 vols. Scottish Text Society 2nd Ser 25 and 27 (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1925-7), vol. 1, pp. cxxxiii-cliv.

²⁴ See Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 53-74.

²⁵ See Boardman, *Early Stewart Kings*, pp. 60-1 and Michael Brown, *The Black Douglases* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998), pp. 16-18, 120-6.

²⁶ Ralph Hanna, in *London Literature, 1300-1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), notes there was a cultivated association of Alexander with Edward I and his successors (pp. 116-18); he suggests that this underlies Barbour's deployment in the *Bruce* (pp. 143-4, n. 17). See also Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland*, pp. 148-9.

²⁷ McDiarmid and Stevenson, eds., *Bruce*, vol. 1, p. 91, note to XII: 303-11

²⁸ See Introduction to John Barbour, *The Bruce*, ed. A.A.M. Duncan (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1997), p. 10.

²⁹ See Duncan, ed., p. 768, n.

³⁰ See Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 106-7; Finlayson, 'History, Romance,' 170-2; G. Heng, *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 109-10.

³¹ Loose transl: 'Jerusalem and the cross is lost, and Bethlehem, where Jesus Christ was born. Christian knights are hanged and drawn; the Saracens have now slain Christian men, children, women and boys. The Pope of Rome is distressed that Christendom

is thus destroyed, and he tells each Christian king in the name of God to go to the Holy Land with armies to destroy the Saracens' boast.'

³² Finlayson, 'Romance, History,' p. 177.

³³ See Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland*, pp. 233-4, and on treason in *Wallace*, p. 247.

³⁴ Goldstein argues strongly that the wholesale identification of Scottish freedom with the Bruce kingship is a feature of most Scottish medieval historiography, and emanated from the power-base of Robert himself (*Matter of Scotland*, passim). However, we should still note Barbour's skill at mapping these diverse issues on to one another.

³⁵ Transl: 'William Wallace, before he was a man of arms, thought it great pity that Scotland took such injury. It made him sad in mind, for he was wise, worthy, strong and kind.'

³⁶ Transl: 'He cut the thirteenth to the backbone, the lance burst, the Saracen died. Richard our king took his axe from his saddle bow. Some he smote on the shoulder, and cut them to the saddle; and some he pared their crowns so that helmet and head fell down.'

³⁷ Transl: 'Before he came many armoured men. He hit the first without waiting on the breastplate until horse and man fell in the water. Another he brought down from his horse, crushed him on the ground and drowned him. The third he hit through the side of his helmet; the spear broke. The great force them rode after him. He saw no advantage waiting there any longer. His sword he bore violently in his hand, and those whom he hit followed him no more.'

³⁸ The axe has been seen as an English weapon, but here is turned against them (see Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, literature and Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p.123.

³⁹ Transl: 'The lords of his company criticised him as much as they could, for he had put himself at risk to meet so good a knight at such a point as he then was seen, for they said it might have the cause of total loss for everyone. The king did not answer them but complained that the shaft of his handaxe was broken in two by the stroke.'

⁴⁰ Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland*, pp. 150-84.

⁴¹ See Finlayson, 'Romance, history,' p. 174; Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, pp. 123-4; Macdonald, 'Richard Coeur de Lion' passim; Heng, *Empire of Magic*, pp. 73-8; Akbari, 'The Hunger for National Identity,' passim.

⁴² Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 73.

⁴³ McDonald, 'Richard Coeur de Lion,' p. 133

⁴⁴ Transl: 'Supper was set as Bruce entered the pavilion and saw his vacant seat. He didn't wash first but went straight to table. He was hungry and had been in great fear. His clothes and weapons were covered in blood. The Southern lords mocked him. One said, 'Look, that Scot eats his own blood'. The king thought it wrong to deride him and he sent water to Bruce of Huntington. They told him to wash. He said he would not: "This blood is mine. That hurts my thoughts most."

⁴⁵ Only the chamberlain and the visiting ambassadors find the anthropophagy problematic, suggesting that criticism is either ignoble or alien.

⁴⁶ See Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland*, pp. 230-2

⁴⁷ See Tolmie, 'Sacrilege, Sacrifice,' pp. 22-4 for a different approach to the same reading.

⁴⁸ Transl: 'A foul mixture there he made, for meal and malt and blood and wine ran altogether in a mix that was ugly to see.'

⁴⁹ See Tolmie, 'Sacrilege, Sacrifice,' pp. 14-17 for a different view of Comyn's murder.

⁵⁰ Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland*, pp. 204-5.

⁵¹ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, last revised Oct 2007 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/60304, accessed 1 May 2009]

⁵² Hary here appears to be invoking the political sanctity enjoyed by various English rebels, such as Thomas of Lancaster and Archbishop Scrope. However, this is a purely literary association; Wallace never became the centre of a cult in the English manner. For detailed discussion of the English tradition, see Danna Prioyansky, *Martyrs in the Making: Political martyrdom in Late Medieval England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, especially her discussion of Arundel (pp. 108-112) and her summary of essential requirements for a proper cult (pp. 119-124).

⁵³ Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. Watt, VI, pp. 313-317.

⁵⁴ Transl: “Then de Vallance said, “And you understand the great need: he spills so much blood, and puts souls of Christian men in peril. I promise that he will be kept whole and alive in prison.”

⁵⁵ Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 336, n.8; see *Alliterative Morte Arthur* in *King Arthur's death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthure and the Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. L.D. Benson, rev. E.E. Foster, (Kalamazoo MI; TEAMS, 1994), ll. 3515-3611, for the report of Mordred's betrayal to Arthur.)

⁵⁶ Heng, *Empire of Magic*, p. 67.

