

MAGIC AND IDENTITY IN OLDER SCOTS ROMANCE

by

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Abstract

Magic and the supernatural are widely recognised as key motifs of the medieval romance genre, yet thus far almost no scholarly attention has been given to their roles in the Older Scots romances of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries. This thesis seeks to redress this critical neglect, contextualising itself within the emerging field of Older Scots romance studies and building upon previous investigations of the supernatural within medieval romance. I argue throughout this thesis that magic and the supernatural in Older Scots romance are intrinsically linked to the development of identity, and that different aspects of the supernatural, from the prophetic to the faerie to the demonic, affect identity in different ways. Furthermore, this thesis demonstrates that in linking the concept of identity with magical and supernatural events, Older Scots romances engage with the themes of kingship and good governance that are essential to Older Scots literature more widely, marking these romances as a corpus of texts which show a distinctively Scottish response to magic and the supernatural.

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Abbreviations

<i>DOST</i>	A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue
EETS	Early English Text Society
ES	Extra Series
<i>ODNB</i>	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
OS	Original Series
<i>SSL</i>	Studies in Scottish Literature
STS	Scottish Text Society

Introduction

As a genre steeped in imaginative possibilities yet ‘grounded in cultural reality’,¹ medieval romances offered the perfect platform from which to explore magic and the supernatural, the very concepts of which occupied a highly ambiguous position between accepted and condemned. Within this spectrum of acceptance and condemnation lay a host of different varieties of magic, from the divinely-inspired prophecies and miracles of the Christian supernatural to the use of demonic ritual, to the unlocking of magical properties found within nature and - somewhere in between the Christian and the demonic supernatural - the world of faerie. While magic has long been recognised as an integral part of the romance genre,² so too has the concept of identity; as Hardman argues, ‘at a profound level the subject of identity is the matter of all romance’.³

In the past decade, much critical attention has focused on the role of magic and the supernatural in the Middle English romances. Cooper’s *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* discusses magic amongst a variety of motifs, or ‘memes’, ideas which ‘adapt, mutate and therefore survive in different forms and cultures’.⁴ More recently, Saunders’ *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* positions Middle English romances within ‘the context of contemporaneous cultural attitudes, and their complex intellectual and cultural history’,⁵ while Wade’s monograph *Fairies in Medieval Romance* views

¹ Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 2010), p. 2.

² ‘Romance’ is often hard to pin down as a genre, but Helen Cooper offers a useful definition: ‘Romances are ... characterized by exotic settings, distant in time and place, or both; subject-matter concerning love or chivalry or both; and high-ranking characters ... the shaking loose of the narrative from precise time and space; quests; magic and the supernatural ... a concern with ... secular ideals’. Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 10.

³ Philippa Hardman, ‘Introduction’ in *The Matter of Identity in Medieval Romance*, ed. by Philippa Hardman (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 2002), pp. 1-9 (p. 1).

⁴ Cooper, *English Romance in Time*, p. 3.

⁵ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 4.

romances through the framework of ‘internal folklore’ where each romance contains ‘a unique imagining of fairies and of the Otherworld at large’.⁶

To date, this increasing awareness of magic in the Middle English romances has not been replicated within the Older Scots romance tradition. In part, this may be due to divided critical opinions on which texts should be categorised as Older Scots romances. Though the known corpus of Older Scots literature stretches in date from c.1375 to c.1700, the number of surviving Older Scots romances from this period is proportionally tiny given this large time span. At the core of these arguments is the debate about how far Older Scots romances can be seen as a distinctive body of literature. While Edwards has rather pessimistically asserted that there is ‘not really’ such a thing as Older Scots romance,⁷ my own discussion of Older Scots romances in this thesis follows and builds upon Purdie’s argument that Scotland was able to ‘develop a confident romance tradition of its own’.⁸ That all the surviving Older Scots romances are in verse is one aspect of this tradition; even those with prose sources, such as *Clariodus*, were versified by Scots authors.

I use Purdie’s assertion that there are twelve Older Scots romances (listed below) as the basis for this thesis, adding to this total John Barbour’s *Bruce* (c.1375-77) and Blind Harry’s *Wallace* (c. 1476-8). Though they have been seen as hybrids of romance and historiography, I discuss both texts in

⁶ James Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 3. Recent journal articles have also discussed the supernatural in individual Middle English romances. See Tony Vandeventer Pearlman, ‘Refiguring Disability: Deviance, Blinding, and the Supernatural in Thomas Chestre’s *Sir Launfal*’, *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 3 (2009), 131-46; Neil Cartlidge, ‘Sir Orfeo in the Otherworld: Courting Chaos’, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 26 (2004), 195-226. A book-length study of magic in both medieval French and English romances can be found in Michelle Sweeney, Michelle Sweeney, *Magic in Medieval Romance: From Chrétien de Troyes to Geoffrey Chaucer* (Dublin and Portland, Oregon: Four Courts Press, 2000).

⁷ A.S.G. Edwards, ‘Contextualising Middle Scots Romance’, in *A Palace in the Wild: Essays on Vernacular Culture and Humanism in Late Medieval and Renaissance Scotland*, ed. by L.A.J.R. Houwen, A.A. MacDonald and S. Mapstone (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), pp. 61-73 (p. 69).

⁸ Rhiannon Purdie, ‘Medieval Romance in Scotland’ in *A Companion to Medieval Scottish Poetry*, ed. by Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams (Woodbridge: D S Brewer, 2006), pp. 165-177 (p. 177).

this thesis as they both contain frequent references to the supernatural.⁹ In the following list, titles highlighted in bold are romances containing magical and supernatural events.¹⁰

List of Older Scots romances with estimated dates of composition:

<i>The Octosyllabic Alexander</i>	c. 1438
<i>The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour</i>	c. 1460
<i>Clariodus</i>	c. 1503-50
<i>Eger and Grime/‘Graysteel’</i>	Before 1497
<i>Florimond of Albany</i> ¹¹ (fragmentary)	Before c. 1550
<i>Golagros and Gawane</i>	15 th century (before 1508)
<i>King Orphius</i> (fragmentary)	Before c. 1550; fifteenth century?
<i>Lancelot of the Laik</i>	c. 1460-79
<i>Rauf Coilȝear</i>	15 th century?
<i>Roswall and Lillian</i>	16 th century?
<i>Scottish Troy Book</i> (fragmentary)	15th century
<i>Sir Colling</i>	Before c. 1582

As shown above, seven of the twelve surviving Older Scots romances contain references to supernatural events, indicating that exploring otherworldly motifs was a foremost concern for the composers of these romances. With this in mind, it is rather surprising that almost no critical attention has focused on the role of magic and the supernatural across these texts.

This thesis, the first substantial study of magic and the supernatural in Older Scots romance, seeks to fill this void in research. It situates itself within the flourishing field of Older Scots romance scholarship which has recently seen a resurgence of interest. This has not only been in the form of new editions of Older Scots romances, such as Hanna’s edition of *Golagros and*

⁹ For comparative purposes, my chapter on the *King Orphius* fragments features a discussion of the romance elements of Robert Henryson’s *Orpheus and Eurydice* (mid-to-late fifteenth century), though the poem is not strictly classifiable as a romance.

¹⁰ This list is adapted from Purdie, ‘Medieval Romances’, p. 166.

¹¹ Surviving only in a fragment, the complete version of *Florimond of Albany*, a close translation of Aimon de Varennes’ Old French romance *Florimont* (1188), would most likely have contained supernatural elements. In the French original, Florimont, grandfather of Alexander the Great, has a fairy mistress and fights a sea-monster sent by a giant to antagonise him. See further *Shorter Scottish Medieval Romances*, ed. by Rhianon Purdie, Scottish Text Society, 5th Series, 11 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), which contains a new edition of *Florimond of Albany*.

Gawane (2008) and Purdie's invaluable *Shorter Scottish Medieval Romances* (2013),¹² but also in Mainer's monograph *The Scottish Romance Tradition c.1375-c.1550: Nation, Chivalry and Knighthood* (2010) and two recent doctoral theses: Wingfield's 'The Manuscript and Print Contexts of Older Scots Romance' (2010) and Caughey's 'Representations of Knighthood in Late Medieval Scotland'.¹³ Space is also given over to several Older Scots romances in Calin's *The Lily and the Thistle: The French Tradition and the Older Literature of Scotland*.¹⁴

In focusing on representations of magic in Older Scots romance, this thesis additionally situates itself in an interdisciplinary discourse which has typically focused on Scottish attitudes to magic in the centuries following the composition of these romances. Most immediately evident are the studies of Scottish witchcraft between the sixteenth and early-eighteenth centuries.¹⁵ An overview of Scottish witchcraft belief is considered from a variety of angles in Julian Goodare and Joyce Miller's collection of essays *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland*, in which they acknowledge that 'Scotland has always been an important place for those studying witchcraft beliefs'.¹⁶ Scottish folk attitudes towards aspects of the supernatural outside witchcraft belief have also been investigated in the work of Lizanne Henderson, whose *Scottish Fairy Belief: A*

¹² *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawane*, ed. Ralph Hanna, STS, 5th Series, 7 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008); Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*.

¹³ Sergi Mainer, *The Scottish Romance Tradition c.1375-c.1550: Nation, Chivalry and Knighthood* (New York and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010); Emily Wingfield, 'The Manuscript and Print Contexts of Older Scots Romance' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2010); Anna Caughey, 'Representations of Knighthood in Late Medieval Scottish Literature' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2010).

¹⁴ William Calin, *The Lily and the Thistle: The French Tradition and the Older Literature of Scotland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).

¹⁵ The body of criticism on Scottish witchcraft is too large to discuss here, but recent works have included Kathryn A. Edwards, 'Witchcraft in Tudor England and Scotland' in *A Companion to Tudor Literature*, ed. by Kent Cartwright (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 31-48; and Julian Goodare, ed., *Scottish Witches and Witch-Hunters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

¹⁶ Julian Goodare et al., eds., *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 16.

History, co-authored with Edward J. Cowan, discusses Scottish perspectives on fairies from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries.¹⁷

Within the aforementioned critical backgrounds of Older Scots romance studies and the interdisciplinary field of specifically Scottish beliefs about the otherworld, I argue throughout this thesis that the supernatural events present in Older Scots romance are not only always used for a specific purpose— that is, the negotiation of identities – but that the authors of these romances overwhelmingly focus upon the effect of magic and the supernatural on kingship and good governance.¹⁸ Even the few supernatural women who appear are mainly geared towards helping the male protagonists to achieve glory, or are possessed with supernatural powers but are still only able to operate within the boundaries of courtly society.¹⁹

Moreover, I propound that this focus on kingship and good governance is a distinctively Scottish reaction to supernatural occurrences and, where the authors of Older Scots romance alter their sources,²⁰ it is often done to emphasise these motifs. The work of Mapstone has been instrumental in identifying the concepts of kingship, good governance and the advice to princes tradition as major concerns of Older Scots authors from the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries,²¹

¹⁷ Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief: A History* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2001). Henderson has also recently edited an interdisciplinary collection of essays on various aspects of the supernatural in Scottish belief from the late medieval period to the present day. See Lizanne Henderson, ed., *Fantastical Imaginations: The Supernatural in Scottish History and Culture* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2009).

¹⁸ It is interesting to note that on occasion, historical Scottish kings were linked to the supernatural. The most famous example is James VI and I (r. 1567-1625), whose *Daemonologie* (1597) is one of the foremost early modern invectives against witchcraft and has been categorised by Clark as ‘a statement about ideal monarchy’, providing a historical dimension to the connection between kingship and the supernatural. See Stuart Clark, ‘King James’s *Daemonologie*: Witchcraft and Kingship’, in *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft*, ed. by Sidney Anglo (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), pp. 156-181 (p. 156). The court of James III (r. 1460-88) has also been linked to astrology: see my chapter on *Lancelot of the Laik*, fn. 7, p. 29.

¹⁹ The chief example of this is Medea in the *Scottish Troy Book*. See further my chapter on the *Scottish Troy Book*, pp. 35-42.

²⁰ Where known, sources are discussed alongside each individual romance.

²¹ Sally Mapstone, ‘The Advice to Princes Tradition in Scottish Literature, 1450-1500’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1986); Sally Mapstone, ‘Kingship and the *Kingis Quair*’ in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, ed. by Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford: Clarendon

and critical scrutiny of these themes have continued apace; this thesis is one more step on that path.

Of course, any study containing detailed discussion of magic and the supernatural must draw attention to the difficulty in attempting to classify ‘types’ of magic. As Saunders argues, ‘the ambiguity of magic is suggested by the plethora of medieval terms associated with it: enchantment, sorcery, witchcraft, ‘nigromancy’. Furthermore, she points out that while the term ‘supernatural’ was not in itself employed by romance writers, ‘literary works reflect a strong cultural recognition that there are distinctions to be made between the supernatural (miracles, the demonic, the otherworldly or faery) and the natural (marvels, wonders), which may yet come to be understood.’²²

Despite these difficulties, such abundant references to different types of magical and supernatural events occur across Older Scots romance that it remains useful to provide basic definitions for these different categories. Essential to the concept of magic and the supernatural is the distinction between ‘natural’ magic and ‘nigromancy’, a synonym for sorcery that Cooper defines as ‘magic on the edge of acceptability’ deriving from ‘sources other than God’.²³ Underlining the concept of natural magic was the belief that natural objects such as stones and plants contained occult forces which could be utilised to various effects – particularly for healing and protective use – and that these effects were not demonic but were in fact part of God’s creation.²⁴ In the Older Scots romances, this kind of magic is most clearly expressed through the healing virtues of the ring in *Clariodus* and the potion given to Eger by Lillias in *Eger and Grime*

Press, 1997), pp. 52-69. Kingship has also recently been discussed in Joanna Martin, *Kingship and Love in Scottish Poetry, 1424-1540* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

²² Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, pp. 6-7.

²³ Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 161.

²⁴ The work of William of Auvergne, thirteenth-century theologian and Bishop of Paris, was instrumental in developing natural magic as a more legitimate form of learning. In his *De fide et legibus* (c. 1228-30) he argues that marvellous phenomena in nature are often misattributed to demons, when in fact they are works of God. See further *De legibus* in *Opera Omnia* (Paris: Andraeas Pralard, 1674, rpt. Frankfurt am Main, 1963). The extract containing Auvergne’s views on natural magic is reproduced in translation in Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Caroline Escobar-Vargas, *Magic and Medieval Society* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), p. 124.

which seals his wounds. Few examples of the more illicit ‘nigromancy’ are given across the Older Scots romance corpus; only Medea’s magical ability to control the weather are explicitly associated with it, and, as I argue, her considerable powers of enchantment are presented rather positively.²⁵

Natural magic has long been seen as a particularly ‘learned’ branch of the occult, and has even been viewed as a science,²⁶ but it was not the only aspect of magic that came to be categorised as such. Astrology was afforded a place amongst the seven Liberal Arts taught at medieval universities, yet this is not to say that this form of divination met with universal approval. St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) is particularly condemnatory towards astrology in his *De Civitate Dei*, remarking that, in contrast to the infallibility of God’s foreknowledge, ‘astrology itself is a delusion’.²⁷ In the *Etymologiae* (c. early-seventh century) of Isidore of Seville, one of the most popular texts of the early medieval period, Isidore provides a detailed discussion of magic in which he categorises the practice of divination into many different areas. Particularly important is his acceptance of certain types of astrology, namely, those that investigate the movement of the sun, moon and stars in the natural passing of the seasons. He is careful, however, to denounce ‘augury by the stars’, such as that which attempts to predict the characters of people through observing the stars.²⁸ In *Lancelot of the Laik*, astrology plays a central role in causing the prophetic dream visions which plague King Arthur.

Indeed, prophecies and prophetic dreams are by far the most prominent aspect of the supernatural found throughout the Older Scots romances. Always associated with the figures of kings or the leaders of nations, they encapsulate medieval attitudes towards the concept of

²⁵ See my chapter on the *Scottish Troy Book*, pp. 35-42.

²⁶ Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 9.

²⁷ St. Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, trans. by Marcus Dods, from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 2, ed. by Philip Schaff (Buffalo, New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887, rev. and ed. for New Advent by Kevin Knight)[<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/120105.htm>, accessed 13/09/2014], Bk 5, Ch. 9.

²⁸ Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney et al., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), III, xxvii, 2.

foreknowledge, where prophecies which clearly originated through God were deemed acceptable, but prophecies of any other origin were explicitly censured.²⁹ Particularly evident across these texts is that prophecies and prophetic visions which have their genesis in the Christian divine are always fulfilled,³⁰ whereas the only failed prophecy - given by a demon to Count Ferrand's mother, a story related in *The Bruce* – is directly shown to be connected to the demonic.

Instrumental to the concept of prophetic dreams is Macrobius' dream theory. In his *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio* (c. 4th century AD), he discusses five types of dream, two of which (the *insomnium*, or nightmare, and the *visum*, or apparition) he classes as having no prophetic significance. The three types of dreams which *do* have prophetic significance are the *somnium*, or enigmatic dream, in which its true meaning is concealed with ambiguity and requires interpretation, the *oraculum*, in which a revered authority such as a priest or an old man appears, and the *visio*, a prophetic vision.³¹

Operating outside the continuum between the Christian supernatural, the ambiguous traditions of natural magic and astrology and the outwardly-condemned use of demonic magic,³² Older Scots romances also feature a variety of references to the otherworldly supernatural; from the eldritch knight in *Sir Colling* to Sir Graysteel in *Eger and Grime*. Under the umbrella of the

²⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-74), one of the Church's most influential medieval theologians, acknowledged that prophetic dreams may lawfully originate from divine revelation, but categorises prophetic dreams arising from demonic revelation as unlawful. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 'Treatise on the Cardinal Virtues', trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), Question 95, Article 6. Online at Christian Classics Ethereal Library [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.SS_Q95_A6.html, accessed 16/07/2014].

³⁰ This corroborates Coote's statement that 'The ultimate origin of political prophecies is God'. See Lesley A. Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2000), p. 41.

³¹ Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. by William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), pp. 87-8.

³² St. Thomas Aquinas follows St. Augustine in firmly condemning the magical arts as demonic. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 'Treatise on the Cardinal Virtues', trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), Question 96, Article 1. Online at Christian Classics Ethereal Library [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.SS_Q96_A1.html, accessed 13/09/2014].

‘otherworld’ we also find the faerie, represented in the fragmentary *King Orphius* and in some elements of Robert Henryson’s *Orpheus and Eurydice*.³³

In arguing for the intrinsic relationship between the aforementioned varieties of magic and the development of identity in Older Scots romance, I have tried as far as possible to organise this thesis thematically, grouping texts together according to what type of magic or otherworldly events are most prominent in them in order to clarify how different aspects of the supernatural affect the development of identity in different ways.

Chapters One, Two and Three have as their broad focus the connection between divine approval, kingship and national identity. Chapter One, *The Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror*, explores how prophecies, supernatural beings and even a magical apple act to confirm and dismantle Alexander’s divinely-approved kingship, discussing how he shifts from ideal ruler to irrational monarch. Chapter Two analyses the abundance of prophecies found in *The Bruce* and *The Wallace*, investigating how these prophecies define Bruce and Wallace as national heroes of Scotland who are approved by God. Chapter Three discusses prophetic dreams and astrology, examining how they are combined in *Lancelot of the Laik* to both signify the complete loss of King Arthur’s divine approval and indicate how he might restore it.

The discussion of the *Scottish Troy Book* in Chapter Four also focuses on astrology and prophecy from a different angle: the presentation of the female practitioners of magic, Medea and Cassandra. It argues that the representations of both these women are broadly positive, despite Medea’s associations with ‘nigromancy’, and that the poet is keen to suppress any negative connotations of their magical skills and instead emphasises their wisdom.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven discuss three romances which follow the same archetype: *Clariodus*, *Eger and Grime* and *Sir Colling*. In each, a lowly knight is able to win the hand of a higher-ranking

³³ See my chapters on *Sir Colling*, pp. 60-6 and *King Orphius* and Henryson’s *Orpheus and Eurydice*, pp. 67-75

lady through defeating otherworldly foes, consequently transforming his social rank through marriage. I additionally link the overcoming of these otherworldly foes to the heroes' successful use of magical objects in all three of these romances, and consider how the themes of good government of the self are prominent in *Eger and Grime* and *Sir Colling*.

Chapter Eight investigates the intrinsic relationship between death and the faerie otherworld featured in *King Orphius* and Robert Henyson's *Orpheus and Eurydice*, analysing Orphius/Orpheus' reactions to the threat of the faerie and its opposite effects on kingly identity for these two different incarnations of the same character; while Orphius' identity as a successful king is confirmed through his dealings with the faerie, Orpheus is defined as a king lacking the essential qualities of good governance.

CHAPTER ONE

The Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror

As an almost complete biography of Alexander the Great,¹ the 19,369-line *Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror* (hereafter *BKA*) utilises magic and the supernatural to continuously define and develop Alexander's identity, from his origins as the son of the necromancer Nectanabus to the marvellous apple which Alexander receives as tribute from the Earthly Paradise.² Attributed to Sir Gilbert Hay (b. c.1397, d. after 1465)³ and based on a variety of sources from the medieval Alexander tradition,⁴ including the second recension of the Latin *Historia de Prelis* (c. 1165-75) and Alexander de Paris' *Roman d'Alexandre* (c. 1252-90),⁵ the poem also incorporates material

¹ The edition used throughout this thesis is Sir Gilbert Hay, *The Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror*, ed. by John Cartwright, 2 vols, STS, 4th Series, 16, 18 (Edinburgh: STS, 1986-1990).

² Although the poem is missing its beginning in both surviving manuscripts (London, British Library, Additional MS 40732 and Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, MS GD 112/71/9), the surviving text clearly follows the traditional opening where King Nectanabus of Egypt, highly skilled in necromancy and astrology, deserts his kingdom after observing in the skies that Egypt will be conquered by the Persians. He then tricks Olympias, queen of Macedonia, into believing that the god Amon will lie with her in the form of a dragon; in reality, it is Nectanabus who sleeps with her, having transformed himself through his magical arts. Through this deception Alexander is conceived. To avoid the wrath of King Philip, Olympias' husband, Nectanabus grants him a dream which, when interpreted by astrologers, reassures him that Olympias has conceived of Amon.

³ There has been much debate as to what extent the surviving poem represents Hay's original work. Both of the two sixteenth-century manuscripts in which the poem survives (London, British Library, Additional MS 40732 and Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland, MS GD 112/71/9) are derived from a fifteenth-century copy, and both include an epilogue which tells us that the poem was completed 'At þe instance off Lord Erskein, be Schir Gilbert þe Hay' (19320). While the original poem is thought to date from c.1460, roughly the same time that Hay composed his prose translations *The Buke of the Law of Amyis*, *The Buke of the Ordre of Knyghteþede* and *The Buke of the Governance of Princes*, the unknown individual who wrote the *BKA*'s epilogue informs us that he 'mendit' the 'faltis' (19343) of the book, a task which he completed in 1499 (19358). Precisely what 'faltis' were mended is difficult to assess, leading McDiarmid to question whether the work can now be classed as a work of Hay's authorship at all. See Matthew P. McDiarmid, 'Concerning Sir Gilbert Hay, the Authorship of *Alexander the Conqueror* and *The Buik of Alexander*', *SSL*, 28 (1993), 28-54. More recently, Emily Wingfield has convincingly argued that Hay himself subjected the *BKA* to various authorial revisions, which were then added to by the redactor in an attempt to clarify Hay's foul papers. See Emily Wingfield, 'The Composition and Revision of Sir Gilbert Hay's *Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror*', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 57 (2013) 247-86.

⁴ For an overview of the medieval Alexander tradition, see George Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*, ed. by D.J.A. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁵ Joanna Martin, "'Of Wisdome and of Guide Governance': Sir Gilbert Hay and *The Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror*' in *A Companion to Medieval Scottish Poetry*, ed. by Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 2006), pp. 75-89 (p. 77). For the *Historia de Prelis*, see *Historia Alexandri Magni (Historia de Prelis) Rezension J2*, ed. by Alfons Hilka (Meisenheim am Glan: Hain, 1976); excerpts

from the *Secretum Secretorum* and the Scottish *De Reginine Principum* to create a romance that consistently foregrounds the concept of good governance.⁶ Hay does not consider his work as useful only to kings and rulers, however, stating that it will give ‘g[u]id teitcheing and exampill’ (19278) to ‘all men that richteouslie wald life’ (19277) allowing them to govern themselves with ‘vertew and iustice’ (19279).

Magic and the supernatural in the *BKA* are used to develop and confirm Alexander’s identity both as a formidable warrior and as a just ruler. Yet, as with King Arthur in *Lancelot of the Laik*, there are clear instances where supernatural events cause Alexander to experience a crisis of identity, often resulting in unreasonable reactions which do not befit the rationality required of a great emperor. For those that ‘richteouslie wald life’ (19277), magic and the supernatural in the *BKA* demonstrate what *not* to do as a ruler as much as illustrating appropriate kingly conduct. This dichotomy is the focus of this chapter. By analysing several extracts in detail,⁷ I firstly take into account how the supernatural affirms Alexander’s divine approval, and will then explore how Alexander’s contrasting reactions to harmful supernatural beings portray him as a ruler whose kingship shifts between the ideal and the flawed.

Throughout the poem, Alexander’s identity – or the threat to it – is consistently linked to the prophetic supernatural. Even before Alexander’s birth, King Philip experiences ‘ane visioun’ (69) which is a combination of *somnium* and *visio*,⁸ where a bird lays an egg on his chest, which falls to the floor and cracks to reveal ‘ane serpent stark and sture’ (80). When the serpent tries to crawl back into the egg, she finds that ‘on na wyse’ can she enter (88) and consequently dies (90).

from J2 can be found in translation in *The Romances of Alexander*, trans. Dennis M. Kratz (New York: Garland, 1991). More on the *BKA*’s sources can be found in John Cartwright, ‘Sir Gilbert Hay and the Alexander Tradition’ in *Scottish Language and Literature: Medieval and Renaissance: Fourth International Conference 1984: Proceedings*, ed. by Dietrich Strauss and Horst W. Drescher (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1986), pp. 229-39.

⁶ Supposedly written by Aristotle, the *Secretum Secretorum* was a highly influential treatise on a range of topics including statecraft and astrology, translated from Arabic into Latin during the twelfth century. *De Reginine Principum* is a Scottish guide to princely conduct dating from the late 1450s or early 1460s. See also my chapter on *King Orphius* and Henryson’s *Orpheus and Eurydice*, fn. 24, p. 74.

⁷ The full range of supernatural events in the *BKA* are so numerous and varied that they require far more space than I can devote to them here.

⁸ See my Introduction for Macrobius’ definitions of these types of dreams (p. 8).

Upon waking, Philip summons the ‘wysest clerkis’ (94) he can find, amongst whom is Aristotle, the flower of ‘clergie’ (103), who explains that Philip’s heir will conquer the whole world:

‘And quhan he sua þe wold ourconquest hes,
And wald agane cum in his cuntre,
In his maist welth and gloir þan sall he de.’
(110-112)

Notably, all subsequent prophecies in the *BKA* are variations of this first dream vision: they either inform Alexander that he is fated to conquer the world, warn him that he will die at the height of his glory, or both.

One such prophecy appears as Alexander enters Jerusalem. Upon being received with ‘devine honouris’ (4608), the Bishop of Jerusalem informs Alexander that, long before his arrival, a prophecy written by ‘Ieremye’ (4664)⁹ was revealed to him in a ‘visioun’ (4662). This *visio* not only reveals that Alexander is destined to conquer Persia, Europe and Africa (4666-8), but, most importantly for the affirmation of Alexander’s status as a divinely-approved emperor, declares that ‘To Paradise all conquest hale suld be’ (4669).¹⁰ That this prophecy is absent from Hay’s sources indicates that he, like many of the other Older Scots romance authors, saw the supernatural as a key motif for developing identity.

Throughout the *BKA*, prophecies occupy a shifting position between the pagan divine and the Christian divine which Hay constantly negotiates, recalling the liminality of the poem’s Christian

⁹ ‘Ieremye’ is presumably identifiable as St. Jeremy, an Egyptian who, along with his four companions, was martyred in 309 after he was beheaded for outwardly declaring his Christian faith during the Christian persecutions by the Roman Emperors Maximian and Galerius (r. 305-311). A link between Alexander and ‘Ieremye’ has already been established when Alexander visits the city of Stalone, later renamed Alexandria (2655), clearly setting this episode in Egypt. The city is surrounded by adders, who have wasted the lands thereabout; to combat this, Alexander raises the bones of ‘Ieremy’ (2659) from a nearby, unnamed city. When he brings the bones into the town ‘with gret deuotioun’ (2664), the ‘virtue of his [Jeremy’s] holie banes’ (2665) cause all the serpents to be ‘waistit þair at anis’ (2666). No adder or dragon troubles the region from that time forth (2662). For the story of St Jeremy, see ‘SS Elias, Jeremy and their Companions’, in *Butler’s Lives of the Saints: Complete Edition*, ed. by Herbert J. Thurston and Donald Attwater, 4 vols (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1990) I, pp. 350-51.

¹⁰ In the country of Rimorte, Alexander is told that he ‘of Paradise suld haue tribute,’ (14462), while Queen Candace mentions in a letter to Alexander that ‘all the landis vnto þe Occiane Sey/Fra Paradise, to ȝoure croun sall obey’ (14794-5).

context itself; as Anna Caughey observes, the *BKA* is placed ‘within the context of the Old and New Testaments by gesturing forward in time to Christ’s birth’.¹¹ It is therefore unsurprising that Amon, the Egyptian god whom Alexander adopts as his father following the death of King Philip, is himself placed within a Christian context,¹² and acts within this context as both guide and father figure to Alexander.¹³

Nowhere is Amon’s advisory role more important than during Alexander’s journey to the Earthly Paradise.¹⁴ In a significant move by Hay, Alexander’s success in receiving tribute from the Earthly Paradise and its consequent affirmation of his divinely-approved kingship is presented as the fulfilment of various prophecies which appear throughout the poem and are absent from Hay’s sources.¹⁵ Through these prophecies, Alexander knows that he is destined to receive tribute from this marvellous land, but is acutely aware of the dangers he will face on the way: he must traverse regions crawling with dangerous beasts, without access to fresh water (16048-51). Despite these perils, Alexander decides that he is ‘Na wourthy to be callit ane emprioure’ (16068) if he does not attempt the journey.

Having accepted the challenges of this landscape as a means to prove himself as the greatest emperor on earth, Alexander prays to various pagan gods, including Amon and Jupiter, asking them for ‘counsale’ (16075). That night, Amon appears to Alexander in a dream which is clearly an *oraculum*, in which he ‘betaucht till him [Alexander] a swerde’ (16078); with this sword,

¹¹ Anna Caughey, ‘Als for the worthynes of þe romance’: Exploitation of Genre in the *Buk of King Alexander the Conqueror* in Laura Ashe et al., *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 2010), pp. 139-158 (p. 147).

¹² Amon’s reorientation within this Christian context may originally have been more explicit in the poem’s lost beginning.

¹³ It is worth noting that Amon’s advisory role comes into prominence after Aristotle, who has been Alexander’s tutor and advisor since the king was a child, leaves to return to Greece (9350).

¹⁴ This episode is derived from two sources: the twelfth-century *Alexandri Magni Iter ad Paradisum*, and the *Voyage au Paradis Terrestre*, a thirteenth-century French version of the story which was, as Cartwright notes, ‘frequently interpolated into Alexander de Paris’ version of the *Roman d’Alexandre*. See John Cartwright, ‘Sir Gilbert Hay’s Alexander: A Study in Transformations’ *Medium Aevum*, 60, 1 (1991), 61-72 (p. 61).

¹⁵ Cartwright, ‘A Study in Transformations’, p. 65; Caughey, ‘Exploitation of Genre’, p. 155.

Alexander should travel the way ‘that Adame come fra Paradise’ (16080).¹⁶ Following Amon’s precise instructions, Alexander is able to approach the walls of the Earthly Paradise, but cannot see an entrance. Crucially, he recognises that no one may ‘fynd the way to past vp to that hicht,/Bot gif it war throw grace of God almycht’ (16238-9). Amon is once more aligned with the Christian divine as he appears in another *oraculum* and bids Alexander to draw his ship near to the walls, while remaining in prayer (16241-3). That Alexander is ‘vpliftit in þe are’ (16258) upon following this advice and is allowed to glimpse ‘the cirkill of Paradise’ (16264) confirms his status as a ruler with God’s blessing.¹⁷ Furthermore, it is ‘ane angell’ (16296) who presents Alexander with his tribute of an apple which will ‘turne hewe’ (16301) at the moment of his death, rather than the old man clothed in white garments who presents Alexander with the apple in the *Voyage au Paradis Terrestre*.¹⁸ Once again, Hay has extended the connection between Alexander and God’s favourable view of his kingship.

The remainder of this chapter investigates Alexander’s contrasting reactions to two different appearances of harmful supernatural beings: the Poisoned Maiden and the devious spirit in the Vale Perilous. While Alexander’s encounter with the Poisoned Maiden portrays him as a victim of lust whose desires nearly result in his death, his journey through the Vale Perilous portrays him as the epitome of wisdom and rationality, illustrating the power of the supernatural to both stabilise and destabilise Alexander’s kingly identity.

The Poisoned Maiden, sent by the Queen of ‘Middle Ynde’ in revenge for the death of Clarus, her cousin (9302), enters Alexander’s court just before Aristotle leaves for Greece. Having been fed only serpent’s flesh and dragon’s blood her whole life (9289-90), she is unmistakeably

¹⁶ This vision is reminiscent of the dream vision that appears to William Wallace in Harry’s *Wallace*, in which he is presented with a sword by St. Andrew. See further my chapter on *The Bruce* and *The Wallace*, pp. 19-26, esp. pp. 23-5.

¹⁷ Cartwright points out that, unlike in the other accounts of the Earthly Paradise, Alexander is allowed to see within the wall (‘A Study in Transformations’, p. 68). This decision by the *BKA*-poet serves to further emphasise Alexander’s divinely-appointed kingship.

¹⁸ Cartwright, ‘A Study in Transformations’, p. 68.

supernatural, yet like Medea is placed firmly in the courtly world.¹⁹ Not only is she described in epithets that emphasise her great beauty, being of ‘þe propirrest portratoure/That euer was formit of þe goddis of nature’ (9293-4), but she is also linked with the possession of land; in attempting to seduce Alexander, she promises that he can ‘[hald] hir landis’ (9299). Indeed, her attempts are nearly successful as Alexander, who is ‘Richt amorus of ladyis fare of face’ (9292) perceives only her physical beauty and fails to ‘read’ her body.²⁰ With the king figuratively blinded by lust and bereft of rationality,²¹ it is left to Aristotle to recognise that ‘hir ene was twynk[land] as þe fyre’ (9304), provoking his suspicion and leading him to suggest that a prisoner is sent to sleep with the maiden; he is found dead the next morning (9339-40). Fearing that her deadly combination of beauty and malignant supernatural characteristics will cause more disruption to Alexander’s court, she is ‘birnt’ (9345).²²

As outlined in the ‘Regiment of Princes’ section of the poem (9464-10107), which has its source in the *Secretum Secretorum* but also contains verbal and thematic resonances with the Scottish *De Reginime Principum*,²³ successful kings should be pious (9912), willing to defend their subjects (9613) and ‘prudent in all ... governyng’ (10025). Alexander demonstrates all of these qualities in response to the otherworldly hazards of the Vale Perilous, where it is his rationality and wisdom, rather than his military prowess, that are essential for his success. At the Vale’s entrance, those wishing to proceed with a host of men are warned that one man amongst them must volunteer to die, henceforth saving the lives of his companions (14131-2). Since Alexander has led his followers there, he nominates himself for this sacrifice (14155), allowing his men to pass through unscathed and thereby fulfilling the role of defender of his subjects. Upon entering the Vale,

¹⁹ See my chapter on the *Scottish Troy Book*, pp. 35-42.

²⁰ Dindimus, King of the Brahmins and a vociferous critic of Alexander’s kingship, later denounces Alexander’s lustfulness, which ‘birnand ... contenualy’ (12955).

²¹ By this point, Alexander is married to Roxanen, daughter of King Dares.

²² Across all of the Older Scots romances I discuss in this thesis, the Poisoned Maiden is the only woman with supernatural qualities who antagonises the hero.

²³ Sally Mapstone, ‘The Scots *Buke of Phisnomy* and Sir Gilbert Hay’, in *The Renaissance in Scotland: Studies in Literature, Religion, History and Culture Offered to John Durkan*, ed. by A. A. MacDonald et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 1-44 (pp. 21-2).

Alexander is beset by a tempest which is overtly linked to the demonic supernatural through the ‘feyndis’ that fly within its clouds (14190), but soon dissipates it through praying to God (14230-1). These demons are not the only supernatural beings Alexander encounters, however.

Proceeding onwards, he meets:

... ane hidduous gast,
Ane wikked sprete, was closit in a serpent,
And in ane roche syne be enchantiment
He was inclosit with ane subtell gyn,
That nane mycht lous bot þai þat put him in;
(14240-4)

Announcing that Alexander is the only person who can free it (14249),²⁴ the spirit informs him that it will safely guide him through the Vale upon its release (14250-2). Alexander is clearly dubious about this (14260), but does free it and allows it to lead him to the Vale’s exit (14287-92). Before the spirit can indulge its ‘wikked’ nature, however, Alexander returns to the contraption in which it was imprisoned, charging it to resume its captivity if it wishes to avoid the wrath of the gods (14300). As the spirit reluctantly does so, Alexander confirms that it is his knowledge and rationality that have overcome its fiendish cunning, revealing that he heard ‘wise men teichand euer/Quha feyndis ane ewill sprete bundin, lous him neuer’ (14309-10).²⁵

However, when Alexander is confronted by his own mortality his identity as a rational ruler is once more jeopardised. Noticing that the apple given to him as a tribute from the Earthly Paradise has become ‘changit of culloure’ (17852), it is weighed and can only be raised with a pile of clay (17864). In stark contrast to Alexander’s current worldly riches, this ‘lenth of erde’ (17869), enough to bury him, will be all that Alexander requires in death. The prophetic token of the apple, which once signified Alexander’s divine approval but now acts as a *memento mori*, forces him into an irrational state so severe that he ‘Was like he had bene tane in extasy’ (17873).

²⁴ The same motif is used in *Clariodus*, where Clariodus successfully removes an arrow from the wounded knight Sir Brounar de la Haunt and is informed that, though many knights have attempted this before him, ‘none of them mycht it remeid bot ȝe’ (IV, 2155). See further my chapter on *Clariodus*, pp. 43-51.

²⁵ See my chapter on *The Bruce* and *The Wallace*, pp. 19-26, esp. pp. 22-3.

From this point, Alexander's downfall progresses so rapidly that the romance becomes closely aligned with the tragic genre.²⁶ Though his citizens praise him almost to the point of hyperbole as "The wall of wisdome and of hie prudence,/Of nobilnes, vertew, and excellencē" (18620-1) upon his death,²⁷ the remaining days of his life are overshadowed by his suicide attempt, an act perceived as the ultimate abandonment of 'hie governance' (18191). Indeed, Alexander is only prevented from carrying out his intention by his wife Roxanen's 'swete langage' (18225). This contrasting of Alexander's complete loss of rationality - and with it his status as an effective leader -with the view held by his followers and citizens that he is the greatest emperor the world will ever see encapsulates the role of magic and the supernatural in the *BKA* in miniature..It acts to confirm his status as a divinely-appointed emperor who at times is the epitome of wisdom while at the same time destabilising this identity through Alexander's immoderate reactions to the otherworldly. In the *BKA*, the supernatural itself occupies a hybrid position between the pagan and the Christian, mirroring the text's shifts between genre and confirming the poem as a text brimming with ambiguities that are ripe for further analysis.

²⁶ Caughey, p. 154. In a more recent article, Caughey and Wingfield cite Alexander's journey to the Earthly Paradise and his consequent acquisition of the prophetic apple as the turning point where his conquests begin to be presented more negatively. See Anna Caughey and Emily Wingfield, 'Conquest and Imperialism: Medieval Scottish Contexts for Alexander's 'Journey to Paradise'', in Catherine Gaullier-Bougassas and Margaret Bridges, *Les Voyages d'Alexandre au paradis Orient et Occident, regards croisés* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 463-84.

²⁷ It should be noted that the public opinion of Alexander will not have been influenced by his moments of irrationality, as they only occur in front of a select few members of his followers and court and can therefore be assigned to the realm of the private.

CHAPTER TWO

The Bruce and The Wallace

The question of genre has pervaded studies of John Barbour's *Bruce* (c. 1375-77) and Blind Harry's *Wallace* (c. 1476-8) for many years,¹ and as such the reader might be surprised to find these two texts included in a study of Older Scots romances.² Most critics, however, have recognised that both poems do contain romance elements, one of the most noticeable of which is the presence of magic and the supernatural.

In *The Bruce* and *The Wallace*, the function of the otherworldly is heavily concerned with national identity, providing an angle for analysing the supernatural which is not as prominent elsewhere in the Older Scots romances. Though they have rightly been studied as separate poems with their own merits, I here discuss the two poems together, both because of their shifting position between genres and because they share a focus on one type of supernatural occurrence in particular: prophecy.

Indeed, the two texts even share the same prophet, a figure named Thomas of Erceldoune. There is some evidence that he historically existed during the late thirteenth century and indeed that he was widely held to have composed prophetic verses.³ Though Thomas himself is a

¹ This is summarised by Grace G. Wilson, who states: 'First impressions might lead us to call the *Bruce* a verse biography-chronicle-romance-epic and the *Wallace* a verse biography-hagiography-romance-epic'. See Grace G. Wilson, *Barbour's Bruce and Harry's Wallace: Complements, Compensations and Conventions*, *SSL*, 25, 1 (1990), 189-201 (p.197). It should be noted too that *The Bruce* consciously describes itself as a romance before the main narrative begins: 'The romanys now begynnys her' (I, 446). The edition used is John Barbour, *The Bruce*, ed. by A.A.M Duncan (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1997).

² *The Bruce* survives in two manuscripts: the incomplete Cambridge, St John's College, MS G23 (which begins at IV, 57 and dates from 1487) and the complete National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates' 19.2.2, dating from 1489 (Duncan, p. 32).

³ See Cyril Edwards, 'Thomas of Erceldoune (fl. late 13th cent.)', *ODNB*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8833>, accessed 7 Sept 2014] for a description of the historical Thomas. Emily Lyle thinks it likely that Thomas 'did compose prophetic verses and that some of the more than fifty oral prophecies ascribed to him contain reminiscences of his compositions'. See Emily Lyle, *Fairies and Folk: Approaches to the Scottish Ballad Tradition* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2007), p. 18. The late-fourteenth to early-fifteenth century Middle

shadowy figure, what is clear is that he is inextricably associated with the Scottish nation. When the Bishop of St. Andrew's receives a letter detailing Bruce's murder of John Comyn, his desire that 'Thomas prophecy/Off Hersildoune soll veryfyd be' (II, 86-7) by Bruce becoming king and having 'this land all in leding' (II, 90) acts to legitimise Comyn's death: had Comyn remained alive, he would have impeded Bruce's rise to kingship. Soon afterwards, Thomas' prophecy is indeed 'veryfyd' as Bruce is crowned king (II, 179-81), the revered Scottish prophet lending his prophetic authority to the revered Scottish king.

In *The Wallace*, Thomas himself appears in the narrative, visiting Fail Monastery whilst Wallace is imprisoned for slaughtering several Englishmen in the town of Ayr. Though rumours abound that Wallace is dead, Thomas reveals that he is in fact still alive and even goes on to prophesy about Wallace's destiny:

'Forsuth, or he deces,
Mony thousand in feild soll mak thar end.
Off this regioune he soll the Sothroun send,
And Scotland thris he soll bryng to the pes.'
(II, 346-349)

McDiarmid's assertion that, like Bruce, Wallace had to be a hero of prophecy in order to compete with Bruce is supported by Hary's direct comparison of the two men in the lines following Thomas' prophecy.⁴ Hary maintains that Wallace 'was als gud ... /As off his handis, and bauldar in battaill' (II, 354-5) than Bruce, and that Bruce's reputation only surpasses Wallace's because, as King of Scotland, Bruce was more well-known. Like Bruce, Thomas'

English romance *Thomas of Erceldoune* contains references to the Anglo-Scottish Wars of Independence, but none of his prophecies mention that Bruce will be king. As Victoria Flood notes, 'Here Thomas functions as a Scottish Merlin, placing prophecy at the centre of history much in the manner of Merlin in the English *Brut*' (Victoria Flood, 'Exile and Return: The Development of Political Prophecy on the Borders of England, c.1136-1450s' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 2013), p. 139. See also *The Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune*, ed. by J.A.H. Murray, EETS, OS 61 (London: Trübner & Co., 1875) and Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*.

⁴ McDiarmid points to a passage in the *Ballet of the Nine Nobles*, which contains a passage wherein Bruce vanquishes Edward I twice – therefore, Wallace needed to save Scotland thrice (ii, p. 148). The edition used is Blind Hary, *Hary's Wallace*, ed. by Matthew P. McDiarmid, 2 vols, STS, 4th Series, 4-5 (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1968-69).

prophecy and his reputation as a soothsayer inextricably linked with Scottish national identity confirms Wallace's destiny as the saviour of Scotland, and Hary's inventiveness here even sets up the prophecy so that, in its fulfilment, Wallace can surpass Bruce as the most pre-eminent Scottish national hero.⁵

Besides the reference to Thomas of Erceldoune made by the Bishop of St Andrews, all the other successful prophecies in *The Bruce* are linked with the divine supernatural and are almost always connected with prophetic women who are given foreknowledge by God.⁶ As Barbour himself contends, no one has knowledge of 'thingis that ar to fall' (I, 130) but God, condemning human attempts at divination as 'na certane demyng' (IV, 717). When Bruce is staying on the Isle of Arran, his hostess makes 'a wyttring' about his future plans (IV, 642). She tells him that, while it is only a 'schort tyme' (IV, 656) until Bruce will overcome his foes, he will have to suffer 'fele anoyis' (IV, 559) before his plans come to fruition. Bruce is comforted by her words, but has 'gret ferly/How scho suld wyt it sekyrly' (IV, 672-3), unless she was inspired 'Off Him that all thing .../ Seys' (IV, 679-80). Of course, the hostesses' prophecy comes true, thus confirming that her foresight has God's approval and, in turn, giving divine approval to Bruce's identity as king.

A prophecy more explicitly connected with divine inspiration is credited to St Margaret (c. 1045-1093), wife of Malcolm III and queen of Scotland until her death in 1093. Barbour tells us that she 'Wyst in hyr tyme throu reveling/Off Him that knawis and wate all thing' (X, 743-4) an event which would happen over 200 years after her death: the assault made on Edinburgh Castle by William Francis and Bruce's key ally, the Earl of Randolph, who scale the side of the castle and capture it from the English (X, 643-706). As a symbol of this 'prophecy' (X, 757), Margaret

⁵ Wallace does indeed save Scotland three times: after the battle of Stirling Bridge (VII, 1303), after leaving France for the first time (XI, l. 125) and after leaving France a second time (XII, 959). Thomas' prophecy is also confirmed through references to several other prophecies throughout the narrative: English clerks are said to be aware how 'a Wallace suld putt thame of Scotland.' (I, 352); while the messenger who invites Wallace to stay at the court of the King of France for the first time mentions that 'it is red in prophecy beforne/In happy tym for Scotland thow was born' (IX, l27-8).

⁶ See my Introduction, p. 7.

leaves an image depicting a man climbing a ladder up a castle wall, with the words ‘Gardys vous de Francais’ written above it (X, 748-52). As Barbour acknowledges, these events develop ‘rycht as scho [St Margaret] said’ (X, 759), confirming that her foresight has been sanctioned by God and, consequently, lending further divine approval to Bruce’s efforts to reclaim the Scottish kingdom.⁷

In contrast to Bruce’s divinely-approved kingship is the figure of Edward I, who becomes associated with demonic spirits. As the English king lies dying in the village of Burgh-by-Sands, he is dismayed to discover the village’s name (IV, 205), having mistakenly believed that he would live until he had taken the ‘burch of Jerusalem’ (IV, 209). The use of demonically-inspired divination – an act linked to Edward in the rumour that he has his own ‘spyryt’ (IV, 220) – is condemned by Barbour in an anecdote which exemplifies the inherently deceptive nature of demons. He relates the story of Count Ferrand of Flanders’ mother, identified as a figurehead of demonic magic through her ability to raise Satan (IV, 242-3), invoking him to tell her the outcome of an upcoming battle between her son and the King of France. From the outset, Satan’s answer is conceived as ‘dissayt’ (IV, 247). Though he informs Ferrand’s mother that the king will fall in battle, and her son will enter Paris followed by a host of men (IV, 249-59), things do not proceed how she expects. Encouraging Ferrand to speed to the battle in the belief that his victory is certain (IV, 276-7), she later hears that the French king did indeed fall, but was helped back onto his horse; moreover, Ferrand has entered Paris not as victor, but as prisoner (IV, 278-85). When she questions Satan about his answer, he insists that his prognostications

⁷ As McDiarmid and Stevenson note, this anecdote originates from the Latin prose chronicle of Guillaume le Breton, the thirteenth-century *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. John Barbour, *Barbour's Bruce*, ed. by Matthew P. McDiarmid and James A. C. Stevenson, 3 vols, STS, 4th Series, 12, 13, 15 (Edinburgh: STS, 1980-5), I (p. 76). Furthermore, the theme of mothers with supernatural powers also appears in Hay’s *Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror*. In direct opposition to the Count Ferrand tale, King Dare’s mother knows through her ‘divinitie’ (6591) that Alexander is destined to conquer the world, warning her son that Alexander’s victory has been preordained by the gods (6608). Free from the deception of demons, her prophecy is fulfilled as Dare loses the battle (6705).

were correct (IV, 301). More importantly for Edward's identity as a foolish king, we are told that his 'cas' (IV, 307) is comparable to Ferrand's mother's mislaid belief in demons.

Edward's association with the demonic in *The Bruce* is mirrored in Hary's conception of the English, whom he presents as devils ('with wrang thir dewillis suld bruk our land', IV, 407). Fawdoun, too, whom Wallace beheads and who is suspected of being treacherous - he is 'haldyn at suspiciooun' (V, 115) - is explicitly linked with the demonic following his death. In the hours following Fawdoun's beheading, Wallace's men set up camp at Gask Hall, where Wallace hears horns blowing at increasingly louder volumes. When Wallace investigates the source of the noise, he is met with a gruesome sight: 'With-out the dur Fawdoun was him beforne,/As till his sycht his awne hed in his hand' (V, 192-3). Fawdoun's demonic status is repeatedly emphasised throughout this scene; when he throws his severed head at Wallace, Wallace is instantly convinced that he is facing 'sum dewill' (V, 200). Interestingly, Wallace, having been presented with a supernatural challenge, does not seek to overcome it but instead flees, leaping fifteen feet from a window (V, 204). This may seem strange considering Wallace's status as a paragon of 'worschipe' (IV, 205) and a formidable warrior, yet this episode is consequently revealed to be a hallucination 'meant to lure men to their destruction'.⁸ This is confirmed when Wallace, having believed he had seen Fawdoun set fire to Gask Hall (V, 207-9), is later told by a woman to return to the Hall to see if any of his men remain there (V, 338). Curious to see whether it really was 'all in fyr' (V, 342), he returns there and finds it still intact, confirming that Wallace has not failed to defeat the demonic supernatural but instead has been subjected to its disturbing psychological effects.

Wallace's further dealings with the supernatural are far more positive. After being made Guardian of Scotland and henceforth reaching the pinnacle of his identity as a national hero (V, 768), his position as the foremost man in the realm is confirmed through the divine supernatural

⁸ McDiarmid, (ii, p. 169) refers to Dante's *Inferno* (c. Xxxiii. 31-3) as a possible source in which 'those that make a treacherous end' are liable to be possessed by demons following their death.

in the form of a dream vision, the content of which is classifiable as a *somnium* and a *visio*.⁹ Falling asleep in Monkton Church, Wallace dreams that an aged man gives Wallace ‘a sword of ‘burly burnist steill’ (VII, 75), with a pommel of topaz and a ‘hilt and hand all gliterand lik the glas’ (VII, 77-8).¹⁰ Next, the old man guides Wallace to a mountaintop, where he sees a ‘fellowune fyr’ (VII, 86) consuming the land. He then watches a queen descend before him, bathed in light ‘full brycht and scheyne’ (VII, 90), who confirms his destiny as the divinely-appointed saviour of Scotland: ‘Thow art grantyt be the gret god abuff/Till help pepill that sufferis mekill wrang’ (VII, 96-7). Before departing, she warns Wallace not to ‘tak redres off this mys’ (VII, 103), but assures him that his reward for saving Scotland will be ‘lestand blys’ in heaven (VII, 104). Finally, she leaves Wallace with a book written in letters of brass, gold and silver (VII, 109-112), at which point Wallace awakens.

Aware that the dream is a symbolic one, Wallace finds a clerk who, though he is worried that he may ‘say off mys’ (VII, 120), attempts to interpret the dream anyway. He explains that it was St. Andrew who gave Wallace the sword (VII, 24) – again linking Wallace’s nationalism with divine approval – and reveals that the mountain represents knowledge of wrongs that must be righted, while the fire represents bad tidings spreading across the land (VII, 126-7). Identifying the queen as Mary due to the “brychtnes scho brocht” (VII, 131), he goes on to divulge the meaning behind the book presented to Wallace: as a whole, it represents the land of Scotland, which Wallace ‘mon rademe’ (VII, 142), with the brass, gold and silver lettering representing, respectively, the oppression of war, Wallace’s victory in arms that he will gain through God’s grace, and the

⁹ See my Introduction for Macrobius’ definitions of these types of dreams (p. 8).

¹⁰ Being granted a sword by an old man recalls the passage after Wallace has recovered from his imprisonment in Ayr. In a nook of the house where his nurse lives, Wallace finds ‘A rousty suerd’ (II, 372) which ‘Ane agyt man it left quhen he was dede’ (II, 375). He draws the blade, finding that it ‘bitt weill’ (II, 376), and, though it is in bad condition, Wallace can tell that it is made of steel (II, 377). He decides to use the sword ‘Quhill bettir cum’ (II, 379). As McDiarmid notes (*Wallace*, ii, p. 200), in the *Alliterative Morte Arthur* Arthur is given a ‘brande with full bright hiltes’ (3358). See *King Arthur’s Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte Arthur*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, TEAMS Middle English Text Series (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994).

reward of heavenly bliss that awaits him (VII, 144-50). That the clerk has correctly interpreted this prophetic vision - with its implications that Wallace is a man chosen by God to save Scotland – is confirmed at the end of the text, when we are told that Wallace’s soul ascended ‘to lestand blys ... for euirrmayr’ (XII, 1406) after his death.

Indeed, the method in which Wallace’s blissful afterlife (and, by extension, his identity as a martyr) is affirmed is in itself supernatural. Wishing to prove that Wallace ‘has his heretage’ in heaven (XII, 1236), Hary relates a story told by ‘wys clerkys’ (XII, 1238) in which ‘a monk off Bery abbay’ (XII, 1239) is asked by his younger fellow-monk whether, upon his impending death, he can come back again and show him the reward that God has granted him for his good deeds; the dying monk responds that he will do this if possible (XII, 1245-50).¹¹ In the very hour he dies, he is allowed to come back, and explains that he is currently in purgatory (XII, 1263), but is due to pass into heaven. Before he can do so, however, he must wait for two others to enter before him, one of whom is ‘a gret slaar off men’ (XII, 1278) who is ‘kep to martyr in London toun,’ (XII, 1279). Though the young monk points out that slaughter is abominable to God (XII, 1283), the spirit-monk asserts that that Wallace will enter heaven ‘For rychtwys wer that he tuk apon hand’ (XII, 1286). As a sign that his tale is true, the ‘spreyt’ (XII, 1296) explains that on the day Wallace is killed, the bells of the abbey will ring for half an hour, which does indeed occur (XII, 1296-99), confirming once and for all Wallace’s position as a divinely-sanctioned Scottish saviour. In this text, as in the *Bruce*, God’s approval is essential to the idea of

¹¹ Notably, John Lydgate was frequently referred to in Scotland as ‘the monk of Bery’. See William Sweet, ‘Lydgate and Scottish Lydgateans’, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2010). The source for this tale has been identified by McDiarmid (ii, p. 277) as the hart’s tale in the late-fifteenth-century *Tales of the Fyre Bestes*, which describes how, on the same day Wallace was martyred, a hermit desired to see how souls fared in the afterlife. A similar story features in the mid-fourteenth century *Gast of Gy*. The widow of Gy, a burgess who has recently died, becomes terrified by strange noises at her home. Seeking help from the nearby Dominican convent, the Dominican prior visits the widow’s house and converses with the spirit of Gy about the nature of Purgatory. Asked by the prior when his suffering in Purgatory will end, Gy assures him that he will pass on to Heaven by Easter. When representatives of the pope return at this time, they are unable to converse with him, surmising that Gy has now proceeded to heaven. See *The Gast of Gy: Eine englische Dichtung des 14. Jahrhunderts nebst ihrer lateinischen Quelle De spiritu Guidonis*, ed. by Gustav Schleich, (Palaestra 1., Berlin: Mayer and Müller, 1898).

becoming a national hero worthy of leading Scotland in its times of greatest peril, and it is through the Christian supernatural – particularly in the form of prophecies – that this approval is most clearly expressed.

CHAPTER THREE

Lancelot of the Laik

The anonymous *Lancelot of the Laik* (c. 1460-79) is one of only two surviving Arthurian Older Scots romances (the other being *Golagros and Gavane*) and has its source in the thirteenth-century French prose romance *Lancelot du Lac*,¹ which is followed closely except, significantly, where the Scottish poet introduces a great deal more astrology than is in his source, as we shall see.

Though incomplete, the prominence of prophetic visions and their conspicuous links to the concept of kingship in the text makes it worthy of a place for any study of the supernatural in Older Scots romance. As in *The Wallace*, the importance of being able to correctly interpret prophetic dreams is directly related to the heroes of these texts understanding how their identities are subject to change. In the case of *Lancelot of the Laik*, the dreams which appear to King Arthur are, initially, unable to be accurately interpreted, leading to a period in which Arthur is temporarily bereft of the means to restore his status as an effective king.²

Even from the beginning of Book 1, Arthur is portrayed as an inadequate ruler. Having ‘sojornyt well long’ (I, 348) with his court at Carlisle, Arthur’s knights are ‘anoit all at the abiding thare’ (I,

¹ The edition of *Lancelot of the Laik* used here is *Lancelot of the Laik and Sir Tristrem*, ed. by Alan Lupack, TEAMS Middle English Text Series (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994). The edition of *Lancelot du Lac* is *Lancelot of the Lake*, trans. by Corin Corley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). The original French version can be found in *Lancelot du Lac: the Non-Cyclic Old French Prose Romance*, ed. by Elspeth Kennedy, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

² Notably, *Lancelot of the Laik* begins with a prologue, absent from the French source, which features a dream as part of the text’s frame narrative. In it, the author of the text is charged by the messenger of the God of Love (who appears in bird form) to write a ‘trety’ (145) ‘Of love ore armys or of sum othir thing’ (147) for his lady, who has, thus far, been paying him little attention. The messenger also advises him to write something which ‘soundith not oneto no hevyness/Bot oneto gladness and to lusteness’ (149-50). Critics have shown divided opinions on how far the subject matter of the poem fits in with this advice, with Archibald contending that the poem ‘does seem to lose sight of its main theme and purpose for long sections’. See Elizabeth Archibald, ‘*Lancelot of the Laik*: Sources, Genre, Reception’, in Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan eds., *The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend* (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 2005), pp. 71-82 (p. 78). Though the dream vision prologue was an undoubtedly conventional method of beginning a medieval poem, the fact that the *Lancelot*-poet chooses to employ this technique helps to reiterate the central role that dreams play in the main text.

351); they can find ‘none aventure’ (I, 350) and, consequently, their own knightly identities are threatened as they cannot engage in quests to enhance their honour and prestige. It is Sir Kay, rather than Arthur himself, who suggests removing to Camelot, a place where the court can once more recover its identity as its residents are ‘wont to heryng of armys day be day’ (I, 358).

It is amidst the background of this worrying lack of authority from Arthur that he is subjected to prophetic visions.³ The night he agrees to journey to Camelot, Arthur is beset with ‘an aperans’ (I, 364) in which ‘It semyth that of al his hed the hore/Of fallith and maid desolat’ (I, 365-6).⁴ Naturally, Arthur is worried by the dream and is unable to rest properly (I, 368) but seeks no counsel for the time being. The next night, however, he experiences another dream which is rather more disturbing, in which ‘His uombe out fallith uith his hoil syde/Apone the ground and liting hym besid’ (I, 375-6). As Joanna Martin suggests, this dismemberment illustrates ‘the possible disintegration of the body politic, reflecting the ‘fractured bonds’ between Arthur and his subjects,⁵ but crucially Arthur fails to realise that his dream is a consequence of his ineffective kingship. Furthermore, the vision is initially relegated to the realm of fantasy, with Queen Guinevere telling him that ‘To dremys ... shuld no man have respek’ (I, 381) and the first clerk he consults informing him that ‘no record [proof] lyith to such thing’ (I, 388).

Despite these sceptical remarks, Arthur is convinced that his dreams have prophetic significance and is quite correct - they can indeed be classified according to Macrobius’ dream theory as a

³ The manuscript context of *Lancelot of the Laik* also reveals a concern with prophecy and prophetic visions. Surviving uniquely in Cambridge University Library, MS Kk. 1.5 – a manuscript made up of a series of originally separate booklets – part 4 of the manuscript contains prophecies covering the Anglo-Scots and Anglo-French wars dating from around the thirteenth century, some of which, rather relevantly for *Lancelot of the Laik*, discuss how the moral health of the King affects the realm. See further Wingfield, ‘The Manuscript and Print Contexts of Older Scots Romance’, particularly pp. 149-50.

⁴ A search for ‘aperans’ in *DOST* reveals further associations with the supernatural in other Older Scots texts. In William Dunbar’s poem ‘Ane peralous seiknes is vane prosperite’ he refers to ‘the dirk apperance of astronomie’ (12, Poem 82) in William Dunbar, *The Poems of William Dunbar*, ed. Priscilla Bawcutt, 2 vols (Glasgow: The Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1998), I (1998). See also ‘apperance’, n., 3., ‘Apparent form; aspect’ [<http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/apperance>, accessed 15/09/2014].

⁵ Martin, *Kingship and Love*, p. 44. She also notes that Arthur’s dreams in the original French are less gruesome. In the first dream, Arthur loses his hair, in the second dream, his fingers, and in the final dream, his toes.

combination of *somnium* and *visio*, as we shall see.⁶ Anxious to know what the dreams portend, he summons the best clerks in the land to Camelot. When they consult their astrological books - ‘The bookis longyne to ther artis set’ (I, 433) - to help them calculate the positions of the planets, they find that:

...the planetis disposicioune,
The wich thei fond ware wonder evill yset
The samyne nyght the King his sweven met.⁷
(I, 438-40)

Like the author of the Scottish *Buke of the Seryne Sagis* found in the Asloan Manuscript (National Library of Scotland, MS 16500), the *Lancelot*-poet seems fascinated by astrology, and, in a similar vein to the *Sagis*-poet, portrays it as ‘a proper and useful field of scholarly endeavour’.⁸ As stated elsewhere, medieval attitudes towards astrology were complex and ambivalent. Indeed, Saunders remarks that ‘the crucial issue was how far the study of the stars and related natural forces might reveal destiny, and then, whether destiny or nature might be altered.’⁹ Often, medieval scholars associated astrology with demonic influence, and Robbins comments that *Lancelot of the Laik* ‘contains an interesting combination of astrological prediction and what Aquinas, following Isidore [of Seville], categorises as divination by dreams, and attributes generally to demonic

⁶ See my Introduction for Macrobius’ definitions of these types of dreams (p. 8).

⁷ A comparison with *Lancelot do Lac* here reveals that astrology is absent in the French text. It is merely stated that the clerks ‘tested the power of their wisdom for nine days’ (M. XLIVa, 261), rather than making reference to astrological instruments and books. This new emphasis on astrology is particularly interesting given the debate about whether *Lancelot of the Laik* was written specifically as advice for King James III (r. 1460-88) (see fn. 15, in this chapter, pp. 32-3). One of James’ favourites, William Scheves, Archbishop of St Andrews from 1478-91 and a court physician, was greatly interested in astrology and was highly resented amongst James’ councillors, though most likely because of his ‘close relationship with James III in matters of royal policy’ rather than his astrological pursuits. See Norman MacDougall, *James III* (John Donald: Edinburgh, 2009), p.148.

⁸ Mary Robbins, ‘Medieval Astrology and *The Buke of the Seryne Sagis*’, *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 38, 4 (2002) 420-34 (p. 420).

⁹ Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 106.

influence',¹⁰ though I go on to argue that the prophetic dream which appears to Arthur is explicitly presented as a sign from God, and any demonic influence is here completely absent.

Having made their astrological calculations, the clerks are terrified to tell Arthur of their findings; Arthur is presented as almost tyrannical as the clerks are in 'dreid of his danger' (I, 444) and in fear 'of the Kingis myght' (I, 461). The clerks' fears of Arthur's tyranny are soon proved to be well-founded, as Arthur, enraged that they are so reluctant to inform him of their conclusion, threatens five of them with being burnt at the stake (I, 474) and threatens to condemn the other five to the gallows (I, 475). While they are clear that only God can know what will come to pass ('For thing to cum preservith it allan/To Hyme the wich is every thing certann', I, 487-8), they inform Arthur:

'All erdly honore ye nedist most forgo
And them the wich ye most affy intyll
Shal failye yow, magré of ther will;
(I,498-500)

Naturally, Arthur is shocked by this revelation that his identity as a renowned king is in jeopardy, and beseeches the clerks to tell him whether there is 'Of possibilitee fore to reforme/His desteny' (I, 505-6). At this crucial juncture, the clerks' failure to interpret the true meaning of Arthur's dream encourages the king to remain in a state of apathy and lethargy. They announce that "Thar is nothing sal sucour nor reskew;/Your worldly honore nedis most adew" (I, 517-8), informing Arthur that his only hope of redemption is 'through the watrye lyone, and ek fyne,/On through the liche and ek the wattir syne,/And through the conseill of the flour' (I, 519-

¹⁰ Robbins, p. 430. After discussing various types of divination, including astrology, Isidore concludes that 'In all these the craft of demons has issued from a certain pestilential alliance of humans and evil angels' (VII, IX, 31, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney et al., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)). Aquinas, too, contends that 'all divination results from the demons' operation'. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 'Treatise on the Cardinal Virtues', trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), Question 95, Article 2. Online at Christian Classics Ethereal Library [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.SS_Q95_A2.html, accessed 16th July 2014].

21). They freely admit that they cannot read these enigmatic symbols, stating that ‘God wot/What this shude menn, for mor ther-of we not’ (I, 521-2).

Arthur’s downfall begins almost immediately; the day after the clerks’ revelation, a messenger sent by a rival knight named Galiot (Galehot in the French) arrives at Arthur’s court. In the messenger’s pronouncement, Galiot is presented as a foil to Arthur, and possesses the worship which Arthur is now at risk of losing: he is ‘...the worthiest that in world is kend/That levyth now of his tyme and age,/Of manhed, wisdome, and of hie curag’ (I, 548-50). More worryingly for Arthur, Galiot is now claiming overlordship, with the messenger informing the king that Galiot ‘...bidis yow your londe/Ye hald hym ovr, without impedymant/Or of hym holde, and if tribut and rent’ (I, 552-4).¹¹ Arthur’s response – that he holds land from God alone, and no other – results in a declaration of war from Galiot.

It is at this point that the scale of Arthur’s loss of identity is made explicit. When Arthur musters an army which Galiot considers to be ‘of febil myght’ (I, 743), possibly indicating that Arthur’s subjects are apathetic about supporting the king militarily, Galiot refuses to ride out in person to face this host and we are told that:

Hyme thought that it his worschip wold degrade
If he hymself in propir persone raide
Enarmyt ayane so few menyé
As it was told Arthur fore to bee.
(I, 749-752)

After Arthur’s army engages Galiot’s forces and are left close to defeat, Galiot again states that it is ‘no worschip to ws ware/In conquerynge of hym nor of his londe’ (I, 1158-9), consequently deciding that he will give Arthur a year to build up his strength and become a foe worth fighting. Such is the effect of Arthur’s loss of status as an honourable king and knight that it now

¹¹ This is an interesting reversal of positions from the other Older Scots Arthurian romance, *Golagros and Gavane* (dating from before 1508), where Arthur claims overlordship of the independent knight Golagros, master of his own realm and answerable to no one. See *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gavane*, ed. Hanna.

threatens the identity of other members of the chivalric community. Given that Arthur's initial response to Galiot's invasion is to go hunting rather than to defend his land (I, 621-7),¹² his status as a completely ineffectual king is indisputable. Instead, it is up to Lancelot, disguised as the Red Knight, to play the part of the inspiring warrior which should be Arthur's, and it is made quite clear that the first battle between Arthur's and Galiot's armies would have been lost without him: 'That ne ware not the uorschip and manhede/Of the Red Knycht, in perell and in dreid/Arthuris folk had ben, uithouten uere' (I, 1113-5).

Despite his inaction, Arthur remains 'distrublit in his hart' (II, 1292) and calls on a clerk named Amytans,¹³ with whom he has previously been acquainted and who is 'rycht expert in al the seven science' (II, 1302).¹⁴ It is only with Amytans' appearance in the narrative that Arthur's dreams are correctly interpreted and he is given the chance of redemption. Amytans explains that God is immensely wrathful with Arthur, warning him that he is soon to be stripped of his identity as a king:

'... His strok approchit now the hour
That boith thi ringe, thi ceptre and thi crounn
From hie estat He smyting shal adoune.'
(II, 1324-6)

Amytans then launches into a full explanation of Arthur's wrongdoing, which Arthur has previously been blind to.¹⁵ The king has not only failed to recognise that his kingdom comes

¹² As Martin remarks, Arthur's decision to go hunting offers 'a powerful metaphor of his own huntedness and entrapment in self-denial.' Martin, *Kingship and Love*, p. 46.

¹³ Sally Mapstone has suggested that the Scottish poet's naming of the clerk (who is unnamed in the French) invites comparison with Aristotle, the supposed author of the *Secretum Secretorum*, one of the key texts in the advice to princes tradition. See Sally Mapstone, 'The Advice to Princes Tradition', pp. 166-7.

¹⁴ The seven Liberal Arts of the medieval curriculum, formed from the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, logic) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy).

¹⁵ This advice section, greatly expanded from the French, had previously been seen by some scholars as a direct address to James III (r. 1460-88) until this view was repudiated by Lyall, who argues that Amytans' advice is conventional in the advice to princes tradition. See R.J. Lyall, 'Politics and Poetry in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Scotland', *Scottish Literary Journal* 3, 2, (1976) 5-29 (p. 16). Most critics, myself included, have found this argument convincing, although recently Karen D. Robinson has reopened this discussion by linking various parts of *Lancelot of the Laik* – even the prologue – to its 'contemporary context', arguing that the poem played a role within the establishment of the legend of James III as a 'bad

from God (II, 1328-1334), but he is ‘confussit’ (II, 1337) with worldliness and is concerned only for his own delight (‘Yow haith non ey but one thyne awn delyt/Or quhat that plesing shall thyne appetyt’, II, 1349-50), linking back to the evisceration of Arthur’s stomach, the centre of all appetite, in his second dream. Furthermore, Arthur fails to uphold justice, instead choosing to do ‘nothing bot al in the contrare/And suffrith al thi puple to forfare’ (II, 1347-8). Indeed, the suffering of Arthur’s people is heavily emphasised by Amytans’ conclusion that ‘Yow sufferith them, oppressith and annoyith/So yow art causs; throw the thei ar distroyth’ (II, 1369-70).

Desperate to know how he might redeem himself and restore his lost identity, Arthur is informed by Amytans that he must ‘Repent thi gilt, repent thi gret trespass/And remembir one Goddis richwysness’ (II, 1405-6). In addition, Arthur must worship ‘the Lech, the Lyone, and the flour also’ (II, 2123). These mysterious symbols are finally revealed to be of Christian origin, and are shown by Amytans to be Christ, God the Father, and the Virgin Mary respectively.¹⁶ The first group of clerks were unable to read these symbols and mistakenly placed God as a ‘wattir [watery] lion (II, 2017), explaining that the clerks ‘have Hyme into the wattir senn’ (II, 2019) as a result of their own incompetence and sin. Indeed, the water becomes a metaphor for their ‘knowlag ... so inperfyt’ (II, 2025), representing their ‘inequitee’ (II, 2022). It signifies ‘ther awn synne’ (II, 2029) and is ‘clowdy’ (2027), precluding their ability to correctly read God’s intentions and causing them to interpret Arthur’s dreams incorrectly.

Having been provided with the correct reading of his prophetic dream, Arthur is now challenged to restore his lost identity as Amytans places the responsibility for redemption solely on Arthur himself, telling him that ‘al is in thi honde’(II, 2127). *Lancelot of the Laik* is incomplete, but we are left with an image of an Arthur in the midst of a transformation, who is mostly keeping ‘the lore of Maister Amytans’ (II, 2446) through largess and a new found concern for discovering ‘how

king’, a view prominent in the sixteenth-century Scottish chronicles. See Karen D. Robinson, ‘*Lancelot of the Laik*: A Scottish Mirror for Princes’, in *Arthurian Literature* 27, eds. Elizabeth Archibald and David F. Johnson (Cambridge, D S Brewer, 2010), pp. 135-77 (p. 151, p. 155).

¹⁶ Martin, *Kingship and Love*, p. 52.

his puples hartis to empless' (II, 2455) but who has, as Martin points out, occasional lapses into pensiveness and petulance; Arthur falls into 'hevynes' (II, 2163) though he has been warned by Amytans not to be 'pensyve' (II, 1694) and he spitefully rejects Gawain's military advice in 'matalent' (II, 2169), leaving Gawain to find Lancelot and therefore secure the safety of the kingdom.¹⁷

More than any of the other Older Scots romances, *Lancelot of the Laik* focuses on the consequences of apathetic responses to the loss of divine approval. While Arthur's ability to transform his identity from failed to successful king is impeded by the clerks' inability to read the Christian symbolism of his dreams, the fact that he does not seek Amytans' advice until the moment when his realm is on the brink of collapse is symptomatic of his apathy towards all aspects of good governance. It is only once Arthur is provided with dire warnings about the possibility that he may lose his kingdom, in combination with Amytans' correct interpretation of his dreams, that Arthur is given the opportunity to effect the transformation of his threatened identity as king.

¹⁷ Martin, *Kingship and Love*, pp. 53-4.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Scottish Troy Book

As one of the particularly fragmentary surviving Older Scots romances, it is both astonishing and fortunate that the parts of the *Scottish Troy Book* (hereafter *STB*) which do survive contain extended references to one of the most famous supernatural figures in Western literature: Medea. She is not the only woman with magical abilities to feature in the *STB* fragments, however; the famous prophetess Cassandra also appears and, as would be expected, she makes several prophecies which are later fulfilled and also correctly interprets signs on behalf of the gods.¹ As it survives, the *STB* is a text focusing on magical women in more depth than in any of the other Older Scots romances, providing a unique angle from which to explore how their identities as female practitioners of the supernatural are presented. Of particular interest is Medea's status as the only enchantress who appears throughout the surviving corpus of Older Scots romances; while other women with supernatural links do appear,² Medea is the only woman explicitly designated as a skilled sorceress.

This chapter analyses how the anonymous Scottish author of the *STB* presents and reacts to Medea's identity as an enchantress, arguing that despite her place in literary tradition as a dangerous and uncontrollable woman,³ the *STB*-poet presents Medea in a broadly positive

¹ At the end of the second fragment, another of the most famous enchantresses in Western literature – Circe – is introduced, but is only ever mentioned in relation to her son, Telegonus, and is not shown to be engaging with magic at all.

² Lillias in *Eger and Grime* follows the archetype of the woman healer, while the Poisoned Maiden in *The Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror* becomes poisoned through being fed snakes rather than through enchantment. See my chapter on *Eger and Grime* (pp. 52–59) and my chapter on *The Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror*, pp. 11–18, esp. pp. 15–16.

³ Medea is famously associated with the murder of her own children, an idea originating from Euripides' famous tragedy *Medea* (c. 431 BC) in which she kills her offspring in order to deprive Jason, the Greek hero and the husband who has abandoned her, of legitimate succession. As Ruth Morse remarks, it is 'largely to Ovid that we owe the establishment of Medea as sorceress.' See Ruth Morse, *The Medieval Medea* (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 1996), p. 115.

manner which emphasises her unsurpassable knowledge of the magical arts.⁴ I also argue that the *STB*-poet continues in the same vein to praise the wisdom of Cassandra, giving an overall favourable tone to his portrayal of these women with formidable supernatural powers. As the *STB* survives in such a fragmentary state, a certain amount of conjecture is required, but I refer where relevant to other medieval Troy narratives to further inform my analysis of Medea and Cassandra.

As an octosyllabic verse translation of Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae* (c. 1287), a Latin prose narrative of the Trojan War, the *Scottish Troy Book* survives in fragmentary form in two manuscripts: Cambridge, University Library, MS Kk.5.30 (hereafter MS Kk) and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 148 (hereafter MS Douce). In both manuscripts, fragments of the *STB* exist in composite form alongside John Lydgate's *Troy Book* (c. 1412-20), which also derives from Guido. In a landmark study of the *STB*, which explores the relationship between the surviving fragments and dates the poem to c. 1400, Angus McIntosh argues against earlier opinions that the *STB* fragments were used to mend a defective manuscript of Lydgate's work, instead arguing that Lydgate's *Troy Book* was actually used to repair a damaged copy of the *STB*.⁵

Before proceeding, it is useful to give a short overview of the remaining *STB* fragments. Fragment 1 – found exclusively in MS Kk – begins with Laomedon, King of Old Troy, dismissing Hercules and Jason from the city, a slight to which they do not take kindly. They are met with hospitality on the island of Colchis, however, and the fragment concludes with a lengthy description of Medea (discussed below). Fragment 2, which survives both in MS Kk (1-563) and MS Douce (1-916), commencing again at 1181-3318, describes Antenor and Aeneas' betrayal of Troy, the theft of the Palladium, Cassandra's warnings that the city will be betrayed,

⁴ In arguing for the *STB*-poet's favourable representation of Medea, I follow Emily Wingfield's view that the poet is broadly sympathetic to her, and indeed seems to adopt a pro-feminist perspective in descriptions of the *STB*'s other women. See further Emily Wingfield, *The Trojan Legend in Medieval Scottish Literature* (Cambridge, D S Brewer, 2014), esp. pp. 109-13.

⁵ Angus McIntosh, 'Some Notes on the Language and Textual Transmission of the *Scottish Troy Book*', *Archivum Linguisticum*, new series, 10 (1979), 1-19.

the acceptance of the Trojan Horse into the city and the Greeks' journey back to their homeland following Troy's destruction.⁶

Despite later discoursing about Medea's magical powers at length,⁷ the *STB*-poet introduces her in the same way that many of the women in Older Scots romances are described: as an heiress. She first appears following a description of Jaconites, the capital city of Colchis ruled by her father, King Cethes. As he welcomes the heroes Jason and Hercules into his court, Cethes bids Medea, introduced as 'Hys doughtre derrest ande hys ayre' (1, 381)⁸ to greet them, thus laying the foundations for the first meeting between Jason and Medea that will ultimately result in their marriage. At this point, Medea is described in terms which firmly place her identity within the world of the court, only able to be defined in relation to her ability to secure the succession to the throne. Her beauty, her prized status as an heir and her eligibility for marriage are heavily emphasised:

Thys Medea, the maydene schene,
Was þane þe wlonkast witht but wene
Of all the kynrik of Colkas,
Ande the kingis A douthtyre was
Ande syne hys ayre eftre hys day,
Suete ande debonare & trew of fay,
Ande ek of age maryit to be.
(1, 387-93)

It is only after her dynastic significance to the kingdom of Colchis has been highlighted that her identity as a powerful woman with great magical knowledge emerges, and it is with these powers

⁶ To avoid confusion, I mark each quote from the *STB* as thus: (fragment number: line number)

⁷ Wingfield observes that 'The Scottish poet greatly expands upon the original description of Medea in Gudio's *Historia*' (*The Trojan Legend*, p. 111). This expansion of his source is particularly interesting, since much of the *STB*-poet's description of Medea is concerned with presenting her as a woman to be admired for her wisdom and beauty.

⁸ Out of necessity, all my quotations about Medea are taken from MS Kk (Fragment 1) since this is the only part of the *STB* in which she appears. The edition used is Barbour's des schottischen Nationaldichters *Legendensammlung: nebst den Fragmenten seines Trojanerkriegs*, ed. by C. Horstmann, 2 vols (Heilbronn: Gebr. Henninger, 1881-2), II. The original attribution of the text to Barbour (the same John Barbour who wrote *The Bruce*) is the result of misleading rubrics in MS Kk, which indicate breaks between the *STB* and Lydgate's *Troy Book* and attribute the former to 'barbour' and the latter 'þe monk' (as Lydgate was known in Scotland).

that she can gain some degree of independence from the constraints of courtly society. We are told that she has ‘sic slyth’ in ‘science’ (1, 404) that, through the ‘myght/Of hyre exorȝaciouns/Ande enchauntyt coniuraciouns’ (1, 405-7),⁹ she is able to turn darkness into light (I, 408), raise fierce winds and hailstorms (1, 409-15), and provoke the violence of nature against ‘Hyr Innymyis’ (1, 423), particularly during sea-voyages (1, 424-30). For Medea and other enchantresses who, as women, are denied the opportunity to defeat their foes on the battlefield and display their military prowess, magic affords them the possibility of defeating their adversaries through utilising knowledge which few possess.

While the destructive power of Medea’s magic is condemned by the *STB*-poet as ‘agane the course of kynde’ (1, 458), her use of ‘nigromancy’ is merely hinted at, rather than bluntly stated as it is in Guido and Lydgate.¹⁰ In stark contrast to this destructive magic is Medea’s ability to renew the natural world. Her skill in restoring ‘þe woddis grene’ (1, 439) and the ‘lewes’ and ‘floures’ (1, 441) counteracts the forces of winter, which is conceived of almost as an enemy through its ‘wickede blastes ande fellone schoures’ (1, 440).¹¹

Medea’s caring side is further reflected in her efforts to secure the safety of her friends as they journey across land and sea (1, 435), using her magic to ensure that their travels can be completed without ‘incombrance’ (1, 438). Perhaps most importantly considering her position as heir, we also see Medea acting for the common good of her future subjects to ensure their safety

⁹ *DOST* gives the definition of ‘coniuraciouns’ as ‘The use of invocations or spells; the conjuring up of spirits; exercise of magical power.’ ‘Conjuratioun’, n., 1., [<http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/conjuratioun>, accessed 15/09/2014].

¹⁰ In the *Historia Destructionis*, Medea’s control of the weather originates from her ‘necromantic means of incantations’ (184). See Guido delle Colonne, *Historia Destructionis Troiae*, trans. by Mary Elizabeth Meek (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1974). In his *Troy Book*, Lydgate also designates Medea’s magic as ‘nygromauncye’ (I, 1624) and adds a ritualistic aspect to her sorcery as he describes her ability to cause illusions through ‘rytis of diuerse sacrifice’ (I, 1628) when the moon is in certain positions in the sky. See John Lydgate, *Lydgate’s Troy Book, A.D. 1412-20*, ed. by Henry Bergen, 4 vols, EETS, ES 97, 103, 106, 126 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. and Oxford University Press for the Early English Text Society, 1906-35), I (1906).

¹¹ The descriptions of Medea’s skill in restoring nature’s abundance recall the descriptions of the countryside surrounding the city of Jaconites, where it is the rain which replenishes the landscape and ‘Reconfortis all grene growande gude,/As cornys, treys, herbys ande fruyttis’ (1, 270-1).

(‘Quhar-throw gret rygour oft scho wrought/To the comowns, þat knew it nouȝt’, 1, 461-2), enchanting the sea so that it remains in ‘tranquillite’ (1, 463). The risk of negative attitudes towards her magical arts mean that she cannot explicitly protect people in the same way that a king riding into battle would, but within the *STB* she is portrayed in a mostly altruistic fashion and her magic is here channelled into ‘common profit’ rather than being used to seek reward or glory.

The final section of Medea’s description concludes with the *STB*-poet further emphasising her status as the wisest and most knowledgeable woman of her time. He reiterates his earlier statement that ‘nane was wiser vndre the hewene/Ne Medea ine hyr dais’ (1, 398-9) in relation to her unsurpassed knowledge of astrology, in which she is ‘maist wise ine-to hyr dais’ (1, 491). In the same way that Clariodus’ epithet as the best knight in the world confirms his place at the pinnacle of the chivalric community,¹² this repeated labelling of Medea as the wisest woman of her day cements her supremacy within the community of human practitioners of magic.

The concluding part of Fragment 1 remains broadly favourable towards Medea. After discussing her apparent ability to cause eclipses and asserting that no Christian should give this story ‘credence’ (1, 525),¹³ the *STB*-poet questions whether tales told of Medea are ‘suth or lese’ (1, 589), but is certain of her ‘perfyt’ learning in astronomy and grammar (1, 591). The *STB*-poet again downplays the more negative aspects of Medea’s magic, replacing Guido’s original statement that she was ‘extremely skillful in astrology and *witchcraft*’ (233-4, emphasis mine) and focusing on her knowledge of grammar instead, a far more legitimate branch of learning. Finally, he concludes that ‘þar was neuir nane her lyk/Ne neuir sall be, pure no ryk’ (1, 595-6), a statement which establishes Medea as matchless in magic and wisdom.

¹² See my *Clariodus* chapter, pp. 43-51..

¹³ This reflects the ambivalent attitudes towards astrology in medieval society (see my Introduction, p. 7). Medea’s supposed ability to cause eclipses would have very much been seen as disruptive to the order in which God had set the universe.

While she lacks the powers of enchantment that Medea possesses, the prophet Cassandra is likewise presented as a strong and wise woman.¹⁴ Indeed, she is first introduced as being ‘wondre wyse’ (2, 465),¹⁵ and immediately proves this by interpreting the strange events which befall the Trojans after they make a sacrifice at the Temple of Apollo. Upon attempting to kindle a fire so that the offering can be made, they find that under no circumstances can it be lit (2, 425-6); furthermore, as they disembowel the beasts they wish to sacrifice, an eagle descends ‘Ryght sodeynly’ (2, 441-3), seizing the entrails in its talons and flying away with them (2, 447-8). These events are clearly conceived as being linked to the divine supernatural, and are repeatedly referred to as miracles (2, 422, 436, 456, 461). At this point an explicit connection between Cassandra and the gods is first made as she is instantly called upon by the ‘counsale’ (2, 463), to interpret these signs. She explains that Apollo’s wrath has been incurred because his temple has been ‘Fylede ine the effusioune’ (2, 471) of Achilles’ blood. To assuage Apollo’s anger, Cassandra informs her fellow-Trojans that they must immediately visit Achilles’ grave, where they should kindle ‘gret lyght’ (2, 477) which will be ‘extinguede be no wyse’ (2, 480), clearly having supernatural qualities of its own. Interpreting the eagle, Cassandra reveals that the bird betokens the ‘prodicioune’ (2, 485) which will cause the destruction of Troy. Of course, the Trojans famously ignore her predictions, later receiving the Trojan Horse into the city and therefore making themselves somewhat culpable for their own demise.¹⁶

¹⁴ Cassandra’s connection to the divine is comparable to the female prophets in *The Bruce* – the unnamed hostess whom Bruce stays with on the Isle of Arran and St. Margaret – who are both linked with God. See further my chapter on *The Bruce and The Wallace*, pp. 19-26, esp. pp. 21-2.

¹⁵ Cassandra appears only in Fragment 2 of both MS Kk and MS Douce, where the two MSS broadly correspond to each other with only minor changes in word order. For the sake of continuity I have therefore continued to quote from MS Kk when discussing Cassandra, again following the format (fragment number: line number).

¹⁶ She later enacts a sort of ‘prophetic revenge’ on the Greeks for the sacking of Troy, informing them that, on their way back to Greece, they will experience ‘gret Ill be mony way/Or þat þai come in þare cuntry’ (2, 1606-7, MS Douce) and even informing Agamemnon that he will be ‘slane with þe folk þat were/Ine-to his hous famyliere’ (2, 1609-10, MS Douce). Rather like Barbour’s remarks about St. Margaret’s prophecy (see my chapter on *The Bruce and The Wallace*, pp. 19-26, esp. pp. 21-2), the STB-poet alerts us to the competence of Cassandra’s foresight: ‘And as It eftir to þaime fell,/Richt as Cassandra gane þaime tell’ (2, 1611-12, MS Douce).

The downfall of Troy has, however, already been sealed through the theft of the Palladium, which in itself is a supernatural object with divine connections. Given to the city by Pallas Athena (2, 247-9),¹⁷ it is repeatedly categorised as marvellous, described both as a ‘ferlyfull relyk’ (2, 185) and ‘a ferly tokene of the hevene’ (2, 203). Moreover, the Palladium is imbued with great protective power: while it remains within Troy, the walls of the city will never be conquered by her ‘foes fellowune’ (2, 234). It is little wonder that the theft of an object so inextricably connected to the collective identities of the Trojan citizens should herald the beginning of the city’s fall. Of course, it is only through treachery that the Palladium can be removed, as no enemies of Troy outside its walls would be able to seize it. Bribed with the promise of a great quantity of ‘golde so rede’ (2, 367), Thoas, the priest charged with its care, gives the Palladium into the possession of Antenor. With its magical protection removed and its prophetic princess ignored, the destruction of Troy is assured.

With its broadly positive portrayal of Medea, the *STB*-poet offers readers of Older Scots romance a rather refreshing take on previous traditions which firmly categorise her as ‘other’ due to her status both as a sorceress and as a murderer.¹⁸ Though the independence bestowed on her by her unsurpassable magical skill is somewhat restricted by the emphasis on her status as heir, there is no doubt that the Medea of the *STB* is a woman of supreme knowledge and wisdom. Cassandra, too, is identified as a woman of exceeding intelligence, but unlike Medea is never described in terms of her courtly status: she is, after all, the daughter of King Priam and is therefore a princess. While we must be aware that much of the *STB* is missing and therefore

¹⁷ References to the Palladium are in Fragment 2 of the *STB*, in both MS KK and MS Douce. Again, for the sake of continuity and because there are only minor changes between the two MSS, I have chosen to quote from MS Kk.

¹⁸ Chaucer’s representation of Medea in his *Legend of Good Women* can also be taken as a positive one. He reflects on her ‘trouthe’ and ‘kyndenesse’ (1664) in contrast to Jason’s ‘falsnesse’ (1670), although some readings argue that this representation is deliberately ironic. See, for example, Florence Percival, *Chaucer’s Legendary Good Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 199-220. Quotations from the *Legend of Good Women* are from Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987). Medea is also presented sympathetically in John Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* (V, 3247-4242). See John Gower, *The English Works of John Gower*, ed. by G. C. Macaulay, 2 vols, EETS, ES 81-82 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1900).

might have an effect on our conception of these characters, the *STB*-poet – unlike so many of his literary predecessors – appears to align himself with the view that these supernaturally skilled women are marvellous, not monstrous.

CHAPTER FIVE

Clariodus

Magic and the supernatural in *Clariodus* function in much the same way as in *Eger and Grime* and *Sir Colling*, acting as a means by which the hero, having fallen in love with a lady of higher rank than himself, can prove his prowess and consequently win her approval, her hand in marriage and the titles and lands that come from their union.¹

Thought to have been written within the first half of the sixteenth century, *Clariodus* is a translation – and, notably, a versification – of the French prose romance *Cleriadus et Meliadice* (c. 1440).² Its plot is rich with romance conventions, including extravagant tournaments, a forest full of perils, disguises and, of course, the supernatural. The hero of the text, Clariodus, son of the Earl of Esture in Spain, falls in love with Meliades, daughter of King Philippon of England. Though their love initially remains secret because of the discrepancy in status between them, Clariodus' victory over supernatural foes and his successful utilisation of magical objects allows him to establish himself as the best knight in the world. In token of this and as recognition of Clariodus' services to the kingdom of England, Philippon grants him Meliades' hand in marriage, making Clariodus King of England in addition to his earlier appointment as the ruler of Ireland through his mother's family.

¹ The edition of *Clariodus* used here is *Clariodus*, ed. by David Irving (Edinburgh: Maitland Club, 1830, reprinted New York: AMS Press, 1973).

² *Clariodus* survives in a single manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates' 19.2.5) estimated to date from the mid-sixteenth century by Irving (p. ii). Emily Wingfield has more recently narrowed down the date of the Advocates' MS to the third quarter of the sixteenth century. See further Wingfield, 'Manuscript and Print Contexts', p. 296. A reference to 'claryades and maliades' among the list of 'storeis' related by a group of shepherds in the *Complaynt of Scotland* (c. 1550) provides us with a *terminus ad quem* for the poem itself, while Purdie's demonstration of the *Clariodus*-poet's debt to William Dunbar's *The Thrissill and the Rois* suggests a *terminus a quo* of 1503 for *Clariodus'* initial composition since Dunbar's poem references the 1503 wedding of James IV and Margaret Tudor. See Rhiannon Purdie, 'Clariodus and the Ambitions of Courtly Romance in Later Medieval Scotland', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 38, 4 (2002), 449-61(p. 449) and *The Complaynt of Scotland*, ed. by A.M. Stewart, STS, 4th Series, 11 (Edinburgh: STS, 1979).

Both Wingfield and Purdie have remarked upon how close *Clariodus* is to its original source.³

Indeed, Purdie points out that ‘the *Clariodus*-author keeps virtually every narrative episode just as it is ... no episode is cut or rearranged and none is added’.⁴ Consequently, the small alterations that the *Clariodus*-poet does make are instantly recognisable, and one such embellishment is his effort to use aureate description in the style of Dunbar and Douglas.⁵ Such a decision, writes Purdie, makes clear that the author of *Clariodus* ‘wishes his work to be associated with the highest courtly literature of his day’.⁶

In light of this observation, it is notable that the instances of magic within the poem are themselves consistently aligned with the world of the court rather than the ‘other’; a fearsome lion is later revealed to be a knight suffering from an enchantment, and it is he who gives Clariodus the magical ring which is later used solely to heal members of courtly society (Meliades, who is a princess, and Sir Brounar de la Haunt, discussed further on p. 50, whose family ‘stand imperiall’ in Northumberland (IV, 2082-3).

The unequal social status between Clariodus and Meliades, later remedied through Clariodus’ interaction with the supernatural, is established almost immediately. In its present state, the

³ Emily Wingfield, “And He, That Did it Out of French Translait”: *Cleriadus* in France, England and Scotland, c. 1440-1550”, *Neophilologus*, 95, 4 (2011), 649-60 (p. 650).

⁴ Purdie, ‘Ambitions of Courtly Romance’, p. 453. Intriguingly, the *Clariodus*-poet may have been working from a now-lost English translation, which would have been an intermediary text between the French original and the version of *Clariodus* which now survives. He refers to his ‘Authore’ (IV, 725) at frequent intervals throughout the text, praising ‘he, that did it out of French translait’ (V, 2255) for using ‘langwage full ornate’ (V, 2256). His self-deprecating admission that he ‘can not so meitter as thay put in prose’ (V, 2259) poses a further possibility: that the English translation used by the *Clariodus*-poet was in prose, further emphasising the significance of his decision to versify it and align it with the verse tradition of Older Scots romances. While pointing out that the *Clariodus*-poet’s author may well have been using a fictional source like Chaucer’s ‘Lollius’ in *Troilus and Criseyde*, Wingfield discusses the possibility that an original English translation may have been undertaken to celebrate the wedding of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou in 1445, which marked a period of short-lived peace between England and France. See further Wingfield, ‘Manuscript and Print Contexts’, esp. pp. 309-14.

⁵ Many examples of the *Clariodus*-poet’s aureate aspirations appear during the Tournament of the Green Knight; for instance, the description of Meliades’ hair as ‘Hir schynyngh hair as [the] bricht gold wyer/Hang schynyngh into gyltine traces cleir’ (II, 1434-5).

⁶ Purdie, ‘Ambitions of Courtly Romance’, p. 453.

poem begins during single combat between Clariodus and a knight of Lombard;⁷ while Clariodus is victorious, he is badly wounded and has to have his injuries tended to by Meliades. As they discuss his victory, Clariodus confesses that his triumph was inspired by her, telling Meliades that ‘Only your bewtie and your womanheid/Put fra my heart all couardice and dreid’ (I, 243-4). When she asks why Clariodus has never revealed his love before, he states that this was directly due to the discrepancy in rank between them:

‘Sa monie prinsis nobill of renoune
3e had in proffer, quhom 3e list to take,
And I, unworthie was, I wndertake,’
(I, 268-70)

Though Meliades is internally ‘owercum’ (I, 283) by this declaration, having already fallen in love with Clariodus, she outwardly issues him with several conditions if he is to successfully claim her love: he must be ‘trew and diligent/Rycht faithfull, secreit and obedient’ (I, 287-8), commanding him to serve her above all women (I, 289) and forbidding him to pursue her ‘for lust’ (I, 292).⁸ Her request that their love is kept secret does not only follow the typical conventions of courtly love, but also makes plain the inability of the two lovers to conduct their relationship openly at this point; it is only once Clariodus has successfully completed a variety of adventures, established himself as the best knight in the world and been made King of Ireland that Philippon offers Meliades in marriage.

⁷ Wingfield notes that seven folios have been lost from the beginning of the MS ('Manuscript and Print Contexts', p. 286), but we can reconstruct the missing part of the romance from its French source. King Philippon of England, being aged and heirless, invites the Earl of Esture (modern-day Asturias in Spain) and his son, Clariodus, to help him govern England. Soon after arriving, Clariodus defends Philippon and his kingdom against a knight of Lombard, whose master the Duc de Jennes has accused Philippon of wrongly seizing some of the Duc's lands, and it is with this scene that *Clariodus* begins.

⁸ This behaviour is part of the characteristics of courtly love described by C.S. Lewis in his influential *Allegory of Love*, in which he notes that the knight/lover's role involves 'Obedience to his lady's lightest wish, however whimsical, and silent acquiescence in her rebukes, however unjust'. See C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936, rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 2-3. However, the precise meaning of courtly love has long been a source of contention among scholars, with some critics asserting that it did not exist in the Middle Ages. See D. W. Robertson, Jr., 'The Concept of Courtly Love as an Impediment to the Understanding of Medieval Texts,' in *The Meaning of Courtly Love*, ed. by F. X. Newman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1968), pp. 1-18.

One convention of the courtly love tradition which is *not* employed, however, is the assignment of quests from the lady to her subservient knight. A perfect example of this occurs in *Sir Colling*,⁹ where Colling is charged by the Lord of Argyll's daughter to battle the eldritch knight. As we have seen, Meliades is careful to encourage Clariodus' fidelity and establish their relationship as a chaste one, but nowhere does she command him to undertake knightly deeds.

It is therefore left to Clariodus himself to embark upon the process of transforming his identity through seeking out adventures, and, on his way back to England from attending his sister's wedding in Spain, Clariodus hears of an opportunity to do so, related by a squire from the country of Galice.¹⁰ He informs Clariodus and his companions (including his father, the Earl of Esture) that Galice is tormented by 'Ane lyoun strong and hidious to behauld' (I, 863) who 'devorit as he list' (I, 866). Though the lion is clearly fearsome, there is no mention of the fact that the creature is really a knight under an enchantment, which is only revealed once Clariodus defeats it. It is Clariodus' own decision to fight it ('at his Father sonne he askit leave/The strong lyoun in batell him to greive', I, 877-8), and there is some sense he does not initially realise the difficulty of the task he has volunteered for, emphasising his youthful thirst to prove himself as a capable warrior.

This initial sense that Clariodus may well die in the battle makes his eventual victory against the lion all the more impressive.¹¹ As Clariodus faces the lion, the poet is keen to emphasise the terrible nature of the beast, informing us that it was 'the strongest lyoun and maist horibill/That

⁹ See my chapter on *Sir Colling*, pp. 60-6, esp. pp. 62-3.

¹⁰ Galice is, most likely, modern-day Galicia in northern Spain, which borders Asturias.

¹¹ Battles between heroes and lions appear elsewhere in Older Scots romance. In the early-fifteenth century *Florimond of Albany*, translated from Aimoin de Varennes' Old French romance *Florimont* (1188), King Philip (father of Alexander the Great) fights a lion 'sa stout lukeing and felloun/That in þis wairld is nane sa wicht' (390-1). See *Florimond of Albany* in Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*. In *Sir Colling*, Colling, protected only by a mantle, fights a lion set upon him by a jealous steward after he has won the hand of the Lord of Argyll's daughter, slaying it with 'sick ane vreist.../His [the lion's] hart vas brokin in thrie.' (233-4). *The Wallace* also includes a very similar passage where Wallace fights a lion 'fayr and rycht felloun in deid' (XII, 199) at the court of the King of France, after the King is tricked by two resentful squires into believing it is Wallace's own desire to fight it. Like Colling, Wallace defeats the lion whilst armoured only with a mantle (XII, 242). See *Hary's Wallace*, ed. Matthew P. McDiarmid (ii).

ever to manis sight was visible' (I, 961-2) and even using the inability *topos* as he concludes that 'His terribilnes cannot weil be tauld' (I, 966). Though this is not a description which reveals the true supernatural nature of the beast, the lion is presented as an almost unassailable foe, wounding Clariodus severely in his relentless attacks (I, 984). It is only once Clariodus is able to drive his sword into the lion's thigh that his victory becomes certain, though he is initially faced with a temporary loss of knightly identity as the lion flees with the sword still stuck in his side (I, 1004). Significantly, the lion's true form is revealed once he flees into a nearby forest; in romance conventions, forests are commonly seen to be places of magic and adventure.¹² It is in this forest that Sir Porrus, as he later identifies himself (I, 1043), is transformed from lion into knight and, after tending to Clariodus' wounds with 'diverse herbis vertewus' (I, 1020),¹³ he reveals that Clariodus has saved him from 'wofull torment' (I, 1014). He informs Clariodus that, around the time of his birth, his mother took him to the 'Waird Sisteris' (I, 1027) in order to discover his destiny; in those times, he explains, 'To Wairdis then was givin grete credence' (I, 1025).¹⁴ Their answer is far from ideal:

They wairdit me, git ane knave chyld war I,
That efter I was sevin ȝeiris old
To be transformit in ane lyoun bold,'
(I, 1030-2)

¹² This convention has already been referenced earlier in the romance, when Clariodus defeats several knights in the Wood of Adventure (I, 465). See further Corinne Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernum, Broceliande, Arden* (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 1993).

¹³ This would suggest that, like Lillias in *Eger and Grime*, Porrus is skilled in healing magic.

¹⁴ 'To Wairdis then was givin grete credence' (emphasis mine) suggests that these kind of folk beliefs about prophecies and fate which abounded in Porrus' childhood are starting to die out by Clariodus' time. There is a sense that the supernatural is in a transitional period, still able to play an influential role in defining the identities of those that interact with it but with perhaps less significance than in years gone by. Intriguingly, Purdie has highlighted that this reference to the 'Weird Sisters' – in other words, the Fates – is part of the *Clariodus*-poet's penchant for alluding to classical figures ('Ambitions of Courtly Romance', p. 454).. As well as referring to the Fates, the phrase 'Weird sisteris' was used to by John Bellenden to specifically describe the three witches in the story of Macbeth in his *Chronicles of Scotland*, a translation of Hector Boece's Latin chronicle *Historia Gentis Scotorum* (1527). See *The Chronicles of Scotland, compiled by Hector Boece, translated by John Bellenden, 1531*, eds. Walter Seton et al., STS, 3rd Series, 10, 15, (Edinburgh: STS, 1935–41) and DOST, 'We(i)rd sisteris', n. pl. b. and c.

[http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/weird_sisteris, accessed 16/09/2014]

Yet the next part of the knight's explanation becomes crucial for Clariodus' identity, directly linking his victory here to his newly-confirmed status as the best knight in the world:

'And so to be ay quhile the nobillest knicht
Into this warld under the sunis licht
Sould draw my blood in battell or in stour.'
(I, 1033-5)

Particularly interesting here is the idea that Clariodus' fight with the knight and his consequent victory is inextricably bound with fate. Accordingly, Clariodus' proven status as the world's supreme knight is similar to the fulfilment of a prophecy. His confirmation of this grand epithet is, moreover, not the only reward he receives from Sir Porrus; the rescued knight is so grateful that he grants Clariodus lordship over his lands in Portugal (I, 1042),¹⁵ and, crucially, presents him with 'ane ring of gold royll' (I, 1044).

Thus, Clariodus' first encounter with the supernatural acts as a catalyst for the further confirmation of his chivalric supremacy, with the aforementioned ring acting as the enabling device by which he can achieve this. Clariodus first uses the ring at a moment where both his and Meliades' identities have just been reconfirmed after a period where they have both concealed their true selves through the means of disguise. Between the time when Clariodus first receives the ring and when he first uses it, the fluidity of identity has been a major theme of the poem. Meliades, sentenced to death for apparently plotting to murder her father,¹⁶ is spared her

¹⁵ When Clariodus rides to see the King of Galice, he too rewards Clariodus with land for defeating the lion: 'the third pairt of my realme heir I/To ȝow and ȝouris do give perpetually' (I, 1117-8). Clariodus' newly-assumed ownership of these lands becomes the legal proof of his victory. Rhiannon Purdie has observed that Portugal seems may been a land associated with magic and the supernatural 'in the minds of late-medieval English and Scottish audiences', citing the setting of *King Orphius* in Portugal, the giants and dragons in the Middle English romance *Torrent of Portyngale* (c. 1400) and the evil Portuguese step-mother who transforms her stepson into a werewolf in *William of Palerne* (mid-fourteenth century). See Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, p. 218. See also *Torrent of Portyngale*, ed. by E. Adam, EETS, ES 51 (London: Trübner & Co., 1887) and *The Romance of William of Palerne: Otherwise known as the romance of 'William and the Werewolf'* ed. by Walter W. Skeat, EETS, ES 1 (London: Trübner & Co., 1867).

¹⁶ This evil scheme is devised by Meliades' jealous uncle Thomas, who wishes to claim the kingdom for himself. He forges letters supposed to have been exchanged between Clariodus and Meliades in which they plot to murder Philippon, who believes that the letters are real and consequently sentences Meliades to death for treason.

life by her would-be executors, then takes up domestic service in the household of the Earl and Countess of Esture. Believing that Meliades is dead, Clariodus takes up employment as a ship's cook and eventually returns to his homeland, where the two lovers meet again near a well and have their true identities confirmed by each other's gaze: Meliades, having heard Clariodus' lament for her 'death', goes to comfort him and 'with looke full studious' (III, 2081) realises it is her lover, while Clariodus recognises Meliades, who is presumably in her servant's attire, after beholding her in '[maist] grathlie wayis' (III, 2091). She is so overcome by emotion that 'Ane rusch of blude furth at hir nose is gone' (III, 2104) which quickly becomes life-threatening as it cannot be staunched. It is at this point that Clariodus remembers the ring:

That was him gevin efter the mellie
Be him that was transformit in the lyoun,
Whais vertew beine for bludis effusioun;
He tuichit hir with it, and scho anone
Ceisit of bleiding;
(III, 2116-2120)

The ring is clearly bestowed with healing properties, yet nowhere in the narrative up until this point are we told that the ring is magical; rather, it seems that Clariodus' own intuition is able to sense these qualities, confirming his worthiness to use the object in much the same way as Grime proves his worthiness to wield Egeking in *Eger and Grime*.¹⁷ In using it, Clariodus has not only saved Meliades' life but has also ensured that the succession to the throne of England can survive.

Inextricably linked with Clariodus' identity as the best knight in the world, the magical ring is next used by him to heal Sir Brounar de la Haunt, a knight of Northumberland who has been shot with a magical arrow. It is 'lansit with sike destanie' (IV, 2092) that only the 'jentillist Knight but doubt' (IV, 2093) can remove it. Being in a company of other knights 'of renowne' (IV, 2130) who have tried and failed to remove the arrow, Meliades asks that Clariodus be allowed to

¹⁷ See my chapter on *Eger and Grime*, pp. 52-59.

attempt its removal, contextualising this request within the conventions of courtly love as she ‘commandit for his Ladies saike’ (IV, 2133).¹⁸ With Meliades’ encouragement and his faith in God, in whom he has ‘houpe and confidence,/To helpe the Knight’ (IV, 2140-1), Clariodus removes the arrow ‘without obstakill’ (IV, 2144). Though the wound bleeds copiously (IV, 2169), Clariodus again successfully utilises the ‘ring of the Lyoune’ to halt it (IV, 2170-1).¹⁹ His possession of the ring which symbolises his victory over the enchanted lion, a feat only accomplishable by the world’s most supreme knight, here acts in tandem with the supernatural proof provided by Clariodus’ successful removal of the magical arrow to confirm his status as worthy of the highest chivalric accolade.

Having reached the pinnacle of knighthood, Clariodus’ identity is subject to further transformation as he becomes King of Ireland when his aged uncle ‘may excerce no justice as he wold’ (IV, 2366) and appoints Clariodus as his heir.²⁰ While this realm is awarded to him more through coincidence than through Clariodus’ own actions, his being made King of England by Philippon is clearly conceived as a consequence of his military prowess. This is not a direct result of Clariodus’ mastery over the supernatural, but because he has consistently been ‘haill protectour and defence’ (IV, 2701) of the realm of England - though his confirmed status as the supreme example of knighthood has likely played a large part in Clariodus’ ability to defend

¹⁸ See fn. 8 in this chapter, p. 45.

¹⁹ This scene is reminiscent of Lancelot’s healing of Sir Urry in Malory’s *Morte Darthur*. Having been cursed to suffer with ever-festerling wounds by a sorceress, Urry can only be healed by ‘the beste knyght of the worlde’ (XIX, 10, 34-5), which proves to be Lancelot. Like Clariodus, Lancelot thinks himself unworthy of the task as so many noble knights have tried beforehand, beseeching God to help him heal the wounds. Sir Thomas Malory, *Works*, ed. by Eugene Vinaver, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

²⁰ Significantly, after becoming King of Ireland, Clariodus tells Meliades in secret:

‘Nather King, Earle, nor [ȝit ane] Duike am I,
Nor uther Lord, Madame, in ȝour presence,
Bot ȝ our awin Knight to doe ȝow reverence’
(IV, 2560-2)

Clariodus is here reverting his high status back to his original status at the beginning of the narrative: that of a young knight who would do anything to please his lady, though of course it is only in Meliades’ presence that he assumes his subordinate status.

England. As we have seen across the Older Scots romances, possession of land is equated with the possession of an heiress; described as a ‘rewairde’ (IV, 2705), Philippon announces that he will give Clariodus the thing that he loves best – his ‘Doghter, heare of this regioun’ (IV, 2729) – along with his ‘kingdom’ and ‘croun’, which he will give to Clariodus along with Meliades’ hand in marriage (IV, 2730-1).²¹

As the best knight in the world and now a beloved king – the English folk who behold his coronation ceremony are said to be ‘Reverencing him with all diligence’ (IV, 2773) – Clariodus’ transformation of identity is complete.²² Chapman, the most recent editor of Clariodus, claimed that ‘Of all the constituent elements of romance, religion and magic play the smallest part in *Clariodus*.²³ On the contrary, it is through interacting with magic that Clariodus is able to cement his position as the best of all knights and save Meliades, from whom he later derives the identity he takes at the pinnacle of the poem’s narrative: that of King of England.

²¹ It is clear that Clariodus himself tries not to perpetuate the view that heiresses should always be associated with the possession of land: he declares that marrying Meliades gladdens him more than if he was given ‘ane hundredre realmis faire,/And all the riches eike under the aire’ (IV, 2749-50).

²² Having no more function to play in the poem’s progression, magic is now relegated to simply being a form of entertainment: there is a reference to ‘Queine Proserpina with hir Court of Fari’ (V, 974) as part of a pageant, while in a later feast lions and dragons are made to appear real by ‘art magicianis’ (V, 1596).

²³ Robert L. Chapman, ‘An Edition of the Middle Scots Romance Clariodus’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, 1952), p. 17.

CHAPTER SIX

Eger and Grime

Eger and Grime seems, at first glance, to share a plot with *Clariodus* and *Sir Colling*, in which a lowly knight falls in love with a higher-ranking lady than himself, overcomes a supernatural foe to prove himself worthy of his lady's love, marries her, and advances his social rank due to her status as an heiress. Upon deeper inspection, however, *Eger and Grime* contravenes this formula through the clever use of disguise and deception by the romance's protagonists, placing the notions of identity and doubling at the narrative's core.¹

The discrepancy in status between Sir Eger and his lady, Winliane,² is established immediately; she is daughter of the Earl Diges of Bealm whereas he is a poor 'Batcheler' (22) with no lands of his own as he is a younger brother.³ At the beginning of the narrative, his identity as a 'well proued' (P, 35) knight has already won him Winliane's love, and the two are even set to be married with her Father's permission (32), though her insistence on having a husband 'That ever

¹ There is a very complex textual tradition behind *Eger and Grime*. Fierce critical debate has centred on which of the two versions of the text is 'nearer' to the 'original' romance mentioned in the Treasurer's Accounts of 1497, which refer to two fiddlers who 'sang Greysteil to the King' (*Compota Thesaurariorum Regum Scotorum*, ed. by T. Dickson (Edinburgh: 1877), I, 330, 19th April 1497) – the King in question being James IV. These are the 1474-line *Eger and Grime* found in the Percy Folio (London, British Library, Additional MS 27879) and the 2860-line version of the poem in the 'Huntington-Laing' (hereafter HL) version, represented by three nearly-identical Scottish prints dating from 1669-1711 and so called because of the 1687 print, now held in the San Marino, Huntington Library, shelfmark 55193, which was edited by David Laing. Hales and Furnivall saw the Percy version as closest, while Caldwell and Purdie advocate HL as the closest. Evans, meanwhile, thinks they should be classed as separate romances. See *Eger and Grime: An Early English Romance edited from Bishop Percy's Folio MS about 1650 AD*, ed. by John W. Hales and Frederick J. Furnivall (London: N. Trübner & Co. 1867), p. 6; *Eger and Grime: A Parallel-Text Edition of the Percy and the Huntington-Laing Versions of the Romance*, ed. by James Ralston Caldwell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), p. 20; Purdie, 'Medieval Romance in Scotland' p. 169; Deanna Delmar Evans, 'Scott's Redgauntlet and the Late Medieval Romance of Friendship, *Eger and Grime*', *SSL*, 31, 1 (1999), 31-45 (p. 33).

² Quotations are taken from HL except where otherwise stated; at times I quote from the Percy version (hereafter P) to fully explore how the supernatural is presented in *Eger and Grime*. All character names are from Huntington-Laing except Grime, known as Graham in HL, whose name I have kept the same as in the title of the romance to avoid confusion. The edition used is Caldwell's.

³ The Older Scots romance *Roswall and Lillian* (c. sixteenth-century?) is also set in 'Bealm', possibly modern Bohemia. A recent edition of *Roswall and Lillian* appears in Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*.

wan and never tint' (12) means that her affection cannot be maintained if Eger does not seek out new opponents to defeat.⁴ When he hears of a knight living in the psychologically liminal 'land of doubt' (1447), Eger travels across a landscape steeped with elements associated with the faerie: he finds that 'A Forrest lay on every hand' (122) and he must also cross a ford (125).⁵ Failing to read the faerie symbolism of this landscape and ignoring advice that his chosen opponent is too formidable to defeat (see below, p. 54), Eger battles the mysterious knight who is clad in all in red armour (137-8), but is severely wounded and utterly defeated, even having his little finger cut off as a morbid trophy (209).

Having escaped Sir Graysteel, as his vanquisher is known, Eger travels to a nearby town where he meets Lillias, a woman skilled in the arts of magical healing but firmly aligned with courtly society: Eger perceives that she is 'a Lady of great linage' (256).⁶ When she gives Eger a drink of 'grasse greene' (P, 291), it instantly heals his wounds (368-70), but all is not as it first appears.⁷ This potion has the double effect of being a healing elixir and a love potion, as Lillias explains: 'Assoon as love makes you aghast,/Your oyntments will you nothing last' (405-6).⁸

Unfortunately for Eger, relying on Winliane's love to maintain the potion's healing powers proves futile. Having overheard Eger telling his blood brother Sir Grime of his defeat (668), Winliane decides she will no longer marry Eger (674), treating him with disdain from this point

⁴ She is very much adopting the position of demanding lady that Meliades is so reluctant to engage with at the beginning of *Clariodus* (see my chapter on *Clariodus*, pp. 43-51, esp. p. 45). Indeed, Hasler's assessment that she subjects Eger to 'senseless, outrageous ... capricious ordeals' becomes more evident as the text goes on. See Anthony J. Hasler, 'Romance and its Discontents in *Eger and Grime*' in Ad Putter and J. Gilbert, eds., *The Spirit of Medieval Popular Romance* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2000, pp. 200-18 (p. 207).

⁵ Caldwell (pp. 102-5) discusses the associations of forests and fords with the entrance to Fairyland.

⁶ Cf. Medea, who has considerable magical powers but is introduced to us as an heiress; see my *Scottish Troy Book* chapter, pp. 35-42, esp. pp. 37-8.

⁷ The motif of women as healers is common in medieval romance, and appears elsewhere in the figure of Josian in *Boris of Hampton* (c. 1300) and *Ywain and Gawain* (first half of 14th century) where Ywain's madness is cured by a magical ointment. See *The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, ed. Eugen Kölbing, EETS, ES 46, 48, 65 (London: Trübner & Co., 1885, 1886, 1894); *Ywain and Gawain in Middle English Romances*, ed. by Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York: Norton, 1995).

⁸ The tradition of love potions in romance is most commonly associated with the *Tristan* legends. See Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, pp. 130-134.

onwards and regretting that for Eger's sake 'For him better I put away' (648).⁹ Grime sympathises with Eger, though not without firstly reprimanding him for fighting Graysteel when he had explicitly warned him not to, citing Graysteel's 'uncannand' (443) status as the reason. Even Winliane later reveals she 'bade him let his journey be' (659). With Grime and Winliane's recognition of Graysteel's supernatural inviolability, Eger is here made culpable for the double loss of his lady and his chivalric identity, where his rashness and his failure to listen to advice underlines the lack of good governance he exerts over his mind. Nevertheless, Grime conceives a plan through which Eger can restore his honour and win back Winliane: he will defeat Graysteel disguised as Eger while the real Eger recuperates (781-90).

Before Grime can defeat Graysteel, however, he realises he will need a formidable weapon, and tells Eger of a sword named Egeking which was once in the possession of Eger's uncle Sir Agam.¹⁰ It is a sword with magical properties which 'will not fail, but ay endure' (822) and is now in possession of Sir Agam's lady living nearby. Like many magical swords, it has a genealogy of its own, having been made for 'the king Forrest' (826), who died after owning it for seven years, though not before passing it on to his Queen, who presents it to her son (827-30). Most significantly, Egeking's powers are specifically linked to the concept of good governance, as Agam's lady explains:

'There was noe fault with Egeking,
But for want of grace & gouerninge
For want of grace & good gouerninge
May loose a Kingdome & a King,'
(P, 593-6)

⁹ Like Clariodus' fear that Meliades will be married off to a man of higher rank than he (see my chapter on *Clariodus*, pp. 43-51, esp. p. 45), Eger is (understandably) terrified that Winglayne will chose to marry a man of higher rank instead, especially as Grime has noticed that there have been messengers between Winglaine and Earl Olyes, who is 'of better blood borne than euer were wee' (508).

¹⁰ 'Egeking' is only referred to by name in P.

This follows the convention that only one who is truly worthy will be able to effectively wield the magical object, directly linking the concepts of magic, identity and good governance which Eger failed to demonstrate.¹¹

Having exchanged the deeds of his lands – effectively, his legal identity – in return for Egeking (P, 586),¹² Grime sets out to challenge Graysteel, but firstly goes to thank Lillias for healing Eger.¹³ When she notices that Grime has all the fingers on his right hand, she becomes wrathful (1293), but is placated once Grime explains that Eger's defeat led to him losing Winliane's love, and by extension his knightly identity. She reveals that she herself desires vengeance on Graysteel for his slaying of her brother and her lover Sir Alistoun, whom she was going to marry (P, 864-867). This personal desire for revenge against a supernatural foe felt by both Lillias and Grime is absent from other confrontations with otherworldly opponents in other Older Scots romances; Colling's battle with the eldritch knight in *Sir Colling* is an opportunity for him to prove his might to the lady he loves, while Clariodus' encounter with the enchanted lion in *Clariodus* stems from his desire to assist the people it terrorises.¹⁴

¹¹ McDiarmid explores the relationship between romance and ballad traditions of the *Eger and Grime* story, noting that the idea of ‘an irresistible sword of a dead king’ is ‘certainly an idea from balladry, and probably from the Danish ballads then influential in Scotland’. See Matthew P. McDiarmid, ‘The Scots Makars and The Ballad Tradition’, in *Bryght Lanternis: Essays on the Language and Literature of Medieval and Renaissance Scotland*, ed. by J Derrick McClure and Michael R.G. Spiller (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989); Lowry Charles Wymerly, *Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads* (New York: Dover Publications, 1965).

¹² Precisely whose lands are being referred to here is rather unclear. Though HL states that it is the deeds to Eger's lands alone that are being left (818), P implies that the deeds to both Eger's and Grime's lands are handed over (586-7). This is in spite of the fact that we are told at the beginning of the text that Eger has no lands, as he is a younger brother. Due to this inconsistency, I have here quoted from P instead of HL.

¹³ Back in the setting of the court at Bealm, Pallias, Grime's brother, tells Winliane a tale in which Eger had a far more successful encounter with the ‘Other’, this time against heathen rather than supernatural foes. Assisting the King of Bealm in his wars against a Sultan named Gonordine, Eger single-handedly defeats the Sultan and ten of a company of sixty heathens hiding in ambush (P, 689-704).

¹⁴ See my chapter on *Sir Colling*, pp. 60-6, esp. pp. 62-3; and my chapter on *Clariodus*, pp. 43-51, esp. pp. 46-7.

We have seen elsewhere that Graysteel is firmly identified as an otherworldly being; he is described by Grime as ‘a ferlie thing’ (623) and by Lillias as a ‘fellowoun freek’ (2012).¹⁵ Yet exclusively to the Percy version of the romance, Graysteel is also revealed to have strength that waxes and wanes depending on the time of day:

‘for euerye houre from Midnight till noone,
eche hower he increaseth the strenght of a man;
& euery houer from Noone till Midnight,
euery hower he bateth the strenght of a Knight.’
(P, 891-4)

Once he has received this information from Lillias, it is little wonder that Grime deliberately sets out to battle Graysteel ‘ere it was mid-morn’ (1445); through defeating Graysteel when his supernatural might is at its greatest, Grime can win more renown.¹⁶

In the ensuing battle between Grime and Graysteel, even Graysteel’s ‘gear … red as any blood’ (1501) has been seen as signifying his supernatural status from its traditional associations as a faerie colour.¹⁷ With his foe so overtly identified as otherworldly, it remains for Grime to successfully utilise the supernatural powers of Egeking to overcome Graysteel.¹⁸ As discussed above (pp. 54-5), Egeking’s might can only be unlocked by one who demonstrates good governance, and Grime conclusively proves himself worthy of the sword by overcoming Graysteel and slicing off Graysteel’s hand as a token of his death (1641).

¹⁵ The term ‘fellowoun freek’ is precisely the same description given to the three-headed giant in *Sir Colling* (152). See my chapter on *Sir Colling*, pp. 60-6, esp. p. 64.

¹⁶ These traits are famously associated with Gawain in English and French Arthurian tradition. In the combat between Lancelot and Gawain in Malory, Lancelot ‘felte sir Gawaynes double hys strengthe, that he had bene a fyende and none earthly man [...] and than whan hit was paste noone sir Gawaynes strengthe was gone and he had no more but hys owne myght’ (XX, 21, 22-31). This derives from the French Lancelot-Grail Cycle (1215-c.1235), which states: ‘Everywhere Gawain had ever fought, people saw that his strength increased around noon’. See Sir Thomas Malory, *Works and Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation: The Death of Arthur*, trans. by Norris J. Lacy (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 2010), p. 102.

¹⁷ Caldwell, 1933, p. 115. Lillias is also clad in red (‘And in scarlet she was clad,/ And all the weed that she on had,/ In red gold could it birn’, 251-4), linking to her connotations as a fairy mistress (see fn. 21 in this chapter, p. 57).

As Purdie has noted,¹⁹ this episode has parallels in the episode in *Sir Colling* where Colling slices off the jewelled hand of the eldritch knight.²⁰ Graysteel's jewelled hand, upon being brought back to the court of Lillias' father, is described thus:

... it was red rowed for to see,
with fingars more then other 3,
& on euerye fingar a fine gold ring,
a precious stone or a goodlye thing,
(P, 1217-1220)

Upon seeing this conclusive token of Graysteel's death, Lillias' father Gorius, an Earl 'bouden with eild' (1936) and consequently desirous of securing his succession, declares:

'... I haue a daughter that is my heyre
of all my Lands, that is soe faire;
& if thou wilt wed that Ladye free,
with all my hart I will giue her thee.'
(P, 1267-1270)

As we have seen in *Sir Colling* and *Clariodus*, the defeat of supernatural foes is equated with the consequent offer of an heiress and her lands in marriage. Lillias herself recognises the inevitability that she will become part of this social transaction, stating that 'For he that hath my marriage,/Shal have my fathers heritage' (1953-4). As Wade suggests, Lillias' identity as a 'quasi-fairy mistress' through her marvellous powers and great beauty is rationalised as the romance goes on, first through her inability to protect her lover from being slain by Graysteel and then through her lack of agency in her own marriage.²¹

¹⁹Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, p. 18.

²⁰ See my chapter on *Sir Colling*, pp. 60-6, esp. p. 63.

²¹ Wade, pp. 23-5. Caldwell and Van Duzee have conclusively placed Lillias as a fairy mistress, and have seen many antecedents for her in Celtic literature. Both Calin and Cichon have expressed scepticism about how far *Eger and Grime* may be seen to have Celtic sources; Calin believes that such romances are 'best explained by the vast, centuries-old corpus of *romans bretons* (Arthurian romances) and *romans d'aventures* (adventure romances) rather than citing hypothetical Celtic orality', while Cichon asserts that Van Duzee's conclusions, though thorough, are 'highly speculative'. See Caldwell, pp. 124-34, Mabel Van Duzee, *A Medieval Romance of Friendship: Eger and Grime* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963); Calin, p. 213; Michael Cichon, "As ye have brewd, so shal ye drink": the Proverbial Context of *Eger and Grime*', in

Grime, having previously fallen in love with Lillias, agrees to marry her and, upon his return to Bealm, becomes a master of nuptial negotiation. Having handed the tokens of his victory to Eger so he can convince the court that it was really he who defeated Graysteel, Grime convinces Eger to treat Winliane with ‘no kindness’ (2365), at which she is greatly upset. Indeed, she is so repentant she agrees to arrange a procession of townsfolk to welcome Eger home, as Grime advises (2499-502); kneeling before Eger in the sight of all, the lovers – encouraged by Grime – are finally reconciled and are married (2531), transforming Eger from dispossessed younger son into the heir to an earldom.²²

Both versions of the text pose intriguing implications for identity. Eger, unable to both control his rashness and heed advice, pays for his decision to abandon good governance of the self through losing his chivalric identity and the love of his lady. In P, Eger is only able to restore his reputation through deception, and it is Grime’s actions in defeating Sir Graysteel that enable him to marry Winliane and become heir to her father’s earldom. In so doing, Grime’s own identity is transformed through his defeat of this formidable supernatural opponent. Like Colling in *Sir Colling*, he proves himself able to overcome the supernatural in battle whilst utilising the supernatural powers of a magical sword. In the case of Egeking – by far given more priority in P – the sword is effective in the hands of someone worthy, thus acting to confirm his military might. Furthermore, Grime’s defeat of Graysteel also secures him an earldom as he receives Lillias – and consequently her lands – in reward.

HL provides Eger with the opportunity to restore his own identity himself, though Winliane is disgusted upon his admission that it was not he but Grime who defeated Graysteel, causing her to leave Bealm (2833). He then leaves for Rhodes to battle the ‘other’ not in the form of the supernatural, as Grime did, but in the form of ‘God his foes’ (2838), demonstrating such might

Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts, ed. by Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 2011), pp. 35-46 (p. 38).

²² The success of Eger’s and Grime’s marriages is emphasised far more in the Percy version, which tells us that Eger and Winliane had fifteen children (P, 1454) while Grime and Lillias had ten (P, 1458).

that a better man than Eger ‘was not counted that day to live,/So good in fight’ (2846-7). Having regained his honoured reputation, Eger returns home, learns that Winliane has died, and marries Lillias. Of all the marriages I discuss in this thesis, this is the only one where the first explicit statement of mutual land-ownership is made: ‘Of her lands she made him Lord,/And he made her Lady of his’ (2854-5). As Eger has previously acquired lands through his marriage to Winliane, the HL Lillias is the only example of a woman in Older Scots romance being able to gain an inheritance – and consequently a new identity - from her husband.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Sir Colling

Following the same pattern as *Eger and Grime* and *Clariodus*, the eponymous young knight of the 246-line *Sir Colling* loves an heiress of superior social status, successfully overcoming a variety of supernatural foes to be rewarded with her hand in marriage and the lordship that comes with it.¹

Discovered in 1972 by Marion Stewart, *Sir Colling* appears in the manuscript National Records of Scotland, MS RH 13/35 (hereafter MS RH).² The booklet in which it was written contains a watermark dating from 1582,³ yet its actual date of composition is harder to ascertain. As Purdie points out, ‘*Sir Colling* does not contain the examples of archaic usage ... that one would expect to find if it were considerably older than its c. 1583 extant copy’.⁴ Additionally, no references are made to *Sir Colling* in the ‘list of storeis’ in the *Complaynt of Scotland* (c. 1550), which does reference a variety of other Older Scots romances including *King Orphius*.⁵ A terminus a quo is possibly provided by *Sir Colling*’s borrowing from the fourteenth-century Middle English romance *Sir Eglamour of Artois* (discussed further in fn. 12, p. 63), though such a date does not correlate with *Colling*’s language.⁶ Indeed, Purdie’s assertion that ‘the best that can be said about the date of *Sir*

¹ The edition of *Sir Colling* used here is from Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Medieval Romances*. All references to *Sir Colling* in this thesis are from this edition.

² Marion Stewart, ‘A Recently Discovered Manuscript: “ane taill of Sir colling ye kny”’, *Scottish Studies*, 17 (1972), 23-39. Notably, the booklet in which *Sir Colling* appears (folios 6-15) also features *King Orphius*, with which it shares many supernatural parallels: in both texts supernatural foes are overcome by the hero (the Fairy King in *King Orphius* and the eldritch knight in *Sir Colling*) and otherworldly events occur near trees. Early readers of this booklet may well have been encouraged to see these supernatural parallels through the placement of these two texts.

³ Wingfield, ‘Manuscript and Print Contexts’ p. 177; Stewart, ‘A Recently Discovered Manuscript’, p. 23.

⁴ Purdie notes that the apparent rhyme *small: away* in *Sir Colling*, 184, was only possible after the mid-fifteenth century (*Shorter Scottish Romances*, p. 21).

⁵ Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, p. 21.

⁶ Neither is the similarity to *Eger and Grime* a more helpful indicator of *Sir Colling*’s date; we know that it was circulating in oral form from the *Treasurer’s Accounts* for 1497, which records a payment for two fiddlers who ‘sang Greysteil to the King’ (see my *Eger and Grime* chapter, fn. 1, p. 52) but it is unknown when *Eger and Grime* was first composed. See Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, p. 18.

Colling is that it is no earlier than the fifteenth century, and as likely to date from the sixteenth' is, at present, the closest we can get to a time of composition for *Sir Colling*.⁷

While *Sir Colling*'s earliest origins are unknown, its later history as an influence on the Scottish ballad tradition is more certain.⁸ In this case, the ballad 'Sir Cawline', preserved in Bishop Percy's folio manuscript (London, British Library, Additional MS 27879) shares enough similarities with *Sir Colling* that the former must be descended from the latter. Furthermore, *Sir Colling* features details which are absent from the version in the Percy Folio manuscript, but are present in 'Sir Colin' and 'King Malcolm and Sir Colvin', two orally-circulating Scottish ballads of the nineteenth century.⁹ A distinctive feature of ballads is the use of 'incremental repetition', the technique of lingering on a word or phrase;¹⁰ and, in *Sir Colling*, many of the images that are lingered upon are images of the supernatural, increasing the sense of tension surrounding these images.

It is through the challenges provided by these supernatural events that Sir Colling is able to demonstrate his worthiness to become Lord of Argyll through marrying the current Lord's (unnamed) daughter. Though Colling is presumably a skilled warrior, having fought alongside 'Edvaird þe Bruce ... /In Irland biyond þe sie' (9-10),¹¹ he is soon afflicted with lovesickness,

⁷ Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, p. 21.

⁸ As Green states, 'It is unwise ever to dismiss out of hand the possibility that any given traditional ballad might incorporate some detail of great antiquity'. Richard Firth Green, 'The Ballad and the Middle Ages', in Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone, eds., *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 163-84 (p. 179).

⁹ Lyle, *Fairies and Folk*, p. 85 and pp. 101-2. For the ballads see *The Song Repertoire of Amelia and Jane Harris*, ed. by Emily Lyle et al., STS, 4th Series, 30 (Edinburgh: STS 2002).

¹⁰ Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, p. 16, following Gummere, 1959. See Francis B. Gummere, *The Popular Ballad* (New York: Dover, 1959), pp. 90-134.

¹¹ It is these lines which indicate that *Sir Colling* may originally have been composed as an ancestral romance for the Campbells of Argyll. Stephen Boardman writes that the historical Colin Campbell did indeed accompany Edward Bruce, Robert Bruce's brother, on his Irish campaigns between 1315-18 and that this Colin was 'clearly the historical basis' for Colling (p. 42). In February 1315, Colin was awarded the lands of Loch Awe and Ardscothish in free barony by King Robert, possibly as preparation for these campaigns (p. 40). Moreover, *Sir Colling* can be seen as an ancestral romance for the Campbells; the early sixteenth-century Gaelic poem 'Ar Sliocht Gaodhal' traces the ancestry of Archibald Campbell, 2nd Earl of Argyll, back to this historical Colin. See Stephen Boardman, *The Campbells 1250-1513* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2006), esp. pp. 40-2.

tortured by his inability to express his love to Argyll's daughter: 'Sir Colling in cairbed lay,/And he caist wp his armis braid [...]’ (24-5).¹² Such is Colling's woe that he fails to attend a feast, a motif also found elsewhere in MS RH in *King Orphius*, where, due to her abduction by the fairy king and subsequent death-like state, Queen Issabell cannot join her husband at the banquet near the beginning of the romance (18-22).¹³ Colling's failure to exert control over his desire for Argyll's daughter and his lack of governance over his own emotions has here prevented him from engaging with the chivalric community to which he belongs. Almost ironically, it falls to Argyll's daughter to regulate this desire and redirect Colling's mind to more chivalrous pursuits. Upon seeing Colling, Argyll's daughter implores him – rather harshly – to 'Win vp, for Godis mycht,/Ly newer sa couartlie!' (44-5). Her use of the word 'couartlie' is imperative for spurring Colling into action, questioning his legitimacy as a knight and causing him to finally declare his love for her, telling her that if he is 'sa sempill ane knycht' (52) he cannot be her 'peir' (53). He wishes to assume a new identity as her 'bachleir' (55), and, in order to prove himself worthy of her love, asks his lady to tell him of 'deidis of armis' (54) that he might perform.

¹² Purdie has found that the lost part of line 25 can be supplied from the late fourteenth-century Middle English romance *Sir Eglamour*, a likely source of *Sir Colling*. In it, the lowly Sir Eglamour wins the love of Christabell, daughter of the earl of Artois, and even fails to attend a feast at the beginning of the romance due to lovesickness, at which point Christabell is sent to tend to him. As Sir Eglamour lies in bed:

Both his handys he cast up sone,
To Jhesu Crist he made his bone,
To that Lord that us bowght.
"The Erles dowghtur, that swete thyng,
She myght be myn at myn endyng,
On her ys all my thoght.
That I myght wedde her to my wyfe
And sythen kepe her all my lyfe;
Owt of care then were I browght."
(100-8)

From *Sir Eglamour of Artois* in *Four Middle English Romances: Sir Isumbras, Octavian, Sir Eglamour of Artois, Sir Tryamour*, ed. by Harriet Hudson, TEAMS Middle English Text Series (Kalamazoo, Michigan: 1996). See further Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, p. 17.

¹³ *King Orphius* in Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*. See also my chapter on *King Orphius* and Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice*, pp. 67-75.

From this point onwards, the features of the ballad form and the language of the poem itself combine to create an image of the supernatural as utterly formidable. That Argyll's daughter is presenting Colling with an otherworldly challenge is made clear not only through use of the word 'alreche' - 'ȝone allreche hill' (56), 'ane alreche knycht' (60) - but also by the reference to the hawthorn tree growing atop the hill (57). As Henderson and Cowan have discussed, hawthorn trees were liminal spaces commonly associated with the entrance to Fairyland.¹⁴ Having made it clear that Colling will be facing a foe outside the boundaries of courtly and indeed human society, Argyll's daughter tells him that no one has defeated the eldritch knight 'Sen þe first tyme þat I vas borne' (63). The incremental repetition which follows ('Pair my hand,' said Sir Collyne,/I sall valk at þat thorne,... 'Pair my hand,' said Sir Collyne,/I sall valk at þat plain', 64-9) almost makes it appear as though Colling, realising his peril, is summoning up his determination to go through with the challenge. Further tension is added by the poet's use of pathetic fallacy. 'Þe thunder and þe fyr flauchtis/Com ouer þe bentis broun' (78-9) as Sir Colling journeys towards the eldritch hill, and the newly-risen moon shows 'littil lycht' (81); instead, Colling is able to see by the light shining from the gold worn by the eldritch knight's lady, who approaches him alongside the eldritch knight. Though it is unknown whether the lady is also eldritch, this luminescence nevertheless gives her a sense of unearthliness. When the eldritch knight himself appears, we are twice told that he 'was stif and stuir' (96, 102), yet, despite his formidable power, Colling manages to defeat him by striking off his right hand.¹⁵

¹⁴ Henderson and Cohen, pp. 40-41. The tree is later destroyed during the battle between Colling and the eldritch knight, pre-empting Colling's victory over his supernatural foe.

¹⁵ As discussed in my *Eger and Grime* chapter (pp. 52-59), this is similar to the episode in *Eger and Grime*, where Grime slices off the hand of Sir Graysteel in order to take it as a trophy. Such a similarity, along with the evidence for *Eger and Grime*'s circulation in Scotland, may well indicate that this was a possible source for *Sir Colling*. See further Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, pp. 17-18.

Of particular interest during this episode is the dichotomy between Colling's status as a Christian knight and the eldritch knight's status as an otherworldly being.¹⁶ When the eldritch knight's lady sees that her lover's hand has been sliced off, she cries: 'Away! Avay þow kirsin knycht - /Thow smett my lord na mai[r]!' (110-11), referring to the eldritch knight as a 'foe to fechtt' with Christian knights who 'leiris of Godis lair' (114-5).

Despite here being categorised as 'other', the eldritch knight is, to an extent, humanised in his defeat. His lady recalls how, when last she held him in her arms, she thought him 'sweit as suair' (117), and, though she knows her lover is likely to die, asks Colling 'Bot foir þe luif þat þow [lui]fis best/His vondit bodie gif me' (120-1), inviting comparisons between the love shared by her and the eldritch knight and Sir Colling and his lady. Though Colling refuses to relinquish the eldritch knight's sword and right hand, requiring them as proof of his deeds, he does agree to give up the rest of his opponent's body to the lady (123-5).

This possession of the eldritch sword later becomes imperative in further developing Colling's prowess in battle, ultimately allowing him to win Argyll's daughter in marriage and assume a new identity as Lord of Argyll. Having returned from his successful duel with the eldritch knight, Colling is immediately rewarded with an embrace from his lady (143), and the two attend a feast together. At this point, the common romance motif of the intruder at the feast is introduced into the text to present Colling with another challenge on his way to becoming a successful lord. Once again, this challenge is provided by a supernatural being. At the head of 'Four and twentie greit schipis' (150),¹⁷ there appears 'ane fellon freik' (152) with 'thrie headis' (154), who commits the utmost disrespect to the king by taking up his cup and drinking the wine from it (156-7),

¹⁶ This is especially unusual since the otherworldly is generally seen to be outside the dichotomy between the Christian and demonic supernatural; it is 'neither demonic nor divine'. Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 179.

¹⁷ The emergence of such a monstrous foe from a ship may be another clue that *Sir Colling* was intended as an ancestral romance for the Campbells. Purdie points out that, in Blind Harry's *Wallace*, a 'knycht Campbell' fights Makfadȝan, fictional leader of the 'bestly folk' of the Hebrides and Ireland who intend to wreak havoc in the Argyll area (Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, p. 20). See further Boardman, 2006.

adding further insult by stating that his intention is either to take possession of the king's lands or his daughter, unless the king finds someone to challenge him (160-164); if he cannot, the king's very identity will be called into question ('pow aucht to be na king', 165). As Byrne suggests, the introduction of such a challenger is 'generally to provide the martial society with its *raison d'être*, to validate authority and reinforce arrangements of precedence'.¹⁸

This is indeed the case in *Sir Colling*; through defeating the three-headed giant, he will not only gain the hand of the king's daughter but will also inherit Argyll, giving him a new precedence in the order of the chivalric community. Here, possession of the king's land is equated with possession of the king's daughter, a consistent theme throughout Older Scots romance. Having volunteered to fight the giant, a decision which establishes his reintegration into the chivalric community of Argyll's court following his earlier self-imposed exclusion from it, Colling tellingly asks for '*my* alreche svord' (187), indicating that the sword and its associations with supernatural strength have now been subsumed into Colling's own identity. In the ensuing battle, Colling decapitates all three of the giant's heads and takes them back to the lord of Argyll as proof of his victory (205-6), confirming his worthiness to marry Argyll's daughter.

Together, the three supernatural tokens in *Sir Colling* – the eldritch knight's hand, the eldritch sword and the giant's three heads – are symbolic of Colling's status as a knight who has not only successfully mastered the art of self-control that he so conspicuously lacked at the beginning of the romance, but as a master of the supernatural too, both through his repeated defeat of otherworldly foes and his ability to successfully utilise the eldritch sword.¹⁹ Through combining the governance of his own mind with his command of the supernatural, Colling is able to marry

¹⁸ Aisling Byrne, 'The Intruder at the Feast: Negotiating Boundaries in Medieval Insular Romance', *Arthurian Literature*, 27, eds. Elizabeth Archibald and David F. Johnson (Cambridge: D S Brewer , 2010), pp. 33-57 (p. 56).

¹⁹ Much as Grime is able to use Egeking to vanquish Graysteel. See my *Eger and Grime* chapter, pp. 52-59, esp. p. 56.

Argyll's daughter, transform himself from a 'sempill knyght' (52) into the Lord of Argyll, and secure his dynasty through having sixteen children (243).

CHAPTER EIGHT

King Orphius and Henryson's Orpheus and Eurydice

The connection between medieval romance and the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice is most commonly associated with the Middle English romance *Sir Orfeo*, written c.1340. Yet in 1973, Marion Stewart discovered that medieval Scotland had its own, albeit fragmentary, version of an Orpheus romance: *King Orphius*.¹ Thought to be the only extant copy of the poem, a second fragment was found by Rhiannon Purdie amongst the papers of the antiquary David Laing (see below for further discussion of both manuscripts).² Though much of *King Orphius* has been lost, there is still enough material to indicate that it aligns itself with the romance tradition of the legend, in which Eurydice (named 'Issabell' in *King Orphius*) is captured by the Fairy King and is successfully rescued from the underworld by Orpheus, contrasting with classical retellings of the myth – such as those in Virgil's *Georgics* (IV, 453-527) and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (X-XI) – in which Eurydice is condemned to remain in Hell forever.³ The *Orphius* fragments are not the sole surviving Older Scots treatment of the legend, however. Robert Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice* combines the classical and romance Orpheus traditions to create a hybrid version of the tale in which Proserpina, Eurydice's kidnapper, is identified as the Fairy Queen and Hell is associated with Fairyland, but the poem ends with Orpheus' failure to rescue Eurydice from her imprisonment.

¹ Marion Stewart, 'King Orphius', *Scottish Studies*, 17, (1973), 1-16.

² Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*. See esp. pp. 43-9 for a discussion of the 'Laing fragment' of *King Orphius*. All quotations from *King Orphius* in this thesis are taken from this edition.

³ Although references to Hell are normally absent from the romance tradition of the Orpheus story, John Block Friedman has suggested that the character of the Fairy King in *Sir Orfeo* is 'quite pointedly' connected with Satan. This is an intriguing interpretation, though it seems to be based on the folkloric concept of the 'noonday demon' rather than on the actions and descriptions of the Fairy King himself. See John Block Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970, rpt. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), esp. pp. 180-90.

While Henryson's poem is not strictly classifiable as a romance, it is rewarding to discuss how these romance elements construct Orpheus' identity as a king, especially as they act in conjunction with elements from the classical tradition to create a 'hybrid Orpheus'.⁴ Before discussing this, however, I will firstly summarise the remaining fragments of *King Orphius*, and will then use evidence provided by its language and date to argue that this romance went on to be used by Henryson in his *Orpheus and Eurydice*. Additionally, I will suggest that both *King Orphius* and Henryson's poem demonstrate a typically 'Scottish' response to the Orpheus myth where the interaction between Orpheus and the faerie underworld serves to underline the importance of kingship and good governance which are central themes of Older Scots literature. Despite *King Orphius'* severely fragmented state, it is still possible to draw some conclusions about its place in the romance-Orpheus tradition and to make suggestions how this tradition acted upon Orphius' status as a king.

Stewart's discovery of the first fragment of *King Orphius* was in the manuscript National Records of Scotland, MS RH13/35, hereafter MS RH.⁵ Consisting of several originally-independent booklets which have since been bound together, *King Orphius* appears in the booklet spanning from Folios 6-15, dating from 1582.⁶ The MS RH *King Orphius* survives in two parts. Part 1 (1-51) opens with a banquet scene where Orphius, missing his wife Issabell at the feast, visits her chamber to be told by one of her ladies that as Issabell sat under a laurel tree that morning, she experienced some terrifying event that caused her to lose her senses.⁷ Just at the part where

⁴ See Carol Mills, 'Romance Convention of Robert Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice*', in Adam J. Aitkin et al., *Bards and Makars: Scottish Language and Literature: Medieval and Renaissance* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 1977), pp. 52-60, in which Mills discusses the relationship between *Sir Orfeo* and *Orpheus and Eurydice*.

⁵ MS RH is also discussed in my *Sir Colling* chapter, pp. 61-7, (p. 61).

⁶ Stewart, 'A Recently-Discovered Manuscript', p. 23. See Emily Wingfield, 'Manuscript and Print Contexts', pp. 171- 216, for a full codicological description of MS RH.

⁷ This is famously paralleled in *Sir Orfeo*, but it is under an 'ympe-tre' (70, Auchinleck MS) that Heurodis, as she is named in *Orfeo*, becomes 'reueyd out of hir witt' (82). The edition used is *Sir Orfeo*, ed. by A.J. Bliss, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966). The role of the mysterious ympe-tre and other trees associated with peril is discussed in Curtis R. H. Jirsa, 'In the Shadow of the Ympe-te: Arboreal Folklore in *Sir Orfeo*', *English Studies*, 89, 2, (2008), 141-51.

Issabell explains that she is doomed to be captured by the ‘king of Pharie’ (48), the text breaks off. Part 2 (52-154) resumes after a chunk of the text has been lost. It begins when Orphius has rescued Issabell and is staying with a burgess, who knows nothing of his true identity. He disguises himself as an old minstrel and is invited to play at court by the new king, who is also Orphius’ nephew, and who shows him great kindness. His nephew’s loyalty is conclusively proved when Orphius initially pretends that the real Orphius is dead, and reveals his true identity once he sees his nephew overcome with grief. The story concludes with the whole kingdom rejoicing at Orphius and Issabell’s return.⁸

Purdie’s recent discovery of a second, previously unknown copy of *King Orphius* in the fragment Edinburgh University Library La.IV.27 (54) (hereafter ‘LF’) has indicated that, several years after MS RH was circulating, so too was another, slightly different version of *King Orphius*. Transcribed from a now-lost manuscript of 1586 by the prominent Scottish antiquary and scholar David Laing (1793-1878),⁹ it corresponds to Part 2 of the MS RH *Orphius* fragment which shows Orphius’ return to his court. As Purdie observes, across both the MS RH and Laing fragments only one couplet matches down to its rhymes:¹⁰

Pow tell me, foir thi vrisone,/Quhidder þow gat þi hairp in to[vr] or toun. (MS RH, 110-11)

Sayis ‘awld men, for vrisone,/Gat thou þat herp in towr or town?’ (LF, ll.50-1)

Both fragmentary versions of *King Orphius* clearly represent a late stage in the poem’s textual transmission, especially since references to *King Orphius* appear in earlier Older Scots texts. For instance, reference is made to ‘Opheus King of Portingal’ in the list of narratives discussed by a group of shepherds in the *Complaynt of Scotland* (c. 1550).¹¹ ‘Portingall’ is directly referenced in

⁸Folios 6-15 - the booklet containing *King Orphius* - also contains *Sir Colling*, which, as described in my *Sir Colling* chapter (fn. 2, p. 61), has themes which broadly correspond to those found in *King Orphius*.

⁹This date has been taken from the *Handlists of Manuscript Collections* in Edinburgh University Library. See Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, p. 45.

¹⁰Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, p. 46.

¹¹*Complaynt of Scotland*, ed. by Stewart, p. 50.

both fragments of *King Orphius*: MS RH refers to Orphius' wife as the 'plisance of Portingale' (4), while in the Laing fragment Orphius asks 'Into quhat part of Porting[all]' (2) the king can be found.¹² These parallels mean that we can date *King Orphius* to before 1550.

In trying to find a *terminus a quo* for *King Orphius*, we can both assess its influence on Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice* and explore how contemporary traditions of the supernatural in the romance tradition affect the identities of these texts' two main protagonists: Orpheus/Orphius and Eurydice/Issabell. In both texts, the power of the supernatural to transform those who encounter it into a death-like state, a liminal existence between life and death, is made explicit. When Issabell's lady informs us that the queen 'sat doun in arbour grein/And leind hir to ane fair laurein' (MS RH, 40-1) with the result that Isabell '... gaif ane skrik/And ay sensyne scho vas deidlyk' (MS RH, 42-3), the *Orphius*-poet seems very much aware of the tradition in which supernatural visitations take place under laurel trees. The intermingling of death, or the threat of it, with the supernatural during such scenes is present in the early fifteenth-century text *The Awntyrs off Arthure*, where Guinevere rests under a laurel tree (70) only to be confronted shortly afterwards with the 'ferly' (72) of her mother's ghost appearing.¹³ Similarly, in the late fourteenth-century *Pistill of Swete Susan*, Susan relaxes under a laurel tree and makes herself vulnerable to 'feole ferlys' (129).¹⁴

¹² The association with Portugal and the supernatural is discussed in my *Clariodus* chapter, fn. 15, p. 48.

¹³ *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, in Thomas Hahn, ed., *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, TEAMS Middle English Text Series (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute, 1995).

¹⁴ *The Pistil of Swete Susan*, in *Heroic Women from the Old Testament in Middle English Verse*, ed. by Russell A. Peck, TEAMS Middle English Text Series (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute, 1991). Both this text and *The Awntyrs of Arthur* may have been circulating in Scotland during the fifteenth century. Ralph Hanna has suggested a Scots provenance for *The Awntyrs*, while the *Pistil of Swete Susan* is referenced in Andrew Wyntoun's *Orygynale Cronykil* (c. 1420) as a work authored by the as-yet-unidentified 'Hucheon' (V,12, 4308). According to Wyntoun, 'Hucheon' also wrote the 'Awntyrs of Gawane' (V, 12, 4311), which considering Gawain's prominent role in *The Awntyrs off Arthur* could be further evidence of its Scottish provenance. See *The Knightly Tale of Golagros and Gawane*, Hanna, pp. xxxv-xxxvi; Andrew of Wyntoun, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. by F.J. Amours, 6 vols, STS, 1st Series, 50, 53, 54, 56, 57, 63, (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1903-14) (IV, 1906). See also Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, pp. 219-20 for further discussion of the laurel tree motif.

Although Henryson's Eurydice is not exposed to supernatural forces through unwittingly sitting under a tree,¹⁵ the episode in which she is reported captured and taken to Hell by Proserpina does have a close parallel in *King Orphius* which suggests Henryson used it as a source for his own retelling of the Orpheus legend. As discussed on p. 70, it is one of Issabell's ladies who inform Orphius of his wife's ordeal, an action which is mirrored in *Orpheus and Eurydice* where Eurydice's 'madinn' (114) informs Orpheus that 'ȝour quene,/Is with the fary tane befor myne ene!' (118-9).¹⁶

This is not the only example of *King Orphius'* influence on Henryson, however, and it is interesting to note that the closest parallels between the two texts are found where the supernatural is explicitly linked with death and, by extension, the transformation of identity. As we have seen, Issabell becomes 'deidlyk' (MS RH, 43) following her ordeal at the hands of the King of Fairy underneath the laurel tree, yet she is also described as being 'van and paill' (MS RH, 45). These descriptions are echoed precisely in *Orpheus and Eurydice*. After descending through the spheres of the underworld and finding his wife, Orpheus is shocked to see that she is 'lene and dedelike' (349), 'pitouse and pale of hewe' (349) and 'wan' (350). Connections with Eurydice's morbid appearance and the supernatural are made even more explicit when Pluto, King of the Underworld, refers to her as being 'like ane elf' (359).¹⁷ Here, the faerie is clearly so intermingled with death that any encounter with it leaves the victim resembling a corpse.¹⁸ Such

¹⁵ Derived from the Virgilian Orpheus tradition, Eurydice instead steps on a 'serpent vennemuss' (105) as she escapes from the shepherd Arestaeus who tries to rape her. The edition used is Robert Henryson, *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. by Denton Fox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

¹⁶ This has been observed by Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, p. 32.

¹⁷ The identification of Pluto and Proserpina as King and Queen of Faerie appears in a range of other works. In Chaucer's *Merchant's Tale*, he writes of 'Proserpina, and al hire fayerye' (2039), and this tradition was clearly known in Scotland; *Clariodus* contains a reference to 'Queine Proserpina with hir Court of Fari' (V, 974) while Dunbar's *Golden Targe* (written before 1508) describes Pluto as an 'elrich incubus' (125, Poem 59). See Benson, *The Riverside Chaucer*, Bawcutt, *The Poems of William Dunbar*.

¹⁸ A search for the word 'elf' in DOST reveals further examples of its usage and unpleasant associations. The most prominent examples are those taken from the late fifteenth-century *Flyting* between Dunbar and Kennedy. Kennedy refers to Dunbar as an elf amongst the barrage of insults in the line: 'Ignorant elf, aip, owl irregular' (36), later using the same insult in the phrase 'Thow lufis nane Irische, elf, I understand', (345). See further the Dictionary of the Scots Language, 'elf', n., 1., [<http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/elf>, accessed 15/09/14]; The *Flyting* is poem 65 in Bawcutt, *The Poems of William Dunbar*. For an exploration of

clear examples of borrowing allow us to posit narrower dates for both *King Orphius* and *Orpheus and Eurydice*. Given that *King Orphius* clearly situates itself in the tradition where laurel trees are associated with the supernatural, which seems to have been especially popular in the early fifteenth-century, it may be that this text too was composed in the early- to mid-fifteenth century, as Purdie speculates.¹⁹ Such a date corresponds to previous efforts to date Henryson's text to between c.1460 and c. 1500, again suggesting that *King Orphius* was able to influence *Orpheus and Eurydice*.²⁰

In both texts, the kidnapping of Issabell/Eurydice by denizens of the faerie otherworld proves to be the catalyst for the transformation of her identity into a living being who is simultaneously on the threshold of death. Yet in setting Orphius/Orpheus on a quest to rescue his queen, the reshaping of her identity also acts as a means by which his ability to be a good king is tested, thereby allowing him to affirm his own worthiness to rule his realm.

Though we have now lost the part of *King Orphius* which presumably described Orphius' journey into the faerie otherworld,²¹ Part 2 of MS RH and all of LF provide insights not only into Orphius' successful rescue of Issabell and his negotiation of supernatural perils but also portray him as a king working in harmony with his subjects. When Orphius returns to his kingdom disguised as a minstrel – itself significant, as discussed in fn. 24, p. 74 – he stays with a burgess who, believing that Orpheus and Issabell are dead, is overcome with weeping (MS RH, 81; LF, 22). In MS RH, Orphius is explicitly shown to play his harp 'for to confort þe burgess' (84), and this theme of the king consciously acting to comfort and reassure his subjects is extended a few lines later when we are told that 'all þe folk thankit him of his play' (87). When Orphius' and Issabell's true identities are finally revealed and they are restored to the throne, the bond between

Scottish cultural attitudes towards faeries, including the belief that they were connected with death, see Henderson and Cowan.

¹⁹ Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, p. 31.

²⁰ These dates are suggested in Martin, *Kingship and Love*, p. 79.

²¹ Purdie provides a detailed discussion of how *King Orphius* matches up with *Sir Orfeo* in order to ascertain how much of the Scottish romance is missing. See Purdie, *Shorter Scottish Romances*, pp. 27-9.

Orphius and his subjects is such that the whole country is united in joy: ‘all þe contrie fair and neir/Var blyth and glaid and maid guid cheir’ (MS RH, 149-50).

In contrast, the ability of Henryson’s Orpheus to be a good king becomes far more ambiguous. Initially, the noble qualities which stem from his divine ancestry – ‘he is ‘fair and wyse/Gentill and full of liberalite’(64-5) – are so prominent that they attract the attention of Eurydice, who requires Orphius ‘to wed hir and be king’ (77) having heard about him by word of mouth alone. With his royal identity deriving from his wife, it is little wonder that he outwardly divests himself of his ‘rob ryell and all my riche array’ (157), exchanging it for clothes of ‘rude russat of gray’ once he has been separated from her (158). This rejection of his royal attire also corresponds with Eurydice’s own physical transformation into a corpse-like state in the underworld.

From this point onwards, it is through his actions alone that Orpheus must demonstrate his fitness for kingship, as he no longer has any outward indication of his royal status. As he descends through the spheres of the underworld, a dichotomy arises between how successful Orpheus’ kingship is in his own kingdom and how effective it is in the otherworld. Most intriguingly, it is in Hell that Orpheus’ leadership is proved to be the most effectual.²² While there is a sense that he has somewhat irresponsibly abandoned his own kingdom without leaving a steward or any sort of government in his stead, his actions in the underworld become a metaphor for effective kingship: just as Orpheus relieves the suffering of the denizens of hell through his harp-playing, so too does the ideal king relieve the suffering of his citizens.

²² Katie Stevenson has discussed the intriguing associations between the boundaries of Scotland and Hell. Three manuscripts of John Hardyngh’s second revision to his *Chronicle* (c. 1461) – London, British Library, Harley 661; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Arch. Selden B10, and Harvard, Houghton Library, MS Eng. 1054 – each contain a map of Scotland depicting ‘the northern edges of Scotland’ which ‘are shown to be on the borders of Hell. A large castle – the palace of Pluto, home of the king of Hell- is surrounded by four of the five rivers of the classical underworld, the Stix, the Acheron, the Phlegethon and the Cocytus.’ See Katie Stevenson, *Power and Propaganda: Scotland 1306-1488* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 3.

After crossing a bridge over a ‘rywir wonder depe’ (261),²³ Orpheus is confronted with a variety of figures who have all been condemned to suffer eternally for their transgressions in life. As Orpheus beholds their torments, his compassion drives him to play his harp in such a way that their pains are assuaged at once. Tantalus, destined never to drink despite standing amidst a river, is seen by Orpheus to have ‘grete neid’ (286), and the melody he produces from his harp stops the flow of water in time for Tantalus to drink (288). Continuing onwards, Orpheus sees Titius, doomed to have his entrails pecked out by a vulture forever more. Understandably, when Orpheus ‘thus saw him this suffir soir’ (300), he plays such a ‘sueit melody’ (301) on his harp that the vulture flees. These examples of Orpheus’ power to alleviate the suffering of others directly contrast with the figures of failed kingship seen by Orpheus as he makes his way through the underworld. Such figures, Julius Caesar (‘for his crueltee’, 324) and Alexander the Conqueror (‘for his wrang conquest’, 322) amongst them, are singled out by Henryson for particular condemnation as they did nothing to relieve the hardships of their subjects.²⁴

Once Orpheus is reunited with Eurydice, however, the irrational king that we saw at the point of Eurydice’s kidnapping emerges once more. Though he has been emphatically warned by

²³ Sarah Dunnigan points out that bridges are ‘a romance and folk motif which often signifies the threshold of the other world’. See Sarah Dunnigan, ‘*Orpheus and Eurydice Disenchanted? Henryson’s Hellish Fairy Romance*’ in Janet Hadley Williams and J. Derrick McClure, eds., *Fresche Fontanis: Studies in the Culture of Medieval and Early Modern Scotland*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. 59-74 (p. 62).

²⁴ As Joanna Martin discusses, the connections implied between Orpheus’ harp-playing and the concept of kingship were especially resonant in late medieval Scottish literature. Walter Bower’s fifteenth-century *Scotichronicon*, for instance, describes James I as ‘another Orphius’, while the mid-fifteenth century Older Scots poem *De Reginime Principum*, found in the *Liber Pluscardensis* (a derivative of the *Scotichronicon*) offers parallels between the act of tuning a harp and the king bringing harmony to a kingdom:

Rycht as stringis ar reulit in a harp
In ane accord, and timyt al be ane uth,
Quhilk as a king than curiusly thai carp,
The sang is sueyt quhen that the sound is suth;
Bot, quhen thai ar discordand, fals and muth,
Thair wil na man tak plesance in that play:
(*De Reginime Principum*, 1– 6)

The image of the finely-tuned harp is, as Martin suggests, ‘a figure of the oneness of the king and his ordered kingdom’ (*Kingship and Love*, p. 86; see also pp. 85 and 87). These connections between *Orpheus and Eurydice* and the *Liber Pluscardensis* can also be extended to the harmonious relationship between Orphius and his subjects in *King Orphius*.

Proserpina that Eurydice will remain in Hell should he ‘blenkis behind [his] bak’ (382) to look at her as they make their way out of the underworld, Orpheus is ‘blindit ... in grete affection’ (388) and does indeed turn back to his wife. As he gazes upon her, he can physically see but is blind to reason. Orpheus’ final identity is not as a king who returns triumphant to his joyful subjects as his equivalent in *King Orphius* does, but merely as a ‘wofull wedow’ (414) who epitomises the failure of good governance that arises when desire overcomes rationality.²⁵

²⁵ This is explained by the poem’s critically-intriguing moralitas, derived from Nicholas Trivet’s c. 1300 commentary on Boethius’ version of the Orpheus myth (found in his *Consolation of Philosophy*, III, 12). Here, Henryson explain that the final separation of Orpheus – who represents reason – and Eurydice – who represents lust and sensuality – represents the widowing of reason due to ‘warldly lust’ (626). Strauss posits that this final line of the poem (414), in its ‘curtness’, might suggest that Henryson did not originally intend for this to be the poem’s final line. See Dietrich Strauss, ‘Some Comments on the Moralitas of Robert Henryson’s “Orpheus and Eurydice”’, *SSL*, 32, 1 (2001), 1-12 (p. 11).

Conclusion

In seeking to close the gap between the study of magic and the supernatural in Middle English romance and the scholarly neglect of this topic within Older Scots romance, this thesis has argued that the otherworldly is intrinsically linked to the development of identity within the Older Scots romance corpus. Furthermore, I have aimed to demonstrate that in spite of the small size of this corpus, it retains one of the most distinctive characteristics of Older Scots literature as a whole: the exploration of kingship and good governance, a concept which applies not only to kingship and lordship but also to ruling one's own mind effectively.

As we have seen, these Older Scots romance texts utilise the entire spectrum of magic and the supernatural, from the prophetic to the faerie to the demonic, to explore the development of identity and, in a wider context, engage with contemporary discourses about how magic should be considered acceptable. Moreover, different aspects of the supernatural have different effects on identity, and, as we have seen, these effects can be negative as well as positive: Alexander, Arthur, and Orpheus are all revealed to be flawed kings through their interactions with the supernatural, while Eger's foolish disregard for the advice given to him about Sir Graysteel is rewarded by his defeat and subsequent loss of honour.

Prophecies and prophetic visions are consistently linked to nationhood and kingship, and it appears most often in the works concerned with those themes: *The Bruce*, *The Wallace* and the *Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror*. Almost without exception, successful prophecies in the Older Scots romances originate from God, and they can be said to be the ultimate expression of God's approval - or disapproval, in the case of King Arthur in *Lancelot of the Laik*. The separate prophecies by Thomas of Erceldoune which appear in *The Bruce* and *The Wallace* are not overtly shown to be God-given, but in both texts other prophecies which are divinely-inspired correspond with Thomas' own prophecies.

Indeed, for an area of the supernatural which caused great concern for theologians such as St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas, this consistent connection between successful prophecies and the Christian divine firmly aligns them within the realm of acceptable divination. The alignment of divination and prophecy with the demonic occurs only once across Older Scots romance - in *The Bruce*, through the deceptive prophecies of the demon summoned by Count Ferrand's mother – and not only fails, but is conclusively condemned.

Views towards astrological magic initially appear to be more ambiguous. While Barbour outwardly denounces it as ‘na certane demyng’ (IV, 717) in *The Bruce*, the author of *Lancelot of the Laik* saw fit to add an astrological interpretation to King Arthur’s dreams where his source had none, suggesting that he recognised the potential of the supernatural for exploring the concept of kingship. In order to legitimise this introduction of astrology, it is situated within a context which firmly links it to the will of God: the planets are aligned in such a way that they cause the dreams which denote God’s unfavourable view of Arthur’s kingship, and must therefore be interpreted through astrological learning.

Indeed, where magic and the supernatural could potentially become threatening to the order of God’s universe, quite often its more negative aspects are effectively neutralised. We have seen this where Amon, the pagan god in *The Buik of Alexander the Conqueror*, is taken from his original position as an Egyptian deity and is placed within the Christian context of the romance, even assisting Alexander in his journey to the Earthly Paradise. Additionally, Medea’s apparent ability to cause eclipses –which contravenes Christian belief that only God has the power to manipulate the order of the planets – is presented as a story which should not be given ‘credence’ (1, 525) by the *Scottish Troy Book*-poet. Instead, he focuses on its status as one of the seven Liberal Arts, a prestigious branch of learning which Medea has mastered to perfection and is an aspect of Medea’s personality which the poet is quick to praise.

Outside of the dichotomy between the Christian supernatural and the demonic supernatural lies the fairy otherworld to which *Eger and Grime*'s Sir Graysteel and *Sir Colling*'s eldritch knight and three-headed giant belong. Sir Porrus in *Clariodus* is rather more curious, originating not from the otherworld but from the courtly world instead; nevertheless, in his enchanted lion form, he is classifiable as a supernatural foe. In each of these three romances, these supernatural adversaries provide the means for lowly knights to demonstrate their worthiness to marry the high-ranking heiresses with whom they have fallen in love, consequently enabling them to advance their own social positions. These supernatural foes are both a part of courtly society and are rejected by it, challenging its order but at once helping to define it through providing the conflict by which knights can transform their identities.

Furthermore, this trio of romances emphasises the concept of good governance which is intrinsic to Older Scots literature more widely: Eger's rash decision to fight Graysteel when he has been firmly warned against it is indicative of a lack of control over his own rationality, and it is up to his double, Grime, to use Egeking - a sword which can only be used by one who demonstrates good governance - to defeat the supernatural Sir Graysteel. The idea that the wielder of a magical object must be worthy to use it is also explored in *Clariodus*, where Clariodus' status as the best knight in the world allows him to firstly defeat Sir Porrus and then win the magical ring through which he can heal Sir Brounar de la Haunt, again confirming his identity as the epitome of chivalry. Sir Colling's initial failure to govern his lovesickness and desire for the Lord of Argyll's daughter excludes him from participating in the feast held by Argyll at the start of the romance, but he is able to both rejoin this community and win Argyll's daughter's hand through redirecting his focus into defeating the eldritch knight and the three-headed giant, proving himself worthy of wielding the eldritch sword at the same time.

The exploration of good governance in relation to supernatural foes is also an integral part of *King Orphius* and in the romance elements of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, where the threat of the faerie is

specifically conceived as being associated with death. The reactions of Orphius/Orpheus to this greatest of threats are linked inextricably with the concept of kingship; here, however, Pluto and Proserpina in *Orpheus and Eurydice* and the Fairy King in *King Orphius* are not defeated in combat, as we have seen with the other supernatural foes in Older Scots romance. Rather, Orpheus (and presumably Orphius in the missing part of *King Orphius*) negotiate with these faerie beings to secure the release of Eurydice/Issabell, with very different reactions: Orpheus is defined as a foolish king blinded by desire and bereft of good governance, while Orphius returns to his kingdom with Issabell as a monarch able to soothe and act in harmony with his people.

There are few magical women in Older Scots romance. Those that do possess magical capability either act to confirm the identities of male protagonists – such as Bruce’s prophetic hostess – or lose the independence that their magical powers give them once they are married; this is especially the case with Lillias, whose healing powers are spoken of no more once she marries Grime. Even Medea is initially introduced as an heiress, prioritising her role within courtly society rather than the liberation afforded her by her magical powers. Only Cassandra, princess of Troy, is never described as an heiress, but her prophetic powers give her no independence; indeed, they are completely ignored.

What we have seen in Older Scots romance, then, is that paradoxically it is the uncertainties and ambiguities of magic and the supernatural which allow the protagonists of Older Scots romance to cement their identities for good.

Having explored magic and the supernatural within the Older Scots romance corpus, more research remains to be done on their role in other areas of Older Scots literature. A particularly rewarding area would be the chronicle tradition, which is replete with references to the otherworldly. To name but a few examples, Walter Bower’s *Scotichronicon* is peppered with tales of

comets which herald death (Vol. 6, VII, 15, 18-21; Vol. 6, Book VIII, 41, 46-8),¹ while the tradition of divine premonition associated with St. Margaret seen in *The Bruce* is also reflected in Andrew Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle*, where she knows of her son's death before the news has been confirmed (Book VII, Chap. 3).² In Older Scots literature, the variety of magic in the romances is a minuscule part of the richness of the Scottish literary supernatural.

¹ Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. by D. E. R. Watt, 9 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987-98) (VI, 1991).

² Andrew of Wyntoun, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. by F.J. Amours, 6 vols, STS 1st Series, 50, 53, 54, 56, 57, 63 (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1903-14).

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