Studies in Scottish Literature

Volume 25 | Issue 1 Article 6

1990

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Recommended Citation
Goldstein, R. James (1990) "Blind Hary's Myth of Blood: The Ideological Closure of The Wallace," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 25: Iss. 1.
Available at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol25/iss1/6

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R. James Goldstein

Blind Hary's Myth of Blood: The Ideological Closure of *The Wallace*

"Had we a king," said Wallace then,
"That our kind Scots might live by their own!
But betwixt me and the English blood
I think there is an ill seed sown."
—"Gude Wallace" (Child #157)

In the last quarter of the fifteenth century, Blind Hary immortalized the Scottish hero William Wallace in the historical romance known as *The Wallace.* Although the poem survives in only a single manuscript, the large number of early printed editions attests to the enormous popularity of the work in the century following its composition.[1] In recent years, however, the poem has received little critical attention, despite its high degree of literary sophistication. Yet the success of *The Wallace* among popular and learned audiences lasted through the nineteenth century, partly thanks to the eighteenth-century adaptation by Hamilton of Gilbertfield that was admired by both Burns and Wordsworth.[2] That *The Wallace*

[1]See William Geddie, *A Bibliography of Middle Scots Poets*, Scottish Text Society (Edinburgh, 1912).

[2]See Walter Scheps, "William Wallace and his 'Buke': Some Instances of Their Influence on Subsequent Literature," *SSL*, 6 (1969), 220-37.

remained a part of Scotland's living culture for so long is suggestive of the poem's peculiar attraction as an affirmation of specifically Scottish values and as a symbolic act of resistance to England's political and cultural hegemony.

In narrating the career of a prominent leader of Scottish resistance to the English regime of occupation during the early years of the Wars of Independence, the poem is relentless in its portrayal of violence. As the most recent editor has suggested: "'Blood' is a very common word in [the poet's] vocabulary."[3] That is putting it mildly. From the opening lines, the continued presence of blood saturates our perceptual horizon. "Our ald ennemys cummyn of Saxon blud" in line seven have the same "Saxons blud" in their veins as the action begins 150 lines later. Wallace thus acts as the surgeon or, as he describes himself:

> a barbour of the best
> To cutt and schaff, and that a wondir gude,
> Now thow sall feyll how I oys to lat blude. (use/let)
> (V. 758-60)

Thus he performs a blood-letting in order to cure the body politic of its infection with foreign bodies. For Wallace, the poet tells us early on, "It was his lyff and maist part of his fude / To se thame sched the byrnand [burning] Sothroun blude" (II. 9-10). This grisly image suggests that Wallace is sustained by human slaughter. Later in the poem, however, in one of the most powerfully imagined sequences of the entire poem, the poet renders more literally this image of feeding on blood. Our attention is focused on Robert Bruce, who is fighting on the English side though he is by right the heir to the Scottish throne. As Bruce and his sword are spattered by the blood of his nation, a clear symbolic resonance is achieved:

> Bathid in blud was Bruce suerd and his weid (clothes)
> Throw fell slauchtyr off trew men off his awn. (cruel)
> Son to the dede the Scottis was ourthrawn.
> (XI. 252-4)

After the battle Bruce refuses to cleanse himself of the Scottish blood that sullies him. At their mess, the "Southeroun lordys scornyt him in termys

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[3] *Hary's* Wallace (*Vita Nobilissimi Defensoris Scotie Wilelmi Wallace Militis*), ed. Matthew P. McDiarmid, Scottish Text Society 4th Series, nos. 4, 5 (Edinburgh, 1968-69) I, cvii. All references to the poem will be to this edition and appear parenthetically in the text.

rud, / 'Behald, ȝon Scot ettis his awn blud'" (XI. 535-6). King Edward orders water brought that Bruce might wash, but he refuses: "This blud is myn. That hurtis most my thoucht" (540). The point is forcefully driven home in this poignant scene: blood is endowed with a symbolic meaning that is truly remarkable for a poem that is not expressly about Christ.

If we are to arrive at a calculation of the ideological closure of *The Wallace*, therefore, we must come to terms with this overwhelming presence of blood. Michel Foucault's suggestive commentary on the significance of blood in feudal societies provides a useful insight to the key term in the value system projected by the poem:

> For a society in which the systems of allegiance, the political form of the sovereign, the differentiation into orders and castes, and the value of descent lines were predominant . . . [a] society of blood . . . where power spoke *through* blood . . . blood was *a reality with a symbolic function*.[4]

Foucault's suggestive remarks help us to see how the significance of blood in feudal society implies the possibility of a historiography which would tell the story of its descent, of the threats to its integrity, and of its triumphant preservation. Indeed, from the time of the Wars of Independence, the genealogy of kings had formed the basis of the mythology of the Scottish *gens*: a concept at once national and racial, denoting the community descended of one bloodline. This mythology provides the semic link between Baldred Bisset's *Processus* of 1301, the famous letter of the barons addressed to Pope John XXII known as the Declaration of Arbroath (1320), and the chronicles of Fordun, Wyntoun, and Bower, on the one hand, and Blind Hary's historical romance, on the other. Hary explicitly draws the connection himself by referring to "Gadalos" (the legendary founder of the *gens Scottorum*) and his descendants in the poem's introduction (I. 121-5).

Rather than examining those broader links with the tradition of Scottish historical narrative, however, I propose instead to focus here on the specific narrative realization of the myth of Scottish blood in Blind Hary's late fifteenth-century poem. In what follows, I shall be drawing on Fredric Jameson' theory of literary interpretation in *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*—a work that offers extraordinarily powerful tools for the analysis of ideology in narrative forms.[5]

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[4]Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York, 1980), p. 147.

[5]Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, 1981). Subsequent references will appear parenthetically in the text.

Jameson proposes as a key concept what he calls the ideologeme. According to an analogy with Saussurean linguistics, the ideologeme may be understood as the minimal unit of organization of a "class discourse," the *langue* of which individual texts would function as the *parole*, or individual utterance. The ideologeme, he argues, "must be susceptible to both a conceptual description and a narrative manifestation" (57). The ideologeme is "a historically determined conceptual or semic complex which can project itself variously in the form of a 'value system' or 'philosophical concept' or in the form of a protonarrative, a private or collective fantasy" (115).

The *gens Scottorum*—the medieval idea of the tribal nation descended from Scota and Gaythelos—I wish to suggest, is just such a collective fantasy. In *The Wallace*, however, the ideologeme of blood is articulated with the language of racism, a discourse of hatred of the Other. We can understand such a discourse, as Jameson reminds us, by returning to Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche sums up with the term "noble morality" all ethical systems founded on positions of dominance. The theory of *ressentiment* envisions a revolt from these systems that is nonetheless locked within the very categories it rejects:

> While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, the slave morality from the outset says No to what is 'outside,' what is 'different' . . . and this No is its creative deed. This inversion of the value-positing eye—this *need* to direct one's view outward instead of back to oneself—is of the essence of *ressentiment*: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs...external stimuli in order to act at all—its action is fundamentally reaction.[6]

Nietzsche's remarks can provide a useful starting point, for even the most cursory reading of *The Wallace* would show that Hary passionately charges his language with ethical significance. Good/evil, right/wrong, true/false, *Scottis/Southeroun*: these recurrent binary oppositions mark the ethical coordinates of the work and thus help us to map the ideological closure projected by such a value system. Hary's mythology of the "rychtwis blud"—the "trew" or "gud blud" of "trew Scottis" (VII. 16, 1298, 373; XII. 7)—was founded on the obvious historical error that ignored, among other things, the Norman Conquest and its consequences for the protonarrative of the history of the racial body. Yet this mythology of blood was no less efficacious in its own day, it seems, than was the creed of Aryanism only a generation ago.

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[6]Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Holingdale, with *Ecce Homo*, trans. Kaufmann (New York, 1969), pp. 36-7.

Part of the historical Wallace's reputation concerned his relatively low status. As the younger son of a middle-ranking vassal, Wallace was not of the class that traditionally assumed a role in leadership. (Popular memory, on the other hand, continues to believe erroneously that Wallace was a *peasant*, as I observed during a conversation with an old woman in Aberdeen the morning I delivered a version of this paper at a conference.) Blind Hary presents William Wallace's genealogy in a way that is calculated to relieve some of the embarrassment over his pedigree that is evident in earlier Scottish chroniclers. John of Fordun admitted that the nobles looked down on Wallace as low-born from the start of his career.[7] Walter Bower (Fordun's fifteenth-century continuator) distracts attention from the question of Wallace's class origins by focusing instead on his physical and moral qualities in a lengthy rhetorical description.[8] Andrew of Wyntoun tells us more directly:

> In sempill stait thoucht he wes then,
> ȝit wes he cummyn of gentill men;
> His fader wes a manly knycht,
> And his moder a lady brycht,
> And he gottin in mariage.
> His eldar brother the heretage
> Had....[9]

In other words, Wallace is neither a churl nor a bastard, but he is no more than the younger son of a knight.

Blind Hary, on the other hand, tells us that Wallace is "of worthi blude" and that his ancestors come "Of hale [whole] lynage and trew lyne of Scotland" (I. 17-22). Belonging to Scotland's "true line" by blood descent or race, it seems, is entitlement enough for Wallace to save his nation.

John Barbour, it should be recalled, uses his historical introduction to describe at some length how Edward I used the Great Cause in order to

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[7]Johannis de Fordun, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. William F. Skene (Edinburgh, 1871). See *Gesta Annalia*, ch. xcviii in this edition.

[8]Walter Bower, *Joannis de Fordun Scotichronicon cum Supplementis et Continuatione Walter Boweri*, ed. W. Goodall (Edinburgh, 1759) II, 170.

[9]Andrew of Wyntoun, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. F. J. Amours, Scottish Text Society, 1st Series nos. 50, 53, 54, 56, 57, 63 (Edinburgh, 1903-14), Book VIII lines 1976-83 (Wemyss MS).

subvert Bruce's legal right to the throne.[10] Blind Hary, however, writing a century after Barbour and almost two hundred years after the Great Cause, is even less concerned with historical accuracy than was Barbour, who at least made a stab at summarizing the complex legal arguments presented at the trial. But by Hary's time, Bruce's right had become deeply ingrained in the Scottish consciousness: the struggle between the Bruce and Balliol factions, though it continued well into the fourteenth century, was a distant memory by Hary's time. This places him in a double bind: although severely critical of Bruce's actions in the poem, Hary leaves himself no room to question the *legitimacy* of Bruce's authority. The introduction of *The Wallace* is therefore less concerned with violations of *feudal* law than with threats to the integrity of the clan: blood first, king in right of blood.

The effects of this shift in emphasis are evident throughout the poem, where we witness a regression to the archaic law of the vendetta or blood feud which is proper to earlier tribal law rather than feudal law. Wallace's patriotism, we should note, is linked to the idea of kinship: "Becaus I am a natyff Scottis man/ It is my dett to do all that I can / To fend our kynrik out off dangeryng" (VIII. 545-7). Since Wallace has no hereditary right to defend, and since Hary excludes the historical Wallace's defense of Balliol's right, his struggle only makes sense as arising from his hatred of the foreigners who have killed members of his kin-group. This, as Nietzsche would remind us, is *ressentiment* with a vengeance.

Blood thus provides the common denominator to the concepts of kinship and vengeance, a lesson as old as Cain and Abel. The ultimate subversion of feudal law is demonstrated by the grim episode of the Barns of Ayr, which is generated by the pun on justice "ayr" or court. In this fictitious episode, the English hang a number of Scottish nobles whom they have summoned to renew their feudal claims. The unjust execution suggests the complete breakdown of feudal law. In its absence, the *lex talionis* rushes in to fill the gap. Wallace, who has lost his uncle and other kin in this massacre, swears a bloody oath not to rest until he exacts vengeance. Hary thus exploits for specific political ends the powerful emotions connected with revenge.

If "power speaks through blood," as Foucault suggests, we have yet to articulate the rules of its grammar. On the one hand, blood is transmitted

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[10]See R. James Goldstein, "'Freedom is a Noble Thing!'" The Ideological Project of John Barbour's Bruce," in *Scottish Language and Literature, Medieval and Renaissance: Fourth International Conference 1984 Proceedings*, ed. D. Strauss and H. W. Drescher (Frankfurt, 1986) 193-206; Lois Ebin, "John Barbour's Bruce: Poetry, History and Propaganda," *SSL*, 9 (1971-72), 218-42.

from one generation to the next. Genealogy plots the history of this flow of blood along a diachronic axis. In feudal society genealogy encodes and enforces the principles of legitimation. Blood thus is a sign of entitlement and is integral to the ideology of feudal law and the class system it supports. Under the rule of primogeniture, the father transmits directly to the eldest son, through blood, the possession of a right. In genealogical discourse, then, blood marks class difference; noble blood enables the transmission of rights of inheritance.

On the other hand, blood also serves to identify a distinct family or kin group. In the Middle Ages, the concept of the family is subsumed by that of the *gens*, the nation in a pseudo-racial sense. When viewed at any given moment of its diachronic evolution, therefore, blood is also the sign of racial or family difference. In terms of a structuralist poetics, this idea corresponds to the synchronic (or paradigmatic) axis of language, the axis of substitution or metaphor.[11] The blood of Balliol can be substituted for that of Bruce in statements in the discourse of the royal lines of Scotland. As blood distinguishes the racial body, the rule of law proper to the ideology of the clan is the vendetta. The *lex talionis* thus functions metaphorically, by substitution: an eye for an eye.

The bivalency of blood as an indicator of both class and race thus provides the fundamental structural opposition of the poem. Jameson, in arguing that semiotics is "the privileged instrument of analysis of ideological closure" (166), applies the "semiotic rectangle" of the French semiotician A. J. Greimas to ideological analysis. As Jameson explains:

> the semiotic rectangle . . . is the representation of a binary opposition or of two contraries (S and -S), along with the simple negations or contradictories of both terms (the so-called subcontraries $-\overline{S}$ and $\overline{S}$): significant slots are constituted by the various possible combinations of these terms, most notably the 'complex' terms (or the ideal synthesis of the two contraries) and the 'neutral' term (or the ideal synthesis of the two subcontraries). (166)

For Jameson, the semiotic rectangle emerges as an indispensable instrument of Marxist interpretation because the device enables us to map "the limits of a specific ideological consciousness and [mark] the conceptual points beyond which that consciousness cannot go, and between which it is condemned to oscillate" (47).

The opposition we have already identified leads us to an exact formulation of the poem's double bind. The double bind consists in the unthinkable paradox that while Bruce enjoys that legitimate right to the

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[11]See Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague, 1956) pp. 55-82.

throne, he nonetheless refuses to occupy his rightful place as king. (The situation for the historical Bruce was not so simple as Hary suggests.) Wallace, on the other hand, demonstrates his truth or loyalty to the nation, but enjoys no legitimate right as leader. This contradiction has some historical basis, as witnessed by Bruce's vacillations and by Wallace's dependence on his military successes to legitimate his leadership: when he began to fail on the battlefield, he had to yield the office of guardian to the magnates Bruce and Comyn.[12] The resolution of this historical contradiction can only take place dialogically, in a symbolic act of the imagination. For this reason, Walter Bower invents the dialogue between Bruce and Wallace after the battle of Falkirk, the source of Hary's dramatization of their fictitious meeting in Book XI of *The Wallace.*

In the *Scotichronicon*, Bower has Bruce challenge Wallace's presumption to lead the Scots. Wallace replies:

> Tua, O Roberte! Roberte! inertia et effemina ignavia me stimulant et provocant ad tuae juris patriae liberationem: sed et nunc semivir de cubilibus ad aciem, de umbra ad solem progressurus, cujus corpus delicatum, mollibus assuetum, pondus praelii pro patriae propriae liberatione, loricae onus segniter assumens, me sic praesumentem, quin forte et et insipientem, effectit, et ad haec intentanda sive capessenda coegit
>
> O Robert, Robert! your slothfulness and effeminate idleness [or cowardice] incite and provoke me to the freeing of your land which is yours by right. But the half-man who has now stepped from the bed to the battlefield, from the shade to the sun, whose body is delicate and used to softness and who now is sluggishly taking on the burden of battle, the weight of the hawberk in order to free his own land: he has brought me to this intention and undertaking. [*Chron. Bower* II, 175; my translation].

The antinomy inherited from Bower, then, is that Bruce represents the legitimate right, but suffers from effeminate idleness, while Wallace must presume on another's right in order to free his homeland by using his manly courage.

Following Jameson, then, we may map out this founding double bind or antinomy: legitimacy + effeminate inertia vs. illegitimacy + manly action. The location of the opposition between consciousness of class and of nation within the terms of this antinomy soon emerges clearly, since according to Wallace's own definitions, right action is synonymous with fidelity to the *patria*. What Jameson terms the "political unconscious" there-

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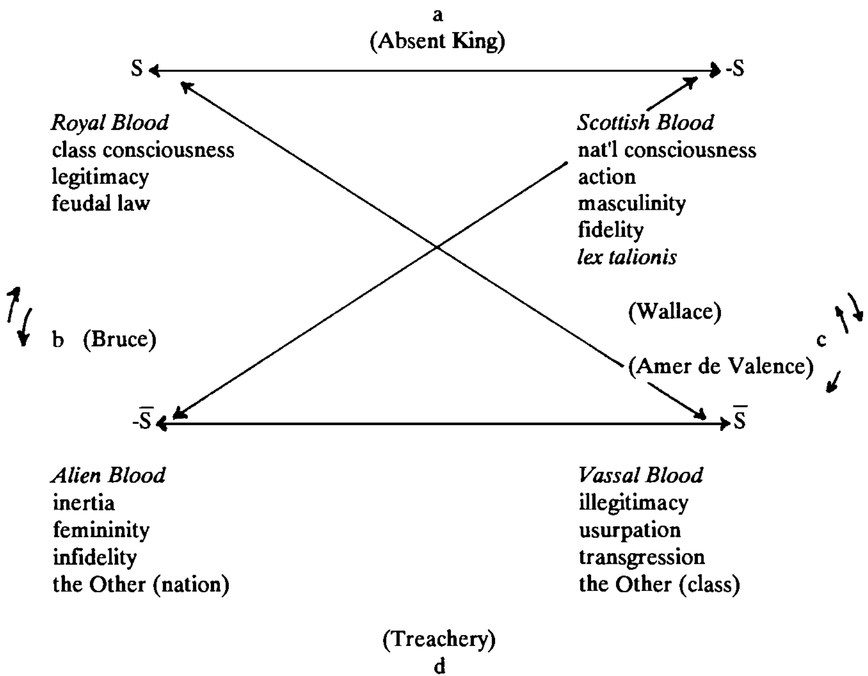
[12]See G. W. S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, 1976) p. 146.

fore attempts to resolve the unthinkable paradox bound up in these contradictions. That is, the political unconscious "seeks by logical permutations and combination to find a way out of its intolerable closure to produce a 'solution' . . ." (167). We may now see that the ideological closure envisioned by the ideologeme of blood may be mapped according to the following scheme, in which the founding binary opposition is taken to be the opposition of Scottishness and the legitimate authority epitomized by kingship; the negations generated by this opposition are those of alien and vassal blood:



It soon becomes clear where the main characters of the narrative are to be located. The ideal synthesis of the two contraries (S, -S) marks the privileged position of the Absent King, the figure invested with legitimate royal authority and who defends the nation. The entire movement of the poem is towards Bruce's acceptance of his historical destiny, and is marked by the vector b-a. Until that culminating moment, his place is shown by the vector a-b, leaving him (with King Edward) in the space representing the synthesis of royalty and Otherness of nation (S, $-\overline{S}$). So long as Bruce refuses to fulfill his natural function, it is Wallace who must

usurp the role of leader. That usurpation is marked by the vector c-a. To preserve the nation he must take on the legitimate authority of his king. The poet seems to imagine this paradox in terms of the medieval *topos* of "the world turned upside-down." As Wallace remarks when he sees Bruce marching with the English at Falkirk: "Allace! the warld is contrar-lik" (XI. 210). Finally, the so-called neuter term, representing the synthesis of the two negations ($\bar{S}$, -$\bar{S}$), provides the final possible combination, that of alien and vassal blood. The poet finds a suitably dramatic conclusion to his work in the medieval topos of treachery; this narrative function is shared by Amer de Valence and Menteith: together they play Judas to Wallace's Christ. Their defection to the English is thus represented by the vector c-d.

Having sketched out in this schematic fashion the ideological contradictions and imaginary resolutions described by the semiotic rectangle, it remains for us to examine at greater length the actual realizations of these solutions in the narrative itself, for it is in these that the poem takes on life.

The poem presents what may be seen as a lengthy meditation on Wallace's contradictory position. In taking on the office of guardian, he assumes the function of lawgiver who punishes transgressors:

> Thus tretyt he and cheryst wondyr fair
> Trew Scottis men that fewte maid him thar, (fealty)
> * * *
> Quha wald rebell and gang contrar the rycht
> He punyst sar, war he squier or knycht. (sorely)
> (VI. 768-82)

His harsh treatment of his social superiors who resist his authority is a legacy from Fordun (*Gesta Annalia* xcviii). Book VIII of *The Wallace* marks the dramatic center of the dramatization of Wallace's double bind, when he summons a parliament which the earl of Dunbar refuses to attend. Wallace offers the earl mercy if he will submit, but Dunbar laughs in scorn. His reply is teeming with the class pride of a great earl as he appeals directly to a sense of solidarity among his peers:

> Her is gret faute off a gud prince or kyng.
> That king off Kyll I can nocht wndirstand. (Kyle)
> Off him I held neuir a fur off land.
> * * *
> Bot to ȝow lordis, and ȝe will wndirstand,
> I make ȝow wys, I aw to mak na band. (submission)

> Als fre I am in this regioun to ryng
> Lord off myn awne, as euir was prince or king.
> (VIII. 20-7)

The class discourse spoken through the earl reveals the contradiction between two opposing senses of freedom: freedom to enjoy one's right to feudal property in this case cannot be reconciled with national freedom.

The conservative English opposition faces a similar dilemma. The English lords refuse to fight Wallace unless he "war off Scotland crownyt king" (VIII. 625). The narrator coyly presents Wallace as too loyal to his Absent King to usurp the royal dignity, and has the Scots only pretend to crown Wallace in order to get on with the battle. In the epilogue to the poem, however, we learn that in this point only did the narrator lie: in fact, he tells us, Wallace *did* wear the crown for a day. The pressures of royal ideology were apparently too great for the poet to bear: he evidently found it unimaginable that his hero should utterly lack some of the prestige of kingship.

The tension created by Wallace's contradictory position resurfaces tragically at the battle of Falkirk. As we have already seen, the unease with Wallace's less than sterling class credentials was part of his original reputation. Fordun and Bower both blame Wallace's defeat at Falkirk on envy on the part of his superiors. Bower even has the Scottish nobles betray Wallace, murmuring: *Nolumus hunc regnare super nos* [We will not have this man rule over us] (*Chron. Bower* II, 174). Hary's account develops this theme at even greater length, and adds a new touch: that Comyn drew John Stewart into his quarrel with Wallace. He tries to arouse Stewart's indignation by reminding him that Wallace should yield to Stewart as the highest-ranking noble present. Stewart reproaches Wallace with the tale of the owl who would wear finer feathers: "thow art cled with our men" (XI. 141), he tells Wallace, who leaves the field in anger just long enough to assure a Scottish defeat.

In the meeting of Wallace and Bruce on the banks of the Carron in Book XI, we see the poet at his best. Bruce's confusion of values is evident as he asks Wallace "What are you?" "A man" (XI. 443), Wallace replies. The poet evidently recalls Bower's description of Bruce as *semivir*. Wallace answers Bruce's accusations by accusing his natural lord of "treson, that suld be our rycht king, / That willfully dystroyis thin awn offspryng" (471-2). When Bruce misses the implied image, Wallace strikes the point home: "Thow renygat deuorar off thi blud" (492), he calls Bruce. As we have already seen, Bruce is shortly to fulfill this saturnian image when he literally devours his own blood along with that of his fellow Scots. It is only now that we can finally appreciate the enormous power with which the idea of blood speaks to us in this brilliant scene.

By the time they meet again, Wallace's harsh medicine has taken effect and Bruce is converted. The two heroes are reconciled in one of the most touching scenes of the poem. When Wallace learns of Bruce's shame, he falls to his knees and Bruce and Wallace embrace. As the natural order is restored, the scene provides a fitting resolution to the *topos* of the world upside-down, with subject kneeling before king. Although it will take a long time for Bruce to arrive, we may finally say that he is now on the road to Scone, where he will assume the kingship in 1306.

It only remains for us to examine the denouement of the poem, for it is here that we must turn if we are to discover the so-called neutral term of the semiotic rectangle, which is formed by the synthesis of the two subcontraries or negations. The pattern of treachery begins to unfold early in the poem, from Book III, when "Schir Amer Wallange, a fals traytour strange" (261) appears as advisor to Percy. As McDiarmid notes, Sir Amer's role is "to play Ganelon to Wallace's Roland"—an apt comparison, since Hary himself makes it later in the poem. It will be recalled from Barbour that Valence was sent to Scotland by Edward I. In *The Wallace*, however, the earl is transformed into a Scottish traitor. Although Hary may not have realized that the earl of Pembroke was English, McDiarmid suggests the change was deliberate because it was more fitting to have the hero's downfall result from treachery. We might go a little further to suggest that the semiotic rectangle offers one last significant slot to complete the poem's ideological closure. The imaginative resolution of the original double bind inherited from Bower therefore not only requires Wallace to fill the role of Absent King (even going so far as to wear the crown for a day); it also foresees a false Scot to betray him. From the start Amer fulfills that function.

The arch-traitor forms an alliance with Sir John Menteith, Wallace's god-father. After some initial resistance, Menteith accepts three hundred pounds of gold and the promise of a new lordship. The treachery *topos* provides the narrator an opportunity to launch a sermon, drawing on the *exempla* of the Nine Worthies who were falsely betrayed through covetousness. Ironically the scene of Wallace's capture is the place appointed by Bruce for his tryst with Wallace. As Blind Hary laconically observes: "Thus he was lost in byding of his king" (XII. 1086). The king's absence is never more painfully felt as Wallace is led south, never to look on Scotland again.

The ideological pattern whose formal closure we have just analyzed, I wish to suggest, should add to our understanding of the political significance of the poem to its original audience. As McDiarmid first argued in 1955 and as Norman MacDougall has recently argued in greater detail, the poem was almost certainly written during the years 1476-78, when

many in Scotland supported the duke of Albany, who opposed his brother James III's efforts to form an alliance with England.[13] A marriage treaty had been sealed in October 1474, betrothing the heir apparent (the future James IV) to the daughter of Edward IV.

This policy was bound to be unpopular in certain quarters and seems to be the reference of the topical allusion in the fifth line of the poem: "Till honour ennymyis is our haile entent." Most of all, the royal policy of alliance with England at the expense of the "auld alliance" with France was sure to alarm the southern lords, like the king's brother Alexander duke of Albany and earl of March or the earl of Angus, whose prosperity in part depended on frequent border raids. If we accept McDiarmid's dating of the poem (and no scholar has seriously questioned it), *The Wallace* takes on a new significance for us that would have been obvious to its original audience. Albany at this time seems to have enjoyed popularity with the southern nobility since he opposed the 1474 treaty. *The Wallace* thus begins to look like an anti-royalist allegory, with Wallace standing by analogy for Albany and Bruce for James III. By focusing on Bruce's failure to lead Scotland against the English and his willingness to serve Edward I, the poem implicitly condemns James III's policy of alliance. For Blind Hary, writing in 1476-78, Albany might well have represented the same ideal synthesis of royal Scottish blood and manly action that is projected by the value system of the poem as a "solution" to an intolerable double bind. Hary's hopes must have been dashed a few years later, however, when Albany joined Richard duke of Gloucester in an invasion of Scotland that eventually led to Albany's disgrace and exile.

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[13] See Matthew P. McDiarmid, "The Date of the *Wallace*," *SHR*, 34 (1955), 26-31; and Norman MacDougall, *James III: A Political Study* (Edinburgh, 1982).