

1991

The Women of the Wars of Independence in Literature and History

R. James Goldstein

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Goldstein, R. James (1991) "The Women of the Wars of Independence in Literature and History," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 26: Iss. 1.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol26/iss1/22>

This Article is brought to you by the Scottish Literature Collections at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Studies in Scottish Literature by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu.

R. James Goldstein

The Women of the Wars of Independence in Literature and History

Sometime in the second half of the thirteenth century, a woman named Christiana inherited from her father Robert the Scot "a certain land or tenement lying within the territory of Esperstoun."¹ The farm was two miles from Temple (then known as Blantrodok), which is about ten miles southeast of Edinburgh in Midlothian. Temple was at that time the headquarters of the Order of the Knights of the Temple in Scotland.² As a freeholder of modest means, Christiana would have made an attractive marriage partner within a certain level of rural society. We know that she had a husband, William son of Galfrid of Haukirstoun, and that they had three sons. To quote from the charter of 1354 that records these events:

the said William son of Galfrid, more given to ease than to labour, during his life, conveyed the said land—the patrimony of his said wife, for his lifetime, to the Templars in return for his maintenance. . . . William accordingly lived in the house of the Temple and the said Christiana his wife dwelt in a certain residence on the said property assigned to her though barely sufficient for the support of herself and her boys.

¹From a charter printed in translation by John Edwards, "The Templars in Scotland," *Scottish Historical Review*, 5 (1908), 17.

²G. W. S. Barrow, "The Aftermath of War: Scotland and England in the Late Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Ser., 28 (1978), 108-25. He discusses the charter at pp. 112-14.

When her husband died, Brian le Jay, the Preceptor of the Temple,³ claiming that William had sold the property to the Order, sent his men to take possession, but Christiana refused to hand it over, insisting that her late husband had no right to sell her property. I quote again from the account in the charter:

the foresaid Master, in no wise desisting on account of her declaration, ordered his followers to drag her forth from her house, and she, resisting this with all her might, closed the doors of the house by which [they] entered, and they dragged her to the door, and when she had reached the house-door, she put her arms in the vault of the door and thus twining them she held on firmly so that they could not pull her forth. Seeing this one of the followers of the Master drew out his knife and cut off one of Christiana's fingers, and they thus forcibly and wrongfully expelled her, wounded by the amputation of her finger, sobbing and shrieking, from her home and heritage. . . . (p. 18)

When she sought justice from the king (probably Alexander III but possibly John Balliol),⁴ an inquest was held and she was restored to her inheritance. But with the outbreak of the War of Independence in 1296, the Templars once again seized the farm. The farm was finally restored to a younger son in 1314 by Robert I, but not before Christiana suffered a further trauma when her eldest son was murdered by Welsh soldiers under le Jay's command.

I have chosen to retell this moving story of an obscure Scottish peasant woman because it enables me to raise questions that historians have not frequently cared to raise. Although historians have occasionally discussed the participation of women in the Wars of Independence, no one has systematically examined the variety of ways in which women experienced a conflict that was in large part imposed upon them by their husbands and fathers, brothers and sons, lords, bishops and priests. Yet the role of women in the Wars of Independence should be of interest not only to social historians but also to students of Scottish literature and to feminist critics, for the memory of the varieties of women's wartime experience was perpetuated in such works as Barbour's *Bruce* and Blind Hary's *Wallace*.

My paper will have two main goals. The first goal is to survey the historical evidence available for the study of real women who were affected by the war. One of the aims of this survey will be to distinguish how class divi-

³Sir Brian le Jay was Preceptor in Scotland in 1291 and Master of the Temple in England by 1296; see Barrow, "Aftermath," p. 113. He was to be killed in 1298 at the Battle of Falkirk.

⁴Barrow, "Aftermath", p. 113. Edwards believed the king to be Edward I.

sions, as well as gender, were important determinants of the experience of medieval warfare. The second goal will be to consider the theoretical implications of the representation of women in a discourse produced entirely by men. My goal, therefore, is to make a modest contribution both to our knowledge of medieval women, and to what we might call "historical epistemology," an examination of the discursive conditions of historical knowledge. I should make it clear that, for the present purposes, I will consider works of imaginative literature not as aesthetic objects but as members of a larger discursive field.

In recent years social historians have devoted considerable attention to the role of medieval women in production and reproduction.⁵ So far as I know, however, historians of medieval warfare have been virtually silent about the role played by women. This silence is no doubt due to the fact that, in theory at least, women should have played no active role in war. As one eminent historian of medieval war tells us, women were among those "people who, because of their status, should have been more or less formally excluded."⁶ There are certainly reports in the relatively well documented wars in France of women who followed armies as servants and prostitutes (*meschines* and *mauvaise femmes*); there are even reports there of armed noblewomen (*dames, baronnes*).⁷ Because of the relative poverty of historical documents for medieval Scotland, the history of the women of the Wars of Independence is, in a certain sense, virtually unwritable.

⁵E.g. Barbara A. Hanawalt, ed., *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe* (Bloomington, 1986); Martha C. Howell, *Women, Production, and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities* (Chicago, 1986); Judith M. Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock before the Plague* (Oxford, 1987).

⁶Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones (London, 1984), p. 240. Honoré Bonet, author of a fourteenth-century handbook of chivalry entitled the *Tree of Battles* (*L'arbre des batailles* [c. 1386]), states that it is "an unworthy thing to imprison either old men taking no part in the war, or women, or innocent children" (quoted by Contamine, *War*, p. 274).

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 241-2. Cf. P. Contamine, *Guerre, état et société à la fin du moyen âge. Études sur les armées des rois de France 1337-1494* (Paris, 1972), pp. 281, 451 on the "filles publiques" and "femmes de péché" who followed medieval armies. I know of only one instance of a Scottish noble woman taking part in warfare: "Black Agnes of Dunbar" countess of March (1313-1369), daughter of Thomas Randolph earl of Moray, defended Dunbar Castle against the earl of Salisbury in 1338, an event that falls outside the period under study. See Harry Graham, *A Group of Scottish Women* (London, 1908), pp. 21-37.

Yet perhaps the almost *random* nature of surviving records such as the one with which I opened can be made into an opportunity. As Fredric Jameson has recently proposed,

history is not a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but . . . it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and . . . our approach to it . . . necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious.⁸

I wish to propose an extended metaphor to describe this process of "textualization": in the vast sea of history, written texts of various sorts (whose discursive properties remain to be classified) function as wide-meshed nets that capture bits of historical reality.

If we begin to examine the contours and contents of the discursive net cast ashore six hundred years ago, it soon becomes clear that the most ample source of narrativizations are the least interesting as *stories*. Indeed, they only minimally qualify as narratives at all (the story of Christiana is of course exceptional). Most of the vast quantity of written records that survive from the war years (nearly all of them being English) pertain to property rights and claims.⁹ We could therefore collect a fair number of examples of wives of Scottish prisoners of war and of widows or daughters of freeholders, from the relatively humble to the higher nobility.¹⁰ Their legal claims or pleas would be told before a competent court in what is technically known as *narratio (conte)*.

As property holders, these women, whose rights are primarily transmitted through fathers and husbands, stand as "surrogate men."¹¹ Here is one

⁸*The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, 1981), p. 35.

⁹Cf. G. W. S. Barrow: "The tendency of medieval record to be concerned with property, and the special character stamped upon the Anglo-Scottish war from the outset by Edward I . . . have combined to produce an emphasis on property rights and claims, forfeiture and counter-forfeiture, restoration and counter-restoration, observable from 1296 right through to the 1340s and '50s" ("Aftermath", p. 106).

¹⁰See, e.g., *Documents Illustrative of the History of Scotland*, ed. J. Stevenson, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1870), II, 92-8. For a list of small freeholders (many of whom were forfeited after the battle of Falkirk), see *The Correspondence, Inventories, Account Rolls and Law Proceedings of the Priory of Coldingham*, ed. J. Raine (London, 1841), pp. lxxxv-civ (cited below as *Coldingham Corresp.*). *Formulary E: Scottish Letters and Brieves 1286-1424*, ed. A. A. M. Duncan (Glasgow, 1976), no. 13, presents the case of a Scottish widow whose husband appears to have been forfeited by Robert I.

¹¹I owe the phrase to Professor John W. Baldwin.

example of the daughter of a small freeholder who presumably fought with Wallace at Falkirk: Agnes daughter of John Brown forfeited her toft and nine acres in Lower Ayton.¹² Here is a more interesting example from 1305 that sheds a small ray of light on the experience of one woman who appears to have had trouble making ends meet: Eve of Stirling had helped victual Stirling Castle while it was garrisoned by the English. As a result, the Scots imprisoned her for ten weeks; she was then forced to leave Scotland. She sought the equivalent of her former holding of one messuage and three acres from King Edward I's government in return for her services.¹³ Finally, what subtle adjustment to our knowledge of the war would we need to make upon discovering an entry in a Wardrobe Account book of Edward I (dated 27 August 1306) that informs us of "a poor woman of Crathgork near Stirling" who was paid 40 shillings "for keeping two greyhound whelps of the king for a year and bringing them to him at Cumnock"?¹⁴

Narratives about women come far more complexly narrativized when we look for them not in legal records but in chronicle sources. Although the only surviving contemporary chronicles are English, they do occasionally inform us about Scottish women, individually and collectively (this is the distinction I wish to draw in the first numbered item in the diagram appended to the present essay). Women sometimes appear in the works of these ecclesiastical authors as the lovers of prominent men. The *Chronicle of Guisborough*, for example, records the sedition of Robert of Ros, lord of Wark-on-Tweed, who deserted to the Scots at the very start of the war because he was *allectus amore cuiusdam mulieris de genere Scotorum quam in vxorem ducere proposuerat* ("instigated by his love for a certain woman of the Scottish race whom he wished to marry").¹⁵ After his brother failed to persuade him not

¹²*Coldingham Corresp.*, p. ciii. For a typical example of a more substantial landowner, see the case of Annabel, the widow of Sir Patrick Graham who died at the battle of Dunbar. Agnes petitioned the Berwick parliament of August, 1296 for her inheritance and her dower from her husband's land; she was told to take her claim before the Warden of the realm (Stevenson, *Documents*, II, 94; cf. Barrow, "Aftermath," p. 116).

¹³*Memoranda de Parlamento . . . 1305*, ed. F. W. Maitland, Rolls Series 98 (London, 1893), no. 287, pp. 177-8.

¹⁴*Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland Preserved in the Public Record Office and the British Library, Vol. V (Supplementary), A.D. 1108-1516*, ed. Grant G. Simpson and James D. Galbraith (Edinburgh, 1987), no. 521 [henceforth cited as *Cal. Docs. Scot.*].

¹⁵*The Chronicles of Walter of Guisborough previously edited as the Chronicle of Walter of Hemingford or Hemingburgh*, ed. H. Rothwell, Camden Series 89 (London, 1957), pp. 271-2 (henceforth cited as *Chron. Guisborough*). The translation is mine.

to join the Scots, Robert "left everything behind on account of his love for the 'beloved' woman and brazen hussy [*forte meretricis*]." ¹⁶ To the obvious satisfaction of the English chronicler, Robert died the same year in abject poverty. ¹⁷ Another chronicler informs us that King Edward in 1298 insisted that his men marry English women; if the English mingled with Scottish women, their heirs would have Scottish blood and endanger English property. ¹⁸

We should understand that, according to a medieval commonplace, there were two kinds of war. The standards set by the law of chivalry (*droiturière justice d'armes*) considered the dishonoring of women a serious offense. ¹⁹ It is in this light that we should understand Barbour when he accuses the English of raping Scottish women in 1296. ²⁰ Popular or communal warfare that pitted entire communities against one another were much more violent and were devoid of aristocratic "courtesy." According to contemporary terminology, this was war "of fire and blood" (*de feu et de sang*). ²¹ At times the brutal conflict that swept up the two kingdoms approached total warfare as much as medieval technologies for inflicting destruction on civilian populations allowed. Criticizing the view that medieval wars tended to be of limited scale, one historian has recently reminded us: "Fire is a terrible weapon of war in any age. . . ." He goes on to observe that "just as fourteenth-century knights thought profit in war no stain on their chivalry, so they seem to have accepted arson and pillage as normal and expected accompaniments

¹⁶My translation of *fortis meretrix* aims at approximating the writer's indignant tone. Modern English will not permit "strong whore," though this insult is recorded in Middle English. See the letter of Margaret Paston to her husband (19 May 1448), in Norman Davis, ed., *Paston Letters*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1971-7) I, no. 129, where Margaret reports that she and her mother were called "stronge hores." *OED*, s.v. *strong*, 11 (e) cites "stronge strompette" c. 1450.

¹⁷G. W. S. Barrow, *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland*, 3rd edn. (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 69 briefly recounts the story.

¹⁸*Chronica Monasterii S. Albani . . . A.D. 1259-1307* [*Chron. Rishanger*], ed. H. Riley, 2 vols., Rolls Series 28 (London, 1865), II, 388.

¹⁹Contamine, *War*, pp. 289-90.

²⁰John Barbour, *The Bruce*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, STS, 31-3 (1894-5), I, 199-200. All further citations are to this edition.

²¹Contamine, *War*, pp. 289-91; it is in this context that we must understand Barbour's frequently paired verbs "burn and slai"; cf. Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 153 for a similar observation.

of campaigning."²² Under these circumstances, women sometimes found themselves at the center of actions by men from which they were in theory excluded.

Perhaps most often, women (and children) thus appear in the familiar role of innocent victim. One chronicler, for example, mentions the pathetic demise of a number of Scottish women who fled after the battle of Falkirk:

the women, taking their little ones and their furnishings, [*supellectilibus*], fled to the coast. They set sail when a ship was prepared, heading wherever fate would take them. When the sail was hoist at last, contrary winds rose up and their ships were broken up [*dissipaverunt*], and in the blink of an eye they were shipwrecked.²³

It is impossible to know in such cases whether a chronicler is repeating a rumor more or less founded in fact, or whether he merely uses women generically to provide his predominantly clerical audience a sense of the hard toll exacted on the innocent by war.²⁴ We find an especially clear instance of this "generic" use of women in a Scottish account of the destruction of Berwick-upon-Tweed in 1296 written five years later:

the king and his chief vassals furiously raged like tyrants against the inhabitants of the town who were fleeing to the churches from the face of the madly pursuing throng, indiscriminately slaying priests even in churches, women and little children to the sum of eight thousand, with no pardon for sex or age.²⁵

This passage draws on a familiar ecclesiastical *topos* found in discourse on the Truce of God, which condemns casualties inflicted on women and chil-

²²Richard W. Kaeuper, *War, Justice, and Public Order: England and France in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1988), p. 84.

²³*Chron. Rishanger*, II, 387 (trans. mine). Rishanger is inconsistent about the number of ships.

²⁴Although my focus is on Scottish women, northern English women also appear as casualties. See *Chronicon de Lanercost*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1839) I, 174-5 [henceforth cited as *Chron. Lanercost*] for the destructive raid into Cumberland in 1296. See *Historical Letters and Papers from the Northern Registers*, ed. J. Raine, Rolls Series 61 (London, 1873), 294-5 for the women at the "chapter of Myton" (an episode also narrated by Barbour). This collection of episcopal letters also includes many examples of nuns whose safety was threatened by Scottish raiders (see nos. cxxiii, cxxxix, cciv, ccvi).

²⁵From the *Instrukiones*, printed in *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and other Early Memorials of Scottish History*, ed. W. Skene (Edinburgh, 1867), p. 267 (trans. mine).

dren in war.²⁶ The *emblematic* function of the slaughter of the innocents calls to mind Shakespeare's Henry V, who demands the surrender of Harfleur with these chilling words:

If not, why, in a moment look to see
The blind and bloody soldier with foul hand
Defile the locks of your shrill-shrieking daughters,
 . . .
Your naked infants spitted upon pikes,
Whiles the mad mothers with their howls confus'd
Do break the clouds, as did the wives of Jewry
At Herod's bloody-hunting slaughtermen.
(*Hen. V*, III. iii. 33-41)

The participation of some individual women, however, is so far from being merely emblematic that their experience has always been included in accounts of the war. The countess of Buchan provides one such example. When Robert Bruce seized the throne in 1306, he took great pains to follow the traditional inauguration ceremony at Scone as closely as circumstances permitted. Since the sixteen-year-old earl of Fife was unavailable to perform his hereditary ceremonial function of seating the king-elect on the Stone of Destiny (which was also unavailable), his aunt Isabel, wife of the earl of Buchan, stood in as a surrogate.²⁷ One English chronicler reports how she had kept her husband's destriers at the ready for the swift ride to Scone. Her husband, who had taken the English side, was so infuriated that when his wife was later captured he demanded her execution. Edward I chose instead "to have her suspended from the wall of Berwick castle in a wooden cage so that passers-by could see and recognize her." The chronicler tells us that "she remained thus for many days in hard confinement" (*in arda dieta*).²⁸ In fact, she remained in her cage until 1310, when Edward II permitted her to be moved to a religious house. Unfortunately, the countess of Buchan was not singled out for such inhumane treatment.²⁹ King Edward I placed King

²⁶I am grateful to Professor John W. Baldwin for this observation. On the Peace and Truce of God, see Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven, 1984), pp. 27, 47-8.

²⁷See Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, pp. 150-51.

²⁸*Chron. Guisborough*, p. 367. Cf. *The Scalacronica of Sir Thomas Gray, Knight*, ed. J. Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1836), p. 130; *Scalacronica*, ed. and trans. Sir Herbert Maxwell (Glasgow, 1907), pp. 30-31.

²⁹See *Cal. Docs. Scot.*, ed. J. Bain, 4 vols. (Edinburgh, 1881-8) II, no. 1851; *Documents and Records Illustrating the History of Scotland*, ed. F. Palgrave (London, 1837), pp.

Robert's sister Mary in a similar cage, though he was more lenient to Bruce's wife and other sister.³⁰

So far we have examined the various modes of insertion of women in the discursive network dating from the war itself. Before closing, we must now consider briefly the place assigned to women in Scottish literature about the war. In Barbour's *Bruce* women contribute in several key ways to the national cause. At an early stage of the war, the queen and her ladies accompany their menfolk, making it easier for them to endure the "mekill paynys" (II. 524) of the war. One scholar has observed that the kind of love celebrated in this passage "is not *amour courtois* as generally understood."³¹ Indeed, the noble women refresh weary soldiers: "In wemen mekill comfort lysis, / And gret solace on mony wis" (548-9).

Barbour imagines that women contributed directly to the war, and to some extent his authority on such matters seems reliable, though independent corroboration is rarely available.³² One woman supplies Bruce with news of the political situation in Arran (IV. 470-95), prophecies his triumph, and offers two of her sons as surety (653-67). A kinswoman leads fifteen men to Bruce and furnishes him with silver and meat (IV. 133-79). A "gud vif" offers Bruce hospitality without knowing who he is, for she welcomes all travellers "for saik of ane" (VII. 244)—not Christ, as we might expect, but "Gud Kyng Robert the Bruce . . . rycht lord of this cuntree" (249-50). She, too, gives up her sons to his cause. One woman who had been enlisted as a spy for Bruce's enemy, Sir Aymer de Valence, is compelled instead to yield Bruce information that saves his life (VII. 559); another woman volunteers information about the de Soules conspiracy (XIX. 23-30). The ways in which women can contribute to the Scottish cause appear limitless: the attractions of an anonymous "wench" (to use Barbour's word [X. 554]) had once led one William Frances to discover a privy way into Edinburgh. He turns this knowledge to strategic use during the midnight assault on the cas-

356-9; see also *Cal. Docs. Scot.* II, no. 1910.

³⁰See Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 162 for further discussion of Edward I's treatment of these female prisoners.

³¹J. A. W. Bennett, *Middle English Literature*, ed. Douglas Gray, Oxford History of English Literature (Oxford, 1986), p. 119.

³²John of Fordun, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. W. Skene, *Historians of Scotland*, Vols. I and IV (Edinburgh, 1871), I, 343 describes help Bruce received from "Christiana of the Isles" while he was a fugitive late in 1306; Barrow, *Robert Bruce*, p. 170, identifies her as Christian of Mar, who appears to have been the heir of Alan Macruarie, lord of Garmoran; see Genealogical Table II, p. 384, for her relation to Robert I.

tle. Barbour has the women and children of Berwick contribute directly to the defence of the town.³³

Women with child and childir small
 In arme-fullis gaderit vp, and bair
 Till thame that on the wallis war
 Arrowes, and nocht ane slayne ves thar
 Na zeit voundit. . . .

(XVII. 820-4)

Time does not permit us to examine in any detail the most purely *literary* representation of the wars of independence, Blind Hary's *Wallace*. But to round out our discussion, let me simply mention here that Hary comes at the end of an entire tradition that links Wallace with amorous activities. The English chroniclers, eager to portray their mortal enemy in the worst possible light, use women as a sign of his moral degeneracy. Thus Pierre Langtoft, for example, claims that "William Wallace, master of thieves" was captured "hiding by the side of his whore" ("*en près de sa puteyne . . . en tapisouns*").³⁴ Andrew of Wyntoun preserves a tradition that William Wallace had a "leman"; Blind Hary, using the woman to help establish the moral worth of his hero, draws out his account to include a courtship that culminates in marriage. In both Wyntoun and Blind Hary, however, Wallace's woman is killed by the English. In Wyntoun, not only do we learn how Wallace's "leman" is executed, but Wallace is observed watching her burning.³⁵ Blind Hary, however, cannot bring himself to kill her onstage; instead we must see Wallace suffering—for that is the poem's proper theme—and we must hear him vow more intently than ever not to relent in his struggle against the English.³⁶ In Hary's brutal narrative, women appear chiefly for their symbolic resonance and emotional force.

³³Cf. the contribution of women to the defense of Carlisle reported in *Chron. Guisborough*, p. 367. *Chron. Lanercost* I, 173 mentions that women of Berwick carried fire and straw in the attempt to burn the English fleet just prior to the destruction of the town in 1296.

³⁴*The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft*, ed. T. Wright, 2 vols., Rolls Series 47 (London, 1866-8), II, 362-3. Robert Mannyng of Bourne (Brunne) translated this passage into Middle English.

³⁵Andrew of Wyntoun, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. F. J. Amours, STS, 50, 53, 54, 56, 57, 63 (1903-14), Bk. VIII, ll. 2035-52.

³⁶See *Hary's Wallace (Vita Nobilissimi Defensoris Scotie Wilelmi Wallace Militis)*, ed. M. P. McDiarmid, STS, 4th Series, 4, 5 (1968-9), Bk. VI, ll. 191-220.

Though we must conclude here, we have only begun the search for archival and literary traces of the women of the wars of independence. So far as I know, we lack any records of the war written by women. What we do have, however, are written records produced by men that occasionally shed some light on how Scottish women of all classes experienced the war. Sometimes male writers present the fictionalized voices of female characters real and imagined. It is even possible on rare occasions to detect traces of women's voices speaking through male discourse. While it would be erroneous to conclude that all women shared a common experience by virtue of their gender, a partial recovery of the collective experience of women points to the particular traumas that many women suffered and, if they were fortunate, managed to survive.

Most of these women are too obscure, socially too marginal, to interest modern historians, who tend to focus on the *public* events of the war, which are by definition conducted almost entirely within a male sphere. Yet these marginal women's histories, caught almost at random in the complex web of a discursive network, help to reveal history's blind spots, its losses of memory, its structural unconscious. With some of these stories we come close to what Gayatri C. Spivak has called "a literary representation of the subaltern."³⁷

Caught in the web of discourse, the traumatic experiences of women help to suggest that, in the words of Cathy Caruth, "history, like an individual's experience of trauma, is never simply one's own; it is indissolubly linked to the suffering of others."³⁸ The war may have disrupted or destroyed countless lives whose memories can never be recovered, but the story of Christiana of Espertoun was kept alive by her family, and in that almost randomly preserved memory of a widow who somehow managed to survive the loss of almost all that she had, we can still faintly detect one woman's heroic voice of refusal.

Auburn University

³⁷Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern: A Woman's Text From the Third World," in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York, 1987), pp. 241-68.

³⁸Cathy Caruth, "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History" (lecture delivered at the Humanities Center, Johns Hopkins University, November 1989).

Women as Discursive Subject

1. *axis of referentiality* (from most directly to least directly corresponding to the real)

individual—collective individual—collective—generic individual—collective—gen

legal *narratio*
 letters, charters,
 accountbooks, etc.
 [n.b. function of
 proper names of
 persons, places,
 dates]

chronicle sources
 Guisborough
 Rishanger
Scalacronica
The Bruce
 Wyntoun

literary sources
Scalacronica
The Bruce
 Wyntoun
The Wallace

2. *axis of class*

landless—unfree tenant—freeholder—bourgeois—noble—royal

3. *axis of marital status*

single—married—widowed

4. *axis of family relations*

daughter—sister—wife—aunt—mother

5. *axis of age*

infant—child—adult

6. *axis of religious*

lay—religious

7. *axis of geography*

island—highland—lowland—border

8. *axis of mood*

passive—middle—active

9. *axis of time*

days—months—seasons—years
 canonical year
 regnal year