

# Wyntoun, the Anonymous and Agnes Randolph

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‘This is ane of my ladyis pynnys;  
Hir amouris to my hert þus rynnys.’

‘Quhow!  
Fairewele; we haif þe Montagw!’  
‘Nay,’ quod Covpland, ‘be my hand,  
Bot pure Iohne of Covpland.’

Bot Fortoune, þocht scho fald sickerly,  
Will nocht at anys all mischeiffis fall.

‘I wow to God, scho beris hir weill,  
The Scottis wenche with hir ploddeill ...’

## Wyntoun, the Anonymous, and Agnes Randolph

**1** First, thank you to Steve Boardman and the organisers of this workshop for inviting me to reconsider the first part of the anonymous contribution to Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle*, namely the account of the seven bad years 1332–38. Roughly a third of the whole piece that Wyntoun adopted, this initial sequence traces the painful recovery from the fragmentation and collapse that follows the death of Robert I. **2** This sequence exhibits a low-style kind of narrative that may influence later Scottish literature and historiography. This is a fitting style in which to consider characters and events from an ironic distance. Stories are illustrated by snippets of verbal evidence: idioms, jargon, nicknames, regional terms, and semantically rich or ambiguous words in prominent position (punchline, song tag, aphorism); structural parallels are clinched through recurrent terms or motifs. Not least through quoted phrases, this style affirms a direct connection to the events being related, as well as a firm grasp of their moral significance. The ensuing discussion is mostly based on the Wemyss MS text as edited by Amours in his STS edition.

In the anonymous contributor's account of the seven bad years, circumstantial details and the idiosyncratic ways in which individuals react to them have the ring of authenticity. Narrative artistry is evident in the foregrounding of such details as if they were indicative of the settings for key events and even their subjective associations. This anonymous narrative conveys a sense of direct descent from the experience of these events themselves. It often does so by highlighting the specific, often mundane objects that acquire weight and sharpness in provoking fateful human choice.



Mirror back: *Attack on the Castle of Love*, carved elephant ivory (ca. 1330–1350), London, Victoria and Albert Museum A.561-1910, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O88657/attack-on-the-castle-of-mirror-back-unknown/>.



Roundel with Scenes of the Attack on the Castle of Love (ca. 1320–1340), New York, Metropolitan Museum, Cloisters Collection, accession 2003.131.1, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/475487>.



London, British Library, Additional MS 42130, fol. 75v, Luttrell Psalter (1325–40), [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add\\_ms\\_42130\\_fs001ar](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_42130_fs001ar).

James Goldstein, 'The Women of the Wars of Independence in Literature and History,' *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 26 (1991), 271–82,  
<https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol26/iss1/22>.

Elizabeth Ewan, 'Dangers of Manly Women: Late Medieval Perceptions of Female Heroism in Scotland's Second War of Independence,' in *Woman and the Feminine in Medieval and Early Modern Scottish Writing*, ed. S. Dunnigan, C.M. Harker and E.S. Newlyn. (Palgrave, 2004), 3–18.

Nicola Royan, 'Some Conspicuous Women in the *Original Chronicle*, *Scotichronicon* and *Scotorum Historia*.' *Innes Review*, 59 (2008), 131–44.

Than said þe lady scho wes ʒung,  
And hir lord wes ʒoung alsua,  
Off powere till haue barnis ma,  
To þat þai twa deid wes þare;  
And ʒit of þare sonnys ma liffand ware. (clxi.3680–4)

Thare Dame Cristiane þe Bruss wiþin,  
That thocht to lat him in to wyn,  
Maid stout and manly resistens,  
And wichtly set for hir defens,  
And oftare chasit þaim without  
Than þai did þaim within, but dout. (clxvi.4363–8)

That tyme þe Erll [wyfe] Davy,  
With oþer ladyis þat were lufly,  
In Loghindorbe wes þan liand.  
And quhen þe King of Ingland  
Herd þat sa were þai ladyis  
Envyround wiþ þar innemyis,  
He schupe him to reskew þaim þen (clxviii.4557–63)

Off þe assegeing of Dunbare,  
And of Dame Annes wis and ware. (clxix, rubric)

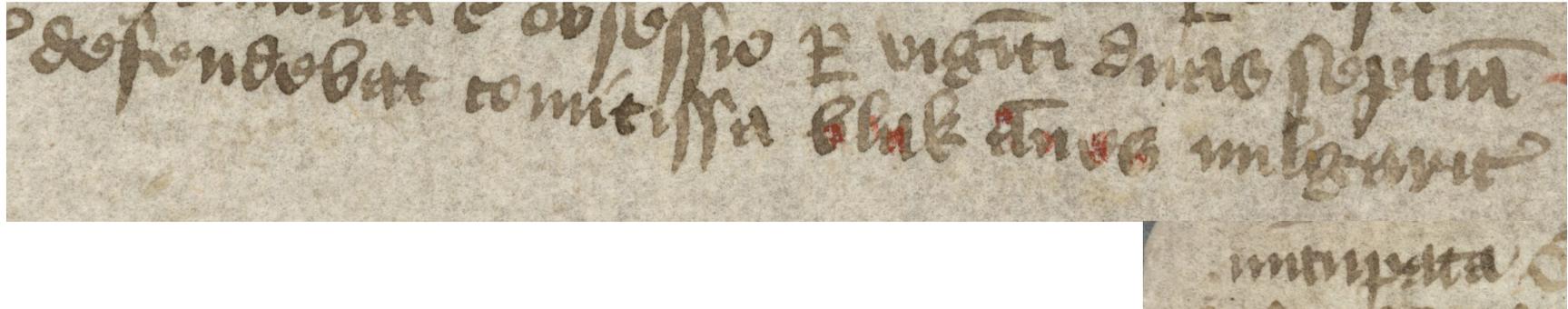
Steve Boardman, ‘Chronicle Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century Scotland: Robert the Steward, John of Fordun and the “Anonymous Chronicle,”’ *SHR* 76 (1997), 26, 28.

Elisabeth van Houts, ‘Introduction: Medieval Memories,’ in *Medieval Memories: Men, Women, and the Past in Europe 700–1300*, ed. E. van Houts (Routledge, 2013), 6–7.

3 The first phase of the anonymous chronicle is coming to an end at the point at which a female protagonist, Agnes Randolph, exploits the allegorical potential of her defence of Dunbar castle. Placing the siege slightly anachronistically at the climax of resistance against the English incursion in 1338, the anonymous contributor depicts Randolph holding the English unexpectedly at bay. 4 In their lightness and allusiveness, her tactics confound her massively manned and equipped opponent. Integral to these tactics is the theme of female self-defence from male assault that is ubiquitous in early fourteenth-century literary and artistic representations of the attack on the Castle of Love. 5 Such representations do not consistently display the female defenders as worthy of success.

6 The following discussion owes much to studies of the episode by James Goldstein, Elizabeth Ewan and Nicola Royan. Though I am interested in the larger issues they consider, such as the evolution of Randolph's role in late medieval and early modern historiography or its significance for the Scottish development of a 'manly woman' protagonist, I attend instead to the ways the details of the anonymous contributor's telling guarantee authenticity – assure direct access to the events and even personalities – but also, as Ewan indicates, signal the female protagonist's otherness.

7 To counterbalance preceding narratives about defeats and defections, the topic of female steadfastness and resolve recurs through the early chapters of the anonymous contribution. Agnes Randolph is the last in a series of women protecting castles; preceding are Lady Seton at Berwick, the 'manly' Christian Bruce at Kildrummy (clxvi.4357–68), 8 and the widowed Catherine Beaumont (unnamed in the anonymous contribution; clxxviii.4557–64) at Lochindorb. These predecessors are relatively easy to interpret as women forced by war to adopt and sustain extreme, even unnatural hostility and determination. 9 Like theirs, Agnes Randolph's story stands out as one of those memorials – familial, regional or even



Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 171B, Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon* (mid-1440s), [volume 2,] ff. 288r–v, *Parker Library on the Web*, <https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/cr633rp5601>.

[One of his soldiers is killed by a bowshot:]

And þan the Muntagw can say,  
‘This is ane of my ladyis pynnis;  
Hir amouris to my hert þus rynniss.’

The port culis come doune on ane  
And sparit þe Montagw þarout.

The Scottis wenche with hir ploddeill ...

W

Bot fortune, þocht scho fald sickerly,  
Will nocht at anys all mischeiffis fall.

‘I wow to God, scho beris hir weil,  
The Scottis wenche with hir ploddeill  
For cum I airly, cum I lait,  
I fynd ay Annes at þe zait.’

C

Bot forton, þouche scho faulde fickylly  
Wil noucht at anys myscheyffis fall.

‘I wow to God, scho mais gret stere  
þe Scottis wenche ploddeyr.  
Cum I are, cum I lat,  
I fande Annote at þe zhat.’

Annote] Dame Annes AuE<sup>2</sup>

Schire William Montagw, þat sa  
Had tane þe assege, in hy gert ma  
A mekle and a stalwart gyne,  
And gert dres it vp smertly syne,  
And warpit at þe wall gret stanis  
Baith hard and hevy for þe nanis (4651–6)

With a towell a damyceill,  
Arrayit iolely and weill,  
Wypit þe wll, at þai mycht se,  
To gere þaim mare anoyit be. (4659–62)

national – of female ‘ancestors who were interesting or well known [...] or whose inheritance had relevance for the present day.’ **10** Though in Wyntoun almost nothing is related about her personally – she is not even given the nickname *Blak Annes* that Bower records – Agnes Randolph is the most fully articulated female defender of the series, but also the most problematic.

**11** Purveying and perhaps embroidering some tales of her exploits at Dunbar castle (but not from other parts of her long and eventful life), the anonymous contributor assimilates Agnes Randolph’s resistance into recognised patterns of romance: the noblewoman protects her castle and herself from an interloping would-be lover. But this portrayal of Randolph is even more exceptional for the theatricality of her tactics and also the way the discourse around her descends, in true *Romance of the Rose* manner, from courtliness to earthiness. A comparable shift takes place from large to small: while topographical features are prominent in narratives featuring male protagonists in this section of the anonymous contribution (the *furd* at Dupplin, the *gret syke* and *brayis stay* at Halidon, the *litill peth* at Culblean), the key items in the Agnes Randolph narrative are domestic, small, quite intimate. **12** These changes of perspective and emphasis have a way of stimulating textual variation. Such variation proliferates in the pithier phrases, especially in direct discourse, that bring anecdotes to their conclusion.

**13** The rubric to the chapter containing the Agnes Randolph narrative highlights ‘Dame Annes wiß and ware’ but the chapter itself begins with the English commander, ‘Schire William Montagw’ (only later identified as the earl of Salisbury), and his deployment of a ‘mekle and a stalwart gyne’, a mangonel that ‘warpit at þe wall gret stanis’. **14** After each volley, the defenders respond contemptuously. The wall is dabled clean by a stylishly outfitted attendant, who reacts to the



Luttrell Psalter, fol. 75v (detail).

Ewan, 'Dangers of Manly Women', pp. 6–7.

Michael Camille, *Mirror in Parchment: The Luttrell Psalter and the Making of Medieval England* (Abrams, 1998), p. 108.



Taymouth Hours, BL Yates Thompson MS 13 (1325–50), f. 181r, British Library MS Viewer, [https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=yates\\_thompson\\_ms\\_13\\_fs001r](https://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=yates_thompson_ms_13_fs001r)

Royan, ‘Some Conspicuous Women’, p. 138.

Kathryn Smith, *The Taymouth Hours: Stories and the Construction of the Self in Late Medieval England* (British Library and University of Toronto Press, 2012), p. 138.

Christiana Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind: A Study of Medieval Architectural Allegory* (University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 89–90.



Met, Cloisters, accession 2003.131.1.



V&A, A.561-1910.

Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (Abrams, 1998), pp. 87–93.



Amors Shoots l'Amans with his Arrows, Bodleian Douce 332 (French, late 14c?), fol. 19v, <https://dlmm.library.jhu.edu/viewer/#rose/Douce332/019v/image>

Joanna H. Drell, 'Aristocratic Economies: Women and the Family,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. J.M. Bennett and R.M. Karras (Oxford UP, 2013), p. 329.

Carissa M. Harris, *Obscene Pedagogies: Transgressive Talk and Sexual Education in Late Medieval Britain* (Cornell UP, 2018), p. 146.



Dunbar Castle, View of covered passage from NE, photograph, 1978, Canmore <http://canmore.org.uk/collection/2583922>

projectile's impact as if it were a filthy drip to be blotted away. **15** The performance conveys an 'active defiance', as do the gestures and facial expressions of the ladies defending their castle in a comparable marginal illustration in the Luttrell Psalter. **16** The wiping is acted out in order to provoke annoyance, the narrator says. Shame resulting in annoyance; this gesture conveys Agnes Randolph's brush-off to Montague. The act also thwarts some widely recognised cultural conventions, both sacred and profane, including the 'notion of the castle of the female body stormed or besieged, briefly or half-heartedly defended, and then "taken and entered" by suitors in a capitulation to erotic desire.' **17** By the 1330s, the Siege (or Storming) of the Castle of Love was being carved on ivory caskets and mirror-backs 'generally thought to be betrothal or marriage gifts' – emblems of the bride's value. **18** Through Wyntoun's preservation of the anonymous contributor's depiction, it is possible to glimpse how Agnes Randolph is memorably 'circumvent[ing] traditional concepts of gender' at this high point of masculine insistence.

**19** The scornful dabbing tactic establishes the tone of the whole defence: a heavily conventional assault is deflected unexpectedly and with flair. However, the defenders' successes are tersely recounted. Only 29 lines are needed for the towel episode and the one following, in which Montague adopts gallant style to acknowledge the skill of one of the defending archers, who achieves an exceptionally murderous shot that the English commander quips is 'ane of my ladyis pynnys; | Hir amouris to my hert þus rynnys' (clxix.4677–8). But then comes a 43-line passage recounting 'iuperdyis' undertaken elsewhere in Scotland by 'Lowrens of Prestoun' and 'Schire William of Keith of Galstoun' (4681, 4701), working toward the collapse of Balliol and English fortunes. This shift of focus might be supposed to place events at Dunbar castle in the

bot þai within haly  
Were warnyt of it prevely.  
He come, and þe 3et opin fand,  
And wald haif gane in fut stepand;  
Bot Iohne of Covpland, þat wes þan  
Bot a rycht pure sympill man,  
Schot him abak, and in is gane.  
The port culis come doune on ane,  
And sparit þe Montagw þarout.  
3it þai within set vp a schout,  
And cryit on hycht, and said þus: ‘Quhow!  
Fairewele; we haif þe Montagw!’  
‘Nay’, quod Covpland, ‘be my hand,  
Bot pure Iohne of Covpland.’ (4735–48)



Portcullis at Eilean Donan Castle (1913–32), Undiscovered Scotland, <https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/dornie/eileandonancastle/images/portcullis.jpg>



*L'Amant iouyst de la rose*. Oxford, Bodleian Douce 195, fol. 155v, Digital Library of Medieval Manuscripts, <https://dlmm.library.jhu.edu/viewer/#rose/Douce195/155r/image>

Heather Arden, 'The Slings and Arrows of Outrageous Love in the *Roman de la Rose*,' in *The Medieval City under Siege*, ed. I.A. Corfis and M. Wolfe (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1995), p. 201.

W

Ȝit þai within set vp a schout,  
 And cryit on hycht, and said þus: ‘Quhow!  
 Fairewele; we haif þe Montagw!’

C

Þai cryit wiþe a sturdy schout:  
 ‘A Montagew for euir mar!’

AuE<sup>2</sup>

Ȝhit þai within set wp a schout  
 And cryit lowde and said ‘Quhewe!  
 Now haif we heire the Montagew.  
 Faire wele, fallowis, faire wele, fayre,  
 Faire wele, Montageu, for euermaire.’

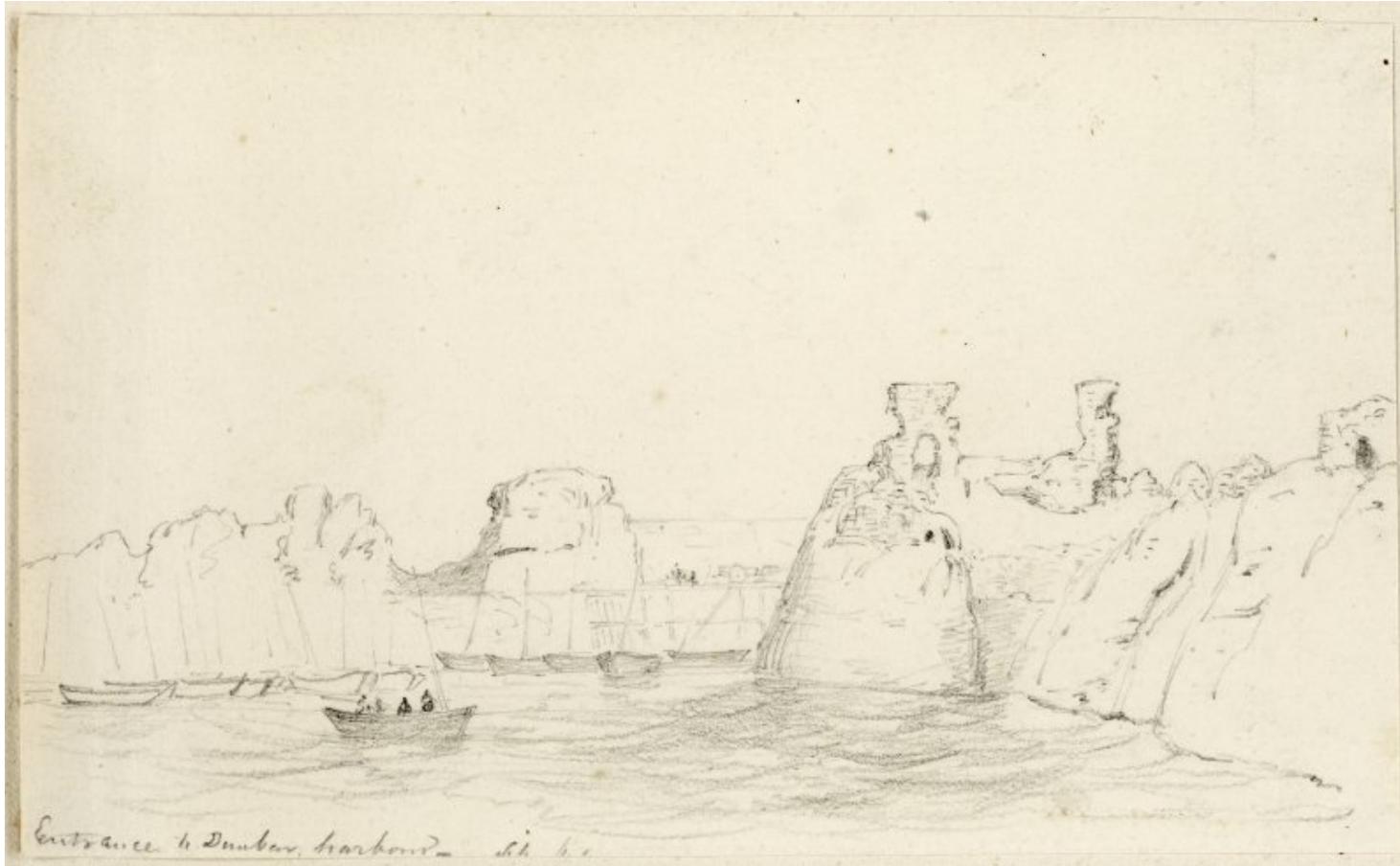
larger context of Scottish resistance, but in consequence it dilutes their importance. Still, the episodes involving Agnes and Montague have an impact one might not expect from their brevity.

**20** When focus returns to Dunbar, '[t]he Montagw' takes the foreground rather than Agnes. He deploys two Genoese galleys (4725, 4727) to block relief to the castle from the sea. Pressing his advantage, he bribes 'ane of þaim þat wes within' to leave a door to the castle unlocked – the moment recalls that juncture in the *Romance of the Rose* at which *la Vielle* shows *Amans* how to enter the castle of the Rose through a back door (14664–88). Back at Dunbar castle, word reaches the defenders. When Montague tries to enter, he is pushed back to safety by one of his officers, who is left behind in his place, a sad substitute, when the portcullis slams shut. **21** The moment might recall one in Chrétien's romance *The Knight of the Lion* when Yvain is trapped inside a castle by a suddenly descending portcullis. In the context of the storming of the Castle of Love, however, the cutting off of Montague's advance guard 'pure Iohne Coupland' (4748), may evoke uncomfortable bodily associations. **22** With its invitingly unlocked portal, watchful guard, and suddenly released portcullis, Agnes Randolph's castle withstands the narrative thrust of the *Romance of the Rose*. It comes into its own as the place where a woman's resistance prevails 'in the face of' a male aggression that is persistently conceived of, in the moment and in its recording, as erotic.

**23** When the portcullis drops, the defenders' exultant outcry stimulates textual variation. Wyntoun's editor François Amours speculated that 'the trick played upon the English knight must have become a popular story; hence the different versions of the cry of the Scots' (6.87n). In the most fully elaborated version, *farewell* alludes ironically to a host's fondly regretful expression of good wishes at the departure of a friend or lover; Bower, by comparison, has *Blak Annot* herself call

Michael Penman, ‘*Anglici Caudati*: Abuse of the English in Fourteenth-Century Scottish Chronicles, Literature and Records,’ in *England and Scotland in the Fourteenth Century: New Perspectives*, ed. by A. King and M.A. Penman (Boydell, 2007), pp. 217–18.

Andrew Galloway, ‘The Borderlands of Satire: Linked, Opposed, and Exchanged Political Poetry during the Scottish and English Wars of the Early Fourteenth Century,’ in *The Anglo-Scottish Border and the Shaping of Identity 1300–1600*, ed. K. Terrell and M. Bruce (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 19, 24.



‘Sketch of the Dunbar harbour entrance and the castle’, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Canmore <https://canmore.org.uk/site/57687/dunbar-castle>.

Bot fortune, þocht scho fald sickerly,  
Will nocht at anys all mischieffis fall.  
Forthy scho set þare [hartis] all  
To verray France, þat Scottis mycht be  
Beleft þus in to gretare lee. (4786–90)

out, *A Dew monsenzor Montagot*. These jingling variations counter Michael Penman and Andrew Galloway's view that Scottish chronicles 'sanitize' anti-English invective. Amongst the various versions of this passage, there is at least one in which the defenders are blowing the discomfited assailant a mock kiss. **24** Far from muting the defenders' voices, the anonymous contributor, Wyntoun his redactor, and the scribes of the *Original Chronicle* intensify the 'complexity and allusiveness' but also the unanimity of these voices.

**25** The shame of Montague's attempted incursion deepens when Alexander Ramsay manages to reach the castle by boat, eluding the Genoese blockade. The entry into the castle that English gold and galleys failed to accomplish, Ramsay and his little boat achieve handily. The contrast is sweetened by a final gesture. The morning after Ramsay's stealthy arrival, he with the castle watch 'maid a pert and stout mellé' and return without casualties (4765–6). Throughout this sequence, the only mention of Agnes Randolph is at the point when Ramsay brings supplies to the castle, and 'The lady, and all þat were þare, | Off *his* come weill comfort were' (4761–2).

Despite its promised focus on 'Dame Annes wis and ware', the chapter has dealt mostly with men's attempts and their unexpected consequences. Finally Edward III summons 'þe Montagw' to his new French campaign, thereby acknowledging that the siege of Dunbar has failed. **26** The anonymous contributor admits that after 'Duplyne and Halydoun' (4784), that was not the expected outcome. Now he is inclined to describe it as a lucky break. Fortune has relented for now in her handling of Scotland. Her usual practice is to 'fald sickerly' – the Cottonian text has 'faulde fickyly'. The semantically rich verb *fald* (*fold*) calls for attention: to arrange by folding; to bend or turn back; to yield; to fail or falter; to swerve or turn aside (as from the truth); all are possible significations in the late fourteenth century (*OED fald* v.1, *DOST fald* v.1). The

of an interlude, an aberration even. In Wyntounesque fashion, the anonymous contributor raises the possibility that her defence is pivotal, only to divert attention from her role in bringing it to success, perhaps even from the national importance of that success. Given the unforgettability with which she casts scorn upon men, Agnes Randolph resists such relegation. It may be that her story survives despite the better instincts of late-medieval historians. For the persistence of this story they have no one to blame but *Annes* herself.

‘I wou to God, scho beris hir weil,  
The Scottis wenche with hir ploddeill;  
For cum I airly, cum I lait,  
I fynd ay Annes at þe 3ait.’ (4793–6)

handling of men's fates like soft fabric might recall the little play with the towel at the start of the chapter. The message is almost explicit that females, historical or allegorical, may choose to protect rather than destroy but should not be counted on to choose always thus; their capriciousness and unknowability place females, even or especially powerful ones, beyond the reach of male trust.

**27** There is a coda. The anonymous contributor gives the last word to the departing English soldiers. A *ploddeill* is a 'band of robbers or cattle-thieves' (*DOST plod(d)eill(e, n.)*); the English are resorting to a common topic in their invective against the Scots, namely that they are all wretched bandits. 'At þe 3ait' refers to the recent defence of the door to her castle with its suddenly descending portcullis but also ascribes to Agnes herself the defenders' unrelenting readiness to ambush the attackers (*MED gate, 2f. OED gate n.1, 3a. DOST 3et(t, yet(t, n. 3d and e)*). There might even be a jeering allusion to her readiness to welcome lovers 'at the gate'; by such a gibe at *Annes* and her penchant for rustic *rendezvous* the English soldiers compensate for their chagrin at being defeated by a woman – she's a *wenche* and no lady. *Annes* and her *ploddeill* have been equated, in a gibe that inadvertently acknowledges the unity of purpose the defenders have shared with their commander.

Edward III's turning away from Scotland in quest for the bigger prize of France gives one, Fortune-driven reason for Scottish success. The victories of Laurence Preston, William Keith and Alexander Ramsay, meanwhile, suggest another route, from one bloody skirmish to the next. And Agnes Randolph? Veering from the stereotypes available for women in warfare – virago or victim – she stages scenes that might make some men in the anonymous contributor's audience shift uneasily. Such listeners, readers and retellers might think it prudent to consider her defence of Dunbar castle as something