Inscribing Identity:
Graffiti on the Walls of Carlisle Castle's Keep

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Despite its fruitfulness as a source, graffiti remains overlooked by many scholars within academia, and the majority of cataloging work has instead been carried out by local antiquarian and historical societies.[1] *An anachronistic stigma has impelled academia to disregard an entire corpus of material culture that has the capacity to illuminate the history of popular culture. Graffiti offers an access point, although fragmented, into studying the material and visual culture of those beyond the nobility. Through examining medieval graffiti, scholars have the potential to analyze a subset of people that has been nearly impossible to intuit in written records. As graffiti's medium is inherently its context, graffiti has the potential to function as a history of how people interacted with their social surroundings and built environment. In this article, I modify Karen Langsholt Holmqvist's model for studying utterances of the 'self' in textual graffiti, which combines cognitive and practice theory, to read the image-based language of heraldic and para-heraldic graffiti in Room 22 of Carlisle Castle Keep as emblems of political identity. I argue that the corpus of graffiti is representative of how those who garrisoned the castle situated themselves in their political environment by identifying with the political networks they were entangled with on a personal level. In displaying the signs of their lords, these men were expressing both a vertical relationship to the nobility alongside a horizontal one that encompassed a brotherhood-in-arms. The political emblems in graffiti form preserve a pictural record of how people less represented in written documents interacted with England's tumultuous political environment. Graffiti lapidifies memory.*

[1] Suffolk Medieval Graffiti Survey http://www.medieval-graffiti-suffolk.co.uk/. Accessed 9 February 2022; Norfolk Medieval Graffiti Survey http://www.medieval-graffiti.co.uk/. Accessed 9 February 2022; Lincolnshire Medieval Graffiti Survey https://lincsgraffiti.wixsite.com/lmgs. Accessed 9 February 2022.

Hidden in plain sight, medieval graffiti is pervasive throughout England, surviving on the walls of castles, cathedrals, churches, and priories. Varying in size, style, subject matter, and purpose, these remnants of the past offer a window into how medieval people interacted with their surrounding architecture. For those who carved the graffiti, the stone face was their canvas with its edges demarcating the limits of a composition. What can graffiti expose about those who created it and their contemporaries? How can it help us to understand the ways in which members of medieval English society viewed themselves, their communities, and their built environments? The corpus of graffiti inscribed on the walls of Room 22 in Carlisle Castle's keep offers answers to such salient questions. Containing palimpsests of graffiti dating from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, the castle's walls constitute a unique social space for predominantly pictural dialogues to occur. Contrasting with manuscripts, which were commissioned by those amongst the social elite who could afford them—such as the Lord Wardens of the Marches who governed Carlisle Castle—and mediated by scribes, graffiti was created by the hands of people from across the socio-economic stratum for their own motives. Despite providing a unique perspective into the social selves of the common people whose identities tend to be lost to history, scholars have largely neglected the study of graffiti due to the negative connotations appended to it by modern society.

The walls of Room 22 function as the medium for visual expressions of identity across several centuries. However, in this article, I narrow the corpus to only those carvings on the top layer dating to the fifteenth century in order to consider how the

carvers who created them responded to the distinct political environment of their time. Despite being referred to as the 'Prison Rooms', those who contributed were likely non-nobles who garrisoned the castle under the Lord Warden of the Marches. These men drew on heraldic, chivalric, military, and religious iconography to visualize facets of their identities on a shared space. Room 22 represents the formation of a community concerned with creating a visual locus of memory. Individuals joined this community through contributing to the walls. Carving graffiti into the walls of the tower was not a clandestine act but may have been part of a bonding practice for those who served as soldiers within the tower during the fifteenth century. The walls record both the formation of a community as well as rivalries and clashes between members with conflicting political affiliations. Reading the iconography in Room 22 has the potential to reveal the common interests and values amongst a subset of English society—lower-ranking soldiers—that goes relatively unrepresented in chronicles and written records outside of Muster Rolls and Retinue Rolls. Drawing upon Karen Langsholt Holmqvist's model for interpreting textual graffiti as 'utterances' of the self, which combines situated cognition with practice theory, I adapt it to better suit image-based languages that are highly visual and common in medieval graffiti. I consider how the fifteenth-century emblematic graffiti at Carlisle Castle presents a lapidified glimpse into the 'selves' of the agents who carved them and what these selves indicate about their conceived political identities. The carvings petrify past moments of self-construction that occurred in dialogue with social networks.

Figure 1: Graffiti in Room 22 of Carlisle Castle Keep

In this article, I am predominantly concerned with the political identities represented on the walls of Room 22 through heraldic or para-heraldic graffiti, and what these emblematic devices indicate about how individuals engaged with the political environment of fifteenth-century England.[2] More than fifty percent of the graffiti in Room 22 can be classified as heraldic and para-heraldic graffiti. Thirty-two livery badges and nine instances of coats of arms dating to the fifteenth century survive in the chamber (Figure 1).[3] On the northern side of the window embrasure are displayed

[2] Para-heraldry consists of identity devices that are related to heraldry but are not formally granted or documented by heralds. The category includes badges adopted by individuals within a house. These symbols could be passed down through the generations of a lineage or adopted by an individual for a single generation. They encapsulated a personal identity that heraldry could not due to its nature.
[3] F.J. Field, 'The Carvings in the Entrance to Major MacIvor's Cell, Carlisle Castle', *Transactions of the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archeological Society*, 37 (1937), 13–23.

a Yorkist rose, an inverted crescent enclosing a fetterlock (Percy), and a coat of arms of Roos impaling Percy. The southern wall near the entrance to the rightmost cell contains a bull passant collared (Dacre), a ragged staff (Greystoke), two escallops in pale (Dacre), a Dacre coat of arms, a water-bouget (Roos), three fusils conjoined in fess (Percy), an escallop knotted to a ragged staff (Dacre), a fleur-de-lis, escallops (Dacre), a lion passant guardant crowned (Greystoke), a griffin passant (Dacre), dolphins haurient (Greystoke), a boar passant (Richard Plantagenet), a stag head couped (Dacre), a fetterlock (Percy), an inverted crescent enclosing a fetterlock (Percy), a Yorkist rose, and an ambiguous heraldic knot. Finally, on the northern wall are an escallop, a fleur-de-lis, a heraldic knot, a dolphin (Greystoke), a boar passant (Richard Plantagenet), a hind's head contourne (Dacre), a ragged staff and an escallop (Dacre and Greystoke), inverted crescent enclosing a fetterlock (Percy), a stag trippant collared (Dacre), and a wyvern (Clifford). The most heavily represented family is the House of Dacre, with eleven related images. The Percy family is the second most represented, with the House of York and the House of Greystoke tying for third. Individuals within families had their own badges, which were occasionally but not always passed down through the generations. In this way, badges promoted a conception of individual identity that heraldry did not. Since the reign of Edward III, each King of England collected on average four distinct badges. Therefore, it is unsurprising that marcher families and those belonging to them in the fifteenth century are represented in a multitude of ways. Adding a permutation of a lord's heraldry or para-heraldry to the existing palimpsest of graffiti placed it in

conversation and competition with others on the wall. Despite the wealth of evidence this graffiti provides on how those employed in the keep conceptualized their place in the castle and the boarder context of England's political environment, it has been neglected by scholars.

MEDIEVAL GRAFFITI IN CURRENT SCHOLARLY DISCOURSE

The stigmatization of graffiti has ultimately hampered fruitful scholarship on the common people of medieval England. Juliet Fleming observes, in relation to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that writing on walls was not differentiated from writing on any other surface and, therefore, was not designated by a discrete term as it is today.[4] While 'graffiti' is an anachronistic term to apply to the late Middle Ages and had no meaning to those creating such carvings, the use of a single overarching label is useful to this study. Coined in the mid-nineteenth century, 'graffiti' or *graffio* derives from the Italian verb *graffio*, meaning 'to scratch'.[5] Not long after, the term took on negative connotations that have been retrospectively applied to past acts of graffitiing, leading to inaccurate revisionism that has impeded the study of medieval graffiti. Matthew Champion demonstrates that evidence in documentary and artistic sources attests to the fact that contemporary attitudes towards graffiti were by no

[4] Juliet Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), p. 33.

[5] Juliet Fleming, 'Wounded Walls: Graffiti, Grammatology, and the Age of Shakespeare', *Criticism*, 39.1 (1997), 1–30 (p. 5); Matthew Champion, 'The Priest, the Prostitute, and the Slander on the Walls: Shifting Perceptions Towards Historic Graffiti', *Peregrinations*, 6.1 (2017), 5–37 (p. 26).

means disapproving until the early-seventeenth century.[6] For instance, in the twelfth-century hagiography of Christina of Markyate, the saintly woman is recorded as having inscribed a votive cross on the door of St. Albans Abbey with her fingernail.[7] The hagiographer does not portray her action as defacing the abbey's walls, but as a means of performing and memorializing a moment of affective spirituality. It was socially acceptable for individuals to physically interact with their architectural surroundings by permanently marking them, and medieval people may have viewed the embodied action itself as being equally important as its product. Individuals in medieval England exploited the commemorative potential of graffiti for a multitude of reasons and to express a multitude of meanings, the majority of which were socially sanctioned practices.

Although the study of medieval English graffiti has gained traction in recent years, scholars have yet to consider insular graffiti as an access point for analyzing medieval selfhood.[8] This study intends to fill that gap, at least partially, by reading the

[6] Champion, 'The Priest, the Prostitute, and the Slander', p. 16.

[7] Jane Geddes, *The St Albans Psalter: A Book for Christina of Markyate* (London: British Library, 2005), p. 9.

[8] Robert Athol, 'Students and Symbols: A Survey of Graffiti at Jesus College, Cambridge', *Post-medieval Archaeology*, 55.1 (2021), 59–90; Nathalie Cohen, 'Scratches and Storytelling: Graffiti and Interpretation at National Trust Sites in Kent and East Sussex, England', *Peregrinations*, 6.1 (2017), 92–118; Becky Williams, 'Monsters, Masons, and Markers: An Overview of the Graffiti at All Saints Church, Leighton Buzzard', *Peregrinations*, 6.1 (2017), 38–64; Matthew Champion, 'Magic on the Walls: Ritual Protection Marks in the Medieval Church', in *Physical Evidence for Ritual Acts, Sorcery and Witchcraft in Christian Britain: A Feeling for Magic,* ed. Ronald Hutton (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 15–38; Matthew Champion, 'Medieval Voices: Recording England's Early Church Graffiti', *Current Archaeology*, 315 (2016), 28–33; Matthew Champion, 'Medieval Window Sketch Found at All Saints Church, Weston Longville', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 46.3 (2012), 383–6; Matthew Champion, 'The Medium is the Message: Votive Devotional Imagery and Gift Giving Amongst the Commonality in the Late Medieval Parish', *Peregrinations*, 3.4 (2012), 103–23; Matthew Champion, 'Medieval Ship Graffiti in English Churches: Interpretation and Function', *Mariner's Mirror*, 101.3 (2015), 343–50; Matthew

graffiti in Carlisle Castle as an expression of the self that is representative of individuals belonging to a subset of English society in the fifteenth century. Albeit in relation to Latin and Norse runic inscriptions, Karen Langsholt Holmqvist proposes a productive model for studying the self in medieval graffiti that merges situated cognition and practice theory.[9] However, the model Holmqvist proposes is based on textual graffiti. The scholarly interpretation of English graffiti has largely been focused on the textual instances due to the enigmatic nature of images. In this article, I tailor Holmqvist's model to better suit the interpretation of image-based graffiti, specifically the standardized visual language of heraldry and para-heraldry. Tapping into the world of emblematic graffiti, which draws on this visual language, expands the scholarly possibilities of interpreting them.

Champion, 'Architectural Inscriptions: New Discoveries in East Anglia', *Church Archaeology*, 16 (2014), 65–80; Matthew Champion, 'Medieval Graffiti Inscription Found in All Saints' Church, Litcham', *Norfolk Archaeology*, 46.2 (2011), 199–208; Matthew Champion, 'Reading the Writing on the Wall: The Norfolk Medieval Graffiti Survey', *Current Archaeology*, 256 (2011), 36–41; Thomas Dhoop, Catriona Cooper and Penny Copeland, 'Recording and Analysis of Ship Graffiti in St Thomas' Church and Blackfriars Barn Undercroft in Winchelsea, East Sussex, UK', *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology*, 45.2 (2016), 296–309; Taleyna Fletcher, 'A Hidden Medieval Door and Graffiti at the Church of SS Mary and Andrew, Whittlesford, Cambridgeshire', *Church Archaeology*, 12 (2010), pp. 79–80; C. Pamela Graves, 'The Monastery of Durham and the Wider World: Medieval Graffiti in the Prior's Chapel', *Northern History*, 50.2 (2013), 186–215; John Peake, 'Graffiti and Devotion in Three Maritime Churches', in *Art, Faith and Place in East Anglia: From Prehistory to the Present*, ed. T.A. Heslop, Elizabeth Mellings and Margit Thøfner (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012), pp. 148–62; Violet Pritchard, *English Medieval Graffiti* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); Nigel Ramsay, 'Medieval Graffiti at Vale Royal Abbey, Cheshire', in *Medieval Archaeology, Art and Architecture at Chester*, ed. Alan Thacker (Leeds: Maney Publishing, 2000), pp. 167–9.

[9] Karen Langsholt Holmqvist, 'The Creation of Selves as a Social Practice and Cognitive Process: A Study of the Construction of Selves in Medieval Graffiti', in *Approaches to the Medieval Self: Representations and Conceptualizations of the Self in the Textual and Material Culture of Western Scandinavia, c. 800-1500,* ed. Stefka G. Eriksen, Karen Langsholt Holmqvist and Bjørn Bandlien (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 301–23; Karen Langsholt Holmqvist, 'Names and Prayers: Expressions of Self in the Medieval Inscriptions of the Nidaros Cathedral Walls', *Collegium Medievale*, 31 (2018), 103–49.

Graffitiing is inherently a practice conditioned by cognitions that are, in turn, dependent upon its situated context, resulting in the end-product—graffiti. As Holmqvist argues, 'the self emerges through the carving process and is a cognitive construction that is constantly shaped and reshaped in relation to the social and material environment'.[10] Situated cognition, within the broader field of cognitive theory, defines cognition as interrelated to the physical, social, and socio-political contexts it is situated within. Practice theory is conducive to understanding the role of context in relation to the social practice of graffitiing. Andreas Reckwitz defines a social practice as consisting of an agent, a material object, tacit knowledge, and social structures.[11] Within this definition, material artifacts and the social environment surrounding them are foregrounded in the process of creation, making them equally as fundamental to a practice as the agent. Regarding medieval graffiti, Holmqvist defines a 'carving practice' as a

> repeating pattern of carving. The pattern repeats because the agents relate to earlier manifestations of the same pattern, but it also changes according to the material surroundings, the social surroundings, and the agents partaking in the practice.[12]

[10] Holmqvist, 'The Creation of Selves', p. 303.
[11] Andreas Reckwitz, 'The Status of the "Material" in Theories of Culture: From "Social Structure" to "Artefacts"', *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 32.2 (2002), 195–217; Andreas Reckwitz, 'Towards a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5.2 (2002), 243–63; Andreas Reckwitz, 'Affective Spaces: A Praxeological Outlook', *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, 6.2 (2012), 241–58.
[12] Holmqvist, 'The Creation of Selves', p. 306.

As new graffiti is added around and on top of existing graffiti, novel material contexts are established that relate to previous patterns but also alter them based on how the carver performs his or her agency. Resultantly, the agents who carved on the walls of Carlisle Castle Keep were influenced by their surroundings when doing so, especially by the pre-existing graffiti encircling and under their own graffito that set a norm which could either be followed or transgressed.[13] The choice between these two reactions is what gives the carver agency. Through his or her choice of reaction, it is possible to locate traces of the self.[14]

In the context of Carlisle Castle, this article proposes an answer to Holmqvist's central question: 'How are the selves expressed in the inscriptions shaped by the carvers' cognition and the practice of carving?'[15] However, in order to accomplish this, what constituted the 'self' or individual identity in late medieval England requires defining. At its foundation, the self is a 'cognitive process of self-awareness.'[16] Cognitively creating a sense of self does not occur in a vacuum, but in material and social contexts. Therefore, considering context in conjunction with an agent's emblematic expression—graffito—opens a window into how the agent conceived of his or her identity at the moment of the graffito's creation.[17] In medieval English society, an individual constructed his or her 'social self' by selecting signs from a

[13] Holmqvist, 'Names and Prayers', p. 105.
[14] *Ibid*., p. 106.
[15] Holmqvist, 'The Creation of Selves', p. 303.
[16] Holmqvist, 'Names and Prayers', p. 106.
[17] *Ibid*.

multitude of medieval communal identities—religious, ethnic, political, familial, etc.—to form an amalgam of affiliations.[18] The 'social self,' as George H. Mead terms it, is a concept that bridges the paradigms of the individual versus the communal to locate subjectivity at the nexus of the two.[19] An individual's 'social self' is inherently situated within the communities he or she identifies with. Personal identities were dynamically negotiated and renegotiated within the various social milieus and imagined communities to which individuals belonged.[20] 'Social self' applies aptly to political communities in late medieval England. The walls of Carlisle Castle Keep function as a social space.[21] The carvers' choices to depict visual devices representative of identity on a relatively public-facing wall situates them as individuals within intersecting social groupings, all of which pictorially converge and concretize on the stone.

Visual symbols commonly accumulated an amalgamation of meanings in medieval England, which makes such forms of graffiti difficult to decipher. The complication this presents might be one of the reasons many scholars have avoided

[18] Matthew Ward, *The Livery Collar in Late Medieval England and Wales: Politics, Identity and Affinity* (Woodbridge, 2016), p. 85.
[19] George H. Mead, 'The Social Self', *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, 10.14 (1913), 374–80.
[20] David Gary Shaw, *Necessary Conjunctions: The Social Self in Medieval England* (London, 2005), pp. 1–20. An imagined community, as Benedict Anderson describes it, is a community in which individuals self-identify as part of a respective community despite never encountering the vast majority of the community's members. For an expanded discussion on imagined communities, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983; repr. 2006).
[21] For social spaces' roles in identity construction, see Richard C. Trexler, 'Introduction', in *Persons in Groups: Social Behaviour as Identity Formation in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, ed. Richard C. Trexler (Binghamton: State University of New York, 1985), pp. 3–16 (p. 4).

working with non-verbal graffiti.[22] Few written sources that survive explain the multitude of connotations a symbol acquired, in part because contemporary people did not need explanations to understand their own semiotics. One of the few instances in the written records, however, occurs in the late-fourteenth-century text, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, when the third-person narrator digresses on a tangent about the pentangle on Gawain's shield. It essentially represents the five wounds of Christ, the Star of Bethlehem, and the five virtues of knighthood.[23] The text provides a unique window into how one symbol, the pentangle, was perceived in late-fourteenth-century Lancashire and how it represents a multitude of meanings. This may be why visual images in graffiti are abundant throughout England. A carver could capture and express to viewers a plethora of information in a single image without being literate. Images in some ways were like a pictural shorthand for the dissemination of knowledge. In a coat of arms, for instance, an entire family's genealogy and political community can by expressed. The visual culture of late medieval England, while expedient for contemporaries, presents problems for modern scholars. Reading symbols etched into the walls of both sacred and secular buildings is a complex task that is not as intuitive for modern scholars as it likely was for people in the Middle Ages. Those who carved the graffiti could have done so in reference to one or more of

[22] This may also be attributed to the popular study of epigraphy, the study of inscriptions.
[23] Gerald Morgan, 'The Significance of the Pentangle Symbolism in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in *The Shaping of English Poetry: Essays on Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Langland, Chaucer and Spenser,* ed. Gerald Morgan (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 1–38; Peter Whiteford, 'Rereading Gawain's Five Wits', *Medium Ævum*, 73.2 (2001), 297–308; Gerald Morgan, 'The Perfection of the Pentangle and of Sir Gawain in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', in *Essays on Ricardian Literature: In Honour of J.A. Burrow,* ed. Alastair J. Minnis, Charlotte C. Morse and Thorlac Turville-Petre (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 252–75.

a symbol's meanings, making the reading of visual graffiti an unwieldy task at times. Applying Holmqvist's model of studying graffiti to image-based graffiti instead of textual graffiti is a productive turn considering the limited literacy amongst the lower rungs of society in late medieval England, despite the complications.

CARLISLE CASTLE

Carlisle Castle was 'a sphere of social action,' as Bob Meeson puts it, and the graffiti on it has the potential to enhance our understanding of how the medieval people who occupied the space perceived it and interacted with it as such.[24] Graffiti is a tangible piece of cognitive reception to the built space that attests to an interaction between the architectural work and its beholder. It is constitutively linked to the bounded interface it is carved into.[25] In this instance, that interface is Room 22 of Carlisle Castle's keep, and, in order to fully understand the implications of the graffiti, it is necessary to first assess the space as a whole. Located to the north of Carlisle Cathedral, Carlisle Castle stands on a rocky bluff. In its current condition, the castle comprises of a triangular enclosure with De Ireby's Tower, its main entrance, facing the city. The inner bailey, entered through the Captain's Tower, is divided off at the east corner by a wall and ditch. William Rufus first built a castle on Carlisle Castle's current location above the

[24] Bob Meeson, 'Ritual Marks and Graffiti: Curiosities or Meaningful Symbols?', *Vernacular Architecture*, 36 (2005), 41–8 (p. 41).
[25] Véronique Plesch, 'Beyond Art History: Graffiti on Frescoes', in *Understanding Graffiti*, ed. Troy Lovata and Elizabeth Olton (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2015), pp. 47–57 (p. 53).

conjunction of the Rivers Caldew, Eden, and Petteril in 1092, but Henry I reconstructed it in the twelfth century, forming the foundation of its present state.[26]

The keep of Carlisle Castle is notably one of the few surviving examples of a Romanesque great tower in England. John A.A. Goodall places Carlisle Castle's keep in the wider architectural context of medieval England, arguing that its architects drew upon Bamburgh Castle's keep as a prototype.[27] It is part of a group of northern great towers erected for the defense of the Anglo-Scottish Marches. Although initially twelfth-century in design, the keep is now a modified patchwork of architectures following multiple repairs due to siege damage, neglect, renovation, and a gunpowder magazine explosion in the late sixteenth century.[28] Like most Romanesque great towers, it is characterized by a rectangular plan consisting of four stories, each corresponding to a floor, topped by a parapet.[29] Internally, it is divided by a Tudor-period spine wall that segments each floor into two chambers.[30] On the second floor, where Room 22 is situated, the west wall is predominantly twelfth-century, while the east wall opposite was later remodeled. A single door provides access to the rectangular mural chamber, Room 22, with its vaulted ceiling and two adjacent cells. In the east of the chamber a small recess window is set into the stone, offering a view

[26] Scholars have also attributed it to King David of Scotland sometime between his seizure of Carlisle in 1135 and his death in 1153. The tower is definitively referenced in the Piper Rolls dated 1187. John A.A. Goodall, 'The Great Tower of Carlisle Castle', in *Carlisle and Cumbria: Roman and Medieval Architecture, Art and Archaeology*, ed. Mike McCarthy and David Weston (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), pp. 39–62 (pp. 41–2).
[27] *Ibid*.
[28] *Ibid*., p. 42.
[29] *Ibid*.
[30] *Ibid*., p. 45.

of the Inner Ward. Although Michael R. McCarthy has speculated that Room 22 may have been a chapel or oratory and English Heritage currently refers to it as a 'Prison Room', neither of these uses is attested in documentary evidence from the fifteenth century.[31] The keep did not necessarily constitute a coherent unit with a single determined function.[32]

How did the purpose of a built space shape the type of pictural responses to it? In the case of Carlisle Castle, the building's purpose dictated the subset of Cumberland society that had access to the keep and influenced what parts of their identities such individuals expressed within its walls. The north wall, the south wall, and the window embrasure on the east wall are covered in the corpus of graffiti that this article is concerned with, as are the wooden doors to the cells which are not addressed here. Interestingly, the graffiti tends to congregate around points of transition—windows and doors. Doors and windows were apertures of connection that likely provided the necessary light conditions to carve and an ideological framework surrounding who was sanctioned to occupy the space. Among the images represented are the heraldry, badges, and other para-heraldry of the Yorkist monarchy and local Marcher houses (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4). These images of political affiliation are placed beside and on top of religious images, military iconography, and

[31] Goodall, 'The Great Tower of Carlisle Castle', p. 46; Michael R. McCarthy, H.R.T. Summerson and R.G. Annis, *Carlisle Castle: A Survey and Documentary History* (Swindon: Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England, 1990), p. 169; Li Sou, 'Carlisle Castle, Cumbria: A Geospatial Survey of Historic Carvings and Graffiti', *Research Report Series*, 53 (2016), 1–47 (p. 4).
[32] Goodall, 'The Great Tower of Carlisle Castle', p. 41.

folkloric motifs. A diversity of identity emblems coexists in the keep as they did within the individuals who created them. Each carver contributed to a discourse occurring on the walls of Room 22, forming a conversation set in stone. The palimpsest of graffiti testifies to an intellectual economy that Juliet Fleming describes as 'predicated on a socially constituted subject and notions of authorship that were collective, aphoristic and inscriptive, rather than individualist, lyric and voice centered.'[33]

THE PROBLEM OF AUTHORSHIP

This begs the question: Who participated in the pictural discourse on Room 22's walls? Although the identities of the individual carvers are unknown, the answer can be narrowed by considering who worked in Carlisle Castle. Room 22 may have made up part of the keep's guardroom or was the guard's station outside of the prison cells, both of which were commonly located on the lower levels of English castle keeps. The second floor also housed a small Norman kitchen and possibly an oratory, which are often situated on the same floor as prison cells and guardrooms in English castle floor plans.[34] As the inner ward of the castle held separate buildings for the chamber, great hall, and noble residence by the fourteenth century, the keep may have been

[33] Fleming, 'Wounded Walls', p. 5.

[34] Andor Gomme and Alison Maguire, *Design and Plan in the Country House: From Castle Donjons to Palladian Boxes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 15; Anthony Emery, *Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales, 1300–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), vol. 1, p. 115. Although common, this floor plan was not always adhered to. Occasionally, the kitchen was on the same floor as the great hall. Norman J.G. Pounds, *The Medieval Castle in England and Wales: A Political and Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 274.

predominantly occupied by soldiers and those who serviced the keep as cooks or cleaners. Since many of the graffiti are bas-relief carvings, and the depth of incisions indicates the considerable amount of time expended on making them, it can be inferred that the carvers spent long periods of time in the keep.[35] This may be why scholars and antiquarians have long speculated that the graffiti at Carlisle Castle was made by prisoners who would have resided in the room for extended amounts of time. However, as mentioned, there is no external evidence to justify such an assumption. Medieval castles were both defensive structures and units of residence for the nobility. Consequently, a full complement of household staff and a body of armed personnel consisting of guards, watchmen, men-at-arms, longbowmen, etc., worked within the castle fortifications during wartime and a skeleton crew of such men during peacetime.[36] Those who were stationed on the second floor of the keep and worked there on a daily basis, whatever occupation they belonged to, would have had the continued access to Room 22 needed to carve in bas-relief on the walls. A castle's keep is the innermost and strongest portion of a fortification, and as such functioned as the last defense in siege warfare.[37] As Carlisle Castle was one of the foremost English defenses on the Anglo-Scottish Marches and the seat of the Lord Warden of the Marches, it was heavily staffed by military personnel during the Anglo-Scottish Wars

[35] Mark Gardiner, 'Graffiti and Their Use in Late Medieval England', in *Arts and Crafts in Medieval Rural Environment: 22nd-29th September 2005,* ed. Jan Klápšte and Petr Sommer (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 265–76 (p. 268).
[36] Lise Hull, *Understanding the Castle Ruins of England and Wales: How to Interpret the History and Meaning of Masonry and Earthworks* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2009), p. 131.
[37] Dan Spencer, *The Castle in the Wars of the Roses* (Philadelphia: Pen & Sword, 2020), p. 9.

from the early fourteenth to the late sixteenth centuries.[38] Given that all of the para-heraldic graffiti represents that of the former wardens, it is unlikely they were made by prisoners, as previously thought. Why would prisoners invest their time in representing the heraldry and para-heraldry of their captors? Instead, I propose that those belonging to the lower rungs of the military hierarchy who labored within the keep were responsible for the palimpsest of fifteenth-century carvings in Room 22, making them as they awaited the next siege or guarded prisoners in adjacent cells. [39]

Emblems of occupational identity in the form of soldiers dressed in armor occur across the walls of Room 22, buttressing the likelihood that the space was predominantly used by those invested in the military profession. Four examples of military-related graffiti occur in Room 22: a knight with one hand on his hip and another holding a raised sword, wearing a helm with its visor raised; two instances of a man's head in profile with his helmet visor raised; and two men in an altercation, the one on the right seizing his opponent by the girdle and holding a sword, the one on the left seizing his opponent by the hair (Figure 4).[40] Both visored helmets pictured on the northern side of the window embrasure are datable to the fifteenth century, temporally locating the graffiti.[41] The men who carved the graffiti may not have been

[38] See Michael Brown, 'The Scottish March Wardenships (c.1340–c.1480)', in *England and Scotland at War, c.1296-c.1513,* ed. Andy King and David Simpkin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 203–30; Steve Boardman, 'Highland Scots and Anglo-Scottish Warfare, c.1300–1513', in *England and Scotland at War, c.1296-c.1513,* ed. Andy King and David Simpkin (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 231–54.
[39] John Rickard, *The Castle Community: The Personnel of English and Welsh Castles, 1272–1422* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2002), pp. 147–58.
[40] Field, 'The Carvings in the Entrance', p. 14–16.
[41] Sou, 'Carlisle Castle, Cumbria', p. 5.

elevated enough to afford such armor. However, they cognitively internalized it as a symbol of their occupation, possibly because of its grandeur. It evidently interested the graffiti-carvers enough to repeat the imagery on the walls. Carlisle Castle was both a real space and an imagined space of occupational identity constructed around a culture of fighting for a lord.[42] Occupational pride was salient in late medieval society, and ties of military brotherhood bound members of a garrison or retinue together as part of an institutional identity.[43] While considering these men part of a 'professional army' may be anachronistic, they were a distinct group from a multitude of social backgrounds who made their living through military service. Their political importance rested in the fighting-related services they provided. As David Grummitt observes, these men shared the martial ideas and chivalric ideals of the aristocracy to an extent, and these cognitive identifications are martialized on the wall through representations of armored men.[44] Whether or not those employed at Carlisle Castle saw themselves as a brotherhood-in-arms might never be recovered. The graffiti in Room 22 indicates that they at the least identified with images relating to military occupations. Their notions of service and how they conceived of themselves within

[42] Christina M. Fitzgerald considers the imagined space of guild-based identities in Christina M. Fitzgerald, *The Drama of Masculinity and Medieval English Guild Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 175.

[43] Chronicles dating to the Hundred Years' War often refer to knights, esquires, men-at-arms, etc., as companions in arms, revealing a form of martial fraternal kinship. Occasionally, verbal oaths or formal documents were drawn up to attest to such covenants. Maurice Keen, 'Brotherhood-in-arms, Brothers-in arms', *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Medieval Warfare and Military Technology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), vol. 1, p. 257; Maurice Keen, 'Brotherhood-in-Arms', *Nobles Knights and Men-at-Arms in the Middle Ages,* ed. (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), pp. 43–62.

[44] David Grummitt, *The Calais Garrison: War and Military Service in England, 1436–1558* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), p. 92–3.

the wider institutions they served were predicated upon idealized imagery of warfare that shaped how they cognitively constructed their professional and political identities.

Carlisle Castle's fifteenth-century graffiti was created at a time when intense civil conflicts were occurring across England and on the Northern Marches, which those within the castle would have been implicated in to some degree. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the historical context within which the individuals who carved the graffiti negotiated their identities. Throughout the Hundred Years' War, the Anglo-Scottish border functioned as a second theater of warfare within the British Isles. The Plantagenet kings had long fought to secure overlordship in Scotland, making a Franco-Scottish alliance beneficial for the House of Stewart, which inherited the Scottish throne in 1371 after David II died childless.[45] Cross-border raids occurred throughout the conflict, and, as one of the dominant defensive structures on the English side of the border, Carlisle Castle saw its fair share of action.[46] It was effectively the English headquarters of the Western Marches. Late medieval England was also plagued by petty feuds amongst its nobility. The notorious Percy-Neville feud in the north troubled Henry VI enough that on July 2nd 1453 he dissolved Parliament to travel north and confront his quarrelsome vassals.[47] The city also saw violence break out during the English civil wars between the Yorkists and

[45] See Steve Boardman, 'Highland Scots', pp. 231–54.
[46] Andy King and Claire Etty, *England and Scotland 1286–1603* (London: Palgrave, 2016), pp. 35, 100.
[47] John Sadler, *Border Fury: England and Scotland at War, 1296–1568* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2005), p. 339.

Lancastrians, popularly dubbed the Wars of the Roses.[48] Ultimately, the petty feuds and civil wars of the fifteenth century shaped the heraldic and para-heraldic graffiti carved into Carlisle Castle's walls.

In 1461, the Scots besieged Carlisle, constituting one of the bloodiest episodes in the Wars of the Roses. The siege likely left an impression on the castle's residents because of its brutality. Combined Scottish-Lancastrian forces led by Richard Salkeld succeeded in taking the castle that year.[49] However, the siege was broken by the Yorkist army led by John Neville, Lord Montagu, the younger brother of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, the Kingmaker.[50] John Neville's father and brother both held the position of Lord Warden of the Marches consecutively from 1420 until 1469. When Henry VI briefly deposed Edward IV from 1470 to 1471, the castle's allegiances shifted again to the Lancastrians but only for a brief time. Upon retaking the throne, Edward IV appointed his brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester (later Richard III), as Lord Warden of the Marches. In 1482, Edward IV created a palatinate for his brother consisting of Westmorland and Cumberland, which Richard held throughout his subsequent kingship until his death at the Battle of Bosworth Field in 1485.[51]

[48] Henry Summerson, *Medieval Carlisle: The City and the Border from the Late Eleventh to the Mid-Sixteenth Century* (Kendal: The Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, 1993), vol. 2, pp. 391-458.
[49] John Sadler, *The Red Rose and the White: The Wars of the Roses, 1453–1487* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), p. 183; A.J. Pollard, *The North of England in the Age of Richard III* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. 90.
[50] Sadler, *Border Fury*, pp. 350–1.
[51] Charles Ross, *Richard III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 25.

As the castle changed hands, the hands that carved graffiti into its walls likely also changed or at least changed allegiances. Under Henry VII, Henry Percy, fourth Earl of Northumberland, acted as Warden of the Western March before the citizens of York assassinated him in 1489, and Thomas Dacre, second Baron Dacre, took his place.[52] Conflict on the Anglo-Scottish border persisted throughout Henry VII's reign, culminating in James IV of Scotland's 1496 invasion in support of Perkin Warbeck, a pretender to the English throne.[53] In only a century, Carlisle Castle had seen its fair share of battle as a key fortress in England's ever shifting political landscape. The city's residents and those employed in the castle likely adapted their political identities to correspond with that of their overlord, complicating how individuals negotiated their dynamic multitude of identities.

THE POLITICS OF PARA-HERALDRY

Most emblematic graffiti in Room 22 represents the networks of political communities constructed around the marcher houses of Percy, Dacre, Greystoke, Ros, and Clifford.[54] Heraldry was a popular subject in graffiti across Western Europe during

[52] Michael A. Hicks, 'Dynastic Change and Northern Society: The Career of the Fourth Earl of Northumberland, 1470–1489', *Northern History: A Review of the History of the North of England and the Border*, 14 (1978), 78–107.

[53] David Dunlop, 'The "Masked Comedian": Perkin Warbeck's Adventures in Scotland and England from 1495-1497', *Scottish Historical Review*, 70.2 (1990), 97–128.

[54] The House of Percy held the earldom of Northumberland. The House of Dacre in the north had its seat at Naworth Castle in Cumbria and Gilsland in Cumberland. The House of Greystoke held the title of Baron Greystoke and had its seat at Greystoke Castle in Cumberland. The Ros family held the barony of Ros. Its estates were primarily in the east (Lincolnshire) and north of England, particularly eastern Yorkshire.

the late Middle Ages. This phenomenon is elucidated in the Dominican theologian Felix Fabri's travel manual on the sites and customs of the Holy Land, when he records the rules dictated to him by his guide:

> Pilgrims of noble birth must not deface walls by drawing their coats-of-arms thereon, or by writing their names, or by fixing upon the walls papers on which their arms are painted, or by scratching columns and marble slabs, or boring holes in them with iron tools, to make marks of their having visited them; for such conduct gives great offence to the Saracens.[55]

Strikingly, the rule is directed solely at the nobility. However, as the walls of Carlisle Castle attest, those outside of the nobility also deployed heraldry, even if it was not their own. In carving the heraldry and para-heraldry of their lords, these people emulated the nobility. Creating heraldic graffiti may have been a way for those associated with the partisan politics of England's nobility to co-opt the signs of their lords, either with or without express permission, and further integrate themselves into an extended network of affiliations. As a separate residential tower, now known as Queen Mary's Tower, was constructed to house the lord's accommodations in 1308, those who carved heraldry and para-heraldic badges in Room 22 were likely not members of the noble houses that assumed the wardenship but were peripherally affiliated with them through maintenance. Room 22's heraldic and para-heraldic

[55] Felix Fabri, *The Wanderings of Felix Fabri 1484 A.D.,* trans. Aubrey Stewart (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1896) vol. 1, p. 249–50.

graffiti represent an internalization of the practice of livery-giving in England, which indicates that such relationships were more than purely an exchange of resources between a lord and his retainer. Bastard feudalism was a means for the nobility to form affinities of retainers who supported them in return for money and the lord's influence.[56] An affiliation created through maintenance or retaining had the potential to become part of a retainer's identity, influencing cognitive expressions of the self.

Heraldry and para-heraldry formed a visual language that was integral to the political culture of late medieval England. Para-heraldry in the form of badges would have been particularly prevalent during the fifteenth century, and these types of images likely inspired those on the walls of Room 22. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how the carvers encountered these badges and what badges meant in late medieval English society to understand what they represented to the carvers. Livery badges were deployed as part of tangible expressions of lordship among other types of livery—robes, collars, etc. In gifting livery to their followers, lords materialized relationships formed around maintenance and retaining.[57] As K.B. McFarlane observes, England was 'full of patrons seeking clients and clients in need of patronage,' forming reciprocal networks of relationships.[58] Late medieval English livery expanded from the practice of distributing livery robes, which originated in the

[56] For more on maintenance see, Jonathan Rose, *Maintenance in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[57] Jackson W. Armstrong, *England's Northern Frontier: Conflict and Local Society in the Fifteenth-Century Scottish Marches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 120.
[58] K.B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Late Medieval England: The Ford Lectures of 1953 and Related Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 113.

twelfth century, to other forms of livery in the late Middle Ages.[59] Although these livery devices were part of the same phenomenon, legislation treated the continuum of livery devices—livery *chaperons* (hats), livery cloth, and livery *signes* (badges)—distinctly.[60] Livery collars were the most prestigious form of livery, while badges were more pervasive, especially among the lower *strata* of those who received livery. The *Westminster Chronicle* (1381-1394) locates the conception of livery badges in the first year of Edward III's reign, claiming 'all the liveries called "badges", as well of our lord the king as of other lords, of which the use has begun since the first year of the noble king Edward the Third.'[61] By the end of Edward III's reign, the rampant abuse of livery sparked concern amongst Parliament.

The government never sought to abolish livery due to how engrained it had become in English society, but it did attempt to restrict it as a means of mitigating its exploitation in feuds like the Percy-Neville feud.[62] The 1380s marked a shift in attitudes towards liveries, particularly livery *signes*. In 1384, the Commons voiced its concern regarding the practice of distributing livery *signes* to form 'petty tyrannies' in localities.[63] Four years later, the Commons demanded the abolition of livery *signes,* but the House of Lords, presided over by those who had their own stakes in the

[59] Ward, *The Livery Collar,* p. 21.
[60] Nigel Saul, 'The Commons and the Abolition of Badges', *Parliamentary History*, 9.2 (1990), 302–15 (p. 302).
[61] 'Touz lez liverees appellez signes si bien de nostre seignur le roy come dautres seignurs comencez usez puis le primer an del noble roy Edward tierce'. *The Westminster Chronicle 1381–1394,* ed. and trans. Leonard Charles Hector and Barbara F. Harvey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 356–7.
[62] McKelvie, *Bastard Feudalism,* p. 31–2.
[63] Saul, 'The Commons and the Abolition of Badges', p. 302.

distribution of livery *signes*, rejected this petition. Still, the clarion call for livery reforms did not fall silent. In 1390, Richard II issued ordinances limiting the right to grant 'liveries of company' to dukes, earls, barons, and bannerets, as well as restricting the recipients to knights, esquires, and servants of the household retained for life.[64] Early fifteenth-century legislation further narrowed the segment of nobility who could grant livery to the royal family:

> That all types of liveries and badges should be utterly abolished except that all the king's sons, dukes, earls, barons and bannerets should be able to wear the livery of the collar of our lord the king, both in his absence and in his presence. And that certain other knights and squires may wear it solely in the presence of the king and not in his absence. [65]

Legally, after 1401, the nobility could only distribute personal livery to their respective households. However, in practice, those inclined to distribute livery beyond their households were not frequently inhibited from doing so, as the sumptuary laws related to livery lacked an efficient court to enforce them. They were only sporadically enforced by either the King's Bench or *oyer et terminer* commissions.[66]

[64] Saul, 'The Commons and the Abolition of Badges', 302–3; Ward, *The Livery Collar,* p. 54.
[65] 'Qe toutz maneres liveres et signes soient de tout oustez, exceptz qe toutz les fitz du roy, ducs, contes, barons, baronettes, puissent user la livere nostre seignur le roy de la coler, sibien en sa absence come en sa presence. Et qe tieuz autres chivalers et esquiers les puissent user soulement en presence du roy, et nient en absence'. 'Henry IV: January 1401', in *Parliament Rolls of Medieval England,* ed. Christ Given-Wilson et al. (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), p. 110.
[66] McKelvie, *Bastard Feudalism*, p. 81–105.

However, the ongoing civil conflict, when affinities posed substantial threats throughout the kingdom, provoked action from the Yorkist dynasty.[67] In relation to the Anglo-Scottish Marches, at the beginning of Edward IV's reign in 1461, he made an exception to the laws restricting livery distribution for the Lord Warden of the Marches. Two prominent Lord Wardens of the Marches, Richard Neville, Earl of Salisbury, and Henry Percy, second Earl of Northumberland, spent an estimated twenty-five and thirty-three percent of their income respectively on retaining, far exceeding the national average of ten per cent.[68] Later in his reign, in 1468, Edward IV sought to further curtail the distribution of livery radically, passing the 1468 statute on livery that upheld the former statutes and stipulated that only persons licensed by the king to retain men could give livery.[69] The Lord Warden of the Marches preserved the ability to grant livery under this statute through the king's licencing. There were no cases of illegal livery pursued in Cumbria between 1390 and 1520.[70] Infractions may have occurred, but legal bodies responsible for enforcing legislation were not doing so. On 15th February 1498, Henry VII issued a letter to the mayor and people of Carlisle declaring that the livery statutes should be upheld in the city, which was threatened by a Scottish invasion, suggesting that the statutes were not being obeyed by the late-

[67] McKelvie, *Bastard Feudalism*, p. 203.
[68] Armstrong, *England's Northern Frontier*, p. 120.
[69] Jonathan Rose, *Maintenance in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 351; M.A. Hicks, 'The 1468 Statute of Livery', *Historical Research* 64 (1991), 15–28; Dominic Luckett, 'Crown Office and Licensed Retinues in the Reign of Henry VII', in *Rulers and Ruled in Late Medieval England: Essays Presented to Gerald Harriss*, ed. Rowena Archer and Simon Walker (London: Hambledon Press, 1995), pp. 223–38.
[70] McKelvie, *Bastard Feudalism*, p. 210.

fifteenth century.[71] Livery *signes* were probably pervasive throughout the city, and especially concentrated within the walls of Carlisle Castle.

Those who were employed at and who occupied Carlisle Castle would have encountered para-heraldry on badges as well as their lord's coats of arms regularly. If those who carved the graffiti into the walls of Room 22 did not own a livery badge themselves, then they likely knew and commonly saw those who did. Doling out badges to retinues was common, the most prominent example being Richard II's granting of livery badges to the Cheshire archers—yeomen archers from the Macclesfield Hundred who served as the king's bodyguards.[72] Coats of arms and images of other such devices would have been strewn about the castle, hanging from banners and ornamenting the lord's accoutrement. It is, therefore, probable that when creating their graffiti, the carvers did not need to refer to images, these images were already imprinted into their minds from daily contact. Such devices were part of their visual environment in the castle and part of their identity through affiliations with the Lord Warden of the Marches, whom the carvers worked under in some capacity. In taking the time to inscribe their lords' badges and coats of arms on the walls, those serving in Room 22 formed emblematic expressions of their political identities.

[71] Gordon McKelvie, 'Henry VII's Letter to Carlisle in 1498: His Concerns about Retaining in a Border Fortress', *Northern History,* 54.2 (2017), 149–66.

[72] *Richard the Redeless and Mum and the Sothsegger,* ed. James Dean (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2000), Passus Secundus, ll. 1–192; Adam Usk, *Chronicle of Adam Usk, 1377–1421,* ed. Chris Given-Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 48–9. James L. Gillespie, 'Richard II's Cheshire Archers', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 125 (1975), 1–39.

Coats of arms and livery badges accrued a multitude of meanings that grafted onto a single image. They could invoke an entire family's lineage as well as the vertical and horizontal networks of its associated political community. Badges or livery *signes*, as phenomenon in themselves, acquired meaning from both the agency of the distributer and the wearer, meaning which did not always align because of the varying intentions of the agents.[73] Since the issue of livery was prominent in English political culture, the graffiti artists of Room 22 probably understood the semiotics of the signs they chose to depict to some degree and created a politically oriented dialogue on the walls of the chamber by deploying them. This pictural discourse was influenced and likely ignited by the highly politicized context of the castle, which was itself a zone for politics to play out. Each badge and coat of arms must be read in the context of the others that surrounded it. Those who chose to place a badge or coat of arms they associated with on the wall were responding to what was already placed on the wall by echoing the established conventions of expression. This is not to imply that various forms of heraldic identity did not compete with one another.

IDENTITIES OF ALLEGIANCES

Although difficult to date, many of the graffiti could have been made during feuds such as the Neville-Neville feud in the north and the Percy-Neville feud. Such feuds

[73] Jennifer M. Lee, '"Reckless Effrontery": Conflict and the Abuse of Badges in Late Medieval England', *Medieval Journal*, 8.1 (2018), 109–36 (p. 116).

were prevalent in Carlisle and throughout Cumberland, as demonstrated by the complaint of Thomas de la More, sheriff of Cumberland, to Henry VI against Thomas Percy amid the Percy-Neville feud.[74] When the Neville family assumed the wardenship of the West Marches in 1399, they were far from the dominant power in the North. The Percy and Clifford families were substantial landowners who formed their own powerful hegemonies in the region.[75] Interestingly, no evidence of Neville family affiliations occur on the walls of the castle, probably because, as Peter Booth observes, the Neville retinue in Cumberland was 'thin on the ground'[76] and there is no surviving evidence that the Neville family distributed livery in the north. In contrast, during January 1404, Henry IV received a report that Percy of Atholl and Clifford were distributing Percy livery badges.[77] The Nevilles may have never established a visual emblem of affiliation widely in Cumbria during the fifteenth century, leading to an absence of representation in Room 22. Alternatively, those who supported the Percy family and their allies may have defaced and eradicated any symbols of the Neville family from Room 22 as an act of contempt. The number of para-heraldic emblems on the walls of the keep attest to how the marcher houses

[74] Peter Booth, 'Men Behaving Badly? The West March Towards Scotland and the Percy-Neville Feud', in *Authority and Subversion,* ed. Linda Clark (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 95–116, (p. 95).
[75] The pattern of landholding on the West Marches differed from other parts of England. See Booth, 'Men Behaving Badly?', pp. 97–8.
[76] *Ibid*., p. 98
[77] Andy King, '"They have the Hertes of the People of the North": Northumberland, the Percies and Henry IV, 1399–1408', in *Henry IV: The Establishment of the Regime, 1399-1406,* ed. Gwilym Dodd and Douglas Biggs (York: York Medieval Press, 2003), pp. 139–60, (p. 148); *Royal and Historical Letters During the Reign of Henry the Fourth, King of England and of France, and Lord of Ireland,* ed. Francis Charles Hingeston (London: Public Records Office, 1860) vol. 1, pp. 206–7.

manufactured and disseminated images of political identity to establish visual means of representing affiliations. The badges depicted in Carlisle Castle are remnants of the cognitive receptions of marketing campaigns that were successful enough for those in the lower strata of political communities to hold stock in.

Figure 2: Rose, crescent enclosing a fetterlock, impalement coat of arms of Roos dexter and Percy sinister.

In taking the extensive time to carve these images into the stone blocks without being commissioned to do so, the carvers testify to the success of the marcher houses' political community-building projects. Neither strictly formalized nor patronized, graffiti carving as a practice was a personalized act of the creator shaped in part by their cognitions. Although it is possible that the emblematic graffiti only represent

doodles, why would those employed within the keep then choose to represent them in such great number when they could have replicated something of greater interest, like the comparatively few nude women also depicted on the walls or the folkloric motifs? It is more likely that the hands that inscribed images into Carlisle Castle's stone belonged to people who identified with what they created and found such identities important enough to take the time to express. The men who were serving in the keep were bound together by a dominant commonality: they all worked in a military occupation serving a single lord. This bond of horizontal affiliation could be succinctly represented in the badge of the incumbent Lord Warden of the Marches. While the heraldic and para-heraldic images may only represent facets of the carvers' personal identities, they represent facets that had value in the specific architectural and functional context of the room. In selecting their subjects, the graffiti artists considered what emblems of their 'selves' were worth expressing in the politically charged context of the castle. Together they created visual communities on the walls of Room 22, ensuring that their affiliations were represented among many others, if not dominant. The graffiti provides valuable evidence that suggests the lower strata of those employed to fight identified with and internalized the material culture of the political communities they belonged to. Their membership in these communities was not superficial, just as the bas-relief carvings are far from superficial scratches into stone.

Figure 3: The boar of Richard III

The walls of Room 22 also memorialize responses to fifteenth-century kingdom-wide internal conflict over the inheritance of the English throne. As the wardenship was held by Richard, Duke of Gloucester, the future Richard III, it is unsurprising that Yorkist graffiti appears in the castle. His aforementioned personal badge, the boar passant, is exhibited on the southern wall (Figure 3). The emblem that the graffito depicts is similar to the examples of Richard III's livery badges that survive, one of which found at Chiddingly is held by the British Museum. Another example hangs from the suns-and-roses Yorkist livery collar on the alabaster tomb effigy of Sir Ralph Fitzherbert in St Mary and St Barlock's Church, Norbury.[78] The four-petalled roses are

[78] Robert W. Jones, 'A Silver Boar on Bosworth Field: The Significance of the Livery Badge on the Medieval Battlefield', *The Coat of Arms: The Journal of the Heraldry Society*, 11 (2015), 25–34.

more ambiguous because of the medium's lack of colour (Figure 2 and 4). While it could represent a Lancastrian rose, which did not become widely used until Henry VII's reign, it more likely represents the Yorkist rose due to the castle's ties with Richard III.[79] In deploying such devices, the graffiti-carvers were expressing their affiliations with a faction in the conflict. In their own micro-level way, they were engaging in and with a political community that spanned far beyond the limits of the Anglo-Scottish marches. The graffiti are what remains of their voices as they participated in this discourse of civil unrest across England. Far from disinterested mercenaries, those who staffed Carlisle Castle's defences were concerned with the political landscape of their kingdom and held stakes in it. The Lancastrian-Yorkist conflict amassed its own visual devices—emblems which even the lower strata of the military selected from to form their personal identities. Those who populated Room 22 placed enough stock in the visual culture of the conflict to adopt select devices as emblems of their own identities. The sign of Yorkist allegiance was not simply a permutation of the 'I was here' complex, it was territorial.[80] In inscribing these images into the walls of the castle, they demarcated the fortification as a Yorkist space, claiming it for their own political community.

[79] John Ashdown-Hill, 'The Red Rose of Lancaster', *The Ricardian*, 10.133 (1996), 406–20; Virginia Henderson, 'Retrieving the "Crown in the Hawthorn Bush": The Origins of the Badges of Henry VII', in *Traditions and Transformations in Late Medieval England,* ed. Douglas Biggs, Sharon Michalove and Compton Reeves (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 237–59.

[80] For a discussion of the "I was here" phenomenon in Early Modern England see Scott L. Newstok, *Quoting Death in Early Modern England: The Poetics of Epitaphs Beyond the Tomb* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 43.

Figure 4: Crescent enclosing a fetterlock, rose, Fifteenth-century soldier, fleur-de-lis, escallop, deer

The Carlisle Castle graffiti artists were members of overlapping and circumscribed political communities, not just a single one belonging to a local marcher family or a faction of the royal line. In representing the Yorkist rose and fleur-de-lis, they engaged with inter-kingdom political discourses prevalent during the fifteenth century. It is striking that those who created the graffiti chose to represent the fleur-de-lis instead of the arms of Plantagenet—gules, three lions passant guardant in pale or armed and langued azure—or the more prevalent variant first adopted by Henry IV consisting of the Plantagenet coat of arms quartered with those of France, the three fleurs-de-lis on a blue field. The fleur-de-lis alone may signify that the carver(s) were interested specifically in the English king's claim to the French crown by way of Edward III's mother, Isabella of France. They were invested in the ongoing Hundred Years' War

with France, and some of those employed in Room 22 may have even fought in France on a military campaign. In a way, the fleur-de-lis is an expression of ownership, a territorial claim to France that those belonging to the lower strata of the military occupation believed in, even if Edward III had only initially deployed such claims as propaganda to regain Gascony.[81] During the fifteenth century, the English king's claim to France was part of a discourse that spanned the kingdom and was even engaged in by those below the ruling rungs of society. By the end of the fourteenth century, the Hundred Years' War was an English cause intertwined with the kingdom-wide political community, not just the House of Plantagenet, even if it relied on the house's bloodline. As materialized in the Carlisle Castle graffiti, England's claim to France may have become integrated into the cognitively constructed militant identity of those who fought for or in England.

COMMUNITIES SET IN STONE

Badges were not simply exploited by yeomen and those in military occupations for personal gain: many of these people identified with such symbols. Livery badges had cognitive resonances beyond the nobility and gentry. Those who fought or were otherwise employed in highly political spaces like Carlisle Castle felt that their identities were connected to the political networks they were part of. The images that

[81] The struggle over Gascony was not the only cause of the Hundred Years' War, but it provided impetus for the conflict to break out. David Green, *The Hundred Years War: A People's History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 10.

the Room 22 graffiti-carvers chose to represent made a cognitive impression on them. In creating politically oriented graffiti in the form of heraldry or para-heraldry, those within the lower strata of military occupations outside of the nobility and gentry engaged with political discourses occurring in England at the time. They formed their own voices and mediated between their overlapping political communities to create a conversation in stone which had temporal longevity. Deeply incised into the walls in bas-relief, the graffiti was intended to be a permanent form of expressing affiliations that transformed the room into a space for political discussion. Reading the process of graffitiing backwards from the graffito to the physical practice of carving, to the cognitive process of doing so, exposes how the carvers of Carlisle Castle may have conceived of their own identities situated in the space of Room 22 through what they selected to express.

The practice of creating expressions of identity through carving into stone was a preestablished practice, but it is the choice in what to portray that made them cognitive expressions, which expose what facets of the 'self' mattered to carvers in the moment of creation. Through the physical practice of carving, carvers appropriated the space of Room 22 as an extension of their identities in material form. As agents, the graffiti artists memorialized their own identities and the identities of their communities. Instead of incising symbols that represented the 'I was here' complex, they selected ones that represented a 'we were here' complex, indicating the value of communities in the formation of medieval personal identities. The graffiti on the walls of Room 22 demonstrate how Holmqvist's model can be extended to visual imagery

due to the highly pictural nature of identity devices in late medieval England. As a canvas, Room 22 influenced what facets of their identities the graffiti artists portrayed. Its location in a castle on the Anglo-Scottish marches coupled with the conflicts in the region brought political identities to the forefront of popular discourses, which is likely why political images are so prevalent.

The graffiti of Room 22 reveal a glimpse into the past of how individuals who occupied the space embodied it and imagined it. These individuals engaged with the space as well as its political atmosphere by inscribing their identities onto it, claiming a segment of it as their own and expressing a sense of belonging. Room 22 preserves its history as an unauthorized archive of contact with its physical features. 'Unauthorized' does not necessarily mean unapproved in this sense, only unmediated. The creating agents are the only hands involved in forming the product, and the collection of the assemblage is not curated by anyone external of the creating agents. Patron, designer, and artisan collapsed into a single agent, constituting an immediacy absent in other forms such as manuscript production, architecture design, or wall painting. Each creating agent orchestrates relationships by intervening in and rearranging the palimpsest of compositions. Resultantly, the room has a pneumonic memory constituted by those who occupied it. It preserves their political, occupational, religious, and other social identities through material expressions. The subject matter that carvers selected demonstrates how the lower strata of those in military occupations interpreted their macro- and micro-environments—the macro being the political landscape and the micro being a single room in the castle keep. The

graffiti of Carlisle Castle Room 22 demonstrates that an often-ignored segment of the English military institution was invested in local conflicts, feuds, kingdom-wide crises, and England's claim to France beyond simply being employed to fight in them. Although unconventional, graffiti, especially image-based graffiti, deserves to be read as a means of reconstructing the lives, interests, and perceptions of those beyond the nobility.