Honors Program

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The Brave:
A Graphic Novel

Creative Writing

02 May 2014
The Brave: A Graphic Novel

AN UNDERGRADUATE HONORS THESIS

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However overlooked and unappreciated due to its prevalence in all disciplines, the ability to read is the oft-neglected foundation of all of academia. Without the skills to decipher the written word, one would be destined to constantly reinvent the wheel; this process would cast man back into a dark age, and, in a less romanticized example, in our modern world, those who cannot read or cannot read well will find their future's dimmer than their literate counterparts.

It is a desire to encourage the propagation of literacy that drew me to the efforts of Will Weaver. Noticing the disparaging levels of literacy within the demographic of young, male readers, Will Weaver began a project to create a novel that would appeal to this audience. If critical acclaim is any measure of success, than Weaver achieved his goal, but, even if the novels written by Weaver did not end up in the hands of every young boy, one can claim the project was something of a success, for it inspired a reader to become a writer. This reader is now a writer with a purpose: to create a text that is approachable to young, male readers, and, with a little luck, it will encourage further endeavors into reading by this demographic.

Luckily, the audience that needs to be addressed is no more than nine years apart from me in age, and, even as I become more distanced from this audience by measures of time, I'll always have an appreciation for the literature that is popular within the group. Thinking back to the ages of twelve to eighteen years old, a pattern existed in reading material: if it was on television, in a video game or at the movie theater, it was something my peers were reading about. This brings me to the phenomenon known as 300. 300 was originally a graphic novel written and drawn by Frank Miller and colored by Lynn Varley. The graphic novel was published by Dark Horse, and it received much critical praise for its compelling story and artwork but what happened next launched an industry.

300 was picked up by Warner Brothers Studios and adapted as an action film. The film was a commercial and critical success, but, more compelling, is that the film created a demand for graphic
novels that could be easily converted into films.

Graphic novels and comic books being adapted as motion pictures was not a new concept; Marvel Comics and its rival DC have been producing comic book film adaptations for several decades, but the success of 300 created a fervor for adaptable comic material. This brought graphic novels into the limelight.

A graphic novel is similar to a comic, in that it is a story driven by illustrations, but a graphic novel differs in several ways; a graphic novel will, like a novel, come to a conclusion. Most comic books progress as television series' do: weekly or monthly, a new installment is released to continue the tale. To accomplish a conclusion, a graphic novel is usually longer in page length and often features more dialogue, narration and text than a comic book.

300 differed from its peers, for the story was a work of historical fiction. Most graphic novels, such as Miller's Sin City or Alan Moore's Watchmen and V for Vendetta are not retellings of any specific historical event. 300 was; it was based on the Battle of Thermopylae. The 2500 year old battle was a favorite of Frank Miller, and he created his 300 as a homage, and, in doing so, Miller did something with the novel that others did not-- and could not; he cited a list of recommendations for a reader to continue learning about the topic.

This addition to the last page of his novel seems trivial, but it is equivalent to a motion picture ending with a list of texts that a movie-goer could pursue to learn more about the basis of the film. It is this addition that inspired me to create a graphic novel based on an historical event.

My choice of subject was only limited by the amount of recorded events throughout time, so it was not an easy decision. Ultimately, to correct the wrongs committed by Hollywood, I've found the focal point of my efforts: the Wars of Scottish Independence.

Much as Frank Miller was fascinated with the Battle of Thermopylae, I find myself enthralled
with the First War of Scottish Independence. Apart from my interest, the Wars of Scottish Independence are often overlooked in favor of events that are larger in scale and feature more participants than two halves of one island; this is hardly a reason to ignore this historical event, for the conclusion of the war set a course for the British Isles to be united.

Furthermore, the events of the first war have only been creatively recreated by the director Mel Gibson. Gibson's *Braveheart* was a commercial and critical success; it won five Academy awards and was nominated for five more. More significant is that in 2009 the film won an award from *The Times*: it placed second on a list that rated a film's historical inaccuracy. The inaccuracy of the film is best summarized by historian Sharon Krossa as "... a film about Colonial America showing the colonial men wearing 20th century business suits, but with the jackets worn back-to-front instead of the right way around."

Just as any historian would be passionately fighting to correct a blunder of the magnitude Krossa cited, I found myself dedicated to the cause of portraying the events of the First War of Scottish Independence accurately. What Hollywood did to such a monumental event in a nation's history, I'll be doing my best to correct.

To meet this end, I've decided upon the form of a graphic novel. This short, illustration-driven story will detail the events of the First War of Scottish Independence beginning with the events that lead up to open revolt in 1297 and ending in the crowning of Robert the Bruce in 1306. To keep the text approachable to the targeted demographic, it will be composed of fewer than 200 pages, and these pages will be separated into a total of four chapters. Each chapter will detail the events of the War from the perspective of a different individual.

The choice of who to follow throughout these nine years of history was not an easy one. Depending on allegiance, the revolt of the Scots could have been interpreted as treason, but it may also
have been seen as justice. This dilemma, accompanied with the problem of finding a sufficient amount of information about specific historical figures has necessitated the creation of four characters.

The first will be a fictional Scottish Lowland noble. This individual will tell the story from the perspective of a Scotsman who was not only surviving during the English rule, but beginning to stabilize and thrive. The second character will be a Scottish Highland peasant. This character has endured the full brunt of English oppression; be it his culture being stripped from him, his forced removal from his ancestral land or his recent *de jure* designation as a second-class citizen, he has suffered, and he will be quick to raise arms against his English enemies.

To voice the perspective of the English, there will be a petty English noble who rides amongst the cavalry sent north to quell the Scottish rabble. To complete the picture, a French mercenary will also be featured in the graphic novel. His is the tale of a man interested in little more than pay, and his defection from one camp to another will make the relativity of a righteous conflict apparent.

The work will begin from the perspective of the Lowland noble. With the death of King Alexander the III and the young Queen Margaret still on the tips of everyone's tongues, the Scottish nobles have sought refuge in the English monarch King Edward I. The nobles' plea is for Edward to restore order, but Edward seizes the opportunity, and with his entire army in tow, he demands the title Lord Paramount of Scotland. Without a ruler or army to defend itself, Scotland agrees to be conquered. To secure his rule, King Edward I demands that all citizens of Scotland swear their fealty to their new leader, all Royal castles be emptied of their garrison and all government servants resign their post until reinstated by Edward.

It is at this point that more is learned of the faceless figure the reader has been following about through these events. The hardships his family have endured to stay neutral in the constant power-struggles between the Scottish nobles that support the English and the nobles that desire a sovereign
Scotland are learned. He knows he and his house can no longer remain silent with talk of a bloody revolution heard daily, so his conflict is not found on the battlefield; it is the choice of aligning his family's future to a faction. The correct decisions would grant him the mobility to ascend from the rabble of petty nobility, but one wrong move and he and his entire house could find themselves awarded all the mobility of the hangman's noose.

Midway between the events of the Lowland noble's story, the trials of the Highlander are first observed. Destined to forever struggle despite monarch after monarch, this grizzled, tried veteran of previous conflicts wants nothing more than to grow old on his family's land. Being denied this dream by yet another English king is too much to bear, and no sooner than the man resolves to make a stand against the English army that is rumored to be advancing, a call to arms is issued to all loyal Scotsmen. He knows his blood will be spilt, but that blood will be of a free man.

Segueing to the very English army that the Highlander readies to meet, there is the English noble. He is a seasoned hobilier, and, as such, he has often trampled the Scottish rabble that dare to raid English lands under hoof. He knows his cause to be just; King Edward is a goodly ruler, and the expanded reach of his King's rule will only better the Scots. He rides now to Stirling, on the River Forth, to meet the Scottish enemy and to an assured, resounding English victory.

It is the hatred of a common enemy that brought the French and Scottish together so many times. The French-born mercenary knows this, but he also knows the English to pay better. He marches alongside the English forces en route to Stirling, but he can't help but ponder at the cold, sinking feeling that slows his every step as he draws closer to the battleground.

It is often said that one should never go about writing with the story's end in mind, but the conclusion of every exchange throughout this conflict is documented; however, the fate of each character is mine to determine, and since I know not the end of each character's tale, it will be omitted
until the work is completed.

The goals of this project are many. Not only do I want to correct the wrongs committed by Gibson’s portrayal of the events, I also want to create a work that appeals to the majority of young, male readers. I would say these are lofty goals, but despite the amount of myself that I will undoubtedly pour into this project, I know two things: my passion for sharing in the experiences of young minds is second to none. For me, sharing in these experiences is often manifested in teaching, so I find myself creating a work of historical fiction that will not only entertain but educate. This brings me to the work’s subject matter: Scotland. This is not just any period in the nation’s history, it was one of its darkest hours, and it was the hour that the nation pulled itself up and defended its liberty and freedom to the end. As a first generation Scottish-American, I am fiercely proud of my heritage, and this pride and passion will temper my motivation and desire to bring the dream that is this project into fruition.
Works Cited


"Wars, without ceasing, will break out till that period arrives, and the continent must in the end be conqueror; for though the flame of liberty may sometimes cease to shine, the coal can never expire."

- Thomas Paine, *The Crisis*
SPARKS: A RETURN

Unfortunately, Bulel became no further than to his knees. For King Edward, with army in tow, demanded oaths of fealty from the newly crowned monarch.

The hostility of the English overlords severed rebellion, but the Scots were cut down in battle.

Their defeated king was stripped of all title and claim, known then and now as Bulel, the Toon tribal.

Those Scottish captives that survived their rebellion against Edward were imprisoned.

And yet... not all men are flesh and bone, to be locked up...

AVOCH CASTLE, SCOTLAND. 1297 A.D.
...to his home...

More filmy babble.

...to his castle...

...to his country.

It canna be!
HOLT, NONELL PASS WHILE THE LORD TENDS TO 'IS... ER... QUIET.

THUD.

DROP IT!

CREE BREAK.

SNNKKT!

THUD.
Leave quietly.

Guards! Seize this man! Guards!

Flanders, France, 1397 A.D.

My King, I bring news of...

Guards, this man expected to rise...

Guards, this man expected to rise...

Send word to Brussels and...
By order of Sir Cressey, High Justice,
in service to King Edward I of England.
Lord Parravane of Scotland.
ALL WHO EMBRACE THEIR ALLEGIANCE AND RECEIVE THE KING'S PROTECTION SHALL PAY THE KINGS DUES. THIS TAX—

NO.

WHO SPEAKS?

WALLACE, SIR, A PUNY LAND HOLDER.

WELL, SIR...

IT SEEMS AS THOUGH NOT... NOT RUGGED.

"WALLACE," SIR.

YOU.

YES, "WALLACE," YOUNG MAN. NOT THE RIGHT TO SPEAK.

WELL NOT PAY YOUR KNOB.

YOU'RE YET TO EMBRACE ALLEGIANCE, YET TO SIGN THE ROLLS.

KEEP YOUR RAGMAN'S ROLLS.

YES, YES, TURN AND FLEE.
...To keep our present order...

...they but need...

No! Guards!

And of the tax, sir?

...of their past...

They'll pay it, yes.

They'll pay, they'll do as our king bade yes.

Oh, I...

They'll—
FLAMES: IN BLOOD

LANARK, SCOTLAND. JUNE, 1297 A.D.

FLANDERS, FRANCE. 1297. A.D.

WILL PAY.

FLAMES: IN BLOOD

IN BLOOD.

LANARK, SCOTLAND. JUNE, 1297 A.D.
WO! RIDER!

STATE YOUR BUSINESS.

My name is Robert Wishart, Bishop of Glasgow.

Aye, and I'm the... and so you are.
You free their arms, their legs, their heads, but what of their hearts? Can a man be free without his God-given soul?

Bishop...

I tend all the flock. From the neck to the very country itself!

Bishop, you'd give your blessing in this?

Worse the souls of free men, Bishop.

Aye, Wallace, you'd have it. Take this land's heart back, free it's eternal soul.
PREPARE THE MEN.

AYE!

REGINALD'S GONE MAD IF HE FEARS INVERNESS FALLING TO THESE REBELS!

Why, he simply need hide behind his high walls while the garrison at Urquhart does the real fighting.

AND YOU, BISHOP? YOU GIVE YOUR BLESSING, BUT WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

INK AND PARCHMENT, WALLACE.

FOR AS YOU WORK IN THE EAST, AND I, THE SOUTH, SO MUST THE FIRE BE STORED IN THE NORTH.

Grr! Warn! The trees're alight! The road's blocked!

INVERNESS, SCOTLAND. MAY, 1297 A.D.
I bring word from the Bishop of Glasgow.

Prepare for the siege!
WHERE DO WE MARCH, WALLACE?

WE MUST HEED THEIR CALL! WE MUST!

BREAK THE CHAINS, LIFT THE SCALES.

BUT WHY?

WHERE?

WHERE, ANDREW?

WE MARCH.

WHERE??
AYE, TO SCONE. WE'LL MEET WITH THE WALLACE OF LANKirk AND WREST THE THRONE FROM THE BACKSIDE'S OF THE ENGLISH.

THE WALLACE??

HE'S OF A LOW-CUT CLOTH, ANDREW! NO CLAIM HAS HE TO PROTECT NOR STEWARD TO THE THRONE.

PRECISELY.

WALLACE WILL BE THE SWORD TO SEVER OUR BONDS, AND THE MORY'S WILL BE HIS SHIELD FROM THE MANIPULATIONS OF THE SOUTHERN LORDS.
Huff...

...WALLACE IS NOWHERE IN SIGHT...

Huff.

Huff.

...AND THE VILLAGE IS...

Huff.

...QUIET, SIR.

WE'VE NO TIME TO WAIT FOR WALLACE.

TAKE THE TOWN.
GRRRRRAHH!

One of Moray's, eh?

The battle's won, boys, but the war's just begun.

Hnnn?

Hail, Sir William.

Welcome to Scone, Sir Andrew.
DUNDEE, SCOTLAND  SEPTEMBER, 1297 A.D.

Nearing the end of their siege at Dundee, the campaign of Sirs William Wallace and Andrew Moray falls prey to the political machinations of Edward I, the Longshanks and hammer of the Scots. A combined force of English soldiers and turncoat Scottish nobles marches north, set on squelching the "rebellion" that has already reclaimed much of northern Great Britain.
Ten thousand, Moray. Our own lords of the South ride with their host, a full three thousand heavy cavalry. We've not the men to resist.

We'll meet them.

Sir Moray, there's another matter.

We'll meet them in open battle.

These noble lords are no men—turncoats, traitors!

Edward would have you remember your father.

We have the advantage. We have the men. We'll break them in open battle.
WOULD MY FATHER TRADE HIS FREEDOM FOR HIS SON'S?

TOWER OF LONDON, ENGLAND. SEPTEMBER, 1297 A.D.

HE STILL LIVES. EDWARD OFFERS HIS LIFE FOR YOURS.

MAY HE AND OUR FATHER FORGIVE ME...

WOULD I TRADE THE FREEDOM OF THEIR SONS FOR THAT OF MY FATHER?

...BUT THIS, THIS I CANNOT DO.
STIRLING, SCOTLAND SEPTEMBER, 1297 A.D.

Who leads them?

The arms of Warenne, the Earl of Surrey.
Warene? Of the Battle of Dunbar?

We'll advance en masse, when I've amok.

Why do they not cross?

A second crossing point?

A flank then?

Down river, six heavy horse could cross abreast. We'd be undone.

We've not the patience nor the need.

We've not the bows to match, nor shields to resist...

M'lord, the men seek to advance.

And their archers?

Keep them in reserve.
Cavalry?

The cavalry will win us this day.

Unlikely, caltrops and spears line the fields.

Order the advance.

In Lord, the bridge is narrow, we—

Two by two, if we must.

Forward!
HE'S MAD, THOSE MEN!

SEND THE REST! BRING ME THEIR CAPTAIN'S HEADS!

IT WILL BE A SLAUGHTER!
Days later, having succumbed to his wounds, Andrew Moray is committed to fire and flame, upon the field of his greatest victory.
AND THOUGH ANDREW MORAY FELL THAT DAY, AND THE WALLACE JOINED HIM AT THE HANDS OF EDWARD'S EXECUTIONERS, THEIR FALL BROUGHT UP GREAT HEROES TO DEFEND THEIR LAND...

...THEIR LAND...

A FREE LAND.

BANNOCKBURN, SCOTLAND JUNE, 1314 A.D.
Works Cited


