Questioning Terminologies: Homosocial and "Homosexual" Bonds in the Royal Bedchamber and Kingship in Medieval England and France

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Abstract: In medieval Western Europe, the sharing of a bed between the king and a close noble or friend was not uncommon, often seen as an example of a strong homosocial bond. Henry II and Richard I of England are known examples of kings who reportedly shared their beds with a male friend. The line between homosocial and what modern scholars would term homosexual bonds is often blurred when it comes to analysing close male relationships between a king and his subjects. These instances usually occurred outside the courtly residence, whilst journeying or in the midst of warfare, leaving little room for privacy and separation, thus enabling them to be reported by the contemporary chroniclers. This paper seeks to address three matters. Firstly, it outlines the terminological issues when discussing medieval masculinities and sexualities. Secondly, it investigates the nature of homosocial and "homosexual" bonds and how we attempt to differentiate these within a medieval, Western European context (here focusing on England and France). It then examines the case studies of Henry II and William Marshal, and Richard I and Philip Augustus. This article contributes to our understanding of the intersections between privacy, sexuality, and friendship. It seeks to enhance knowledge surrounding the balance of friendships and power, and how homosocial and "homosexual" bonds could impact the monarch's relationship with their consort, and, in some cases, their ability to rule.

Keywords: kingship; masculinity; medieval; England; France; homosociality; gender

Introduction

The relationships of Henry II and Richard I with their wives have received scholarly attention by their biographers, but there has been less scrutiny of their male friendships in the context of gender and sexuality research. In this article I hope to recontextualise these partnerships within the idea of what masculinity could be in the High Middle Ages, and to consider how both kings chose to interact with and display their close male relationships. The study of royal sexualities, and the intersection of royal and gender studies, with a particular focus on royal masculinities, has picked up apace over the last decade.[2] The

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[2] Katherine J. Lewis, *Kingship and Masculinity in Late Medieval England* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); E. Amanda McVitty, *Treason and Masculinity in Medieval England: Gender, Law and Political Culture* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020). For earlier discussions on medieval masculinities, see Clare A. Lees, ed., *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); and D. M. Hadley, ed., *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1999). For works on royal (male) sexuality, see Kit Heyam, *The Reputation of Edward II, 1305-1697* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020); and "Royal Sexualities," ed. Katia Wright, Edward Legon, and Matthew Storey, special issue, *Royal Studies Journal* 6, no. 2 (2013), especially the articles by Karl Alvestad, "A Kingdom for my Bed: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in Harold Farhair's Conquest of Norway," 48–60; Charlotte Backerra, "Disregarding Norms: Charles VI and His Intimate Relationships," 74–88; Robert Kusek and Wojciech Szymański, "Kings as 'Queens'—Textual and Visual Homophobic Fabrications of Two Polish Kings: The Curious Cases of Bolesław the Generous and Henry I of Poland," 127–147.

emergence of medieval sexuality as a subfield in the 1980s has provided rich foundations for this work, and this study owes its analysis to the multiple fields of gender, sexuality, and royal studies that intersect in the analysis of medieval partnerships. It seeks to bring together some of the recent work in these fields to produce a comparative examination of two famous male partnerships, those of Henry II and William Marshal, and Richard I and Philip Augustus, to consider how homosocial and same-sex bonds operated in the High Middle Ages. The article also argues for a more flexible approach to studying the sexuality of historical figures, instead of focusing on a binary and categorical approach.

This article first discusses the issues surrounding terminology, the centre point of its argument regarding male relationships and bonding. The second section, on Henry II and William Marshal, considers how chivalry and values of manhood can be brought together to help us better understand elite masculinities. The third section on Richard I and Philip Augustus does not comprehensively examine the partnership but focuses on particular instances of their time together on the Third Crusade, and what these examples tell us about masculine expressions and homosocial bonds in the twelfth century. Work thus far has concentrated on kingship and masculinity in the later medieval period, or considered masculinity from a literary perspective. When it comes to royal sexualities, particularly non-heteronormative sexualities, there has been plentiful discussion of theories and allegations, the most notable of which for medieval England are those of Richard I and Edward II. This article sets the foundations for further exploration of royal masculinities in the High Middle Ages and challenges existing thought on Richard's sexuality, whilst outlining some of the terminological issues historians need to address when considering medieval sexualities, in order to avoid the anachronistic assumptions that have previously governed such discussions. The binary nature of manliness and otherness has affected modern perceptions of the behaviours of men which fall outside this code of manhood, a clear methodological issue when exploring male activities. It is the intention of this study to examine the partnerships of Henry II and William Marshal, and Richard I and Philip Augustus in the context of homosociality—herein defined as the close male friendships which formed an integral part of men's masculinity in the medieval period—rather than explicitly through the lens of sexuality and defining the sexual orientation of these men, particularly Richard.[3]

It is necessary to first consider the terminological issues involved in discussing male same-sex affections and relationships in the medieval period. As heterosexuality, bisexuality, homosexuality, and queerness are all modern concepts, it is not accurate to use them for the medieval period, when those who expressed affection outside of a male-female binary would not have identified with them. Certainly people have engaged in physical and emotional acts with those other than their opposite sex across time and place, and this article does not refute the existence in the past of people who may now fall under what we would label LGBTQ+. Rather it, continues to challenge the application of our modern sexual categories and identities on the past. This is a contested area of discussion: most notably, John Boswell argued for 'gay history'—though not an ideal term—to be utilised for the history of those who now identify as part of the modern gay

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[3] On medieval homosociality, see Rachel E. Moss, *Fatherhood and its Representations in Middle English Texts* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013); Rachel E. Moss, "Ready to Disport with You: Homosocial Culture amongst the Wool Merchants of Fifteenth-century Calais," *History Workshop Journal* 86 (Autumn 2018): 1–21; M. J. Ailes, "The Medieval Male Couple and the Language of Homosociality," in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, 214–237; Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2012), 157–195.

community.[4] This study also highlights the pervasiveness of heteronormativity within scholarship on the history of sexuality, which further impacts modern understanding of sexual affection in the past. The unstated acceptance of heterosexuality as the default for historical figures places the onus on historians to definitively prove what can be labelled as non-heteronormative behaviour, rather than approaching subjects as fluid in gender and attraction. Though more recent discussions as evidenced below indicate a move beyond sexual and gender binaries, this article demonstrates that a shift towards a relaxation of categorisation and binary identification is needed. As Phillips and Reay have highlighted, premodern Western culture "encouraged homosociality (strong bonds between men) and the homoerotic."[5] Therefore, in this article any references to homosexuality are those used by modern historians or in twenty-first century discussions. For the purpose of this analysis, 'same-sex' will be used for the study of medieval male-male relationships. Especially concerning the mythology regarding Richard's sexuality, challenging the notion of his homosexuality implies a binary heterosexuality which is also an inaccurate descriptor. Historians must remain aware of the difficulties of imposing modern terminologies and concepts on previous societies; discussion of Richard's sexuality in particular informs us more about the historian's viewpoint than that of the king or his contemporaries.

The characterisation of male friendships as deviant is part of the inspiration for this discussion. I seek to untangle some of the preconceptions (and misconceptions) surrounding Henry's and Richard's partnerships, and to set them within the context of masculine and homosocial attributes. Thus it is important to consider the definitions of masculinity and homosociality used in this article. There is a ream of excellent scholarship on royal masculinities and homosociality for the later medieval period, particularly in England. Kit Heyam's recent monograph on Edward II's reputation is a useful parallel to this piece, as it considers how the legacy of Edward's homosexuality has been established and, perhaps most critically, abstains from the debate on Edward's sexuality. Heyam writes:

> It is important to state explicitly that the historiography of Edward II has been inevitably affected by heteronormativity, and by the characterization of relationships between men as sensational and deviant: scholars who now try to address this question would do well to remember that the previous scholarship to which they must respond, and which often unconsciously shapes interpretations of primary texts, has consequently not been neutral or objective.[6]

There were several elements to royal secular masculinities, including sexuality: Heyam's comment on the heteronormativity of scholarship demonstrates how sexuality can be viewed as an overarching aspect of masculine identity. Other elements of royal secular masculinities, namely the attributes of brotherhood, chivalry, knighthood, and fatherhood, are explored in further detail in this study.

Masculinity in the late medieval period is often tied strongly to the notions of chivalry and knighthood. However, there were multiple masculinities that were dominant in society at once, as men sought to differentiate themselves from other men.[7] Matthew Mesley's article on crusading,

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[4] Carolyn Dinshaw, "Touching on the Past," in *The Boswell Thesis, Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, ed. Mathew Kuefler (London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 64–66; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 16–18. By 'modern gay community,' I here mean those who identify as holding same-sex attraction, given that, at the time of Boswell's writing, bisexuality had not become a popularised term. Nor had LGBT, which came into use in the 1990s.
[5] Kim M. Phillips and Barry Reay, *Sex before Sexuality: A Premodern History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 5.
[6] Heyam, *Edward II*, 19.
[7] D. M. Hadley, "Introduction: Medieval Masculinities," in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, 4.

masculinities, and sexuality provides a foundation for discussion of Henry's and Richard's fulfilment of chivalric values, principles which are affected by time, place, and the motives of the author depicting these events.[8] Matthew Bennett's work on military masculinities helps to define what constituted a masculine warrior: to be complete in both a physical and a moral manner, to be able to wield weapons well, and to be committed to his lord's cause, amongst other things, all of which is particularly relevant in the case of William Marshal.[9] If we are to consider Henry and Richard as fulfilling a masculine ideal of knighthood by acting as honourable warriors and military leaders, we need to understand how this corresponds with other forms of masculinity at the time, such as brotherhood and companionship with other men of similar status, including those that might be labelled "favourites" in later historiography.

Much of the previous scholarship concerned with masculinities focuses on clerical, rather than secular, masculinities, and this research demonstrates that a distinction needs to be made between the two. Jo Ann McNamara's theory of the *Herrenfrage*—the notion of a masculine identity crisis that emerged in the twelfth century—is useful as it emphasises why medieval men grew concerned with exhibiting their power and masculinity, but it cannot completely explain the secular experience of manliness.[10] McNamara argues that a psychological crisis developed around sexuality, owing to the growth of younger sons alongside female heiresses.[11] They comment that men "had fused personhood with manhood, and to defend their manhood they had to become ever more manly. They had to persecute with ever-increasing severity anyone who threatened the uncertain inner core of that image."[12] This argument demonstrates what we might now call toxicity around masculinity, a system which enforced clear boundaries of manliness and otherness. For men in the twelfth century, this system placed them in a competition with one another, to continue to exercise their manliness through knighthood and soldiering predominantly, and through the wielding of power and authority in other domains. Rachel E. Moss has counteracted this statement within the context of Middle English romances, where an expression of emotion reinforced elite masculine behaviour and promoted homosocial bonding.[13] The links between sexuality, masculinity, and manhood, and their associated social contexts, are highly individualised. Christopher Fletcher clearly elucidates the issue at play here:

> In particular, the relationship between medieval manhood and sexuality is rather different from that suggested by the close association in the modern mind between masculinity and sexuality. Instead, the associations of 'manhood' are organised around strength, vigour, steadfastness and a certain kind of concern with status and honour, including largesse and conspicuous expenditure.[14]

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[8] Matthew Mesley, "Chivalry, Masculinity and Sexuality," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the Crusades*, ed. Anthony Bale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 146–148.

[9] Matthew Bennett, "Military Masculinity in England and Northern France, *c.*1050-*c.*1225," in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, 88.

[10] Jo Ann McNamara, "The *Herrenfrage*: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050-1150," in *Medieval Masculinities*, 3.

[11] McNamara, "*Herrenfrage*," 8.

[12] McNamara, "*Herrenfrage*," 22.

[13] Rachel E. Moss, "'And Much More I am Soryat for my Good Knyghts': Fainting, Homosociality, and Elite Male Culture in Middle English Romance," *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques* 42, no. 1 (2016): 102.

[14] Christopher Fletcher, "The Whig Interpretation of Masculinity? Honour and Sexuality in Late Medieval Manhood," in *What is Masculinity?*, ed. John H. Arnold and Sean Brady (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 61–62; Christopher Fletcher, *Richard II: Manhood, Youth, and Politics 1377-99* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), chs. 2–3.

The relationships between men need to be explored and considered in different ways, which fall outside a heteronormative framework. This study demonstrates that examining male relationships within the context of masculinity and sexuality studies provides a deeper understanding of masculine identities and their representations.

Placing the relationships between Henry II and William Marshal, and Richard I and Philip Augustus, in their historical context requires consideration of another pertinent issue, alongside the complex definitions of masculinity, homosociality, and homosexuality: that of favourites, and the resulting legacy that has been interpreted and popularised through commemorative and historical works. Although the idea of favourites seems most relevant to the later medieval kings of England, the modern category of favourites—those closest to the king, typically male members of the court—remains relevant when considering Henry and Richard as well. Carol Clover's foundational work on sex, gender, and power in northern Europe is useful when examining the apparent subversion of what have often appeared to be traditional roles, though modern scholarship continually disproves the binaries of sex, gender, and power, as well as demonstrating the fluidity with which sexuality could be expressed, even if not viewed as acceptable (either by contemporaries or later historians).[15]

Through comparison of two male royal pairings within the context of masculinity and sexuality studies, I argue that William Marshal would have viewed himself as fulfilling the expected masculine roles and activities expected of him in high medieval England: he was a chivalrous knight, a lord, and a protector of societal values.[16] He embodied the role of the warrior and defender of his lord and king. How the three kings in this study—Henry II, Richard I, and Philip Augustus—viewed their masculinity was quite different. Each certainly embraced the military warrior role and its association with manliness, as evidenced by their continual campaigns and crusading activities. As the highest-ranking male in the land, however, they were also able to fully exert their masculinity by subordinating other men and women. The exercise of power was an essential characteristic of the gender identity of medieval adult men, according to William Aird, alongside the production of a son to ensure dynastic continuance, an issue which concerned some kings more than others.[17]

A Loyal Knight and An Aging King

The relationship between Henry II and William Marshal is often framed as that of a noble faithful to the Plantagenet dynasty. William's service to the Crown extended through the reigns of Henry II, Richard I, John, and Henry III, along with service to Henry the Young King, son of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine. William first appears to have reached the attention of the Plantagenets when he was ransomed by Eleanor of Aquitaine after the 1168 campaign in Poitou, and taken into her court.[18] William remained in Eleanor's service until 1170, when he transferred to the household of her eldest son, Henry the Young King, before joining Henry II's service in 1186.[19] Thus, his

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[15] Carol Clover, "Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe," *Representations* 44 (1993): 1–28.

[16] Laura Ashe, "William Marshal, Lancelot, and Arthur: Chivalry and Kingship," *Anglo Norman Studies* 30 (2008): 19–40.

[17] W. M. Aird, "Frustrated Masculinity: The Relationship between William the Conqueror and his Eldest Son," in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe,* 48–49.

[18] David Crouch, *William Marshal*, 3rd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 40.

[19] Crouch, *William Marshal*, 41.

time as a member of Henry II's inner circle was brief, given the duration of his career. Henry and William's relationship, that of loyal knight and master—and indeed, William was consistently loyal to his Plantagenet lord, no matter which one he was serving—provides us with an exemplar through which to explore twelfth-century masculinity and its expression.

William Marshal has captured the attention of many historians of twelfth- and thirteenth-century England, and the thirteenth-century French chronicle *L'Histoire de Guillaume le Marechal*, the earliest surviving biography of a medieval knight, provides an insight into medieval England from one of its most famous courtiers. The bond between William and Henry has been described as that of the loyal servitude of England's greatest knight, and although William undoubtedly gained further fame in his later career under Richard, John, and Henry III, it is useful to explore his earlier development with the first Angevin king.

What is also worth discussing here is how Henry II fulfilled a masculine role—that of ruler, knight, and one who subordinated other men.[20] Father-son relationships affected the abilities of men to realise masculine roles. Research undertaken by Aird on the relationship between William the Conqueror and his eldest son Robert Curthose indicates the complexities of the expression of masculinities by father and son. The patriarch seeks to maintain his own power and control, which impacts the ability of his son to rule and thus to express his masculine identity.[21] This undoubtedly had implications for Richard's expression of his masculinity whilst under the rule of his father, which will be explored further in the next section.

The virtues associated with chivalry and knighthood formed part of a group identity. These principles bound together groups of men in service to the protection of those weaker than themselves, but also in service to a higher power, be it their feudal lord, the king, or the pope.[22] Through his role as a loyal knight, William Marshal fulfilled the position of a chivalric knight and thus embodied some of the concepts of masculinity discussed in the previous section. He accompanied Henry the Young King on several tournaments, and, after the Young King's death in 1183, fulfilled Henry's crusading vow by journeying to the Holy Land, where he remained until 1185.[23] Upon his return to the Angevin domains William joined the service of Henry II, and was rewarded for his loyalties with several grants of land and a marriage to the wealthy heiress Isabel de Clare. However, William was limited in his expressions of masculinity owing to his position in the hierarchy: he could not exert authority over all men. Multiple masculinities could exist in society at one time, and not all men could carry out all aspects of each type of masculinity. Indeed, it is important to note that military prowess was not the sole defining factor of manliness, focused on examples of military valour and homosocial bonds as this article is.[24] Fletcher has argued that the association between manhood and warfare appears "quintessential," but the relationships brokered between William Marshal and his lords demonstrate that this may not have always been the case, as they formed bonds outside the martial sphere.[25]

As discussed in the first section of this article, kings had different approaches to their exercise of manliness, but one tenet would have been essential, and that was the subordination of all to their monarch. Even in the case of power-sharing with their royal co-rulers or councils,

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[20] Aird, "Frustrated Masculinity," 40.
[21] Aird, "Frustrated Masculinity," 55.
[22] Mesley, "Chivalry, Masculinity, and Sexuality," 149.
[23] Thomas Asbridge, *The Greatest Knight: The Remarkable Life of William Marshal, the Power Behind Five English Thrones* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 163.
[24] Hadley, "Introduction," 5.
[25] Fletcher, "The Whig Interpretation," 63.

power was not absolutely ceded; the partner or council was consciously aware of their lower status with regards to the king.[26]

William's service during Henry's years and the bond they shared is evident in the few reports from the period. *L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal* reported the bed-sharing of the two men whilst on campaign against the French, which is situated in a political context by John Gillingham.[27] The author of *L'Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal* recorded this event, wherein Henry was ill and reliant on William for aid. Bryant has translated the text as they "laid him [Henry] in the bed," whereas the Old French version edited by Meyer has been interpreted as William requesting that Henry lay in the bed, though the circumstances of William joining him are less clear.[28] William's loyalty to Henry at this point indicates a certain closeness and a sense of Henry's dependence on him, and it is entirely plausible that William would have been in close quarters with the king as a companion. This allegiance was an exemplar of William and Henry's manly virtues in the face of both battle and illness.

It has become a focal point of queer history studies to uncover LGBTQIA+ history, which has often seen non-heteronormative affection and expressions obscured at initial investigation by historians. This is often seen most clearly when analysing letters between favourites and the letter receiver (and letter writing comes with its own history, format, and discourses), wherein a closer textual analysis uncovers a loving or erotic same-sex relationship. In this context, bed-sharing between two familiar and loyal men can initially appear to be something more than homosocial bonding. Homosocial bonding, according to Sedgwick, was part of a spectrum of desire, with homosociality constituting a form of desire in itself, which held a particular relationship with the maintenance and transmission of patriarchal power.[29] I do not agree with Sedgwick's supposition that this relationship takes a form of either ideological homophobia or homosexuality.[30] However, it is my firm opinion that, in this case, the bed-sharing of Henry II and William Marshal is an example of homosocial bonding in a semi-private setting—as private as being on campaign could allow. Both Henry and William could see the advantages in being closely bonded to one another through patronage, protection, and loyalty, and a homosocial bond encapsulates this companionship without the addition of sexual desire and activity.

The tent was a physical, semi-private structure erected on a military campaign, a setting in which wives were not often present; in this example neither Henry nor William's spouses were nearby. This all-male military setting for both case studies therefore allowed for homosocial bonds to further develop. The positioning of the tent within the military camp meant that other members of the campaign would have passed by a structure not completely enclosed. Access to the king was not heavily restricted either, with close companions and nobles allowed to enter. The royal quarters would offer some privacy, but not much, and it is therefore unsurprising that this moment between

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[26] For more on Angevin co-ruling partnerships, see Gabrielle Storey, "Co-operation, Co-Rulership and Competition: Queenship in the Angevin Domains, 1135-1230," (PhD thesis, University of Winchester, 2020), ch. 3.

[27] John Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion: Kingship, Chivalry and War in the Twelfth Century* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1994), 135.

[28] Nigel Bryant, ed. and trans., *The History of William Marshal* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), 121; P. Meyer, ed., *L'Histoire de Guilluame le Maréchal comte de Striguil et de Pembroke, régent d'Angleterre de 1216 à 1219* (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1891-1901), 1:324. Old French from Meyer: "Quant il vit que tels ert sis mals, / K'angoissosement rogisseit / e après ce si nercis[s]eit. / Al rei dist : « Sire, ge vos pri e / requier la vostre merci / q'os vos reposez un petit. » / Lors le couchiérent en un lit."

[29] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 25.

[30] Sedgwick, *Between Men*, 25.

the king and his knight was presented in the chronicles. Bed-sharing in the High Middle Ages was a political act in addition to being a sexual one, depending on the relationship between the bed's occupants. Given the semi-private nature of beds in high medieval England, which is explored in more detail in the following section on Richard and Philip, it is likely that Henry II and Richard I knew that their bed-sharing was a political act that could be later publicised.[31] Indeed, the recording of the acts in these cases, especially so for Richard and Philip, demonstrates that bed-sharing was part of the public display of homosocial bonding. In these two cases, the act of bed-sharing did not have sexual connotations, despite Sedgwick's argument that homosociality was part of a spectrum of desire.

For William, this event was a moment to demonstrate his loyalty and virtues: he was close, physically and, to a degree, emotionally, to his king, ready to defend him at a moment's notice. For Henry, this was a relaxation of displaying the masculine virtues associated with a warring military leader, or indeed an opportunity to redefine them. For he had a member of his court at close quarters, presenting emotional closeness to someone of the same sex, whether as part of a brotherly demonstration of affection or that of a master and servant relationship. This event indicates that William was undoubtedly close, in a political and physical sense, to Henry, and that although their partnership was brief, they were a pair who fulfilled medieval manliness whilst also being able to operate outside the boundaries of the dominant warrior. They offer a snapshot of another aspect of masculinity, that of 'brothers in arms' and companions.[32] This example shows how men could hold close relationships and connections with one another as friends and allies, without a homoerotic subtext, regardless of whether it took place in the public or private sphere (or somewhere in-between). It is this expression of masculinity that lays the foundation for the discussion of the next royal male pairing.

Richard I and Philip Augustus—Brothers in Arms?

Richard I, commonly known as the Lionheart, is one of England's most famous kings. Known for his military activities, Richard is perhaps only second to Henry V in prowess and feats of arms. His military campaigns and alliances dominated his reign, and it is evident that Richard was far more interested in campaigning than ruling. His tenuous relationship with Philip Augustus—also a famed conqueror and military leader, especially after his conquest of the remaining Angevin heartlands from 1200—has been a point of discussion from the twelfth century onwards. Though these kings undoubtedly fulfilled notions of manliness through military prowess, there were other instances where they struggled, and indeed failed, to fully realise the traits of one dominant type of masculinity: that of fathering an heir. It is through these multiple contexts that this partnership is examined.

Richard and Philip were likely to have had similar upbringings as royal heirs, with regards to participation in and training for tournaments and campaigns. Richard was brought into the rulership of Aquitaine from 1170; Philip, however, did not have such an opportunity. He became king at a young age due to his father's declining health; crowned at the age of 14 on 1 November 1179, he exercised royal authority from then onwards. The relationship between Richard and Philip against Henry II during and shortly after the second rebellion of Henry the Young King in 1183

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[31] See Alan Bray, *The Friend* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), ch. 6; Alan Bray, "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England," *History Workshop Journal* 29, no. 1 (1990): 1–19, for the importance of bed-sharing as a political act in premodern England.
[32] Bennett, "Military Masculinity," 82–83.

placed them at odds: Philip was concerned with the return of the dowry of Henry the Young King's widow (and Philip's sister), Margaret, whereas Richard was more concerned with his father granting him rulership in Aquitaine, tenuous even after Richard's attempts to subdue his elder brother.[33] Richard and Philip's political and personal relationship was affected by another entanglement: the long-drawn betrothal of Richard to Philip's sister Alys, about which Henry II continued to make delayed promises.

Upon Henry II's death in 1189, Richard was quick to free his mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, from her guardianship, and to allow her and the government to assist him with his primary aim: organising and funding the Third Crusade. In December 1189 and March and June 1190, Philip and Richard met to protect the crusaders and uphold faith to one another. The two kings initially travelled together before the armies split at Lyon, with Richard continuing via sea and Philip journeying overland. They were reunited at Messina later that year, and it is likely that, before the departure of Philip in March 1191, discussions were made for the breaking of the betrothal between Richard and Alys to facilitate Richard's marriage to Berengaria of Navarre. This would have undoubtedly caused some tension amongst the "brothers in arms," who were then separated as Philip set sail for Acre, while Richard focussed on his marital ceremony and the coronation of his queen.

Richard's failure to father an heir might indicate that he had failed as a man, but I would argue that his lack of success in providing a legitimate male heir did not affect perceptions of his manliness, in part due to his success as a military leader. Marriage brought with it expectations of how to fulfil a masculine ideal in medieval society. The assumption that women acted as subordinates to men within the context of marriage was argued throughout the medieval period, even by later writers such as Christine de Pizan, who maintained that women must "obey without complaint."[34] D. M. Hadley has aptly summarised the burdens placed on men in marriage too, notably the need "to perform sexually; and to beget children. Failure in any of these marital responsibilities might indicate that 'he had failed as a man'."[35]

The concern of having a male heir was primary for most medieval kings. Richard was aware of the difficulties his paternal grandmother, the Empress Matilda, encountered when ensuring her succession to the English throne; Philip was equally aware of his importance as the long-awaited heir of his father Louis VII and his third wife, Adela of Champagne. Marital arrangements and the continuance of the dynasty were therefore often a focal point for kings. Philip and his first wife, Isabella of Hainault, did not produce an heir until 1187, though this was understandable because of Isabella's young age at marriage. She died due to complications following the birth of twin boys in 1190, and, like his father, Philip went on to marry twice more to ensure that the succession to the French throne was stable and that he fulfilled the masculine ideals of succession. In comparison to Richard, Philip would appear to embody many of the concepts of the multiple masculinities functioning in this period, acting as a military leader and a present ruler as well as ensuring he fulfilled his familial duties—shoddy treatment of his second wife Ingeborg of Denmark notwithstanding.

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[33] John Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart*, 2nd ed. (London: George Weinfeld & Nicolson, 1989), 99–102.

[34] Christine de Pizan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*, trans. Sarah Lawson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 49; Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe*, ch. 3.

[35] Hadley, "Introduction," 14; Vern L. Bullough, "On Being a Male in the Middle Ages," in *Medieval Masculinities*, 31–45; Susan Mosher Stuard, "Burdens of Matrimony: Husbanding and Gender in Medieval Italy," in *Medieval Masculinities*, 61–71.

Richard, however, seemed less concerned with these male duties. Neither he nor Henry II ensured the marriage of Richard to Alys to secure the dynasty. Although the Anglo-Navarrese union with Richard's marriage to Berengaria of Navarre brought its benefits, and the marriage was deemed of importance given that it was conducted whilst on crusade, the evidence suggests that Richard did little to ensure the provision for his wife or the production of any heirs, even after his risky capture and imprisonment upon his return from crusade. This may have been affected by Richard's own precedent as a risk to his father's patrimony, which could in turn explain his reluctance to produce a challenge to his own power. Richard's experience of masculinity, in accordance with Hadley's statement above, can be viewed as a partial failure because he did not produce an heir to the throne. This reasoning has been used on occasion to suggest Richard's same-sex activities, though he did father a bastard, Philip of Cognac. This illegitimate son is not clear evidence of his fulfilment of same-sex desires, alongside other reasons discussed below.[36]

Richard's sexual activities are not as essential to a consideration of masculine ideals as twentieth- and early twenty-first-century discussions suggest. Nevertheless, given the begetting of an heir was a fundamental part of being male, the lack of a male heir would plausibly have impacted perceptions of Richard's masculinity, the urging from the hermit—as discussed in due course—indicating the need for Richard to fulfil his role as a man and a king.[37] However, a lack of contemporary evidence makes it difficult to ascertain how much time he and Berengaria spent together in attempting to bear an heir. The importance of ensuring the succession of a male heir and its impact on the masculinity of the king continued until the early modern period.[38] Although Fletcher has argued that sexuality was not a central tenet of medieval manhood, the values of strength, honour, and steadfastness being more dominant, men did use their sexuality and expressions thereof (be it through promiscuity or the begetting of heirs) to exemplify their masculinity.[39] Without an heir as an expression of masculine triumph, Richard may have been keen to assert his military prowess and domination over other men—and indeed, over the "other" in the Holy Land, who were often stereotyped as weaker because they were not white Christian males—to compensate for his lack of male heir. Equally, given the unexpected nature of his death, he may have considered the crusade and military endeavours a priority, the nature of the succession to be arranged later. His naming of John as his heir in 1197 demonstrates that he was not entirely unconcerned with the matter, yet his lack of time spent with Berengaria to facilitate the production of an heir does not give the impression of a king focused on dynasticism. Despite this, Richard's plans for John to succeed him were confirmed on Richard's deathbed.[40] This did not entirely prevent the succession crisis on his deathbed, from which John emerged victorious.

The analysis of Richard and Philip through this particular lens of kingship and masculinity demonstrates the various ways in which men could still rule and succeed even if they did not fully embody all the traits of manliness. Whilst Richard's experience of masculinity undoubtedly differed because he had no legitimate heir, given his earlier military successes and legacy as a leader, this does not appear to have affected later perceptions of him as a man. Philip's status as a person who excelled in exhibiting manly virtues has not been subject to as much interrogation as Richard's,

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[36] Gillingham, *Richard Coeur de Lion*, 119–139.

[37] Bullough, "On Being a Male," 41.

[38] See Emma Levitt, "'The Whole Stature of a Goodly Man and a Large Horse': Memorialising Henry VIII's Manly, Knightly and Warrior status," in Gabrielle Storey, ed., *Memorialising Premodern Monarchs: Medias of Commemoration and Remembrance* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 13–36.

[39] Fletcher, "The Whig Interpretation," 66, 69–70.

[40] Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart*, 282.

perhaps due to his all-round successes. This next section moves onto the discussion of the bed-sharing between the two kings which, alongside a hermit's warning to Richard, has been used as evidence for Richard's same-sex interest in men by early twentieth-century historians, an idea that continues to circulate despite its disproval by most modern historians.[41]

Like Henry II and William Marshal, Richard and Philip are known to have shared a bed after peace was made between the Angevins and Capetians in 1187, before Richard became king. The source for this record is the chronicler Roger of Howden. In *The Annals of Roger de Hoveden*, the passage reads:

> After peace was thus made, Richard, earl of Poitou, remained with the king of France, though much against the will of his father, and the king of France held him in such high esteem, that every day they ate at the same table and from the same dish, and at night they had not separate chambers.[42]

Note that John Boswell has translated the text as follows from Howden's *Gesta Henrici Secundi*:

> Richard, duke of Aquitaine, son of the king of England, remained with Philip the king of France, who honoured him for so long that they ate every day at the same table and from the same dish, and at night their beds did not separate them. And the King of France loved him as his own soul; and they loved each other so much that the king of England was absolutely astonished at the passionate love between them and marvelled at it.[43]

Boswell's translation is more faithful to the original Latin, but the 'passionate love' between Richard and Philip was probably a literary convention, demonstrating the camaraderie and friendship between them after the friction between the Angevins and the Capetians, and was no more expressive than that of courtly love in crusading narratives.[44] As discussed in the example of Henry and William, bed-sharing—even behind closed doors, rather than in a campaign tent—was still a political act, demonstrative of trust and brotherhood, and the loyalty of one man to another. It is worth expanding here on the political and sexual symbolisms of sharing food, plate, and company as well, which further reinforced the bond between Richard and Philip. Such acts of intimacy were typically reserved for spouses, though on occasion this clearly extended to close companions. The progression from sharing items in a dining environment to sharing a bed could be seen as an extension of the activities typically seen at nuptial celebrations, though these actions were not recorded for Richard and Berengaria. Interestingly, there has been little comment on Philip Augustus' sexuality apart from in relation to Richard. Philip Augustus' expression of

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[41] The hermit's warning can be found in Roger of Howden, *Chronica magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. William Stubbs (London, 1868-1871), 3:288. It reads, "Esto memor subversionis Sodomæ, et ab illicitis te abstine; sin autem, veniet super te ultio Digna Dei," translated as "remember the destruction of Sodom and abstain from illicit acts, for if you do not God will punish you in a fitting manner."

[42] H. T. Riley, trans., *The Annals of Roger de Hoveden Comprising The History of England and of Other Countries of Europe from A. D. 732 to A. D. 1201* (London, 1853), 2:63–64.

[43] J. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 231–232. Original text from Roger of Howden, *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis*, ed. William Stubbs (London, 1867), 2:7: "Ricardus dux Aquitanniae, filus regis Angliae, morum fecit cum Philippo rege Franciae, quem ipse in tantum honoravit per longum tempus, quod singulis diebus in una mensa ad unum catinum manducabant, et in noctibus non separabat eos lectus. Et dilexit eum rex Franciae quasi animam suam; et in tantum se mutuo diligebant, quod propter vehmentem delictionem quae inter illos erat, dominus rex Angliae nimio stupore arreptus admirabatur quid hoc esset."

[44] Ailes, "The Medieval Male Couple," 232.

masculinity was largely successful, whereas Richard's initial success at the beginning of his reign faded, his death in 1199 accentuating his failures in marriage, rulership, and dynasticism. Richard appears to have preferred associations with his brothers-in-arms rather than women, however there is no other substantive evidence which indicates same-sex attraction. Instead, it is far more plausible that Richard positioned himself on the separate spectrums of homosocial bonding and sexualities, though historians cannot position Richard closer to same-sex or opposite-sex attraction with certainty unless further evidence comes to light.

With regards to notions of privacy in this case study, the bedchamber where Richard and Philip spent their nights was secluded, although still accessible, making their bed-sharing a semi-private act. Amanda Richardson has discussed in her exploration of the queen's bedchambers in medieval England that although access was restricted, it was not entirely isolated, and the king's bedchambers were more open to public view than the queen's.[45] Hollie Morgan's work on beds and chambers in late medieval England demonstrates the sanctity of the bed and its chamber for marital sex, and thus its place as a private space for couples.[46] However, for the High Middle Ages I argue that the space of the bedchamber was only semi-private. Participants in this space were able to share the bed and chamber as acts of political closeness and bonding, as well as for further companionship, not only for sexual purposes. The act of bed-sharing between men in high medieval England was not explicitly or even implicitly sexual. The bed and chamber were never entirely private spaces, though bed-sharing in a state of undress and for the purposes of sexual intercourse was a private act, regardless of the sex of the participants. Thus Richard and Philip's bed-sharing was a semi-private act, though represented in a very public way by the chroniclers, further removing notions of privacy that could be attached to it.

The only modern historian who has argued for Richard's same-sex activities is Jean Flori, on the basis of Richard's public confessions and penitence in 1191 and 1195.[47] Flori ultimately concludes that, due to accounts of Richard raping women, he likely had relations with men and women.[48] Acts of sexual violence are not a necessary indicator of sexuality, but often an assertion of power and reinforcing one's place in the hierarchy by dominating an individual. Therefore, reports of Richard's sexual violence cannot be used as strong evidence either way. Richard may have engaged in these acts as a man primarily attracted to women with a sexual interest in the victim; he may have existed further along the spectrum of sexual attraction and fallen outside the boundaries of medieval categorisation of sexualities. It is highly conceivable that he engaged in these acts of sexual violence as an expression of a dominant male. Although manliness was not associated with acts of sexual violence, the need to subordinate others was, and these acts constituted an extreme method. If we view the bed-sharing as an expression of male brotherhood, we can understand Philip and Richard's relationship at this point as one of camaraderie, even if it was to later sour after Richard's rejection of Alys. Richard's bastard and acts of sexual violence have been argued as evidence of his attraction to women, and the former would have demonstrated his manliness. Sexual violence does not equal sexuality, or sexual interest; it is an expression of power and dominance. Overall, there is not enough conclusive evidence to strongly prove

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[45] Amanda Richardson, "Gender and Space in English Royal Palaces, *c.*1160-*c.*1547: A Study in Access Analysis and Imagery," *Medieval Archaeology* 47, no. 1 (2003): 136–146.
[46] Hollie L. S. Morgan, *Beds and Chambers in Late Medieval England: Readings, Representations and Realities* (York: York Medieval Press, 2017), 139–170.
[47] Jean Flori, *Richard the Lionheart: King and Knight*, trans. Jean Birrell (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 387–389.
[48] Flori, *Richard the Lionheart*, 392–393.

Richard's sexual orientation, and, given the difficulties in appropriating modern labels on the past, it is not important to definitively label Richard.

Conclusion

These two case studies demonstrate how intimate acts of companionship and camaraderie need to be considered within the context of masculinity. All four men under scrutiny here publicly and privately expressed their affection towards their brother-in-arms as part of their expression of manly attributes. What is also clear is that there were multiple types of manliness, or masculine identities, that men sought to exemplify at any given time. The friendship between William and Henry demonstrates what the modern reader may still view as a stereotypical nobleman's role—one who held honour, strength, and loyalty to their liege lord, and was a steadfast companion to their allies. While not discussed in the section, both men fulfilled other expectations, namely fathering an heir and dynasticism, without issue, although Henry II's succession issues have been well explored by others.

The example of Richard and Philip Augustus is more complex. Both have significant legacies as military leaders: each can be viewed as successful in their campaigns, with Richard's initial successes in the Holy Land, and Philip's successful conquests against the Angevins throughout Richard's reign and beyond. The two kings acted as men: they led their armies, fought in battles, were loyal to their companions (though not always to each other), and usually upheld honour in a martial chivalric context, though not always in a marital one. Issues of dynasticism were well known to them, although Philip was far more proactive in ensuring the continuance of the Capetians than Richard was of the Angevin line.

The question of Richard's sexuality is unlikely to be answered conclusively. However, the imprint of Richard as allegedly homosexual continues to foreground any discussion of him in both academic and popular circles, even though it is not a majority view. I would argue that instead of strictly categorising his behaviour as either homosocial or homosexual, we should consider a more nuanced approach to describing the allegations. Richard may have expressed or held non-heteronormative desires, and instead of a continued fixation on proving or disproving this allegation one way or another (though many would argue it has been roundly dismissed), it is perhaps best to consider that Richard may have been sexually fluid, as well as fulfilling the expectations of a masculine warrior king. In the case of Philip, as discussed within this article, there is far less concern regarding his sexuality, whether due to national historiographical priorities or because there is not as much spurious evidence upon which claims can be based. These case studies demonstrate the flexibility with which we should approach homosocial bonding in the twelfth century, and the need to consider multiple types of masculinities that, whilst embodying typical knightly values, also impact how sexuality has been interpreted. These men publicly and privately expressed notions of manliness, demonstrating their comfort with their male identities amongst their companions. Though one may argue that complete privacy was not available to royals, as evidenced by records by outsiders of their activities, they were still able to have moments of intimacy and closeness amongst their companions and express these sentiments without fear of reprisal. In sum, the analysis of royal and noble men within the context of manliness or masculinity studies ought to encompass the multiple and varied types of manhood, and to consider further how expressions of sexuality—both hetero- and non-heteronormative—by non-clerical men in the high medieval period can be included in these discussions.