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Arthur in Scotland: an Exploration of 15th-Century Kingship in Literature

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Not all stories survive the test of time; whether due to physical deterioration or cultural changes, manuscripts have been lost, forgotten, or ignored. Does the context in which some stories are written dictate their future? This project seeks to understand the background and motivations of a 15<sup>th</sup>-century Scottish text, *Lancelot of the Laik*. Both the author and publication date of *Lancelot* have been lost, but Book II of the text contains a lengthy advice dialogue between the failing King Arthur and a wise old friend. This dialogue has been used by some to claim a connection between the text to a possible contemporary king; James III, James IV, and James V are all candidates for this connection. This project has examined the implications of this text being written for each of these kings, considering the strengths and weaknesses that each displayed that *Lancelot* may have addressed.

Through a translation of Book II from Middle Scots to Modern English, this project sought to identify key qualities and traits that the author thought important for the king to know and embody. These points, given through the wise master, reveal to modern critics what the author considered to be the ideal king. This ideal can then be juxtaposed with the possible contemporary kings, indicating whether the piece may have been written in criticism or in praise of the author's sovereign. This project explores the context and implications of the publication of *Lancelot* under varying circumstances, exploring what the author's intentions for the text may have been. The future of this project includes a finalized translation of the entire text and further exploration into why this depiction of the perfect Scottish king was never accepted by modern audiences.