

## **The *dit amoureux* and the Makars: An Essay on *The Kingis Quair* and *The Testament of Cresseid***

**William Calin**

Although less pervasive in Scotland than in England, and with major Scottish writing coming under a strong English influence, French maintained its presence and its seminal impact on literature in the Scots vernacular, in both the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.<sup>1</sup> This is especially true for what is, arguably, the most important single genre in late medieval Scotland, high courtly narrative — what C. S. Lewis called the allegory of love. Late medieval Scottish poetry can benefit from renewed scrutiny in light of the analogous French tradition of the *dit amoureux* (tale of love). In this article, I hope to situate Scottish books in a larger intertextual context, one that is international and European. Instead of the microanalysis of Scots texts and their French sources, this essay is concerned primarily with the broader issues of genre, mode, structure, and style. The first two major tales of love in the grand manner in Scots are *The Kingis Quair*, attributed to James Stewart (King James I), and *The Testament of Cresseid* by Robert Henryson. These two poems relate to Chaucer, of course, but also to well-known works by Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart, and, in Henryson's case, Alain Chartier. They are admirable test cases demonstrating how greater attention to the French can help situate James's and Henryson's texts in their cultural milieu and also help account for their extraordinary complexity and maturity as works of art.

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1 On French and English, see Calin, *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England*; on French and Scots, see the old yet still useful study by Smith, *The French Background of Middle Scots Literature*.

*The Kingis Quair*, attributed to King James I, was written relatively early in the fifteenth century, either in late 1423-1424 or, according to Matthew P. McDiarmid, between 1428 and 1437, more likely in 1435.<sup>2</sup> It is the first of a number of Scottish texts that partake of that late medieval mode of high courtly narrative, Lewis's allegory of love, what, in French studies, is now called the *dit amoureux* or 'tale of love.' A number of scholars have explored James's debt to Chaucer, Lydgate, and, to a lesser extent, Gower and Hoccleve; their studies are so meticulous and so exhaustive that the uninformed reader could arrive at the conclusion that the English books plus Boethius are, for all intents and purposes, *the sources of The Kingis Quair*.<sup>3</sup> I wish to cast a wider net and look at the French analogues, which James would have known and which will enrich our understanding of his poem.

The *Quair* narrator recounts a night of insomnia during which he reads Boethius and decides to write his own life experience. He tells of a sea voyage and of being taken prisoner when he was only a youth. While in prison, he delivers a Boethian complaint and then looks out of the window and beholds a lovely garden filled with bird song, especially the song of a nightingale. Then enters a Lady of quasi-divine beauty. The narrator prays to Venus and addresses the Lady's little dog and the birds. After the Lady departs, the narrator delivers a second complaint and then experiences a dream vision and is wafted up to Venus. Venus delivers wise counsel and provides the narrator with Gude Hope, who conducts him to Minerva, who delivers more wise counsel. Gude Hope then takes the narrator to Dame Fortune, who, after having lodged him on her wheel, yanks him by the ear, upon which he awakens. As a sign that the dream is authentic, a turtle dove brings him a red flower on a green stalk with a message written in gold: Wake up, sing,

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2 On the chronology, see McDiarmid, ed., *The Kingis Quair of James Stewart*, 28-48. Quotations are taken from this edition. Other good modern editions are: Simon, ed., *Le Livre du Roi (The Kingis Quair) attribué à Jacques I<sup>er</sup> d'Écosse*; James I of Scotland, *The Kingis Quair*, ed. Norton-Smith; Boffey, ed., *Fifteenth-Century English Dream Visions*; and Mooney and Arn, eds., "*The Kingis Quair*" and *Other Prison Poems*.

3 Among other examples, Bennett, *The Parlement of Foules*, 59, 60, 96, 161; MacQueen, "Tradition and the Interpretation of the *Kingis Quair*"; Ebin, "Boethius, Chaucer, and *The Kingis Quair*"; Kohl, "*The Kingis Quair* and Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* as Imitations of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*"; Kratzmann, *Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations*, 33-62; Fradenburg, "The Scottish Chaucer"; Boffey, "Chaucerian Prisoners"; Spearing, "Dreams in *The Kingis Quair* and the Duke's Book"; Bowers, "Three Readings of *The Knight's Tale*"; Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing and the Politics of Autobiography*, 60-89; Petrina, "My maisteris dere"; Martin, "The Translations of Fortune."

and laugh! The narrator proclaims that Fortune granted him freedom and gave him the Lady.

The themes, motifs, and doctrine in the *Quair* follow closely upon those found in the French love allegories of the time. Guillaume de Machaut and Jean Froissart are the leading French poets of the *dit amoureux* in the fourteenth century; their impact on Chaucer is enormous.<sup>4</sup> Three of Machaut's narrative texts, the *Remede de Fortune*, *La Fonteinne amoureuse*, and *Le Confort d'Ami*, are pertinent here.<sup>5</sup>

In *Remede de Fortune*, the unhappy amorous narrator flees to a beautiful garden where, after a long Boethian complaint against Fortune, he is comforted by a female authority figure, Esperence also called Bon Espoir. She offers him counsel on love. He returns to the court and to the Lady. Machaut's Bon Espoir and James's Venus and Minerva, seconded by Gude Hope, preach the same doctrine: a good lover must be patient and has to moderate his desires with regard to the lady. Machaut's *souffissance* is echoed by James's *suffiance*:

Dont cils qui vit de si douce pasture  
Vie d'onneur puet bien et doit mener,  
Car de tous biens a a comble mesure,  
Plus qu'autres cuers ne saroit desirer,  
Ne d'autre merci rouver  
N'a desir, cuer, ne bëance,  
Pour ce qu'il a souffissance;  
Et je ne say nommer ci  
Nulle autre merci.

(*Remede*, 2003-11)

[So, he who lives on such sweet food can and must lead a life of honour, for he has all good things to overflowing, more than another heart can desire;

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4 Much work over the past few decades has been devoted to rehabilitating Machaut and Froissart as narrative poets. Among the full-length studies are Calin, *A Poet at the Fountain*; Brownlee, *Poetic Identity in Guillaume de Machaut*; Cerquiglini, "Un engin si subtil"; de Looze, *Pseudo-Autobiography in the Fourteenth Century*; Bétemps, *L'Imaginaire dans l'oeuvre de Guillaume de Machaut*; Zink, *Froissart et le temps*; Schwarze, *Generische Wahrheit*; Lechat, "Dire par fiction"; and McGrady, *Controlling Readers*. A rich collection of essays on Froissart is *Froissart Across the Genres*, edited by Maddox and Sturm-Maddox.

5 Guillaume de Machaut, *Œuvres de Guillaume de Machaut*, 3 vols., ed. Hoepffner: *Remede de Fortune*, 2:1-157; *Le Confort d'Ami*, 3:1-142; *La Fonteinne amoureuse*, 3:143-244.

he does not have the desire, the heart, or the expectation to implore for another reward because he has sufficiency; I cannot proclaim here any other reward.]<sup>6</sup>

Garde que Raisons te maistrie  
Et qu'aies en toy pacience  
Et la vertu de souffissance.

(*Remede*, 2486-88; similarly, 2773-78)

[Take care that Reason holds mastery over you and that you maintain in yourself patience and the virtue of sufficiency.]

Eke quho may in this lyfe haue more plesance  
Than cum to largesse from thraldom and peyne,  
And by the mene of luffis ordinance,  
That has so mony in his goldin cheyne  
Quhich thinkis to wyn his hertis souereyne?  
Quho suld me wite to write thar-of, lat se?  
Now sufficiance is my felicitee.

(*Kingis Quair*, st. 183)

Esperence informs the Machaut narrator that Souffissance (plus Pacience) lead to Bonneürté:

Les deus precieuses vertus  
Que je t'ay nommé ci dessus:  
L'une est Souffissance la belle,  
L'autre est Pacience, s'encelle.

. . . . .  
Eins mettent l'omme a seürté  
En chemin de Bonneürté.

(*Remede*, 2775-86)

[The two precious virtues that I mentioned to you previously: one is beautiful Sufficiency, the other is Patience, her handmaiden. . . . They place a man safely on the path to Happiness.]

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6 All translations are my own.

Earlier she tells him of the closeness of *bonneürté* and *felicité*, and that, as gifts, so to speak, of Nature and Reason, they are not subject to Fortune:

La bonneürté souverinne  
 Et la felicité certainne  
 Sont souverain bien de Nature  
 Qui use de Raison la pure;  
 Et tels biens, on ne les puet perdre.

. . . . .  
 Si que je te moustre en apert  
 Que Fortune n'a riens seür,  
 Felicité ne boneür.

(*Remede*, 2467-78)

[Supreme happiness and assured felicity are sovereign goods of Nature, who makes use of pure Reason; you cannot lose such good things. Thus, I reveal to you openly that Fortune holds nothing that is secure, neither felicity nor happiness.]

Machaut's *bonneürté* and *felicité* are the precise equivalent of James's *felicitee* and *pleasance*, just as his *joie* (2806) corresponds to the Scots *blisse* (st. 181) and *joy* (st. 182, 188). This happiness means that the lover will joy in his lady's love even if sexual possession is forever denied him. Both Machaut and James denounce false, deceitful lovers who expect too much:

Et qui vorroit plus souhaidier,  
 Je n'os cuidier  
 Si fol cuidier  
 Que cils aime de cuer entier  
 Qui de tels biens n'a souffisance;  
 Car qui plus quiert, il vuet trichier,  
 S'Amours tant chier  
 L'a que fichier  
 Deingne par l'ueil de son archier  
 En son cuer d'eaus la congnoissance.

(*Remede*, 459-68)

[And he who wishes for more — I cannot imagine a belief so insane that one who loves with all his heart would not be satisfied with such good things (from love); for, he who seeks more wants to deceive, even though

Love holds him so dear that he deigns, by the eye of his archer, to strike into his heart the knowledge of love's good things.]

Bot there be mony of so brukill sort,  
 That feynis treuth in lufe bot for a quhile,  
 And setten all thaire wittis and disport  
 The sely innocent woman to begyle,  
 And so to wynne thaire lustis with a wile.  
 Suich feynit treuth is all bot trechorye,  
 Vnder the vmbre of ypocrisy.

(*Kingis Quair*, st. 134)

All this is an extension of the Boethian response to earthly vicissitude, applied uniquely to the erotic domain. James follows Machaut closely, agreeing that *sufficiency* brings happiness; however, he takes the doctrine one step further by implying that, because he loves wisely, he wins the Lady in the end:

And schortly, so wele Fortune has hir bore  
 To quikin treuly day by day my lore,  
 To my larges that I am cumyn agayn,  
 To blisse with hir that is my souirane.

And eke the goddis mercifull virking,  
 For my long pane and trewe seruice in lufe,  
 That has me gevin halë myn asking,  
 Quhich has my hert for-euir sett abufe  
 In perfyte joy; that neuir may remufe  
 Bot onely deth.

(*Kingis Quair*, st. 181, 188)

Whereas Esperence offers Machaut's narrator a remedy against Fortune, James's narrator proclaims that Fortune helped him attain his ends. His *blisse* and *joy* appear to be more solid and more lasting than Machaut's.

This said, Machaut's and James's narrators both overcome a problem of communication with their respective beloveds, they are educated by female authority figures, they grow in the course of the experience, they deliver long *plaintes* against Fortune, and they are comforted by or through the assistance of Esperence/Bon Espoir and Gude Hope. At the centre of their love experience is a beautiful garden, a *locus amoenus* and image of the feminine. In Machaut, the narrator composes a number of lyrics; he is a poet as well as a lover, and one theme of the *Remede* is the writing of

poetry. Similarly, the *Quair* narrator provides a lyric text to the songs of the night-ingle — “And to the notis of the philomene / Quhilkis sche sang, the ditee there I maid” (st. 62): one theme of the book is how it came into being. Finally, the Machaut dream is authenticated by Esperence placing a ring on the narrator’s finger, just as the dove brings authentication in James’s text. Since one may now think of the Machaldian first-person narrative as poetic pseudo-autobiography, *The Kingis Quair* adheres to the same subgenre.

In *La Fonteinne amoureuse*, the narrator functions as observer and witness to the love experience of another, one who can be designated as the Prince. The Prince, who is to be separated from his Lady, delivers a long complaint at night in his chamber. The next day, he and the narrator have a dream vision in which Venus and the Lady bring comfort and consolation.

The Prince can be identified as Jean duc de Berry, who, upon the liberation of his father, King Jean le Bon, taken prisoner at the battle of Poitiers, crossed the Channel to pledge himself in Jean’s stead. His situation, crossing the sea to become a prisoner in England, corresponds closely to that of James Stewart in *The Kingis Quair*. Like the *Quair* narrator, the Prince is in love and in despair over his separation from the Lady and his inability to communicate with her. At the beginning, the Prince delivers his complaint isolated in a room, alluding to a prison and stating that he is already in confinement, specifically that his heart is held in his Lady’s prison:

C’est ma dame qui tient en sa prison  
 Mon loial cuer; a trop bonne occoison  
 Y devint siens maugré li; c’est raison  
     Qu’il oubeïsse  
 Et qu’il y soit en tele entencion  
 Que mis jamais n’i soit a raënçon  
 Et qu’il y muire ou qu’il ait guerredon  
     Qui le garisse.

(*Fonteinne*, 827-34)

[It is my lady who holds my loyal heart in her prison; under the best circumstances, in spite of himself, he became hers; it is just that he obey her and that it be his intent never to be ransomed and to die there or to receive a reward that will spare him.]

In the end, he will go to prison, though in the meantime, he is comforted in a lovely garden by two *anima*-figures who teach him and give him counsel. Venus’s advice is

once again to love deeply and purely, to remain chaste, and to endure what Fortune does to him. The dream vision brings comfort and learning; also, as an authenticating device, the Prince and the Lady exchange rings. In this circular structure, the circularity underscored by the imagery of the fountain, the Prince goes from prison to freedom to prison much like the *Quair* narrator. In addition, both he and the *Fonteinne* narrator are lyric poets, and as in the *Remede*, the narrative tells how their poetry came into being.

No less significant is the fact that, whereas in *Remede de Fortune* the lovelorn suitor is a textual self, a poet-lover and clerkly narrator to be partially identified with the historical figure Guillaume de Machaut, in *La Fonteinne amoureuse* the two entities are separated. The clerkly narrator, famous for his poetry, obviously is a displacement of Machaut the implied author. He is the narrator as observer or witness, not the protagonist of his story. The protagonist, the lover figure, is now a prince. The Machaldian Prince, to be identified as Jean duc de Berry, resembles the Scottish Prince, to be identified as James Stewart, soon to be crowned King of Scots. Both are sons of kings. One was to be crowned, the other could have been. Both poets generate sympathy and empathy for that most tragic of figures, the prince in love, forced into exile and imprisoned, his love and his freedom thwarted by fate and Fortune. Thus, James conflates, as it were, the princely protagonist and the faithful friend and adviser, returning at the same time to the original structure of the *dit amoureux* in Guillaume de Lorris: the lover-narrator who tells his own story. And, because he is a prince, James deletes or ignores the comic elements in the narrator when the latter is only a clerkly author figure.

Finally, *Le Confort d'Ami* is a largely didactic work, the addressee being Jean le Mauvais, King of Navarre, held prisoner by King Jean le Bon of France from 1354 to 1356. In other words, Machaut is advising and comforting a royal prisoner. It is presumed that Friend is in love, and his amatory situation is alluded to from time to time. Although Friend is separated from his lady, he should think of her fondly with *Douce Pensee* born from *Souvenir*:

Je t'ai dit que Douce Pensee  
Est de Souvenir engendree,  
Dont toutes les fois qu'il avient  
Que de ta dame te souvient.

(*Confort*, 2153-56)

[I told you that Sweet Thought is born from Memory, therefore, always,  
when he (Memory) comes to you, think of your lady.]

The *locus amoenus* imagery of the garden is evoked by the stories of Susanna and the Elders and Proserpine and Pluto. In what is primarily a moral, didactic poem, the Speaker discourses at length on Fortune and on the necessity for Friend to remain loyal to Esperence. He also explores how a prince can practise the virtues — can *be* virtuous — and can also regain happiness and good fortune in the world. This Boethian thematic, in its political dimension and its relation to statecraft, is thought by recent scholars to be a central element in *The Kingis Quair*.<sup>7</sup>

Several of Froissart's narrative poems relate in similar ways to the Scottish books.<sup>8</sup> In *Le Paradis d'Amour*, Froissart's first love allegory, while in a lovely garden embellished with singing nightingales, the narrator complains, dreams, and is wafted to the seat of Amour. Plaisance and Esperance offer comfort: the narrator *will* win his Lady's love but must, under no circumstances, manifest haste or presumption and must never expect sexual favours — Machaut's Boethian doctrine in *Remede de Fortune*.

The doctrine of *souffissance* and the goal of consolation and comfort carry over to Froissart's other tales of love, including *Le Bleu Chevalier*. *Le Dit dou Bleu Chevalier* is based on Machaut's *Fonteinne amoureuse*. Like Machaut's Prince, Froissart's protagonist, perhaps to be identified as Louis duc d'Anjou, is a French hostage held prisoner in England. The narrator ministers to the Blue Knight in a garden with nightingales. The Knight suffers from clausturation and from separation from his Lady: held in a tower, he can neither see nor converse with her. He is urged to love and be loyal to his Lady. That is all, and that should suffice.

In the extended narrative of *L'Espinette amoureuse*, the narrator is comforted by Venus, who takes him to be her own vassal. Alone, enclosed in his room, he delivers a long complaint. In a dream, the Lady's voice gives comfort. He travels over the sea to England. Love and the Lady have taught him much, beginning when he was very young.

More interesting, no doubt, is *La Prison amoureuse*, which tells the story of two lovers who are also poets: Rose and Flos, that is, the Prisoner and the narrator. The narrator offers his homage and fealty to Love just as James's narrator does:

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7 Mapstone, "Kingship and the *Kingis Quair*"; Petrina, "*The Kingis Quair*" of James I of Scotland; Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing*, 60-89; Martin, "The Translations of Fortune." In her doctoral thesis, "The 'Counsele' of Philosophy," and in her article "The Open Sentence," Elliott relates the Boethian tradition to statecraft and kingship in the *dit amoureux* and *The Kingis Quair*.

8 Jean Froissart, *Le Paradis d'Amour*, ed. Dembowski; *Le Dit dou Bleu Chevalier*, in *Dits et Débats*, ed. Fourrier; *L'Espinette amoureuse*, ed. Fourrier; *La Prison amoureuse*, ed. Fourrier; *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece*, ed. Fourrier.

Et pour ce que tant vault services,  
 Que tenus je ne soie a nices,  
 Je voel servir de franc voloir  
 Celi qui tant me poet valoir,  
 A cui j'ai fait de liet corage  
 Seüreté, foi et hommage:  
 Amours, mon signeur et mon mestre.

(*Prison*, 21-27)

[And because feudal service is of such value, and so that I not be considered a fool, I wish to serve of my own free will him who can do so much for me, him to whom, with a glad heart, I have pledged surety, faith, and homage: to Love, my lord and master.]

Than wold I pray his blisfull grace benigne  
 To hable me vnto his service digne,  
 And euermore for to be one of tho  
 Him trewly for to serue in wele and wo.

(*Kingis Quair*, st. 39)

Rose is to be identified as Duke Wenceslas of Brabant, who was taken prisoner at the battle of Baesweiler in 1371. The imprisoned Rose is in love, and his Lady is unaware of his predicament. Rose sends her a complaint. Flos reassures his friend that he will be helped by personages that include Esperance. Flos offers an allegorical interpretation of Rose's captivity, the prison being the situation of the lover suffering from jealousy or his beloved's refusal. Rose's cell is called the "cambre [. . .] 'Amoureuse li bien celee'" (*Prison*, 3289-90):

di ensi que vous sejournés et demorés en prison, car coers jolis et amoureux,  
 qui aime en le fourme et maniere comme vous fetes, ne poet vivre ne  
 resgner sans estre emprisonnés. [. . .] de quoi tel vie doit estre appellee  
 amoureuse et prisons ossi. (Prison, Letter 12, p. 171)

[I declare thus that you live and remain in a prison, for a sweet and loving heart  
 who loves the way you do cannot live and reign unless as a prisoner. . . .  
 Consequently, such a life ought to be called a life of love and also a prison.]

Finally, *La Prison amoureuse* recounts how, as a book, it came into being: the Lady was so pleased with the embedded lyrics and correspondence that she urged them to be put together.

This text recounts the interactions between Flos and Rose, that is, between the clerkly poet of love and the imprisoned prince, who becomes a poet of love. Both are enamored of their respective ladies. As does Machaut, Froissart develops the theme of Horatian friendship between noble patron and clerkly poet. The very title — *La Prison amoureuse* — could have given James the idea for his poem of amorous incarceration, especially since Froissart spells out the symbolism latent in the Scottish text. For, beyond the four walls of a jail cell, the true devotee of *fin' amor* lives a life of imprisonment to love, his lady, and the gods and goddesses of love, yet (and most importantly) this is a good captivity, one that the true lover must embrace with steadfastness and joy.

Finally, *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece* tells how an older narrator remembers his earlier life and tells of it and the circumstances surrounding his remembrance. Nature and Philozophie come to him and encourage him to write. During a long winter night, he dreams of an encounter with Venus, who urges him to leave his room and to listen to the song of the nightingale. In the end, after a complex and convoluted story, on the road to Amour, he is pushed and wakes up. Although Froissart constructs a rich, complex, and indeed convoluted narrative structure, so different from James's relatively stark pattern, he and James tell a similar tale: a narrator reflects on what happened to him in the past; he learns of true love from Nature and Venus; he communes with a nightingale; and he becomes (James), or becomes again (Froissart), a writer.

Very little in *The Kingis Quair* can be traced to the works of Christine de Pizan.<sup>9</sup> James's near contemporary, she took the *dit amoureux* in a different direction, and it is possible that James was unacquainted with her texts. However, in *Le Livre du Debat de deux amans*, one speaker points out that good love should always remain happy even when the lover is (physically or allegorically) imprisoned; he should always seek comfort in Bonne Esperance and Doux Penser. And in *Le Livre du Dit de Poissy*, one of the unhappy ladies is separated from her lover, who was taken prisoner after the battle of Nicopolis in 1396. Finally, the Lady's little dog, praised and spoken to by the *Quair* narrator, recalls the Lady's *chiennet* in Machaut's *Jugement dou Roy de Behaingne*, who brings about communication between the witness narrator and the debating lover and lady.

Thus, almost all the motifs to be found in *The Kingis Quair* appeared earlier in the French *dit amoureux*. Insomnia, reading a book, a sea voyage, being taken prisoner, a

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9 Christine de Pizan, *The Love Debate Poems of Christine de Pizan*, ed. Altmann.

Boethian complaint, the *locus amoenus*, singing birds including the nightingale, the lovely lady, the lapdog, the prayer to Venus, ancient myth, the dream vision, being wafted on high, female authority figures, vassaldom to one of them, Venus, Fortune and her wheel, advice and comfort, the Boethian lesson of *sufficiance*, being suddenly awakened, the authenticating device, writing the book, and a circular structure — all these permeate the works of Machaut and Froissart, and some of them can also be traced to Guillaume de Lorris, whose *Roman de la Rose* is the first major allegory of love, and to Christine de Pizan. Above all, the French books offer what Chaucer does not: tales of love narrated in the first person in which the I-narrator is the protagonist and the lover, and the diegesis concerns his fortunes and misfortunes in love — the same as in *The Kingis Quair*.

Which French poems would have influenced James Stewart directly? Perhaps Machaut's *Remede de Fortune* with the Boethian nexus, comfort from Esperence, and the doctrine of *souffissance*; *La Fonteinne amoureuse* with the Prince to be imprisoned and yet comforted by Venus; and Froissart's *Prison amoureuse*, telling of a noble duke and his real and metaphorical prison of love. James could also have been acquainted with some of the other tales of love. During his stay in England, and to a somewhat lesser extent in Edinburgh, he would have had the same access to contemporary French books as Chaucer and Gower had. He also spent time in France, twice crossing the Channel at the behest of King Henry V. We know the extent to which *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Parliament of Fowls*, and the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* are permeated with French themes and motifs, and that they bear witness to the overriding presence of Machaut, Froissart, and *Le Roman de la Rose*.<sup>10</sup> The same is true for *The Kingis Quair*. Many of the themes and motifs could have come to James filtered through Chaucer; no doubt many did. But far from all of them. Especially not the over-all structure: the I-narrative in which the narrator recounts his own story as a lover, including the adoration of the unreachable lady, the experience in a garden or a prison, the dream vision, the message (*fin' amor*) from supreme donors of wisdom, wisdom which he acquires and which makes him a better man. Thus, the first book of high courtliness in Scottish literature, like Chaucer's texts, comes at the beginning of a national, Insular tradition but well along in the international Continental context. Part of its success can be attributed to the belatedness, to the intertextual richness and ripeness of a work so totally grounded in the conventions, themes, and motifs of Continental provenance.

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10 See Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*; and Calin, *The French Tradition*.

Can the French books help to interpret James Stewart's book? First of all, there is no inherent conflict between reading the *Quair* as 'reality,' that is, as James's personal story, on the one hand, and seeing the *Quair* as a more general, 'universal' allegory of love. *La Fonteinne amoureuse*, *Le Confort d'Ami*, *La Prison amoureuse*, and perhaps *Le Bleu Chevalier*, all universal tales of love, are directed to and speak of a single, specific prisoner in his concrete historical existence, a duke or prince held captive. It is eminently possible, indeed probable, given the philological evidence, that the medieval public would have identified the *Quair* narrator as the man who became King James I of Scotland. Again, although the text contains no direct allusion to marriage and although the pure, good, and faithful love in Machaut and Froissart is in no way directed towards or expected to end in marriage, the medieval audience, having recognized the protagonist to be James, could then presume the Lady to be the Joan Beaufort whom James indeed wed and who became his queen. To the extent that *The Kingis Quair* treats the question of kingship and the attainment of political wisdom as well as wisdom in matters of the heart, it can also be read as James's personal claim to having mastered the prudence, steadfastness, and self-reliance necessary to being a successful monarch. The medievals were as eager to find 'reality' in their texts as are their twentieth- and twenty-first-century descendants. This said, the conventionality and the stylization of the *Quair* are such that the narrator's story can be designated as pseudo-autobiography, just like the works of Machaut and Froissart in which the I-narrator is also the protagonist. Therefore, one need have no hesitation at reading James's prison as the sign and symbol of his captivity at the English court but also as an allegory for the prison of love, for the sudden absence of freedom and the loss of self felt by a courtly lover when he falls in love. That is how scholars read Froissart's *Prison amoureuse*; the same is true for *The Kingis Quair*.

But do I have the right to designate as a 'courtly lover' the protagonist of a story who weds his beloved? Whom he had presumably loved chastely prior to the happy ending? A few scholars insist that, because courtly love is grounded in adultery, it is either condemned or surpassed or simply not manifest in *The Kingis Quair*.<sup>11</sup> Lewis even states that, because of the marriage, James's is the first modern book of love.<sup>12</sup>

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11 Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, 255-57; Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition*, 34, 80; Bain, "The Nightingale and the Dove in *The Kingis Quair*"; Noll, "The Romantic Conception of Marriage"; McDiarmid, ed., Introduction, *The Kingis Quair of James Stewart*, 55-60; C. James, "The Kingis Quair."

12 Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, 235-37.

In my opinion, these critics are in error. The error can be traced back to Lewis's own *The Allegory of Love*, which lists the four constituent traits of courtly love, one of which is adultery.<sup>13</sup> Some of the more recent *Quair* scholars base their knowledge of the convention on Lewis, whose *Allegory of Love* is one of the great books on the Middle Ages; it also dates from 1936. At one time, when Robertsonian exegesis declared that there is no such thing as courtly love or that sexual desire unredeemed by *caritas* is always condemned in medieval books, apologists for Lewis conceded that they would have to disavow much of *The Allegory of Love*. Today, it is the extreme Robertsonian formulations that have been rejected, whereas Lewis's book remains. Today, most French medievalists would say that *fin' amor* did exist then and was as important as Lewis says it was — hence the resounding success, over the decades, of the scholarly group named The International Courtly Literature Society. It is also true, however, that scholars in medieval French studies have for the most part substituted 'obstacle' for 'adultery' in the erotic literary convention called *fin' amor*. Obstacle would be perhaps *the* necessary element in *fin' amor*. In addition, long before 1432, French books, including the *Erec* and the *Yvain* by Chrétien de Troyes, were exploring the problematic relations between *fin' amor* and marriage. And so many romances of *fin' amor* end in marriage and have a happy ending. Therefore, I can posit deep, pure love, obstacle, and a happy ending in *The Kingis Quair* — in other words, that James wrote a *dit amoureux* of *fin' amor* that the audience may have assumed to end in marriage.

The denouement is one of a happy ending; the marriage is a trifle more problematic. What really occurs is that James adopts the Boethian practice previously adopted by Guillaume de Machaut in *Remede de Fortune*. A man can attain happiness in the sphere of Eros by controlling what lies in his power to control — his way of loving. If he loves deeply and purely, if he is a *fin' aman*, then love is its own reward. For such love is grounded in *joy*, the *joy* of the troubadours. *Fin' amor* bestows its own joy on all who love well.

Then, what constitutes the joy? In *The Kingis Quair*, does the narrator's love end in physical possession? In marriage? Or in a chaste love which is its own reward? The denouement is hinted at yet not spelled out. Similar ambiguities are common in the French books. In *Remede de Fortune*, the narrator seemingly attains a successful outcome with his Lady — they love each other. Yet the poem does not end there. The

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13 Lewis, *The Allegory of Love*, 2.

ambiguity comes from an added section in which the Lady flirts with other men and the narrator falls into jealousy.<sup>14</sup> Froissart's texts also have ambiguous endings. The ambiguity in James's book, his ending, may well be conscious and intentional; such an element forms part of the tradition.

*Fin' amor* in the French poems is an admirable positive state. Love is good or, rather, good love is very good. It is not, however, particularly or necessarily Christian. It forms part of a refined, elegant, highly aristocratic culture, a culture that, in most of the romances and allegories of love, is secular — not anti-Christian in any reasonable sense of the term, yet not preaching Christian doctrine either. A number of *Quair* scholars, on the contrary, state that James does proclaim Christian doctrine (whether in accordance with the *fin' amor* or against it), that the poem teaches Christian cosmic harmony and peace, and that the story itself reflects God's plan.<sup>15</sup> While a Christian reading of the *Quair* is eminently legitimate, it is also the case that a few medievalists are still under the influence of D. W. Robertson and the Robertsonian school of Christian exegesis and that they will normally adopt a Christian stance in interpreting works composed during the Christian Middle Ages. The French evidence, however, dating back to the songs of the troubadours and the trouvères and to the earliest courtly romances, not to speak of the allegories of love, testifies to two cultures — an ecclesiastical culture and an aristocratic culture — that flourished in the Middle Ages and since then up to and beyond 1776 and 1789. Reading *The Kingis Quair* in line with the French makes me posit a secular aristocratic poem by James.

The structure of the *Quair* corresponds to that in Machaut and Froissart. A young man falls or is already in love; he is usually the narrator of his own story. He progresses from the court to a *locus amoenus* (a garden, grove, or park) and then returns to court. A variation on this structure has the lover progress from a real or metaphoric prison to the garden and then back to his prison or from the court to a prison and back to court. These are versions of the archetypal withdrawal and return of the epic hero and of the structuralist presence-absence-presence and

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14 On the thematic and structural ambiguities in *Remede*, see Calin and Earp, "The Lai in *Remede de Fortune*."

15 For example, McDiarmid, ed., Introduction, *The Kingis Quair of James Stewart*; Markland, "The Structure of *The Kingis Quair*"; MacQueen, "Tradition and the Interpretation of the *Kingis Quair*"; Bain, "The Nightingale and the Dove"; von Hendy, "The Free Thrall"; Noll, "The Romantic Conception of Marriage"; Rose, "The Oxymoron and the Structure of *The Kingis Quair*"; Boffey, "Chaucerian Prisoners"; James, "The *Kingis Quair*"; Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing*, 60-89.

possession-lack-possession. In the course of the narrative, the protagonist learns the secrets of life and love; in some sense, he grows from a boy into a man — or from a princely boy into a man worthy of exercising sovereignty. The transformation is brought about through a dream vision in which the lover-narrator receives instruction and comfort from divine or semi-divine, usually female authority figures, including Reason, Good Hope, Happiness, Venus (perhaps the most common), and Nature, as well as the God of Love. Adhering to a complex configuration of the dream experience, the dream is shown to be an extension of the dreamer's previous waking concerns (Freud's day residue) and a positive response to his sexual anxiety (Freud's wish-fulfillment). It is also shown to be a genuine *somnium* and *oraculum* by means of authenticating devices — in the French texts usually the giving or exchange of a ring; in *The Kingis Quair*, Venus's turtle dove comes with a flower and a message.

Lastly, in Machaut and Froissart, the art of poetry — the theme of art and the artist — is a major component of the book: the narrator-lover or the narrator-observer or the noble lover all compose poems. The poems contribute to the narrative and authenticate its and the lover(s)' sincerity and are there for their own sake, as art. In Machaut's *Voir Dit* and in Froissart's *Prison amoureuse* the narrative recounts how it (the book) comes into being, how the Lady requests that the lyrics and the prose letters be gathered to tell her (and their) story. Even when the noble lover and the clerkly narrator are separated into two distinct characters, both grow in the course of the narrative, and both become or are poets. They share dreaming and the act of writing. However, as noted above, whereas Machaut and Froissart include, embedded in their narratives, lyric poetry ascribed to their noble patrons (Jean de Berry in *La Fontaine amoureuse*, and Wenceslas de Brabant in *La Prison amoureuse* and *Meliador*), James Stewart writes his own book, which cites his own textual offering to the music of the birds as well as his own love-complaints. This is one of his most significant departures from the tradition. *Quair* scholars emphasize, with good reason, James's artistic self-consciousness and the extent to which his narrator tells how he learned to write and how his book comes into being.<sup>16</sup> This is Chaucerian, of course, and also the central convention in the French allegories of love.

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16 Slabey, "Art Poetical' in *The Kingis Quair*"; Brown, "The Mental Traveller"; Ebin, "Boethius, Chaucer, and *The Kingis Quair*" and *Illuminator*, *Makar, Vates*, 50-55; Straus, "Convention in *The Kingis Quair*"; Fradenburg, "The Scottish Chaucer"; Robertson, "'Raptus' and the Poetics of Married Love"; Petrina, "My maisteris dere."

Although a very different text in so many ways, *The Testament of Cresseid* by Robert Henryson partakes of courtly traditions just as *The Kingis Quair* does. This magnificent poem is one of the masterworks of medieval literature.<sup>17</sup> Bound intertextually to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Testament* has been portrayed as offering commentary on the *Troilus* or presenting a sequel or alternative ending.<sup>18</sup> Some critics insist on Henryson's critiquing or destabilizing Chaucer and undermining his authority.<sup>19</sup> For the most part they agree on Henryson's powerful, dark, tragic vision in contrast to the Chaucerian — tragedy in response to Chaucer's broad ironic comedy or to Chaucer's more humane tragedy.<sup>20</sup>

Henryson tells his story through a narrator, old and suffering from the cold weather, a devotee of Venus obliged to sit before the fire and read books, one of which is *Troilus and Criseyde*. Allegedly based on his reading of the other book, he tells how Cresseid, abandoned by Diomedes, falls socially and morally. Returning home to her father, she berates Cupid and Venus for having betrayed her. Cresseid falls into a trance and dreams that she is indicted before the seven planets, who are also seven gods. Cupid demands punishment for Cresseid's blasphemy, apostasy, and libel — she blamed others for her own sins, and she accused Venus of being blind. Found guilty, she awakes to discover that she is now a leper, and she repairs to a leper house to beg by the roadside. When Troilus passes by, neither he nor Cresseid recognizes the other. Informed of Troilus's identity, Cresseid repents, delivers a moving testament, and dies. Informed of Cresseid's identity, Troilus erects her tomb.

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17 Quotations from Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* are taken from *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. Fox.

18 Among other examples, Jentoft, "Henryson as Authentic 'Chaucerian'"; Craik, "The Substance and Structure of *The Testament of Cresseid*"; Kratzmann, *Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations*, 63-103; Fox, ed., Introduction, *Robert Henryson*, 20-23, 42-44, 50-56; McDiarmid, *Robert Henryson*, 88-116; Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, 165-87; MacQueen, "Poetry – James I to Henryson,"; Torti, "From 'History' to 'Tragedy'"; Storm, "The Intertextual Cresseida"; McKim, "The European Tragedy of Cresseid."

19 Miskimin, *The Renaissance Chaucer*, 205-15; Kindrick, *Robert Henryson*, 118-48; Stiller, "Robert Henryson's Cresseid and Sexual Backlash"; Johnson, "Whatever Happened to Criseyde?"; Drexler, "Cresseid as the Other."

20 See Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition*, 36-39; Spearing, "Conciseness and *The Testament of Cresseid*"; Gray, *Robert Henryson*, 162-208; Scheps, "A Climatological Reading of Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*"; Torti, "From 'History' to 'Tragedy'"; Parkinson, "Henryson's Scottish Tragedy"; Kelly, *Chaucerian Tragedy*, 216-59; McKim, "The European Tragedy of Cresseid"; Haydock, "The pane of Cresseid for to modifie."

A number of elements in Henryson's text correspond to and reflect elements in the French *dits amoureux*. In Machaut's *Le Jugement dou Roy de Navarre* an old narrator remains indoors in winter because of the plague. He leaves in spring to go hunting but is summoned by Lady Bonneürté (Happiness, Good Fortune) to be tried before the King of Navarre. He is accused of having given a false judgement in the earlier *Jugement dou Roy de Behaingne*, in essence, of having defamed ladies and the God of Love.

Machaut brings together the themes of winter, the cold, old age, and the plague. Henryson does the same, foregrounding leprosy, however, and not the plague. This said, the medievals associated the two. John B. Friedman proposes that Henryson was influenced by a treatise in Latin on the plague as divine punishment.<sup>21</sup> Machaut's and Henryson's respective depictions of the malady are similar in some of the details:

Et [. . .] leur couleur en perdoient.  
 Car tuit estoient mal traitié,  
 Descoulouré et deshaitié:  
 Boces avoient et grans clos  
 Dont on moroit.

(*Roy de Navarre*, 320-24)

[And . . . their complexion faded. For they all were in a bad state, pale and ill; they had lumps and big pustules from which they died.]

Thy lustie lyre ouirsprede with spottis blak,  
 And lumpis haw appeirand in thy face:  
 . . . . .  
 Of hir becaus scho was sa deformait,  
 With bylis blak ouirsprede in hir visage,  
 And hir fair colour fadit and alterait.

(*Cresseid*, 339-40, 394-96)

In some of the details Machaut's November corresponds to Henryson's April:

M'en aloie par mi ma chambre.  
 . . . . .  
 Pour ce me tenoie a couvert;

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21 Friedman, "Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* and the *Judicio Solis in Conviviis Saturni* of Simon of Couvin."

Car ce qu'estre soloit tout vert  
 Estoit mué en autre teint,  
 Car bise l'avoit tout desteint  
 Qui mainte fleur a decopée  
 Par la froidure de s'espée.

(*Roy de Navarre*, 26-36)

[I wandered about in my room. . . . For these reasons, I remained inside; for what used to be all green was transformed into another hue, for the north wind, who cut down many a flower by the coldness of its sword, had discoloured everything.]

Schouris of haill gart fra the north discend,  
 That scantlie fra the cauld I nicht defend.

3it neuertheles within myne oratur  
 I stude, . . .

. . . . .  
 The northin wind had purifyit the air  
 And sched the mistie cloudis fra the sky;  
 The froist freisit, the blastis bitterly  
 Fra Pole Artick come quhisling loud and schill,  
 And causit me remufe aganis my will.

(*Cresseid*, 6-9, 17-21)

It is a time of storms, wind, contagion, melancholy, madness, and death, unleashed by God. This is a *mundus senescens* in which the narrator is forced into solitude and portrayed as a writer of love deprived of love.

The would-be writer of love deprived of love is thwarted by winter; with the change in the season, it turns out, his situation improves in one respect and not in the other. In springtime, joy triumphs over melancholy, health over corruption, and life over death. The Machaldian narrator would like to participate. He cannot, for a number of reasons, some relating to his age and others to his social class. An inept lover and unreliable narrator, he defends himself badly at court. Among other things, he mocks the female allegorical figures who plead against him. On the other hand, it can be argued that the trial machinery is biased — the King of Navarre's councillors include ladies from Bonneürté's camp, and the accusation itself shifts in the course of the proceedings. In a comic, good-natured ending, the clerkly narrator cannot function in the courtly aristocratic world as a lover but can always do so as a

writer. Machaut's narrator is condemned to compose a *ballade*, a *virelay*, and a *rondeau*.

In his last great tale of love Machaut casts himself as an aged writer of love and an aged lover: *senex amans*. *Le Livre du Voir Dit*, which many consider to be Guillaume de Machaut's masterpiece, tells of an old narrator, famous for his poetry and music — a figure for Machaut the implied author — and of his amorous relations with the young Toute-Belle. Toute-Belle pays him court because of his authorial celebrity. Old, ill, metaphorically impotent, and a coward, he avoids visiting her in winter because of bandits and bad weather, and in spring as well. On the one occasion when they are together, the narrator prays to Venus and enjoys some form of *consolatio*. The text can be read as an anti-romance in which the clerkly narrator cuts a sorry figure as a lover and also as a teller of his own story because, although he appears to be accurate enough concerning the facts, we see him to be utterly unreliable in terms of judgment, unable to interpret the facts that he himself reveals. Finally, the intertextuality of *Le Voir Dit* is enormous, given that it parodies a number of the author's previous love allegories and because the story could not come into being without the narrator's reputation due to his previous work. In other words, the French poem is auto-textual whereas Henryson's poem, following after Chaucer, is heterotextual. Thus, just as the *Cresseid* narrator is concerned with finding the 'true' version of his story — "Quha wait gif all that Chauceir wrait was trew?" (64) — so Toute-Belle and her narrator are also committed to the authenticity of their *True Story*:

Le Voir Dit veuil je qu'on appelle  
Ce traitié que je fais pour elle,  
Pour ce que ja n'i mentira.

(*Voir Dit*, 518-20)

[I want this book, the one I am writing for her, to be called The True Story,  
for in it I will never lie.]

Yet, just as the *Cresseid* narrator leaves open the question as to which *quair* offers the true story, so the *Voir Dit* narrator is torn throughout his *livre* as to what is true and what is not. Irony is a powerful element in both works.

Froissart's *Joli Buisson de Jonece*, an intertextual reworking of *Le Voir Dit*, develops roughly the same thematic. The old narrator, known as a writer, bewails that the world mistreats him. In the cold of winter, in a dream vision, he complains to Venus that his youth is gone and that his lady threw him over for another. Venus serves as

a guide, leading him to Jonece. In time, the narrator is taught the wisdom of the Bush/Grove of Youth, knowledge which includes the seven planetary gods and the seven ages of man. Important for our reading of Henryson are the motifs of winter and old age and of knowledge of the planets and gods, in a poem intertextually grounded in a famous preceding poem.

No less important in the French tradition is a series of texts from the fifteenth century, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy* by Alain Chartier and the sequence of poems which make up the *Belle Dame sans Mercy* Cycle, the second major literary controversy in the French vernacular, the first being the debate over *Le Roman de la Rose*.<sup>22</sup> In Chartier's original *Belle Dame*, the narrator, wretched because of his lady's death, overhears a dialogue between a Lover and a Lovely Lady. The Lover uses every argument in the book to convince the Lady to have pity on him and, therefore, to accept his love service, but she refuses on all counts. The narrator has heard since then that the Lover died of chagrin.

The Cycle is comprised of a series of narratives in verse which recount a trial scene: the Lovely Lady accused before the God of Love's judgement seat. Among those of interest for the *Testament of Cresseid* are Baudet Herenc's *Le Parlement d'Amour*, Achille Caulier's *La Cruelle Femme en Amour*, and the anonymous *Les Erreurs du Jugement de la Belle Dame sans Merci*. In *Le Parlement d'Amour*, the narrator witnesses a trial held by Amours before his parliament, where Desir and Espoir accuse the Lovely Lady of cruelty, pride, and disdain, and of having insulted Amours; due to the absence of defence counsel, the case is adjourned. In *La Cruelle Femme en Amour*, the wretched narrator has a vision, whereby he is conveyed to Amours's judgement seat, where the previous case, which had led to acquittal, is re-opened. Here, because the Lady was loyal to no-one and wished to be altogether free from love, she is found guilty of lèse-majesté vis-à-vis Amours and is then condemned to be executed. And in *Les Erreurs du Jugement de la Belle Dame sans Merci*, the Lovely Lady's heirs appeal the previous judgement and, for the sake of her honour and the family's good name, petition that it be overturned; the new verdict states that there were no errors in procedure and that the Lady is indeed guilty. In all these texts, the narrator is an unhappy lover who recounts the story as an observer or witness. The story line is roughly the same throughout: the Lovely Lady of Chartier's poem is

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22 Chartier, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*; Chartier, Herenc, and Caulier, *Le Cycle de La Belle Dame sans Mercy*. Recent good work has been devoted to rehabilitating Chartier: Cayley, *Debate and Dialogue*; and Cayley and Kinch, eds., *Chartier in Europe*.

accused of *lèse-majesté*, of having betrayed Amours (Henryson's Cupid) by her discourse in Chartier's text, especially the phrase "Amours est cruel losengier, / Aspre en fait et doulx a mentir" (313-14), which corresponds to Cresseid's reproach: "O fals Cupide, is nane to wyte bot thow / And thy mother, of lufe the blind goddes!" (134-35). By that phrase and elsewhere, she accuses the God of Love of cruelty, duplicity, and lying.

The majority of the texts, though not all, take the Lover's side against the Lovely Lady, manifesting what appears to be the reaction on the part of male writers and courtiers against a woman. Just as a number of feminist articles treat the gender question in Henryson,<sup>23</sup> so also a gender-oriented approach to the French would argue that in the sequels the Lovely Lady is condemned repeatedly in a court of justice, a quintessentially masculine institution presided over by a male divinity: her penalty is to be drowned in a well of tears. The mode of execution can be termed, from a Freudian perspective, vaginal, as the appropriate sentence for a woman who has renounced her femininity and the traits, including pity, which purportedly give meaning to a woman's existence. In addition, just as Felicity Riddy argues convincingly that Cresseid's abjection is misogynistic punishment for being a woman in a woman's body, the same is true for the Lady through much of the *Belle Dame sans Mercy* Cycle.<sup>24</sup> The trial machinery allows for, when it does not require, sequels. In Baudet Herenc, judgment is postponed to allow the Lovely Lady to find an advocate; other poems relaunch the action by having one side or the other claim a mistrial and file an appeal. In addition, the ludic exploitation of the judicial increases with time. *Les Erreurs du Jugement* argues, for and against, the twelve errors alleged to have taken place during the trial recounted by Achille Caulier.

As part of the judicial machinery, each poem examines the text of Chartier's *Belle Dame* and, occasionally, the text of the previous poem(s) just as they would in a 'real' trial, especially one in which a person's statements are being scrutinized for heresy or for *lèse-majesté*. In addition, the poets do not hesitate to invent new material within the textual narratives, that is, they not only reinterpret but also recreate their predecessors'

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23 Stiller, "Robert Henryson's Cresseid and Sexual Backlash"; Aronstein, "Cresseid Reading Cresseid"; Cox, "Froward Language and Wanton Play"; Riddy, "Abject odious"; McKim, "The European Tragedy of Cresseid"; and Knutson, "Constructing Chaucer in the Fifteenth Century." See also intelligent, challenging articles by Ives and Parkinson, "Scottish Chaucer, Misogynist Chaucer," and Dunnigan, "Feminizing the Text."

24 Riddy, "Abject odious"; also, Drexler, "Cresseid as the Other."

work, and thus criticize or refute it. Such a tendency is most flagrant in *La Dame loyale en Amour*, where the defence of the Lovely Lady is based on the claim that she does not deny love or blaspheme the God of Love: she loves and is loved by someone else and is faithful to him. Achille Caulier will then deny the validity of the new evidence; and, now on the offensive, the Lover's advocates, in *Les Erreurs du Jugement*, submit that the Lady spurned the advances of more than ten suitors only to sell herself to the highest bidder. Other poets will take the same route and introduce new material — the Lady ogled at the Lover during the dance, or they exchanged a kiss, or he is not in fact deceased — which can then be interpreted or refuted.

Thus, these poems are inherently, essentially intertextual: they come into being as interpretations and critiques of the preceding texts and unite with them to form a narrative cycle, similar to the earlier French *chanson de geste* and the Arthurian and Reynardian cycles yet strikingly more self-conscious. Last of all, such texts, which offer as their central thematic the interpretation of texts, call out, as it were, to be interpreted in turn by the implied audience. Indeed, modern scholars differ with regard to the way in which the Cycle should be read as much as they differ over Henryson's *Cresseid*. Like the scholars of Middle Scots, French medievalists offer divergent readings of fifteenth-century mental structures on the nature of love and of nobility and what it means to be a lady.<sup>25</sup>

Outside the tradition of the *dit amoureux*, the most important elements of a possible French influence in the *Testament of Cresseid* would be the leprosy motif and the testament. In Bérout's *Roman de Tristan*, King Marc is convinced to punish Iseut, caught (almost) *in flagrante delicto*, by handing her over to a herd of one hundred male lepers to be their sex slave, though Tristan rescues her in time. In the *chanson de geste* *Ami et Amile*, Ami is punished by God with leprosy for having taken Amile's place in judicial combat and having lied to do so and for having wed Charlemagne's daughter (as if he were Amile) when he was already married to another. Amile sacrifices his two infant sons so that their blood can cure his friend's malady. Similarly, in *La Queste del Saint Graal*, Perceval's sister sacrifices herself so that her blood can restore a leper to health. And in the Occitan romance *Jaufré*, the protagonist rescues a maiden, a baby, and some children from the machinations of two wicked lepers, one of them a monster intent on rape and blood sacrifice.<sup>26</sup> These analogues develop a thematic of

25 Some of this material is taken from Calin, "Intertextual Play and the Game of Love."

26 Bérout, *Le Roman de Tristan*, ed. Muret and Defourques; *Ami et Amile*, *chanson de geste*, ed. Dembowski; *La Queste del Saint Graal*, ed. Pauphilet; *Jaufré*, *roman arthurien*, ed. Brunel.

leprosy. Leprosy is connected to sexual promiscuity and deviance, for lepers are presumed to be especially lecherous, their illness caused by or the punishment for that lust. They are presumed to be evil, their wickedness made manifest in acts of illicit sex or violence or perjury. God punishes lepers for their sins. However, the leper can also be one of God's chosen, chastised by God out of love and as a test of faith and virtue. Finally, since leprosy can be cured by the shedding of innocent virginal blood, the leper becomes a figure for sinful humanity redeemed by the blood of the Lamb on the Cross.

With regard to Henryson's thematic of leprosy, community of lepers, last testament, and death, note also that early in the thirteenth century Jean Bodel and Baude Fastoul wrote *Congés*.<sup>27</sup> These farewell poems are also last testaments, for the two poets have developed leprosy and are leaving Arras to go to a leper house where they will be dead to life.

A cold, dark, windy April in Scotland — the equivalent of winter elsewhere — sets the tone for the *Testament of Cresseid*. This weather plus the god Saturn plus the old, cold, and dry narrator, whose condition relates to old age in the year, dominate Henryson's cold tragic narrative which begins at sunset and in which, as Larry M. Sklute observes, the sun sets twice but doesn't rise.<sup>28</sup> This imagery is to be found, too, in *Le Jugement dou Roy de Navarre*, *Le Voir Dit*, and *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece*. In the French texts, which exploit the vein of comedy, winter, old age, melancholy, decay, and death are contrasted with and succeeded by spring, youth, the sanguine, growth, and life. Henryson concentrates on the tragic, eliminating the jovial and sanguine except by implication. One reason for the disparity is that, in the *dits amoureux* by Machaut and Froissart, the old, cold, and dry narrators are also the protagonists, and their follies in the domain of love are balanced against their success as clerks in the domain of art. Henryson's narrator — the narrator as implied author — purportedly relates what he has read in a book. He is not personally involved in the diegesis and therefore has greater liberty in breaking with the tradition and setting his own ambience for the story. One model for the new ambience of the failure of love due to the treachery of women, the ambience of tragedy, comes from Chartier's *Belle Dame sans Mercy* and the Cycle which it inspired, with their portrayal of the coldness and the fickleness of women.

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<sup>27</sup> *Les Congés d'Arras*, ed. Ruelle.

<sup>28</sup> Sklute, "Phoebus Descending," 189.

The plague in Machaut is transformed or, rather, concretized as leprosy in Henryson. Cresseid's leprosy is perceived, as in the French tradition, as venereal disease, as the corruption and decay associated with promiscuous sex, a manifestation, symbolic and concrete, of sexual corruption and decay.<sup>29</sup> The woman is punished as a woman, in her sexuality, by a panel of largely male divinities in a masculine institution: a trial before the law. Cresseid recalls Alain Chartier's *Lovely Lady* and the judicial proceedings that condemned her. Significantly, to be subject to leprosy or to drown in a well are both manifestations of the cold and moist, the tempers associated with the feminine. Cresseid and the *Belle Dame* are adjudged guilty of roughly the same offence: breaking a sexual taboo — promiscuity and lechery in the one, the absolute refusal of love in the other — accompanied by blasphemy and heresy:

Si l'aproche en deux faiz premis  
De crisme tout manifesté.  
Premier, je diz qu'elle a commis  
Crisme de leze magesté.

(Caulier, *La Cruelle Femme*, 745-48)

[I put forward against her, as ordered, two manifestly criminal acts. First, I state that she committed the crime of *lèse-majesté*.]

‘Lo, quod Cupide, ‘quaha will blaspheme the name  
Of his awin god, outhir in word or deid,  
. . . . .  
With sclander and defame iniurious.’

(*Cresseid*, 274-84)

The blasphemy and heresy, and the sexual transgression, are directed against the same deity, named *Amour* or *Cupid*. The doctrine of *Eros* is the same — medieval *fin' amor*, a love grounded in high ideals: loyalty, service, and the gift of self inherent in *joven*, the spirit of youthful ardour and *joy*. These are lacking in the *Belle Dame* (too calculating, too self-centred) and in *Cresseid* (too changeable, too self-centred). Both ladies are spiritually old, close to death; therefore the one is executed and the other endures a living death administered by the god of *senectus*, Saturn. And then she dies also.

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29 On this topic, see Rowland, “The ‘Seiknes Incurabill’ in Henryson’s *Testament of Cresseid*”; Fox, ed., Introduction, *Robert Henryson*, 23-43; Hume, “Leprosy or Syphilis in Henryson’s *Testament of Cresseid*?”; and Brody, *The Disease of the Soul*, 173-77.

In Machaut, Froissart, and Henryson (as well as in Gower), the stories are told by old men seeking to be devotees of Venus but lacking the virility inherent in *joven* and *joy*, subject instead to *melancholia*, as writers and as greybeards under the sign of Saturn. This masculine *melancholia* and *acedia* contribute to and justify, in psychological terms, an atmosphere of misogyny in which men and male deities punish the women who defy their law.

Like Chaucer's, the French tales of love are situated in a conventional, self-contained, fictional, high courtly world of ladies, noblemen, and male and female allegories. Henryson adapts this machinery to his own closed, self-contained, fictional neo-pagan world of mythological characters and classical gods who exercise their influence as astrological planets. In both worlds Eros rules. The fact that Christianity is absent from the French books helps explain why Henryson's poem can be and has been read also as non-Christian.<sup>30</sup> I say 'can be read' because a number of studies argue cogently for a Christian reading of *The Testament of Cresseid*.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the doctrinal ambiguity and the interpretative indeterminacy which characterize *Le Jugement dou Roy de Navarre* and *Le Voir Dit* and which are the *raison d'être* of the *Belle Dame Cycle* apply also to *The Testament of Cresseid*. Scholars are also free to debate for what sin Cresseid is punished: whoredom, promiscuity, sexual betrayal, lechery, apostasy, blasphemy, slander, the abdication of responsibility, or the denial of life. Scholars are also free to debate Cresseid's trial, to what extent the proceedings are fair and just, and, therefore, how seriously we should respond to that increment in the narrative. One can argue that the trial machinery in Henryson's text is as warped, as consciously defective, as it is in Machaut and the *Belle Dame Cycle*: Cresseid is not allowed to defend herself, the two justiciars (Saturn and Cynthia) are hostile to her, and her punishment far exceeds the alleged crime.<sup>32</sup>

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30 Taking this approach, among many others, are Noll, "*The Testament of Cresseid*"; Jentoft, "Henryson as Authentic 'Chaucerian'"; McNamara, "Divine Justice in Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*"; Adamson, "Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*"; Sklute, "Phoebus Descending"; Kohl, "Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*"; Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance*, 165-87; and Boffey, "Lydgate, Henryson, and the Literary Testament."

31 Taking this approach, among others, are Patterson, "Christian and Pagan in *The Testament of Cresseid*"; Benson, "Troilus and Cresseid in Henryson's *Testament*"; Kindrick, *Robert Henryson*, 118-48; Nitecki, "'Fenzeit of the New'"; Quinn, "Henryson's 'ballet schort'"; Dunnigan, "Impossible Saint, Improbable Magdelene?"; and McGinley, "'In brief sermone ane pregnant sentence'."

32 For a very intelligent article arguing that Henryson critiques the land law judicial proceedings of his day through Cresseid's trial before the planets, see Mathews, "Land, Lepers, and the Law in *The Testament of Cresseid*."

Complexity and ambiguity are further augmented by the conditions of narratology, the fact that the Machaut, Froissart, and Henryson narrators are inherently unreliable, not for the facts *per se* but for their presentation and the moulding of the implied audience's response. The *Cresseid* narrator can be read as sympathetic or antipathetic, as a learned ironic author figure who leads the reader by the hand or as a cold impotent lecher who plays the fool. How one interprets the narrator will help shape the interpretation of the poem as a whole. As a final example can be cited *Cresseid's* dream vision which, like more than one comparable oneiric experience in the French books, can be deemed either an authentic, objective *somnium* or *visio* or the more subjective *insomnium* or *visum* caused by the medieval equivalent of Freud's day residue. What is the truth? How can we know it? These are fundamental questions to which the implied reader or audience has to provide the answers.

Last but not least, the French *dits amoureux* and the poems of the *Belle Dame Cycle* contain a meditation on the functioning of language and reveal the conscious practice of intertextuality. So for *The Kingis Quair*, so also for *The Testament of Cresseid*. As in the French poems, language is the action, what *Cresseid* says rather than what she does, what and how the narrator says it; and the story turns around the distinction between good and bad speech, how the one is to be rewarded and the other punished. Just as *The Testament of Cresseid* replies to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, so Machaut's *Roy de Navarre* replies to his own *Roy de Behaingne*, Froissart's *Buisson de Jonece* replies to Machaut's *Voir Dit*, and each poem in the Cycle replies to the preceding poems and to Chartier's original *Belle Dame sans Mercy*. The Continental tradition, so 'bookish' as C. S. Lewis would say, so profoundly intertextual in its essence, helps explain Robert Henryson's own intertextuality vis-à-vis Chaucer and also vis-à-vis the French love poems.

Ostentatious bookishness and conscious, willful intertextuality, with an author's revelling in the pre-texts he appropriates, devours, and recreates; and artistic self-consciousness with the notion that a novel's major thematic will be concerned with the writing of novels and, more specifically, with how it itself came into being — these are givens in our time, recognized and attended to by creator and critic alike. Inevitably, they have also been displaced onto the Middle Ages, not always with success. It ought to be obvious that *fabliaux* were not written to problematize the writing of *fabliaux*. However, in the later Middle Ages, and in the *dit amoureux* especially, narrative does become metanarrative, and the metanarrative is intertextual. Consequently, late medieval texts manifest some of the features found in their

twentieth- and twenty-first-century counterparts. They are perhaps indicative of mannerism, a state of mind or a pattern of mental structures that unites our respective ages. They certainly enable today's scholars to envisage the later Middle Ages with greater sympathy and insight than was the case for preceding generations and thus enrich the national heritage, both French and Scots.

The impact of the *dit amoureux* is not limited to *The Kingis Quair* and *The Testament of Cresseid*. *The Palis of Honoure* by Gavin Douglas and *The Goldyn Targe* and *The Thrissill and the Rois* by William Dunbar can also be characterized as high courtly tales of love. The tradition extends up to the second half of the sixteenth century with *The Court of Venus* by John Rolland. It is surely significant that the *dit amoureux*, with its wit, play, complexity, and ambiguity, proves to be one of the genres most congenial to the Makars and their public. For the Makars, like their counterparts in England, were aware of, and totally up-to-date concerning, the dominant literary modes and production in the French-speaking lands. The *dit amoureux* in the Scottish literary culture proves to be one element in an aristocratic, transnational world of letters. So much of the traditional medieval and early modern Scots literature is, as scholars now recognize, strikingly international and European. The international, European-oriented Scotland of Smith and Hume, for that matter of MacDiarmid and Muir, was preceded brilliantly in earlier times.

**University of Florida**

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