

Literary and Political Governance
in Scottish Reception of Chaucer, 1424-1513

Chelsea Victoria Honeyman

Department of English

McGill University, Montréal

June 2009

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This study posits an intertextual paradigm of governance, modelled on the interdependent nature of late-medieval Anglo-Scottish cultural relations, for interpreting Chaucerian reception by Scots poets of the long fifteenth century. These poets use Chaucer to enrich their own works in ways that advance an autonomous, self-governing Scottish literary tradition. Chapter 1, establishing context for the study, comprises two sections. The first analyses how Scottish chronicles (including Bower's *Scotichronicon*, Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle* and the anonymous "Scottis Originale") interpret selected details of English chronicles to suit Scottish interests; the second explores interdependency's importance to the eponymous heroes of Barbour's *Bruce* and Harry's *Wallace*, who defer to friends, monarchs and moral ideals in order to further their goal of Scottish autonomy. Chapter 2 explores the *Kingis Quair*'s paradox of freedom through service, which applies not only to the narrator's liberation through service to his lady but also to the poet's literary emancipation through a transformation of motifs from Chaucer's *Troilus* and *Knight's Tale*. Chapter 3 examines how Robert Henryson's *Moral Fables* argue for a monarch's success through restraint; the *Testament of Cresseid* echoes this concept both in Cresseid's evolution from a slave of lust to a liberated penitent and in Henryson's creation of an alternative yet narratively consistent fate for Chaucer's Criseyde. Chapter 4 focuses on Gavin Douglas' *Eneados* and *Palice of Honour*; each depicts a dynamic in which Douglas' debt to Chaucerian works such as the *Legend of Good Women* and the *House of Fame* is matched by Chaucer's need for Douglas to perpetuate his legacy. Chapter 5 demonstrates how William Dunbar's philosophical, petitionary,

occasional and courtly poems advocate self-governance as a condition for governing others; special attention is paid to poetry concerning James IV and Margaret Tudor's marriage, wherein Dunbar articulates reciprocal responsibilities paralleling those of the new relationship between Scotland and England, and to the *Goldyn Targe*, wherein Dunbar establishes a similarly reciprocal relationship with Chaucer. The conclusion suggests future applications of the study of governance in Scottish poetry, particularly the evolution of the concept of literary governance with the rise of parliamentary governance in sixteenth-century Scotland.

Précis

Cette étude avance un paradigme intertextuel de “gouvernance,” basé sur la relation interdépendante entre les cultures anglaises et écossaises pendant le Bas Moyen Âge, pour interpréter la réception chaucérienne des poètes écossais au quinzième siècle et au début du seizième siècle. Ces poètes emploient Chaucer pour enrichir leurs œuvres propres afin de promouvoir une tradition littéraire écossaise autonome. Chapitre 1, établissant le contexte pour cette étude, comprend deux sections. La première section analyse comment les chroniques écossaises (telles que le *Scotichronicon* de Bower, le *Original Chronicle* de Wyntoun et l’anonyme «Scottis Originale») interprètent les détails choisis des chroniques anglaises pour convenir aux intérêts écossais; la deuxième section examine l’importance vitale de l’interdépendance pour les héros éponymes du *Bruce* de Barbour et du *Wallace* de Harry, deux leaders qui défèrent aux amis, aux rois et aux idéales morales pour réaliser leur but d’une Écosse autonome. Chapitre 2 explore le *Kingis Quair* et son articulation du paradoxe d’une liberté qui se trouve dans la servitude, un paradoxe qui s’applique non seulement à la liberté achevée par le narrateur dans son service pour sa dame, mais aussi à l’émancipation du poète dans sa transformation des motifs tirés du *Troilus* et du *Knight’s Tale* du Chaucer. Chapitre 3 examine comment les *Moral Fables* du Robert Henryson soutiennent qu’un roi puissant, c’est un roi modéré; ce sentiment trouve un écho chez le *Testament of Cresseid*, qui suit non seulement Cresseid dans son évolution personnelle (d’une esclave du désir à une pénitente libérée) mais aussi Henryson dans sa création d’un destin pour Cresseid qui contraste mais complète le destin de Criseyde dans le *Troilus*. Chapitre 4 centre sur l’*Eneados* et le *Palice of*

Honour de Gavin Douglas; ces deux œuvres décrivent une dynamique dans laquelle la dette de Douglas aux œuvres chaucériennes telles que le *Legend of Good Women* et le *House of Fame* est égalée par le besoin des œuvres chaucériennes d'être préservées dans la connaissance des lecteurs par les efforts des poètes tel que Douglas. Chapitre 5 démontre comment les poèmes philosophiques, pétitionnaires, occasionnelles et courtoises de William Dunbar préconise la gouvernance de soi comme condition pour la gouvernance des autres; une attention spéciale est faite aux œuvres dédiées au mariage du Margaret Tudor James IV, dans lesquelles sont articulées des responsabilités réciproques qui trouvent des parallèles dans les relations anglo-écossaises de l'ère, et au *Goldyn Targe*, dans lequel Dunbar établie de la même façon une relation réciproque avec Chaucer. La conclusion suggère des applications futures de l'étude de la gouvernance dans la poésie écossaise, particulièrement en ce qui concerne l'évolution du concept de la gouvernance littéraire avec l'essor de la gouvernance parlementaire en Écosse pendant le seizième siècle.

Acknowledgements

If medieval Scottish literature contends that self-governance is impossible without reliance on others, recent experience has proven to me that completing this dissertation would have been impossible without the support and encouragement of a great many people. I must begin by thanking my supervisor, Prof. Jamie Fumo; it was on her recommendation that I began to read the medieval Scots poets, and so this study is greatly indebted to her not only for its development and completion, but also for its very origin.

I also thank Profs. Dorothy Bray, Maggie Kilgour, Erin Hurley and Sebastian Sobiecki for their comments and suggestions on my work as it progressed. I am grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) for the financial means to complete this project, and the Interlibrary Loan service of McGill University Library for tracking down my many requests.

My friends have been sources both of cathartic commiseration and renewed inspiration, and I appreciate their provision of both as I have completed this dissertation. Deserving of special recognition are the fellow founding members of the McGill Medievalist Tea Circle—Jake Walsh Morrissey, Karen Oberer and William Sweet—and Jill McMillan, who offered listening ears, practical advice and, above all, excellent company.

Finally, I am profoundly thankful for the help I have received from my family as I undertook this task. In particular, thanks are due to Ruth Honeyman and Kevin McQuinn for their loving patience and copious feedback; to Simon Honeyman for his constant encouragement and fresh

literary perspectives; and to Barry Honeyman and Nora Fontaine for moral support.

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Abbreviations

<i>CR</i>	<i>Chaucer Review</i>
DOST	Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue
<i>EC</i>	<i>Essays in Criticism</i>
<i>ELH</i>	<i>English Literary History</i>
<i>Fables</i>	<i>Moral Fables</i>
<i>Legend</i>	<i>Legend of Good Women</i>
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
<i>MLQ</i>	<i>Modern Language Quarterly</i>
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
<i>Palice</i>	<i>Palice of Honour</i>
<i>Parliament</i>	<i>Parliament of Fowls</i>
<i>PLL</i>	<i>Papers in Language and Literature</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i>
<i>PQ</i>	<i>Philological Quarterly</i>
<i>Quair</i>	<i>Kingis Quair</i>
<i>RES</i>	<i>Review of English Studies</i>
<i>Roman</i>	<i>Roman de la Rose</i>
<i>Romaunt</i>	<i>Romaunt of the Rose</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studies in Philology</i>
<i>SSL</i>	<i>Studies in Scottish Literature</i>
STS	Scottish Text Society
<i>Testament</i>	<i>Testament of Cresseid</i>
<i>TLS</i>	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>
<i>Troilus</i>	<i>Troilus and Criseyde</i>

**Introduction: Towards a Paradigm of Governance in Interpreting
Scottish Reception of Chaucer**

Scotland is a country and a people whose defining characteristic
is built on the collective understanding of what they're not.
And what they're not is English.

A.A. Gill¹

To begin a study of Chaucerian reception in medieval Scottish literature by defining Scottish identity in relation to England seems at first glance to be a natural move. Gill's quotation reinforces a prevalent mainstream definition of "Scottishness": that is, a rejection of "Englishness." Manifestations of this definition are prolific in popular culture both within Scotland and throughout the Scottish diaspora; to give but one example, T-shirts abound with anti-English quotations from the "Scottish Declaration of Independence" (in fact, the Declaration of Arbroath, on which more shortly) and slogans such as, "I support two teams: Scotland, and whoever's playing England." In fact, one might even interpret the subtitle of the work from which Gill's assessment derives—*Hunting the English*—as offering an implicit elaboration on the remarks quoted above. Indeed, it would seem that the eponymous hero of Harry's *Wallace* (one of the texts explored in Chapter 1 of this study) has taken Gill's phrase to (Brave)heart.

Even in the medieval period, assertions of "Scottish" interests—often in reality the interests of only a powerful segment of Scottish society—were often paired with a rejection of English conquest or assimilation. The 1320

¹ A.A. Gill, *The Angry Island: Hunting the English* (London: Phoenix, 2005) 5-6.

Declaration of Arbroath, written at the climax of the First Scottish War of Independence, is a potent example of this strategy, defining the Scottish cause in terms of Scotland's opposition to the English. In what is perhaps its most-quoted passage (it even graces a wall of the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh), the Declaration reads, "For as long as a hundred of us remain alive, we will never on any condition be subjected to the lordship of the English. For we fight not for glory nor riches nor honours, but for freedom alone, which no good man gives up except with his life."² Recent scholarship generally avoids such affecting rhetoric, but nevertheless tends to associate the medieval ancestors of Scottish nationalism with efforts to be distinct from the English, ranging from the development of a mythology of ancient and uninterrupted Scottish kingship to the prolonged Scottish Wars of Independence in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.³

It would seem, then, that Scottish identity in the medieval era (and, many would contend, even today) is largely defined by contrast to England and the English. Such a conclusion, some might say, is so commonplace that it bears no reiteration. In fact, one might argue that the past two paragraphs have merely reinforced Gill's succinct epigraph. And yet it is worthwhile to pause for a moment over the ideas advanced thus far. Is it indeed a natural move, as asserted above, to view medieval Scottish "nationalism" as predicated purely on Anglophobia? Is it accurate to describe the collective expressions of certain groups of Scots during the period as "nationalist" at all,

² "Quia quamdiu Centum ex nobis viui remanserint, nuncquam Anglorum dominio aliquatenus volumus subiugari. Non enim propter gloriam, diuicias aut honores pugnamus set propter libertatem solummodo quam Nemo bonus nisi simul cum vita amittit." Latin text from http://www.geo.ed.ac.uk/home/scotland/arbroath_latin.html (accessed 20 May 2009).

³ For an overview of medieval Scottish identity, see Bruce Webster, *Medieval Scotland: The Making of an Identity* (London: Macmillan, 1997).

particularly given the medieval Scottish kingdom's dearth of common national unifiers such as stable borders, ethnic homogeneity, and linguistic unity? And if the responses to the previous questions are inconclusive, can we even argue for a distinct "Scottish" literature, separate from the English tradition?

It is productive to address these last questions first, if only briefly. There is not time and space enough here to establish firmly any objective markers of Scottish identity; as noted above, medieval Scotland's amorphous territory and cultural diversity make such markers elusive. To borrow a phrase from Benedict Anderson, however, the "imagined community" of a group of individuals can create a collective identity as strong as one originating from a set of objective unifiers; the construction of a cohesive myth, in other words, can bring a collective into existence.⁴ This is a valuable point to remember when considering the existence of a distinctively Scottish literary tradition. Since the definition of "Scottishness" cannot be completely objective, it means little that writers' definitions of this concept vary from one period to the next. What makes the work Scottish is the fact that the writer wants it to be perceived as such—that the writer imagines himself as contributing to a Scottish literary tradition. It is therefore vital when studying texts from another era to be sensitive to how the writers *themselves* position their work as Scottish, and what that might have meant in their own historical context, rather than impose our own retrospective and potentially inaccurate definitions of "Scottishness."⁵

⁴ See Anderson's landmark study, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 2006).

⁵ R.D.S. Jack critiques this historically risky practice in several essays, including "Translating the Scottish Renaissance," *Translation and Literature* 6.1 (1997): 66-80, in which he warns that employing a "closed and cumulative set of values drawn from modern sociological and political views of Scottishness" endangers "the rhetorical ideal of individual texts being

Having advanced a definition of Scottish literature that relies on poets' self-identification with that category, we may now turn to the first question and explore the extent to which medieval Scots writers defined their "Scottishness" through a simple rejection of England and English influences. This is a particularly important issue when surveying the evolution of scholarship on Scottish reception of Chaucer, a body of criticism with a well-established tradition of source study which is ready for more theoretical approaches to how Scots poets responded to Chaucer's works and literary status. After a brief period in the early twentieth century in which the so-called "Scottish Chaucerians" were seen as "yield[ing] wholeheartedly to the genius of Chaucer"⁶—apparently displaying a form of influence without anxiety—a wave of renewed critical interest in the 1970s began to stress how these *makars* (a Scots term at least as old as the poets themselves, but one that gained renewed currency with the declining use of the term "Scottish Chaucerians"⁷) distinguished their own works from the Chaucerian sources with which they worked, responding to Chaucer's literary authority by asserting their own.⁸ Even more recently, certain scholars have pushed this

diachronically evaluated according to the aesthetic and linguistic criteria proper to their own time and the evidence of the specific text" (71).

⁶ The description is Gregory Smith's, from *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (London: Macmillan, 1919) 77. See also Caroline Spurgeon (1925), who sees the earliest phases of Scottish reception of Chaucer as characterised by "enthusiastic and reverential praise" followed by "admiration taking the form of imitation" (*Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion, 1357–1900, Vol. 1* [1925; New York: Russell and Russell, 1960] x).

⁷ As Priscilla Bawcutt suggests, recent scholarly reaction against the term "Scottish Chaucerians" "is not wholly disinterested [...] and] has been clearly been fuelled by Scottish nationalism" (*Dunbar the Makar* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1992] 24).

⁸ A vivid illustration of this phenomenon is the cluster of critical biographies published during this period; two volumes on William Dunbar were released within two years of each other (Edmund Reiss, 1979 and Ian Simpson Ross, 1981) and three books on Robert Henryson were published in the span of twelve years (John MacQueen, 1967; Robert L. Kindrick and Douglas Gray, both in 1979). Additionally, the era saw two editions of the *Kingis Quair* (Matthew P. McDiarmid, 1973 and John Norton-Smith, 1981) and Priscilla Bawcutt's critical biography on Gavin Douglas (1976).

line of analysis even further, arguing that Scots writers subvert Chaucer in order to emancipate Scottish literature from the English tradition,⁹ thereby enacting a form of “precolonial postcolonialism.” Perhaps participating in the *zeitgeist*, this new direction in the criticism coincided with the rise in the 1970s of the Scottish Nationalist Party and their eventually successful efforts for a separate Scottish Parliament; these literary and political trends each advocated in their own way for indigenous, autonomous Scottish traditions.

For literary criticism to pursue this autonomist trend exclusively, however, would lead it to neglect the numerous points of contact—and *productive* contact—between Scotland and England. Even the modern Scottish Parliament shares duties of governance with Westminster;¹⁰ similarly, to rely on a model of subversion when examining the relationship between Scots poets and Chaucer risks ignoring the complex nature of cultural exchange between Scotland and England in the medieval period. While independence-oriented political documents such as the Declaration of Arbroath do much to colour modern perceptions of medieval Anglo-Scottish relations, it is important to recognise that such artefacts date from a specific period of war between the two kingdoms, a period that concluded approximately fifty years before the earliest poem addressed in this study, Barbour’s *Bruce* (composed

⁹ Examples include John M. Bowers, “Three Readings of the Knight’s Tale: Sir John Clanvowe, Geoffrey Chaucer, and James I of Scotland,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34.2 (Spring 2004): 279-307, which argues that the *Quair* is part of James I’s “cunning, wide-ranging and politically ambitious appropriation of Lancastrian culture” (279); and Carolyn Ives and David Parkinson, “Scottish Chaucer, Misogynist Chaucer,” *Rewriting Chaucer: Culture, Authority, and the Idea of the Authentic Text, 1400-1602*, ed. Thomas A. Prendergast and Barbara Kline (Columbus : Ohio State UP, 1999) 186-202, which contends that “the ‘Scottish Chaucerians’ undermine the power of English literary authority” and that the poets’ “appropriation of Chaucer and Chaucerian themes invokes literary authority, compromises it, and dismisses it” (188).

¹⁰ Russell Deacon provides a full list of the divided responsibilities in *Devolution in Britain Today*, 2nd ed. (New York: Manchester UP, 2006) 120; the matters under Scottish jurisdiction include health, justice and the environment, while Westminster retains control over areas including defence, finance and foreign affairs.

c. 1375). As will be demonstrated in chapter 1, Scottish historical chronicles and romances from the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—even those whose objectives included the establishment of Scotland as a separate kingdom and collective—also recognised the complex relationship between England and Scotland, a relationship that needed to take into account not merely competing claims to Scotland’s territory, but also the existence of numerous individuals and families with loyalties and lands on both sides of the (frequently-shifting) border. The imagined ideal of a completely autonomous, “free” Scotland was in reality mitigated by a certain material reliance on the kingdom’s southern neighbor.

Crucially, however, this “mitigation” must not be viewed as entirely negative, particularly on a literary level. Scots poetry of the fifteenth century makes evident the emergence of a Scottish identity secure despite (or perhaps because of) its foreign interactions. While scholars have addressed the impact of French¹¹ and Italian¹² culture on late-medieval Scottish literature, by far the Scots poets’ most significant interlocutors were the poets of England, particularly Chaucer. Indeed, as R.D.S. Jack notes, Scots poets of the fifteenth century were well aware of the Scots language’s origins in Northern English;¹³ they clearly felt no (proto-)nationalist compunction against using Scots as a vehicle for their poetry. Unfortunately, however, the common perception of Anglo-Scottish political relations during the period as being uniformly antagonistic has led few scholars to look beyond that model when analysing literary relations between Scotland and England. Important exceptions include

¹¹ See Janet L. Smith, *The French Background of Middle Scots Literature* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1934).

¹² See R.D.S. Jack, *The Italian Influence on Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1972).

¹³ Jack, “Translating” 74.

Gregory Kratzmann's seminal study¹⁴ and, more recently, Priscilla Bawcutt's examination of sixteenth-century English readers of Scottish poetry;¹⁵ these scholars posit a model of Anglo-Scottish literary relations in which each culture derives benefit from its neighbour's literary tradition. This model is valuable for its recognition of Anglo-Scottish cultural exchange; it is important, however, to define even more precisely the nature of this dynamic in order to determine the exact nature of the cultural interaction between Scotland and England. A more historically sensitive definition of this relationship will consequently permit us to interpret Scottish reception of English texts with a more precise, contextually accurate vocabulary.

Seeking to define the cultural relationship between Scotland and England in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Jack observes that "a minority culture must measure itself against its rival but look for a literary (i.e. intrinsic) distinctiveness."¹⁶ Much as Scotland's relationship with England has for centuries balanced autonomist and unionist components, so must we adopt an interpretive framework for late-medieval Scots poetry that acknowledges both its distinctive character and its undeniable links with its English counterpart. This study seeks to implement a new interpretive paradigm for late-medieval Anglo-Scottish poetic relations, one that falls back neither on models of simple imitation nor on anachronistic impositions of modern nationalist or postcolonial principles. The model of exchange proposed by the scholars named above is a useful starting point, and the precepts of intertextuality seem

¹⁴ Gregory Kratzmann, *Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations, 1430-1550* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1980).

¹⁵ Priscilla Bawcutt, "Crossing the Border: Scottish Poetry and English Readers in the Sixteenth Century," *The Rose and the Thistle: Essays on the Culture of Late Medieval and Renaissance Scotland*, ed. Sally Mapstone and Juliette Wood (East Linton: Tuckwell, 1998) 59-76.

¹⁶ Jack, "Translating " 77.

an appropriate departure point for understanding the nature of the relationship between Scots and English poetry of the period. Kristeva's early formulation of intertextual relationships, in which texts "se croisent et se neutralisent [intersect with one another and neutralise one another],"¹⁷ has been interpreted by Mary Orr to mean "not so much a cancelling out as an interactive levelling," in which both the prior and the subsequent texts "are of equal importance in the intertextual *process*."¹⁸ Not only, however, do these texts stand alongside each other in their mutually informative dialogue; Kristeva also argues that what may initially appear to be separate texts, foreign to each other, are actually unified in their exchange, becoming complementary aspects of one larger entity in which each text responds to the other not as an "Other," but as (in Orr's phrasing) "(an)other of the self."¹⁹

These principles of Kristevan intertextuality—textual levelling and the fundamental unity between ostensibly "foreign" texts—offer a more useful framework for interpreting the nature of Scottish reception of Chaucer than schemas that emphasise difference and conflict. The intertextual model is appropriate for this period in a way that (for example) postcolonial theory is not, not only because of the specific nature of Scottish collective identity and Anglo-Scottish relations at the time but also because the poems examined in this study explicitly engage with themes of interdependence and proper governance, whether in the personal, political or moral sphere. Moreover, on a specifically literary level, Kristevan concepts of a levelling intertextuality and a closer relationship between supposed "strangers" or "others" is appropriate

¹⁷ Julia Kristeva, "Le texte clos," *Semiotikè: recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969) 113. Translation by Mary Orr, from *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003) 27.

¹⁸ Orr 28.

¹⁹ Orr 31.

when examining poets who, to varying degrees, considered themselves part of a universal poetic brotherhood.²⁰ It is necessary, however, to modify Kristeva's principles somewhat in order to provide the most useful and historically congruent framework for interpreting Scottish reception of Chaucer. Specifically, the "level" nature of Kristeva's intertextual model suggests a horizontal, democratic relationship between texts; given, however, how the poets examined in this study present their own relationship with Chaucer and his works, a vertical, hierarchical model would be more appropriate to the late-medieval Scottish context.

As Chapters 2 through 5 explore in detail, the *Kingis Quair* and the poems of Robert Henryson, Gavin Douglas and William Dunbar all examine the means and consequences of proper governance, championing above all the strategy of judicious dependence on others in order to achieve greater power and autonomy (be it in a romantic, political or spiritual context). In addition to illuminating this strategy of governance on a literal, narrative level, the poets employ this strategy to define their response to Chaucer, enhancing the authority of their own creations (and, by implication, that of an emerging Scottish literary tradition) by implicitly and sometimes explicitly presenting Chaucer as a superior literary figure, one with whom it is advantageous for their poetry to be associated. In other words, the relationship these poets establish with Chaucer deliberately upholds an image of Chaucer's superiority, in order that these poets might incorporate that authority into their own works. This strategy is consistent with the techniques of cultural importation and transformation described earlier, in which foreign innovations in areas such as

²⁰ The most explicit proponent of this attitude is Gavin Douglas, whose poetic philosophy is described in Chapter 4.

architecture and government were adapted to suit—and also create—a specifically Scottish context. Significantly, it is also consistent with wider attitudes towards social and political governance in fifteenth-century Scotland, in which the clear hierarchy of king/lord over subject nevertheless coexisted with prescriptive codes outlining the obligations of those in power to those under their sway. This sophisticated dynamic manifested itself in several ways, and two in particular. Firstly, the persistence in Scotland of relationships based on individual feudal bonds and kinship ties indicates the value still placed on these mutually-beneficial and mutually-obligating bonds in late-medieval Scottish society.²¹ Secondly, the prominence of “advice to princes” literature in Scotland during the period, as Sally Mapstone has demonstrated in a comprehensive study,²² stresses that a king’s rule is made secure primarily through his respect for his subjects—a message with especial resonance in fifteenth-century Scotland, a period in which the Stewart dynasty was marked by several assassinations and minority rulers and, significantly, during which was composed much of the poetry examined in this study. In these two instances, the clear ranking of lord/king over vassal/subject does not preclude the latter group’s power to preserve their ruler’s governing status—thereby, in a sense, making them governors themselves.

In this hierarchical yet interdependent relationship, we find an appropriate model for interpreting Scottish response to Chaucer, one that is

²¹ As A.D.M. Barrell notes, by the late thirteenth century Scotland had incorporated the feudal system but in many contexts still favoured bonds of kinship (*Medieval Scotland* [New York: Cambridge UP, 2000] 41). Nevertheless, the literary utility of the feudal model persisted well into the late medieval period; see, for instance, Liam O. Purdon and Julian N. Wasserman’s argument that Barbour’s *Bruce* illuminates “the social as well as political potential value of using a system of feudal obligation to unify a people under militant kingship” (“Chivalry and Feudal Obligation in Barbour’s *Bruce*,” *The Rusted Hauberk: Feudal Ideals of Order and Their Decline*, ed. Liam O. Purdon and Cindy L. Vitto [Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1994] 78).

²² Sally Mapstone, “The Advice To Princes Tradition in Scottish Literature, 1450-1500,” D.Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 1986.

fundamentally intertextual but nevertheless respects Chaucer's status as a figure to whom these Scottish poets must pay homage. The *Quair*-poet, Henryson, Douglas and Dunbar offer interpretations of Chaucer and his texts that navigate between subservient imitation and subversive rejection, achieving a relationship with the Chaucerian tradition that replicates the mutually-beneficial dynamic of governance advocated in the feudal model and the advice-to-princes tradition. The works profiled in this study make clear how each party in the textual exchange depends on the other: through allusion and praise, Scottish poets rely on the authority of Chaucer's poetry and reputation in order to champion their own compositions; at the same time, however, these poets' response to Chaucer illuminates the English poet's dependency on his literary successors to maintain his legacy. Employing this dynamic of governance—one with distinctively Scottish resonances—the poets examined in the following chapters self-consciously use Chaucer's authority to fuel the development of an autonomous Scots poetic tradition.

This study follows a roughly chronological trajectory, tracing the several incarnations of the dynamic of governance that Scots poets embody in their relationship with Chaucer over the course of the long fifteenth century. By way of establishing context, the first chapter examines Scottish historical narratives, introducing the question of how Scots poets' reception and reinterpretation of English poetic sources compares with Scottish chroniclers' similar employment of English historical sources. Recent scholarship on historical chronicles posits that Scottish chroniclers incorporated English myths into narratives in order to enrich a sense of Scottish national identity.²³

²³ See, for instance, Steven Boardman, "Late Medieval Scotland and the Matter of Britain," *Scottish History: The Power of the Past*, ed. Edward J. Cowan and Richard J. Finlay

These narratives, including Bower's *Scotichronicon*, Andrew of Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle*, and the anonymous "Scottis Originale" of the Asloan MS, employed two chief techniques: claiming a shared ancestry—and, by extension, a shared power—with England and asserting a claim to Britain that antedates the English chronicles' accounts of its foundation. The second part of Chapter 1 examines how this model of reciprocity is central to the establishment of Scottish identity and leadership in two influential Scottish historical romances, John Barbour's *Bruce* and Harry's *Wallace*. Through Bruce's cultivation of a network of friends and feudal bonds, and Wallace's more subtle adherence to social and religious hierarchies, these poems each articulate how the route to effective Scottish governance lies in the judicious incorporation of powerful forces outside the leader himself. The terms through which Scottish chroniclers and verse historians seek to empower the Scottish nation, particularly by encouraging intelligent reliance on and integration of powerful external entities, establish the framework within which the poets profiled in subsequent chapters reshape their Chaucerian intertexts, establishing a Scots literary tradition that draws strength from and yet governs its reception of English sources.

The second chapter examines the *Kingis Quair*'s advocacy of self-governance not only as an explicit narrative trope but as a strategy for responding to Chaucerian influence. The *Quair* occupies an important place in Scottish literary history, both for its status as one of the earliest Scottish works to draw on Chaucerian influences and for its reputation as the work of James I,

(Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2002) 47-72, and Juliette Wood, "Where Does Britain End? The Reception of Geoffrey of Monmouth in Scotland and Wales," *The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend*, ed. Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005) 9-24, both of which will be considered in greater depth in Chapter 1.

a monarch whose ability to govern his own kingdom was compromised by an eighteen-year English imprisonment.²⁴ Lois Ebin has described the poem's treatment of its Chaucerian sources as an active "response" rather than passive "imitation," offering distinctive refiguring rather than rote copies of elements from *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Knight's Tale*.²⁵ I extend this idea, emphasising that the poet's recurring theme of governance – expressed on a narrative level in the narrator's negotiations of political, romantic and divine authority—is not a bid to reject his Chaucerian sources but rather to have his text stand alongside Chaucer's as a complementary yet independently viable entity. Vital to understanding the *Quair's* relationship with Chaucer (and with English culture more generally) is the poem's advocacy of personal and spiritual self-governance and its political implications for the speaker, whose narrative bears close resemblances to the life of James. Given James' position as King of Scotland, it is hardly surprising that the speaker's views on governance in the *Quair* have a significantly political cast. As the speaker's decision to submit to Fortune and to his lady does not enslave but rather sets him free, so too did James' implementation of Lancastrian-style policies upon his return to Scottish rule seek to empower Scotland as a separate kingdom rather than allow it to be assimilated into its southern neighbour.²⁶ The relationship between the narrator and his lady love thus imitates the type of political dynamic James would establish with England upon his return to the Scottish throne in 1424.

²⁴ As addressed in greater depth in Chapter 2, even if the poem was not in fact authored by James I, its speaker is clearly intended to be James I, and so its resonances with James' particular relationship with the English remain relevant points of discussion.

²⁵ Lois Ebin, "Boethius, Chaucer, and the *Kingis Quair*," *PQ* 53.3 (Summer 1974): 321.

²⁶ These reforms included attempts to impose a more centralised authority and increased taxes; these changes and others did not please many Scottish noblemen, a small group of which assassinated James in 1437 (Bowers 296).

The third chapter centres on Robert Henryson's perspective on governance as expressed in the *Moral Fables* and examines how it motivates and shapes Henryson's treatment of his Chaucerian intertexts in the *Testament of Cresseid*. The *Moral Fables*' advocacy of active rule over oneself and others complements the poem's subtle critique of James III's passive style of rule. As such, the work offers important insight not only into the *Testament*'s view of governance but also into Henryson's governance of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* throughout the *Testament*. Significantly, the principal concern of contemporary critics of James III was what they perceived as the king's rule over "a corrupt and ineffectual judicial system" that "failed to execute justice."²⁷ In the *Testament*, Cresseid's preoccupation with the justice of the gods is an excuse that masks the importance of her capacity for choice, a capacity which the *Moral Fables* criticise James for not exercising. In the *Testament*, Henryson demonstrates his own literary agency, establishing his relationship with Chaucer as one that transcends imitation, creating a text that operates as a self-sustaining interpolation within the *Troilus*.

The fourth chapter examines Gavin Douglas' articulation of a model for Scottish literary governance (especially of foreign literary authorities such as Virgil and Chaucer) in Prologue 1 and the end-matter of the *Eneados* (1513), the origins for which model may be perceived in his relationship with Chaucer's *House of Fame* in the *Palice of Honour* (1501). In describing his translation's relationship with Virgil and Chaucer, Douglas articulates a dynamic of interdependency between his own work and that of his forebears. The Scottish writer turns to the Roman and English poets in order to validate

²⁷ Barrell 172.

his contribution to the Scots literary tradition; at the same time, however, Douglas seems aware that Virgil and Chaucer require Douglas' translation, allusions and adaptations in order to reinforce their position in the literary pantheon. Douglas' treatment of the *House of Fame* in the *Palice of Honour*, while occurring some twelve years prior to the *Eneados*, nevertheless contains hints of the later poem's model of reciprocal literary dependence. While Douglas' narrative advocates a point similar to Chaucer's—that man must pursue lasting virtue over fleeting worldly fame—Douglas arrives at this point through a reinterpretation of Chaucerian motifs, thereby offering an autonomous literary work that simultaneously profits from its association with Chaucer. Moreover, the *Palice*'s court of poets, featuring both Scottish and English members, reinforces the notion of a pan-British literary brotherhood, guiding the reader to resist an interpretation of the *Palice* as a subversion of Chaucer in favour of viewing it as a complementary yet autonomous Scottish response.

The final chapter examines William Dunbar's exploration of a philosophy of self-governance on individual, interpersonal, royal and literary levels, the latter of which is illustrated most vividly through his relationship with Chaucer. Dunbar's philosophical meditations, petitionary poems, occasional poetry and courtly love allegories consistently advocate the need to govern oneself before governing others. Dunbar describes in "How sowld I gouerne me, and in quhat wyis?" and "He rewillis weill that weill him self can gyde " the need to exercise moral self-governance in order to achieve a lasting Christian serenity in the shallow, volatile world of James IV's court. In his petitionary poems, Dunbar creates a persona of exaggerated disappointment

with the king's refusal to grant him a benefice, a technique that allows him to advise the king on maintaining his subject's favour without risking his position as court poet. The poem commonly known as "The Thrissill and the Rois" articulates an interdependent relationship between ruler and ruled, stressing that the king must govern moderately in order to retain his subjects' favour. The poem also asserts the king's responsibilities to his English bride, Margaret Tudor, in a manner that parallels the new relationship with England under the Treaty of Perpetual Peace. Dunbar reiterates Scotland's need to incorporate rather than reject English power in "Gladethe, thoue queyne of Scottis regioun," his welcome poem to Margaret; the poem's horticultural conceit sees Dunbar incorporate the Tudor Rose into the Stewart vine, using English power to add vigour to the Scottish kingdom. Finally, Dunbar applies his philosophy of reciprocity to his literary relationship with Chaucer, as his dedicatory verses in the *Goldyn Targe* suggest. While Dunbar, unlike Douglas, calls his dialect "Inglis" rather than Scots, he claims this language as Scotland's—and similarly reacts to Chaucer's literary authority by absorbing it into a larger British tradition, one in which Scots can also participate.

The conclusion traces the larger implications of its proposed model of "governance" for interpreting fifteenth-century Scottish reception of Chaucer. Several questions posed during this study—What constitutes the Scottish "nation" in this period? How did poets perceive and construct it? To what extent is the notion of a Scottish literature defined by perceptions of contemporary Anglo-Scottish relations, and how accurate are these perceptions?—guide several current debates on the assumptions underlying theoretical approaches to Scottish literary studies. The aim of this work is not,

and indeed cannot be, to arrive at an objective truth about Scottish national identity, but merely to define more precisely what late-medieval Scots poets' own assumptions may have been regarding what constitutes "Scottishness," and how this is expressed in their poetry. One cannot completely discount the idea (expressed in the opening epigraph) that Scots define themselves by the fact they are not English; there is clearly an element of this attitude present in all of the poets covered in this study. It is crucial to remember, however, that this repudiation of English identity is complemented by an active engagement with and reinterpretation of English literary influences into an emergent Scottish poetic tradition. In their embrace of a mutually informative relationship with their Chaucerian sources, the poets profiled here do not isolate themselves from what Scotland is not, but govern those foreign influences to help shape what Scotland is—and what it can become.

Chapter 1

Scotland and Britain, Brothers in Arms:

Self-Governance and Interdependency in Scottish Chronicles and Historical Romances

The mutually-beneficial yet ultimately hierarchical dynamic of intertextuality posited in the introduction finds a natural fit with late-medieval Scottish historical writings, which already champion their own, particularly relevant ideal of interdependence. Scottish historical chronicles and romances concerning the lives of celebrated Scottish leaders offer a useful paradigm of Scottish governance, one that champions incorporation of powerful influences (external and especially internal) and encourages interdependence for mutual benefit. Paradoxically yet effectively, Scottish chroniclers assert Scotland's inalienable freedom by incorporating powerful foreign traditions into Scotland's own historical narratives. In doing so, the chroniclers heighten the authority of their national stories—and, by extension, heighten the authority of Scotland as an autonomous, powerful nation—by accepting and perpetuating the power of foreign (and particularly English) sources rather than rejecting them.

The chronicles' origin myths for the Scottish people employ this technique of drawing from without to build Scotland's authority. The prevalent medieval account of the Scots' origins, found in chronicles including Andrew Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle* (c.1420-1423), Fordun's *Chronica Gentis Scottorum* (c.1384-1387), Bower's *Scotichronicon* (c.1440-1449)¹ and the "Scottis Originale" of the

¹ The passages quoted from *Scotichronicon* are from earlier books of Bower's work, which are taken from Fordun's *Chronica*; given that the discussed quotations are virtually identical to those

Asloan MS², links the Scots to the ancient Greeks and Egyptians in the time of the Biblical Pharaoh; the Scottish origin myth's connection to classical and Biblical lore furnishes the Scots with a history that antedates the dominant Brutus myth of English chronicles and glitters with its associations to two towering ancient traditions.

Rather than denouncing English chronicles as fabrications, Scottish chroniclers incorporate the most potent ideas in those same chronicles to advance Scottish cultural interests, particularly the importance of defining Scotland as a separate and viable kingdom. Scottish chroniclers accept in large part the narrative of history presented by English works such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c.1125-1139) but manipulate the details in order to give Scotland a position of greater precedence and authority in the isle of Britain. In this selective acceptance and adaptation of English sources, Scottish chroniclers attempt to have the best of both worlds (or kingdoms): they seek to give their texts greater authority by drawing from standard English chronicles while also attempting to use those sources to support their assertions of Scotland's superiority and autonomy within Britain.

This phenomenon of autonomy achieved through dependence is even more apparent in the historical romances' depictions of Scottish leaders, which advocate even more explicitly a reciprocal model of governance. The leadership

from Fordun, the present discussion will refer only to Bower, though it should be understood that the same comments would also apply to Fordun.

² While the Asloan MS dates from the reign of James V (1513-1542), placing it somewhat later than the other works examined here, W.A. Craigie has noted that the "Scottis Originale" is thought to date from 1460 and may itself be a translation of an earlier Latin source (Preface, *The Asloan Manuscript: A Miscellany in Prose and Verse*, Vol. 1., ed. W.A. Craigie [Edinburgh: William Blackwood for the STS, 1923] vii).

of Robert the Bruce and William Wallace is presented as depending in large part on forces outside themselves. In Barbour's *Bruce*, Robert's power as a leader is contingent on his subjection to God and the support he receives from his lords.³ While Harry's *Wallace*, with its more polemical tone, tends to depict William Wallace as an outlaw hero, Harry nevertheless emphasises Wallace's debt to God and his ultimate deference to the Scottish monarchical line. Scottish chronicles and romances both make clear that Scotland and its leaders, while autonomous, must draw on sources outside themselves for support and strength.

While the concept of consolidating one's own power by winning over subjects and potential opponents is also a common theme of English literary treatments of kingship (with perhaps its most famous expression in English Arthurian legend, in which the Round Table symbolically renders Arthur and his knights equal in rank), the Scottish interpretation of that concept in both chronicle and romance form is distinctive in its emphasis on regulating *internal* affairs, a

³ This contingency is not solely a literary motif, but was present throughout Bruce's royal career; the 1320 Declaration of Arbroath places responsibility on Bruce to uphold his duties to his subjects, and warns, "Quem si ab inceptis desisteret, regi Anglorum aut Anglicis nos aut Regnum nostrum volens subicere, tanquam inimicum nostrum et sui nostrique Juris subuersorem statim expellere niteremur et alium Regem nostrum qui ad defensionem nostrum sufficeret faceremus" [if he should give up what he had begun, seeking to make us or our kingdom subject to the king of England or to the English, we would strive at once to drive him out as our enemy and a subverter of his own right and ours, and we would make some other man who was able to defend us our king] (Latin from http://geo.ed.ac.uk/home/scotland/arbroath_latin.html, accessed 28 January 2009; trans. A.A.M. Duncan, from Edward J. Cowan, "*For Freedom Alone*": *The Declaration of Arbroath, 1320* [East Linton: Tuckwell, 2003] 146). Cowan has called this condition "the first national or governmental expression, in all of Europe, of the principle of the contractual theory of monarchy which lies at the root of modern constitutionalism" ("*For Freedom Alone*" 62). As Mapstone contends, the Declaration's position that "kingly rule is predicated on the congruence of its interests with those of the political community" marks "a defining moment in establishing Scottish national identity as something that constitutes itself in opposition to the English" ("Scotland's Stories," *Scotland: A History*, ed. Jenny Wormald [New York: Oxford UP, 2005] 308).

goal with immediate practical relevance for the kingdom.⁴ The frequent conflicts between Scottish monarchs and powerful factions of magnates, the conflicting and shifting loyalties of landowners on the Borders, the linguistic and political divide between highland and lowland culture, and the recurring phenomenon of minority rulers provided the context for a literature of governance that emphasised a ruler's responsibility to unite his kingdom from within before defending it from external attack.

For Scottish writers of national narratives, then, exploring the issue of Scottish governance focuses in large part on the issue of Scottish *self*-governance, examining how the kingdom must create for itself a unified society, culture and history in order to achieve a secure autonomy. While this does not preclude a reaction against foreign (and particularly English) cultural influences, it is not enough for Scottish writers to merely reject these influences; they must respond with a positive articulation of what Scotland *is* and *has been* rather than what it is *not*. Through this strategy, Scottish chronicles and romances participate in a literary paradigm of self-governance, creating a Scottish identity that will provide the inner stability required to defend oneself from external threats and ultimately strengthen Scottish autonomy. The content and construction of the Scottish chronicles and romances articulates a specific relationship between the Scottish and foreign nations, cultures and written texts, in which Scottish writers and

⁴Mapstone, "The Advice to Princes Tradition" offers a detailed examination of the impact of the advice genre on Scottish literature. For a discussion of the functions of advice literature in late-medieval England, see Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1996).

characters gain strength from external sources of authority in order to reinforce their own validity.

Scottish Originality:

The Absorption of Foreign Authority in Scottish Origin Myths

The medieval era saw a delicate negotiation of Scottish identity in the works of those concerned with recording Scotland's history. In several medieval Scottish chronicles and even verse romances on the lives of Scottish historical figures, historians asserted the vibrancy of Scotland's national identity by forging connections between that identity and the most illustrious aspects of foreign traditions, whether English, classical or Biblical. Medieval Scottish chronicles ranging from Bower's Latin prose *Scotichronicon* and Wyntoun's rhyming Scots *Original Chronicle* exemplify this practice in their accounts of the origins and history of the Scottish people.

As John MacQueen has observed, both Andrew of Wyntoun and Walter Bower situate Scotland's history within a universal narrative in order to stress Scotland's important position in the wider world,⁵ a view that Steven Boardman has applied more specifically to Scottish chroniclers' implication of their kingdom in their responses to English versions of history. Boardman contends that Scottish chronicles incorporated several of the most memorable and influential elements of English chronicles such as Geoffrey's *Historia* as a means of assimilating the English narrative into a Scottish history in order to make that history more authoritative, rather than subordinating Scottish historical traditions to a dominant

⁵ John MacQueen, "The Literature of Fifteenth-Century Scotland," *Scottish Society in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Jennifer M. Brown (now Wormald) (London: Edward Arnold, 1977) 185-186.

English narrative. Apart from Scottish chronicles' treatment of the story of Arthur's kingship (on which more later), a prominent theme in both English and Scottish historical chronicles was the marriage of the Scottish King Malcolm III to the Saxon Queen Margaret in 1069 and their subsequent creation of a royal line that possessed both English and Scottish blood.⁶ Boardman contends that Margaret and her descendents proved useful to the political agendas of both English and Scottish chroniclers, as they represented "the legitimate line of the English royal dynasty displaced by the conquest of 1066. This notion was acceptable to both the English and Scottish royal dynasties of the early twelfth century, for both could claim to embody Margaret's bloodline."⁷ In Wyntoun's chronicle, Boardman argues, the marriage of Margaret's daughter Matilda to the English king Henry I "was presented as a means of regenerating the tree of English kingship because the royal bride was a bearer of Saxon as well as Scottish blood."⁸ At the same time, however, the Scottish royal line's combined Saxon and Scottish roots "allowed the Scots to champion the right of their kings as heirs to the English throne usurped by William I in 1066."⁹ Thus the marriage and offspring of Malcolm and Margaret proved useful for the reinforcement of both English and Scottish national narratives, allowing both to claim a right to the ancient and legendary British throne once occupied by Brutus and his heirs. The

⁶ Boardman 61.

⁷ Boardman 61.

⁸ Boardman 61. As Wyntoun's chronicle relates, Margaret is descended from "Sanct Edward out of Normondy" (CXX. 2445) and ultimately from Woden and Frea, who are in turn descended from Noah's son Shem (CXIX. 2381-2440); this lineage grants Margaret greater status not only through her saintly grandfather Edward the Confessor, but through her links to Norse divinities and notable Biblical figures. *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. F.J. Amours (Edinburgh: William Blackwood for the STS, 1903-1908). References to Wyntoun will refer to this edition's version of the Wemyss MS, the earliest extant manuscript of the chronicle.

⁹ Boardman 62.

perception of St. Margaret as a bridging figure between the Scots and the English is hinted at even in Harry's staunchly Anglophobic *Wallace*; at one point, Wallace and his mother, disguised as pilgrims to flee from English reprisals for Wallace's murder of Englishmen, encounter English pilgrims also on their way to the shrine of St. Margaret, a fact that seems to improve their stature in Harry's eyes: "Quha serwit hir, full gret frendschipe thai fand / With Sothroun folk, for scho was of Ingland" (I. 283-84).¹⁰

While Scottish chroniclers accepted the notion that the Scots had a claim to the throne of Brutus through Margaret's marriage to Malcolm, however, they were equally adamant to establish a genealogy for the Scots separate from that of the Britons descended from the Trojan hero. Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan note that Geoffrey's *Historia* constituted the dominant version of British history to which Scottish chronicles felt the need to respond; chroniclers often rejected core aspects of the Galfridian narrative, including the foundation of Scotland under Brutus' son Albanactus and the status of Arthur as king of all Britain, but also presented an alternative origin myth to Geoffrey's "Brito-Norman account."¹¹ This alternative myth centres on the founding figures of the Greek prince Gathelos and his wife, the Egyptian princess Scota (from whence the words "Gaelic" and "Scotland" derive, respectively).¹² The "Scottis Originale," in fact,

¹⁰ *Harry's Wallace*, ed. Matthew P. McDiarmid, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood for the STS, 1968). All quotations from the *Wallace* are from this edition.

¹¹ Rhiannon Purdie and Nicola Royan, "Introduction: Tartan Arthur?", *The Scots and Medieval Arthurian Legend* 4.

¹² One example of this creative etymology is found in the "Scottis Originale," fol. 93, ll. 9-21: Quharfor' þe king of athenis in/to grece callit neolus send his son with gret pow/ere callit gathelos efter quhom our langag Is callit/ galeig with gret power' of men in egipte and dis/comfit þe ethiopis and habandonit þam vnto/ þe tyme þat moyses raiss: ffor þe quhilk victory / The king of egipt gaf his allanerly dochtere & / air' callit scota in mariage to þe

vehemently rejects any suggestion that the Scots may derive their lineage from Brutus or his descendents: “þe opiniones of þam ar’ nocht trew þat / sayis or trowis þat we come of brute quhilk come / of tratouris of troye.”¹³ Other Scottish chronicles are less blunt in their manner but also distance their people’s origins from those of Brutus and the Trojans. Wyntoun’s chronicle describes the Greek and Egyptian heritage of the Scots, writing that the Greek “Sir Newill” (King Neolus)

had a sone callit Gedell-Glaiss,
 As þe story of him sayis,
 That weddit to wif Scotia ying,
 Pharois dochter of Egipt king.
 This Gadeill-Glaiss wes of gret pith,
 And warnyst weill of wit þarwith;
 He gat on Scotia barnis faire,
 And ane of þai suld haif bene aire
 To king Pharo þat drovnit was
 In þe Reid Se quhen he couth chass
 Apone þe folkis of Israell [...]¹⁴

said gathelos / be proper’ name of þe quhilk scota we war’ callit / Scottis as vse and custome was þat tyme to / nacionis to tak denominacioun and name efter þe / proper name of women and nocht of men as asya / affrik & Europe The thre principale partis of þe world.

In addition to the anonymous chronicler’s explanation of the origins of the words “Gaelic” and “Scots,” note also that Scotland’s ‘female’ name is validated with examples from the world’s ‘three principal parts’—Asia, Africa and Europe—thus granting greater stature to Scotland’s name (and, by extension, nation). From *The Asloan Manuscript* 185.

¹³ “Scottis Originale” fol. 93, ll. 23-25 (p. 185).

¹⁴ Wyntoun XXVI. 647-657.

Wyntoun, typical of medieval Scottish chroniclers, gives the Scots a genealogy separate from that claimed by the English through Brutus. By linking the Scottish people not to the Trojans but to the Greeks and the Egyptians, Scottish chronicles such as Wyntoun's and the "Scottis Originale" give the Scottish line a more ancient ancestry than that of the Britons, creating an older—and therefore superior—past.

The Scottish chronicles also tend to give their nation's history a more grandiose element by linking it to notable eras and peoples of Biblical history. By claiming Scota as the daughter of the Pharaoh who oppressed Moses and the Israelites, the chronicles situate the Scots' Egyptian roots in one of the Bible's most memorable narratives, thereby lending the Scots' existence an added aura of authority; while the British can claim only a storied classical tradition, the Scots' line originates in both a classical Greek (Gathelos) and quasi-Biblical (Scota) tradition.¹⁵ Another recurring Biblical parallel popular in medieval Scottish chronicles is the explicit comparison of the Scots' subjugation and eventual triumphs with those of the Maccabees.¹⁶ In his *Chronica Gentis Scottorum*, John of Fordun compares Robert the Bruce's tribulations in his pursuit of freedom with the struggles of Judas Maccabeus:

¹⁵ While it may seem counterproductive to associate the Scots with the oppressive Egyptians of the Biblical Pharaoh, Scottish chroniclers either avoid discussion of this complication (as in Wyntoun) or attempt to neutralise the potential wrinkle, as in the "Scottis Originale": "And gif ony wald say þat we ar' cummin of þe ta syde of þaim of egipt þat appressit þe barnis of Israell luf ws nocht þe were þairfor / ffor þai war' ay lele amangis þaim self ffor Ihesu crist was borne of Iewis suppos þai persaut þe barnis of Israell þai resaut crist in egipte and nurist him nere vij 3ere quhill þe generacoun of þe samyn barnis persewit crist to þe deid and crucified him" (fol. 93b-94, ll. 23-31 [pp.186-187]). The chronicler's strategy attempts to sidestep the question of the Egyptians' moral rectitude by pointing out that Egyptians "resaut" and "nurist" Jesus during his childhood exile from Israel, while the descendants of the Israelites whom Pharaoh's Egyptians oppressed would crucify Jesus.

¹⁶ For further discussion of these parallels, see G.W.S. Barrow, "The Idea of Freedom in Late Medieval Scotland," *The Innes Review* 30 (1979): 16-34.

[T]anquam alter Machabaeus, manum mittens ad fortia, pro fratribus liberandis, innumeros et importabiles diei aestus, et frigoris, et famis, in terra et in mari, subiit labores, non inimicorum tantum, sed etiam falsorum fratrum insidias, et taedia, inedias, et pericula laetanter amplectando.

[Like another Maccabeus putting forth his hand unto force, underwent the countless and unbearable toils of the heat of day, of cold and hunger, by land and sea, gladly welcoming weariness, fasting, dangers, and the snares not only of foes, but also of false friends, for the sake of freeing his brethren.]¹⁷

Anne McKim also notes the analogies between Bruce and Judas Maccabeus in the 1320 Declaration of Arbroath, which credits God for sending “strenuissimum principem, regem et dominum nostrum, Dominum Robertum, qui pro populo et hereditate suis de minimis liberandis, quasi alter Maccabeus aut Joshua, labores et taedia, inedias et pericula laeto sustinuit animo” [our most valiant prince, king, and lord, the lord Robert, who, that his people and heritage might be delivered out of the hands of enemies, bore cheerfully toil and fatigue, hunger and danger, like another Joshua or Maccabeus].¹⁸ By connecting the narratives of the Scottish people and the Maccabees, Scottish chroniclers sought to associate their nation’s story with an established heroic tradition—and, in so doing, to increase the heroic quality of Scotland’s origins and development.

¹⁷ From the *Gesta Annalia* of Fordun’s *Chronica Gentis Scottorum*, CXII. Quoted and translated in Anne McKim, “‘Gret Price Off Chewalry’: Barbour’s Debt to Fordun,” *SSL* 24 (1989): 14.

¹⁸ McKim, “Gret Price” 14-15. McKim uses the Latin version from *A Source Book of Scottish History*, ed. William Croft Dickinson, Gordon Donaldson and Isabel A. Milne, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1958; rpt. 1963), I. 151-158; translation by A.A.M. Duncan, “*For Freedom Alone*” 145.

The Scots are linked to Biblical authority in other ways as well. Bower's chronicle focuses on the fact that Prince Gathelos—whom Bower describes as “vultu elegantem animo tamen instabilem” [good looking but mentally unstable] (I.9.2-3)—intends to succeed Scota's father as the new ruler of Egypt.¹⁹ Bower, continuing to attribute to the Scots an ancient Biblical authority, says that Gathelos' aspirations are likely inherited from his tyrannical ancestor Nimrod: “Et non mirum quod Gaithelos animum dominandi conciperet qui nepos Nemproth fuisse dicitur, qui fuit primus qui per conquestum regnare et regnum usurpare presumpsit” [And it is not surprising that Gaythelos should conceive the ambition to dominate since he is said to have been the descendent of Nimrod, who was the first to presume to rule by conquest and to usurp a kingdom] (I.9.35-37). Gathelos' ambitions are thwarted, however, when he, Scota, and his Greek and Egyptian followers are driven out of the country by a peasants' uprising (I.11.10-12). His loyal supporters having elected him king (I.12.1-2), Gathelos recognises that his people do not have the power to conquer Egypt, and so he undertakes instead either to conquer another land or settle somewhere uninhabited (I.12.4-9).²⁰ After decades of wandering around Africa (at the same time as Moses and the Israelites wander the desert), the Scots sail to Spain (I.13. 8-10), where fierce opposition from the established inhabitants (I. 15; I. 16) eventually brings them to

¹⁹ Bower, Walter, *Scotichronicon*, gen. ed. D.E.R. Watt, 9 vols. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP, 1987-1998). All quotations and translations of Bower are from this edition.

²⁰ “Sed et/ iterum in Greciam sciens obstructam reditus orbitam ob perpetrata/ prius ibidem scelera, suorum consilio majorum pro rato decrevit ut/ aut regnum et terras ab aliis abriperet gentibus armis perpetuo colen/das, seu diis faventibus desertas saltem mansions conquereret possi/dendas” [And since he knew that his return route to Greece was barred to him because of the crimes he had formerly committed there, on the advice of his nobles he firmly decreed that he would either seize a kingdom and territory from other peoples to be inhabited for ever by force of arms or, if the gods favoured them, he would at least take possession of some uninhabited place for settlement] (I. 12. 4-8).

Ireland (I.18. 1-4) where they remain for several centuries before settling in Scotland (I.32).

Bower's account of the Scots' origins is notable for its depiction of how the Scots governed themselves in their earliest days. The narrative of the Scots' search for a land of their own—and particularly Bower's portrayal of Gathelos' role in this search—is as much a reflection of the fifteenth-century context in which Bower wrote the *Scotichronicon* as it is of the shadowy past it purports to relate. Bower's depiction of Gathelos as an oppressive, erratic tyrant who nevertheless commanded a great deal of loyalty from his supporters leads one to ask what positive qualities of leadership Gathelos possessed in order to help found the Scottish kingdom and people. As Bower's narrative continues, it becomes clear that Gathelos' eventual advocacy of measured self-governance for both himself and his people is a defining quality of the early Scots—and an attribute to which Bower's own readers should aspire in their own late-medieval context.

Gathelos' original plan for his people, according to Bower, was to lead them into an uninhabited land which they could turn into their kingdom. From very early on, however, these plans are ignored as the Scots settle in Spain, where they found a town named Brigantia and are routinely assailed by the Spaniards already occupying the area (I. 15. 12-14).²¹ Vitally, Gathelos comes to realise that his people's travails are the result of attempting to impose their existence on a previously-established set of inhabitants:

²¹ “Omnibus igitur diebus vite sue, continuis affectus bellorum incursibus ibidem deguit variisque fortune casibus jugiter obvolutus” [So he (Gathelos) lived in that same place all the days of his life, assailed by constant warlike attacks and perpetually involved in the changing vicissitudes of Fortune] (I.15. 12-14).

De tali vero continua cede necnon / imminenti discidio seu
 deinceps de dicto quid agendum negocio dum/ cura pervigili
 precavens mente devolveret secum tamen disceptans / animadvertit
 quod quas paciebatur merito tulisset angustias utpote / qui suum
 primitive deliberacionis propositum terras scilicet// vacuas / nulli
 molestiam inferens acquirere dimiserat... (I.16.14-17)

[So while he was taking thought for the future with watchful intent
 and reflecting on this never ending slaughter (or rather their
 imminent destruction) and on what should be done next of all about
 this matter, he observed as he was setting out the arguments in his
 own mind that he had brought the hardships which he was suffering
 upon himself since he had given up the plan which he had
 originally decided upon, that is to acquire unoccupied lands and so
 harm no-one.]

Bower may include Gathelos' revelation as a metaphor for the English
 incursions into Scotland occurring during Bower's own time; Scotland's mythical
 founder understands the folly of attempting to dominate a people who will not be
 moved.²²

The king sends a group to find an empty land, and they return with news of
 "quadam plaga / terre pulcherima Oceano" [a very beautiful tract of land that

²² This message may have had a special contemporary relevance for Bower; as Watt notes in his introduction to the *Scotichronicon*, "Bower offers his comments on men, manners and morals in the past and in his own day as guidance for his contemporaries (not least the young James II) on how to behave" (Introduction, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 9, xii). Given the murder of James I by powerful landowners who opposed James' efforts at centralised government, Bower's inclusion of Fordun's account of the early Scots may have been intended to advise his royal audience to proceed with caution when dealing with established inhabitants.

they had found in Ocean] (I.16.25-26). After the sailors return to the island and wipe out the inhabitants (I.17.5-7), Gathelos dies—but not before encouraging his sons to invade the new land (I. 17. 7-9), saying,

‘In his estimo/ partibus dominii possessio difficiliter acquiritur nisi
caro nimis / precio servili videlicet subjeccione seu nostrum
omnium morte, quod absit, redimatur. Sed et nobis jocundius est
laudabiliusque mortem/ compati bello strenue quam ignobiliter
quasi viventes moriendo/ cotidie sub execrabilis onere subjeccionis
jugiter compediri.’ (I. 17. 18-23)

[‘In these parts, I reckon, it is difficult to acquire possession of
right of ownership except by paying the too high price of the
subjection or the death (heaven forbid!) of all our people. Yet it is
more agreeable and more praiseworthy for us to suffer death
fighting vigorously rather than to live in shame dying daily in
chains beneath the burden of an accursed subjection.’]

He adds that his sons should “nullius alienigene dominantis imperium pati, sed successive / solummodo proprie nacionis uti spontaliter potestate” [refuse to endure the rule of any foreign domination, but to accept willingly the hereditary power of one’s own nation only] (I.17. 30-31). In Gathelos’ final words are the seeds of a set of Scottish values that will surface throughout the historical chronicles, particularly in the period after 1286 when Anglo-Scottish conflict and the instability of Scotland’s rule become most pronounced. Gathelos privileges a people’s right to self-governance, a right he feels should be defended to the death. This sentiment appears in a number of literary and political documents in

fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Scotland, ranging from the verse romances of Barbour's *Bruce* and Blind Harry's *Wallace* to the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320. Bower, then, writing in the fifteenth century, situates the Scots' desire for self-rule in the nation's very first leader, a leader who saw the identity of his people defined by a desire for freedom.

Jostling Geoffrey:

Scottish Chroniclers' Response to the *Historia Regum Britanniae*

As discussed above, Scottish historical chronicles establish a genealogy for the Scots separate from the standard British genealogy offered by chronicles such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*. Significantly, however, Scottish chronicles do not ignore or even openly reject Geoffrey's version of British history, but instead focus on and manipulate aspects of the *Historia* to portray Scotland in a more powerful light. In their treatment of the borders of Britain, the Galfridian account of the foundation of Albany, and the kingship of Arthur, Scottish chroniclers reinterpret Geoffrey's history while retaining enough of it to boost the authority of their own Scottish narratives.

Geoffrey's *Historia* describes the dimensions of Britain, "insularum optima" [the best of islands] (Descriptio.5.24) as measuring "octigenta milia in longum, ducenta uero in latum continens" [eight hundred miles long by two hundred miles wide] (Descriptio.5.25).²³ Geoffrey adds that Britain is "quinque / inhabitatur populis, Normannis uidelicet atque Britannis, Saxonibus, / Pictis, et Scotis; ex quibus Britones olim ante ceteros a mari usque ad mare / insederunt

²³ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain (Historia Regum Britanniae)*, Latin text ed. Michael D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright (Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 2007). All quotations and translations of the *Historia* are from this edition.

donec ultione diuina propter ipsorum superbiam superueniente / Pictis et Saxonibus cesserunt” [inhabited by five peoples, the Normans, the Britons, the Saxons, the Picts and the Scots; of these the Britons once occupied it from shore to shore before the others, until their pride brought divine retribution down upon them and they gave way to the Picts and the Saxons] (Descriptio.5.42-46).

Geoffrey here outlines a rather ambiguous role for the Scots and the Scottish kingdom within Britain; while the Scots are named as one of the five peoples inhabiting Britain (a distinction that would appear to separate them from the “Scots”—that is, the Irish—living to the west of Britain), they are not named as one of the groups to subdue the Britons, when geographically it would have been necessary for the Britons to encounter the Scots as well as the Picts and Saxons. Geoffrey’s account acknowledges the Scots as inhabitants of Britain but leaves no space for their kingdom.

While Bower’s *Scotichronicon* does not exactly contradict Geoffrey’s description, it offers an alternative phrasing that distinguishes Scotland from the rest of Britain. Bower asserts that “Britain” and “Scotland” were the names given to two separate kingdoms on the greater island of Albion (II.1.27-29)²⁴ and quotes several examples from Geoffrey (II.2. 15-48)²⁵ as well as William of Malmesbury, Bede and Ptolemy (II. 3) that demonstrate the chronicler’s semantic separation of Britain from Scotland, thus using Geoffrey’s own words about the

²⁴ “Hec igitur insula post gigantes, omisso nomine pri/mo, duobus consequenter nominibus secundum has duas divisiones, / Britannia videlicet et Scocia, fruebatur” [So this island of Albion gave up its first name after the time of the giants and as a consequence acquired two names, Britain and Scotland, corresponding to these two divisions] (II.1.27-29).

²⁵ According to John and Winnifred MacQueen, editors of Books I and II of the *Scotichronicon*, Bower has added lines 33-36 to this chapter, which otherwise corresponds to Fordun II.2. These lines merely list the types of marine life to be found in Scotland’s rivers and do not alter the substance of Fordun’s text.

isle of Britain to demonstrate Scotland's status as a separate kingdom from Britain. While Bower devotes a subsequent chapter of his chronicle (II.4) to arguments suggesting Britain and Scotland are the same kingdom, he attributes these not to the authors of the chronicles, but to "scribis potius emule/ nationis" [the transcribers of an antagonistic nation] (II.4.22-23) who have maliciously manipulated the original chronicles to "regnum / confinium viget auctoritas" [weaken the authority of neighbouring kingdoms] (II.4.23-24). Bower offers a compromise: "[V]ulgaris / opinio moderni temporis omnem Albionem a Bruto qui [nichil] / preter australes eius regiones cultura// redigerat dici velit Britanniam" [The commonly held opinion at the present time is that the whole of Albion was called Britain from the name of Brutus, who had settled none of it except for its southern regions] (II.4. 27-29). In other words, Britain was the name given the whole island—but Brutus had no knowledge of or sovereignty over the north, which would become Scotland.

Bower employs a similar strategy in his response to Geoffrey's account of the three-way division of Britain among Brutus' three sons Locrinus, Camber and Albanactus (the last of which inherited Albany, or Scotland). Geoffrey writes,

Hic, postquam / pater in .xx.iii. anno aduentus sui ab hoc saeculo
migravit, sepelierunt eum / infra urbem quam condiderat et
diuiserunt regnum Britanniae inter se et / secesserunt unusquisque
in loco suo [...] Albanactus iunior possedit patriam quae lingua
nostra / his temporibus appellatur Scotia et nomen ei ex nomine suo
Albania dedit. (II.23. 2-5, 10-11)

[When their father passed away, twenty-four years after his landing, they (Brutus' sons) buried him in the city he had founded and divided up the kingdom of Britain among them, each living in his own region [...] Albanactus, the youngest, received the region known today as Scotland, which he named Albania after himself.]

Bower's response to Geoffrey's Brutean version of Scotland's foundation is notable for its skilful reconciliation of Galfridian history with the established Scottish origin narrative. Bower reports that Brutus did give Albany to Albanactus, but leaves room for the Scots myth by redefining Albany's borders; instead of adopting Geoffrey's view of Albany as encompassing Scotland, Bower contends that "*Albania sidiquem regnum Albanacti tertia region regni Britonum ad / idem Humbri flumen et gurgitem ampnis de Tharent habens initium, / in fine boreali Britannie, sicut superius expressum est, terminator*" [Albany the kingdom of Albanactus the third region of the kingdom of the Britons has its beginning at the same river Humber and the tidal reaches of the river Trent and ends at the northern extremity of Britain, as was explained above] (II.6. 21-23). Bower refers in the last part of that excerpt to his previous definition of Britain's northern border as "*ad Humbri flumen / versus boream, et ad ampnem de Tharent finem habet*" [finishing at the river Humber and the river Trent in the north] (II.6.15-16). While Albany's boundaries do finish at Britain's northernmost point, Bower defines Britain's dimensions differently than does Geoffrey, limiting it to land south of the Firth of Forth: "*Huis autem Albanie regionis provincias, quecumque fuerint, que / sunt inter Humbrum et mare Scoticum, olim Britones dominio / tantum et nichil umquam possessionis amplius in Albione versus boream*

habuerunt” [The Britons at one time held only lordship over all the provinces of this region of Albany that were between the Humber and the Firth of Forth, and they never had any possession further north in Albion] (II. 6. 24-27). Rather than completely rejecting Geoffrey’s account of the three-way division of Britain, Bower reconciles it with Scotland’s own tradition through an artful use of semantics, offering an alternative definition of Britain’s borders and distinguishing between the British Albany and the Scottish Albion.

Scottish chroniclers had a particular interest in one of the *Historia*’s most enduring elements: the story of King Arthur. A.M. Kinghorn contends that the Scottish chronicles have little Arthurian material beyond scattered references in Fordun, Wyntoun and Barbour.²⁶ While it is true that the volume of Arthurian material in medieval Scottish chronicles is limited, the treatment of Arthur in those texts that do discuss him reveals much about how Scottish chroniclers and authors used the tradition of Arthur (and particularly his kingship) to enrich their accounts of Scottish history.²⁷ Rather than ignore or dismiss the Arthurian legends, Scottish chroniclers tended to accept Arthur’s kingship as fact. At the same time, however, the chronicles often challenge the validity of that kingship, using aspects of the English Arthurian legends to work *against* the supremacy of Arthur and *for* those figures in the legends with connections to Scotland. Scottish

²⁶ A.M. Kinghorn, “A New Introduction to Barbour’s Bruce,” *SSL* 6.3 (January 1969): 143-144.

²⁷ As this chapter focuses on Scottish historical writing, the fifteenth-century Scots romance *Lancelot of the Laik* will not be included here; the work’s engagement with the theme of Arthur’s governance, however, particularly in the section in which Amytans advises Arthur on how to rule himself and others, has been interpreted by some to be a commentary on the rule of James III and a piece of advice literature. For a view of the poem as contemporary commentary, see Flora Alexander, “Late Medieval Scottish Attitudes to the Figure of King Arthur: A Reassessment,” *Anglia* 93 (1975): 17-34; for a reading of the poem as advice literature, see Douglas Wurtele, “A Reappraisal of the Scottish *Lancelot of the Laik*,” *Revue de l’Université d’Ottawa* 46 (1976): 68-82.

chroniclers often use Arthur's reign to demonstrate lessons about kingship that are of use to Scotland rather than England, thus manipulating the English tradition of Arthur's rule to benefit and enhance Scotland's knowledge of how to rule itself.

Geoffrey's claim that Arthur is the ruler of all Britain (a term that implicitly includes Scotland if one accepts Geoffrey's definition at the beginning of his chronicle) motivates some creative responses in the Scottish chronicles. Geoffrey is clear in his statement that Arthur becomes the king of Britain after the death of his father Uther Pendragon (IX.143. 1-3). This declaration is fiercely contested even by certain characters in Geoffrey's narrative. A notable opponent is the Saxon leader Colgrimus, who "*collegit Saxones, Scotos, et Pictos, / uenitque ei obuius cum multitudine maxima iuxta flumen Duglas*" [gathered the Saxons, Scots and Picts to meet him (Arthur) with a great host by the river Duglas] to challenge his rule (IX.143. 19-20). Geoffrey's own history, then, contains Scottish doubt over Arthur's claim to be king of all of Britain, and this ambivalence is even more prominent in the Scottish histories. Scottish chronicles treat Arthur's kingship with varying degrees of respect, but the accounts share a lack of acceptance, whether tacit or explicit, that Arthur ruled Scotland.²⁸ In Wyntoun's chronicle, Arthur is a powerful conqueror who

wan all France and Lumbardy,

Gascone, Gyane and Normundy,

²⁸ Despite this rejection of Arthur's rule of the Scots, many sites in medieval Scotland were touted by residents to have Arthurian connections. Boardman notes that this trend was particularly pronounced in southwest Scotland, where (for instance) by the mid-fourteenth century there was an established acceptance that the town and castle of Stirling were once Arthur's Snowdon (55). This was a view consistent with accounts in Fordun and Bower, which claim that Stirling had once straddled the border between Britain and Scotland, allowing the possibility that Arthur may have resided there (55).

Flandris, Burgone and Braband,
 Celland, Holland and Fresland,
 Swessioun, Swethrik and Norway,
 Denmark, Irland and Orknay;
 And all þe Ilis in þe se
 Subiect were till his pouste. (XCVII. 4281-4288)

Notably, however, Scotland (apart from the Orkneys) does not appear on Wyntoun's list. This would seem to be the case for one of two reasons: either Wyntoun considers Scotland part of Britain and therefore under Arthur's original sway—an unlikely choice given Wyntoun's assiduous attention in most of his chronicle to delineating the genealogy of Scottish kings before, during and after Arthur's time—or he does not believe Arthur conquered Scotland, which seems more plausible given Wyntoun's overarching mission of promoting an autonomous Scottish history. Scotland's conspicuous absence from the list of Arthur's conquered territories, therefore, is a subtle indicator that it remains a separate kingdom. By asserting Arthur's dominance over other lands, Wyntoun is somewhat paradoxically able to use Arthur's power to put Scotland at an advantage: Arthur is formidable enough to conquer a host of kingdoms, but Scotland eludes his grasp. Rather than champion Scotland by downplaying Arthur's prowess, Wyntoun uses the very fact of Arthur's strength to elevate Scotland's autonomous status.

While Wyntoun is firm in his stance that Arthur rules a separate nation, he otherwise gives credit to his leadership, considering him worthy to rule. This approval is evident in Wyntoun's assessment of Arthur's fall at the hands of

Mordred; Wyntoun writes of “the tressoun till him done / Be Mordred, his sister sone” (XCVII. 4367-4368), a treason that causes Arthur to return to fight with his nephew in Britain, “Quhare he and his Round Tabill quyt / Wes vndone and discomfyt” (XCVII. 4371-4372). Wyntoun’s description of Arthur’s final struggles is brief but evocative, demonstrating his faith in Arthur’s right to rule Britain (albeit a Britain that, significantly, does not include Scotland). Juliette Wood observes that Wyntoun’s more sympathetic view of Arthur’s kingship may be due to his decision to avoid a direct engagement with Geoffrey’s version of history: “Wyntoun claims he had a specific source which allowed him to side-step the controversies about Geoffrey.”²⁹ Wyntoun thus does not undertake to embrace or reject Geoffrey’s account directly, but instead claims an alternative authority (in this case, the Scottish “Gestis Historiall” of “Huchon of the Auld Ryall” [XCVII. 4309-4310] and an unspecified “Brute” [XCVII. 4323]) consistent with Geoffrey’s history. In so doing, Wyntoun can claim the autonomy of his Scottish narrative while still aligning it with the dominant English tradition.

Other Scottish chronicles choose a more direct confrontation with Galfridian portrayals of Arthur and his kingship. These encounters vary in their degrees of sympathy towards Arthur’s rule. Bower sees Arthur as the least worst candidate to rule Britain; while denouncing Arthur’s origins as illegitimate and the work of Merlin and asserting that Mordred and Gawain had the proper claim to the British crown, these latter two were too young to assume their proper role (III.25.8-22). The “Scottis Originale” provides perhaps the most scathing assessment of Arthur’s right to rule, saying that Arthur “tuke to him fra þe

²⁹Wood, “Where Does Britain End?” 12.

richtuiss aire / The crovne of brettane That Is to say fra mor/dred and gawane
 quhilkis war's sir loth of lo/thianis sonis gottin apon þe kingis dochter and air' of
 brettan quhilk was arthuris sister & mariit with þe said loth or arthour was
 borne.”³⁰ The chronicler goes on to say that Arthur was conceived “[t]hrow þe
 devilry of/ merlyne” and that, while the kingdom of Britain was rightfully meant
 to pass into the hands of a Scot (presumably either Mordred or Gawain), Arthur
 was made king by the “brettonnis,” a term that suggests that the author of the
 “Scottis Originale” does not consider the Scots to be Britons, despite Scotland’s
 situation on the isle of Britain.³¹ In each of these examples, Geoffrey’s basic
 version of events surrounding Arthur’s rise to power is not denied; rather, the
 Scottish chroniclers illuminate the facets of Geoffrey’s account that serve Scottish
 interests in order to give Scotland a greater stake in the power balance of the
 British kingdoms. In other words, the Scottish chronicles do not alter the course
 of events presented in the English narrative; they instead place their focus on
 certain aspects of that narrative to make it work more effectively in Scotland’s
 favour.

One final illustration of this shift of focus is Bower’s description of
 Fulgentius, the duke of Albany. Fulgentius, whom Geoffrey calls Fulgenius,
 plays a relatively fleeting role in Geoffrey’s history; Geoffrey writes that he
 drives back the Roman Severus and his British supporters back from the border of
 Scotland, causing the Roman Emperor to order the construction of a barrier to
 keep the attackers at bay: “Irruptionem igitur eius grauiter ferens imperator iussit /

³⁰ “Scottis Originale” fol. 95b, ll. 5- 10 (p. 190).

³¹ “Scottis Originale” fol. 95b. 11.15-16, 12-16 (p. 190).

construi uallum inter Deiram et Albaniam ut impetum eius propius accedere / prohiberet. Communicato igitur sumptu, fecerunt illud a mari usque ad mare” [Annoyed by their raids, the emperor ordered a rampart to be constructed between Deira and Scotland to prevent their attacks penetrating any further. The rampart was constructed from coast to coast at public expense] (V.74.19-22). Fulgenius later sails to Scythia to enlist the help of the Picts in defeating the Romans in Britain; returning with a group of warriors, they besiege York, causing many Britons to switch their allegiance from Severus to Fulgenius (V.74.22-27). Severus and Fulgenius eventually kill each other in battle (V.74.27-31).

This episode takes up only one chapter in Geoffrey, but as Boardman notes, Fulgentius (as he is known in Bower) and his descendants play a more important role in Bower’s chronicle, which contributes to maintaining a verbal separation between the kingdoms of Britain and Scotland.³² In Bower, Fulgentius enters into an alliance with the Scots after they and the Picts sack Albany (II. 36. 15-19); together, their forces attack the allied Roman and British forces (II. 36. 19-20), leading to Severus’ construction of the wall to prevent Fulgentius from returning to Britain (II. 37. 23-25). While (as Boardman argues) Fordun and Bower likely draw their depiction of Fulgentius from “a modified text of Monmouth’s work,” Bower’s chronicle distinguishes itself from Geoffrey’s by maintaining a verbal separation between the kingdom of Britain and the kingdom of Scotland.³³ This semantic separation goes beyond the physical barrier between Scotland and the *rest* of Britain described by Geoffrey; for Bower, Scotland is not a part of Britain

³² Boardman 56.

³³ Boardman 57.

at all.³⁴ Bower thus extends Geoffrey's account of the wall, making minimal changes but subtly shifting the focus to serve his goal of enhancing Scotland's autonomy from Geoffrey's Britain. The chroniclers' focus on Fulgentius, argues Boardman, is a way for Scottish chronicles "to give the Scots dynasty a direct link to the British past without validating Geoffrey's vision of the threefold division of the island between the sons of Brutus."³⁵ In this way, Bower reinterprets the Galfridian account of the wall to make it not only a marker of England's boundaries, but of *Scotland's*, thereby facilitating Scotland's efforts to define itself.

Scottish chroniclers such as Bower thus use Geoffrey selectively not in an effort to contradict his account directly, but to present an alternative version using aspects of Geoffrey's own narrative. By challenging the borders of Britain and the legitimacy of Arthur's kingship, and by expanding less prominent aspects of Geoffrey's history to place Scotland in a more positive, powerful light, the Scottish accounts are able to claim part of the authoritative tradition established by Geoffrey's *Historia* without subscribing to those aspects of Geoffrey's narrative that deny an autonomous Scottish genealogy. Scottish chroniclers are thus able to govern English sources through strategic integration and reinterpretation rather than blunt rejection in a sense, they defer to selected English accounts in order to establish a stronger overarching Scottish narrative. As will be demonstrated below, a similar dynamic of governance through

³⁴ See the earlier discussion of Scotland's dimensions for further examples of Bower's tendency to distinguish Scotland from Britain.

³⁵ Boardman 58.

deference is manifested in the depictions of two towering figures in medieval Scottish history: Robert Bruce and William Wallace.

Freedom Through Friendship: Interdependent Governance in the *Bruce*

John Barbour's *Bruce* articulates a distinct vision of Anglo-Scottish relations in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Specifically, the *Bruce* addresses the period after Alexander III's accidental death in 1286, which led to a vacuum of leadership and conflicting claims to the throne by the Balliols and Bruces.³⁶ According to many historical accounts, a group of Scottish magnates asked England's Edward I to decide which of the two families had the stronger claim to the Scottish crown.³⁷ Edward seized the opportunity to act as arbiter to assert that Scotland had owed homage to England for many years and therefore, in the absence of a leader, the kingdom would now be under England's control.³⁸ By the chronicles' accounts, Edward's assertion of control and his subsequent selection of John Balliol as king—a decision denounced by Barbour as

³⁶ Barrell 93-95.

³⁷ The Balliols and Bruces were both descended from David I, leading both families to vie for succession. While the Balliols had a more direct kinship tie to the line of Alexander III, it was through a woman, Devorguilla Balliol; the Bruces claimed that the elder Robert Bruce (the grandfather of Barbour's hero) had been named heir presumptive by Alexander II during Alexander III's minority, but the claim was unsubstantiated by any written proof (Barrell 90-94). While Barrell perceives Robert Bruce's claim to have been "inherently weaker than his rival's" (103), a view shared by G.W.S. Barrow in *Robert Bruce and the Community of the Realm of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2005: 55-56), Scottish writers such as Barbour and Wyntoun tend to favour the eventual victor (cf. *Bruce* I. 41-68; Wyntoun CXXXVIII. 651-660).

³⁸ According to Wyntoun, Edward had other ideas of how to bring Scotland under English control "wip strength or art" (CXXXVI. 30) in the absence of a leader. These included a marriage between Edward's son Edward of Caernarvon with Alexander III's daughter Margaret, the "Maid of Norway," who died before this possibility could be pursued (CXXXVI. 40-48). Wyntoun writes that Edward then wrote to scholars at the University of Paris for advice on the kingship dispute, but misrepresented the case to make it appear as though Edward was Scotland's overlord by right (CXXXVIII. 187-190).

nothing more than the appointment of a puppet king to fulfil Edward's wishes³⁹—led Robert Bruce, lord of Annandale (the original competitor for the Scottish crown and grandfather of the Robert Bruce commemorated in Barbour's poem)⁴⁰ to take up the cause of reclaiming Scotland's freedom and, in the process, of claiming the Scottish crown.⁴¹

The *Bruce* and Wyntoun emphasise the complicated nature of Anglo-Scottish relations post-1286, particularly with respect to individual allegiances to one nation or the other. Neither Barbour nor Wyntoun bases Scottish identity simply in one's ethnic background or geographical situation, both unreliable markers in a culturally heterogeneous country with frequently shifting borders (particularly in the south). Kinghorn observes that "in the fourteenth century Bruce's Scottish nation was made up of a variety of peoples of different stock—Scots, Picts, Britons, Gaels, Scands, English, Flemings and Normans, welded together by Celtic tradition" and that the Scotland of the day must therefore be considered a "community of the realm, a welding of diverse interests into one

³⁹ Barrow differs from this view, noting, "The succession of kings from Edgar in 1097 to the acceptance of the Maid of Norway in 1284—in which Bruce and his son had joined—demonstrated clearly that a tendency to prefer the most senior available heir had hardened into a rule. The court of 1291-92 was surely right, and not merely overawed by Edward I and English influence, when it stated that Scottish royal succession was governed by the rule of primogeniture" (*Robert Bruce* 56). Barbour and Harry nevertheless accept Bruce's claim as worthy.

⁴⁰ Given that three Robert Bruces were active during the Scottish Wars of Independence, it is important to clarify that subsequent references to "Robert the Bruce" or "Bruce" will be to the third such individual, who would become Robert I of Scotland.

⁴¹ Barbour writes that Robert rejects Edward's initial offer of kingship because to do so would have required him and his heirs to defer to Edward's power in perpetuity (I. 153-156), a response that reveals Robert's dedication to an independent Scottish kingdom and his consequent worthiness to be king. Wyntoun corroborates this account in an exchange between Edward and Bruce. Edward asks Bruce if he will "hald Scotland of him in fe / And heretage" (CXXXVIII. 840-841); Bruce refuses, saying he will only be king of Scotland if he, as his ancestors did, is able to rule the kingdom "in freast ryalte" (CXXXVIII. 852), without England's "oversight."

natio and the creation of a new Scotland in the heroic spirit.”⁴² Barbour and Wyntoun develop a view of Scottish identity as rooted in the subscription to a heroic Scottish narrative and to the leaders charged with making it a reality.⁴³ The two writers often refer to characters as “becoming” English or Scottish—a characterisation that challenges the notion of collective identity being fixed in an ethnic or even linguistic base. Wyntoun asserts the ability to choose one’s identity in his account of a 1334 battle between the Scots and the English. Wyntoun writes that David, Earl of Atholl, “persauit þat openly /He mycht nocht fordo þe Dowglass” (CLXV. 4242-4243), at which point

[h]is hert fra Scottis haille turnyt was,
 And become Inglisman again,
 And gert his men wiþ all þar mayne
 Ryot halely þe cuntre,
 And leit at all his avne suld be. (CLXV. 4344-4348)

By contrast, the Earl of Dunbar’s actions in the same chapter demonstrate that one can also become more Scottish by embracing the Scottish cause: “Dunbar be þat

⁴²Kinghorn 140. Purdon and Wasserman, advancing a different yet complementary view of the construction of Scottish national identity in the fourteenth century, claim that “the Scottish war for independence and even the need for a Scottish ‘national epic’ [such as the *Bruce*] may be taken as manifestations of the development of the sense of the individual and of individual ‘rights,’” in particular “the developing right of *exfestucatio* or *diffidatio*, the repudiation of the feudal contract by a vassal if the lord did not fulfill his duties and overstepped contractual bonds” (77). Whether as a result of ethnic and linguistic diversity or of an increased sense that vassals had rights as well as obligations, then, national identity becomes a conscious choice contingent on one’s opinion of a national leader and his cause.

⁴³A seemingly obvious example of this form of shifting allegiance would be found in Robert the Bruce himself, who in October 1302 publicly demonstrated his adherence to Edward I’s authority by attending the Westminster parliament (Barrow, *Robert Bruce* 184). While some chronicles, most notably Fordun’s *Chronica Gentis Scottorum*, describe Robert’s early affiliation with the English (which was likely motivated, as for so many lowland magnates, by Robert’s possession of lands on either side of the Anglo-Scottish border), Barbour’s *Bruce* makes no reference to it, a decision Anne McKim attributes to Barbour’s desire “to dwell on those details that tend to justify or legitimise Bruce’s claim to the throne” (“Gret Price” 13)

wes biggit weill; / And quhen þe Erll had his castell stalwart, he stuffit it in hy, /
And become Scottisman fullylely” (CLXV. 4349-4352).

At numerous points in the *Bruce*, characters shift their allegiances from one side to the other of the Anglo-Scottish divide, indicating that national identity is a matter of choice rather than birth for Barbour’s Scots and Englishmen.⁴⁴ The difference between the two is often unclear in Barbour’s narrative until Bruce becomes king, at which point “Scots may then ‘become’ Scottish only by becoming [Bruce’s] subjects.”⁴⁵ In choosing one’s allegiance in the battle over Scotland’s autonomy, Barbour’s characters do not merely choose a side; they also adopt the national identity that goes with a particular side.

The emphasis on national identity as a choice rather than a result of biological determinism implies that the leader of a nation so composed must give his followers a compelling rationale for their continued loyalty. A leader is therefore obligated to be solicitous of his followers’ concerns in order to maintain

⁴⁴ As Anne McKim puts it, “That nationality is a matter of political identity and allegiance for Barbour is clear when he goes on to write of Scottish nationals who become either ‘Inglis’ (English) or ‘Scottis’ men in the course of the war” (“Barbour’s *Bruce*: Literature of Region and Nation?”, *Literature of Region and Nation: Proceedings of the 6th International Literature of Region and Nation Conference, University of New Brunswick in Saint John* (1996), ed. Winnifred M. Bogaards [Saint John: SSHRC and the University of New Brunswick in Saint John, 1998]: 264). See also R. James Goldstein, who argues that Barbour “generally uses ‘Scottis’ to designate a nationality” but, significantly, also uses the term “to indicate a specific political allegiance, which always expresses a positive value” (*The Matter of Scotland: Historical Narrative in Medieval Scotland* [Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1993] 193-194).

⁴⁵ Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland* 194. Goldstein cites as examples Adam Gordon, who “wes becommyn a Scottis man” (XV. 333), Sir Ingram de Umphraville, who opposed Bruce at Bannockburn but eventually “wes with the king as Scottis man” (XIX. 74), and Sir Laurence of Abynethy, who “becomes” Scottish after pledging loyalty to James Douglas after Bannockburn (XIII 556- 61) (194-195). Goldstein also observes the opposite effect, “as when Barbour tells us that the folk of Carrick, a predominantly Gaelic-speaking region, have become *English*. By excluding Bruce’s Scottish opponents from the category ‘Scottish,’ Barbour effectively banishes the history of internal division from the poem” (*Matter of Scotland* 195). While Goldstein is correct to point out the fluid definition of Scottish identity, it seems that Barbour’s emphasis on that fluidity does imply the potential for domestic Scottish instability—and, consequently, Bruce’s need to retain his supporters’ loyalty.

a united front. Goldstein notes both Barbour's efforts, reinforced through his depiction of Bruce, to "produce a unified Scotland from [the] many fragments" of a kingdom in turmoil.⁴⁶ Barbour's Bruce, in order to maintain his power and advance the Scottish cause, must place a high value on his relationships with his lords, his followers and his people. It thus becomes incumbent upon Bruce to work with his subjects in order to achieve shared goals. The mutual rights and responsibilities of Bruce and his followers, as Purdon and Wasserman have argued, may be understood in terms of a feudal relationship in which each party simultaneously swears fealty to and demands protection from the other.⁴⁷ They contend that

[t]hrough vassalic obligation—that is, through the relationships resulting from vassal homage—Barbour demonstrates that social and political unity can be achieved. [...] Unburnished as it may be, the relationship that mutually benefits a lord and his men is, finally, the basis of a free and independent feudal monarchy.⁴⁸

While Purdon and Wasserman go further than others in asserting that the *Bruce* exemplifies feudal ideals, the argument stands that the poem favours a social system in which mutual obligation leads to Scotland's greater freedom.⁴⁹ Purdon

⁴⁶ Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland* 151.

⁴⁷ Purdon and Wasserman 91.

⁴⁸ Purdon and Wasserman 91.

⁴⁹ Bernice W. Kliman sees the *Bruce* as advocating chivalry rather than feudal order, though she qualifies her argument by saying that the concept of 'chivalry' in the poem is not that conventionally seen in late-medieval secular literature but one modified to suit the poem's emphasis on God, war and nationalism ("The Idea of Chivalry in John Barbour's *Bruce*," *Mediaeval Studies* 35 [1973]: 478-479). While Jack, for instance, does not advocate a conscious championing of the feudal system in the *Bruce*, he does believe that the poem is consistent with

and Wasserman's argument highlights a fascinating paradox: while one may consider the feudal system's emphasis on mutual obligation (feudal or otherwise) to be a form of servitude out of place in a poem whose most celebrated line is, "A! Fredome is a noble thing!" (I.225), it is precisely this system of mutual obligation that provides Scotland with the means to assert its independence from England.⁵⁰ In fact, the famous speech commencing with the above line soon distinguishes between various types of servitude, with some being more favourable than others; while serfdom is unequivocally condemned as a fate worse than death (I. 269), the servitude of marriage is said to be a step up, since, unlike the daily death that is a life of serfdom, in marriage a man will only die once (I. 272).

Bruce's relationships with his supporters and with God, in which Bruce recognises his obligations to others, help Bruce achieve his goals of Scottish freedom and achievement of the Scottish crown. Bruce's friendship with Sir James Douglas is an excellent example of how the leader rules through respect for his lords. In Book II, James, who has been disinherited of his land by the English (II. 100-104), is advised by the Bishop of St. Andrews to seek out Bruce and join

Aristotelian "hierarchical constitutional means of safeguarding the liberty of the majority," where the service of some leads to the freedom of most, rather than "a mistaken view of freedom—namely the placing of individual freedom above that of the law and the state" ("(A!), Fredome is a Noble Thing!": Christian Hermeneutics and Barbour's *Bruce*," *Scottish Studies Review* 1 [Winter 2000]: 30). Hans Utz is more sympathetic to the idea that the *Bruce* favours a feudal structure, going so far as to say that "for the nobility the fight for freedom might include, or even be identical with, the defence of class privilege" ("Freedom' in John Barbour's *The Bruce*," *English Studies* 50.2 [April 1969]: 156). All the same, writes Utz, Barbour's Scots define freedom as "the possibility of living under their own right" (156); for the Scots, living under a set of structured rules is compatible with freedom, so long as the rules are of their own construction.

⁵⁰ All Barbour quotations are from *Barbour's Bruce: A fredome is a noble thing!*, ed. Matthew P. McDiarmid and James A.C. Stevenson, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: STS, 1980-1985). This edition of the *Bruce* represents thorns with the letter "y," which for clarity and consistency I have replaced with "th" (indicated in square brackets).

his battle against the English (II. 115-118). James tells Bruce the story of his disinheritance and says that he now comes

to mak homage

Till him as till his rychtwis king,

And at he boune wes in all thing

To tak with him [th]e gud and ill. (II. 158-161)

Bruce “resawyt him in gret daynte” (II. 163), expressing faith that James will be “worthy / For all his eldris war douchty” (II. 165-166). Significantly, Barbour depicts the relationship between the two as one of reciprocity:

[Th]air frendschip woux ay mar & mar,

For he serwyt ay lelely,

And [th]e to[th]er full wilfully

[Th]at was bath worthy wycht and wys

Rewardyt him weile his seruice. (II. 170-174)

In exchange for James’ service, Bruce “rewardyt him weile,” indicating at once the pair’s mutual benefit and mutual obligation. While Purdon and Wasserman are certainly correct in characterising relationships such as these in the *Bruce* as feudal bonds, it is also notable that Barbour deems the bond between James and Bruce as not merely one of a vassal and lord, but as one of “frendschip,” a term suggesting that the two men are, at least on one level, equals. Given that Bruce is said shortly thereafter to go “our all [th]e land / Frendis and frendschip purchesand / To maynteym [th]at he had begunnyn” (II. 187-89), we can suppose that Bruce’s feudal bonds with these men (a relationship that in and of itself

indicates the responsibilities of all parties) also have an element of friendship, a term that implies a certain degree of equality and mutual respect.⁵¹

Bruce's loyalty to his friends/ brothers-in-arms extends to his actions on the battlefield. During one battle, Barbour says of Bruce,

Sa weile defendyt he his men
[Th]at quha-sa-euer had seyne him [th]en
Prowe sa worthely wasselage
And turn sa oft-sythis [th]e wisage
He suld say he awcht weill to be
A king off a gret reawte. (III. 55-60)

Seemingly paradoxically, Bruce's "wasselage" to his men proves his worth as a leader of a kingdom. As Bernice Kliman notes, Bruce is also willing to take (and even ask for) the advice of his lords, as at III. 331-332, where Bruce "to him callyt he / [Th]aim [th]at till him war mast preue" to seek counsel on whether the queen and Earl of Atholl should be sent to Kildrummy castle for their safety, and V. 62-63, where Bruce asks his "prywe men in hy / Quhat at [th]aim thocht wes best to do" after Percy occupies one of Bruce's castles.⁵² Bruce's seeming subjection to his friends and followers, however, is not so curious—as a ruler, Bruce must defend his subjects; that he is able to fulfil this obligation in battle indicates his suitability to be Scotland's protector.

⁵¹ It should also be noted that Bruce's friendship with James Douglas transcends those made with Bruce's other supporters, with James going so far as to attempt to satisfy Bruce's wish to have his heart buried in the Holy Land after his death (XX. 207-212).

⁵² Kliman 494.

Barbour depicts Bruce's other principal object of deference—God—to be a vital component of his leadership and eventual victory in Scotland. This is perhaps most obvious in Barbour's account of the hours preceding the Scots' victory at Bannockburn. In a pre-battle speech to his men, Bruce balances an assertion of his leadership with deference to God and his men. Bruce begins by saying, "[W]e aucht to love & luff / All mychty God [th]at syttis abuff / [Th]at sendis ws sa fayr begynnynng" (XII. 171-173). By the end of his speech, Bruce shifts the focus from God's will to his men's:

‘[Th]e-quheyer I say nocht [th]is 3ow till
 For [th]at 3e suld folow my will
 To fycht, bot in 3ow all sall be,
 For gyff 3ow thinkis spedfull [th]at we
 Fecht we sall, and giff 3e will
 We leve, 3our liking to fulfill.
 I sall consent on alkyn wis
 To do rycht as 3e will dywys,
 [Th]arfor sayis off 3our will planly.’ (XII. 191-199)

Bruce gives his men the choice of whether they wish to stay and fight or leave the field; this deference to their judgement results in the men freely choosing to fight for the Scottish cause:

‘[Gud] king forowtyn mar delay
 To-morne alsone as 3e se day
 Ordane 3ow hale for [th]e bataill,
 For doute off dede we sall nocht fail

Na na payn sall refusyt be

Quhill we haiff maid our countre fre.’ (XII. 201-206)

Bruce’s expression of submission to God and his men leads to increased support for his cause; his men commit themselves so fully that not even the fear of death will deter them from the fight.

The morning of the battle, the Scots take the field and “comounaly / Knelyt all doune to God to pray / And a schort prayer [th]ar maid [th]ai / To God to help [th]aim in [th]at fycht” (XII. 478-481). King Edward misinterprets the Scots’ stance of supplication as one of submission to the English forces: “3one folk knelis to ask mercy” (XII. 484). Ingram’s response to Edward’s assumption reveals the strength of the Scots’ desire for freedom:

‘3e say suth now,

[Th]ai ask mercy bot nane at 3ow,

For [th]ar trespass to God [th]ai cry.

I tell 3ow a thing sekyrly,

[Th]at 3one men will all wyn or de,

For doute of dede [th]ai sall nocht fle.’ (XII. 485-490)

Ingram is aware that the Scottish forces recognise only two lords, Bruce and God, and that they will refuse to serve any other.

Barbour enshrines Bruce’s subjection to God in the king’s final request: to have his heart buried in the Holy Land (XX. 191-199). Through this request, Bruce indicates his awareness that Scotland, while dear to him, is not the ultimate kingdom, and his heart should therefore lie in the earthly locale closest to heaven.

Appropriately, it is Bruce's close friend James Douglas who attempts (but sadly, unsuccessfully) to fulfil his lord's final wish (XX. 207-212).

Bruce's other qualities as a leader also paint a picture of a measured, self-controlled man—traits that Barbour depicts as necessary in a proper ruler.

Barbour praises Bruce's moderation in Book VI, noting, "Worschip extremyteys has twa, / Fule-hardyment [th]e formast is / And [th]e to[th]er is cowartys, / And [th]ai ar bath for to forsak" (338-341). Bruce, however, is said to find the golden mean of "worschip" between foolhardiness and cowardice through the exercise of his wits:

[Th]us hardyment gouernyt with wyt
 [Th]at he all tyme wald samyn knyt
 Gert him off worschip haiff [th]e price
 And oft ourcum his ennemyis. (VI. 371-374)

Bruce is able to temper his "hardyment" with mental discipline, and this self-governance is at the root of his success in battle. In the *Bruce*, then, Barbour presents his readers with the portrait of an heroic Scottish king, one whose best qualities are his reliance on his lords and his mental self-discipline.

Bruce's strength as a leader derives from an understanding of his obligations to others. By contrast, the excessively independent excursions of Robert's brother Edward Bruce demonstrate the dangers of asserting one's will without garnering sufficient support. After Edward has made significant gains in Ireland and been proclaimed its ruler (XV.160-161), the Irish kings do Edward's bidding and refer to him as king (XVI. 313-17). Barbour writes that Edward was on his way "[t]o conquer [th]e land halyly" (XVI. 319) and that if he had only

“gouernyt him throw skill / And folowyt nocht to fast his will / Bot with mesur haf led his dede” (XVI. 325-327), the whole of Ireland could have been his. Edward, however, stumbles; “his owtrageous sucquedry / And will [th]at wes mar [th]an hardy / Off purpos letttyt him perfay” (XVI. 331-333). Edward’s “owtrageous sucquedry” (arrogance) and excessively hardy “will” are said to lead to his downfall,⁵³ and readers later learn the nature of Edward’s fateful actions: while his forces are greatly outnumbered, he still desires to fight (XVIII. 28-30). Defying the advice of both his lords and the Irish kings, Edward remains stubbornly opposed to waiting: “[Th]ar mycht na consaill awaile, / He wald algat hav bataile” (XVIII. 69-70). He presses onward, where his force of under 2,000 men is slaughtered by the over 40,000 men of the opposing forces (XVIII. 90-107).

Edward meets his end when he refuses to acknowledge that his military strength comes in the numbers of his supporters. In so doing, he acts as a tragic but effective counterpoint to Bruce’s more collaborative leadership style in Barbour’s narrative. Bruce’s success as a leader stems in large part from his acceptance of the fact that his power is derived from the number and loyalty of his supporters. This realisation leads Bruce to ask advice from his lords, to act in a

⁵³ Critics who examine the *Bruce*’s engagement with the precepts of feudalism have contrasted Robert the Bruce’s embrace of feudal relationships with what they see as Edward Bruce’s excessive attachment to more individualist chivalric ideals. Purdon and Wasserman note that Edward’s campaign in Ireland “provided Barbour with an appropriate historical means of demonstrating the inherent weakness of the chivalric ideal and the strength of feudal obligation” (79), showing how Edward’s reliance on informal, individual verbal bonds and his own fixation on “the fulfillment of his chivalric ambition [and] his individual glory” lead to his defeat (81). Kliman maintains that Edward Bruce fits the traditional chivalric convention more closely than his brother because the former is said to have a paramour (480). Kliman contends, however, that conventional chivalric traits such as these are not the ideal in a poem embracing a modified, more martial chivalric model, in which “Edward is a hero in the old tradition” (493).

measurable way, and to give due deference to God; these actions, which would seem to indicate a restraint on Bruce's power, in fact give him the ability to restore Scotland's autonomy.

Keeping the Faith and Toeing the (Royal) Line:

The Wallace's Vision of Leadership

Harry's *Wallace* expresses a very different view of Anglo-Scottish relations and identity. Harry's work, composed in the latter half of the fifteenth century, takes a much more polemical view regarding the English than does Barbour's *Bruce*.⁵⁴ Harry appears to define Scottish identity along far more ethnically-based lines than does Barbour, thus to a certain extent downplaying the role of individual agency in adopting Scottish identity. R. James Goldstein contends that the *Wallace* subscribes to an historically inaccurate but emotionally potent "ideology of blood" that presents the divide between Scots and English in binary, ingrained terms.⁵⁵ For Harry, bloodlines serve to determine Scottish identity and clarify class distinctions within the Scottish people, leading Goldstein to conclude in an earlier articulation of his argument on the *Wallace*, "Blood thus is a sign of entitlement and is integral to the ideology of feudal law and the class system it supports."⁵⁶ Unlike in Barbour's *Bruce*, argues Goldstein, Harry's Scots

⁵⁴ One of the more moderate opinions regarding Harry's rhetoric is expressed by Grace G. Wilson: "Its tone is patriotic, if harshly so" ("Barbour's *Bruce* and Hary's *Wallace*: Complements, Compensations and Conventions," *SSL* 25 [1990]: 190). Stefan Thomas Hall is more blunt: "Hary's Anglophobia cannot be denied. Hary, like his hero, is a racist" ("Scottish Identity in Blind Hary's *Wallace*," *SSL* 33-34 [2004]: 187).

⁵⁵ Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland* 232. Stefan Thomas Hall concurs with Goldstein's assessment of the *Wallace* as advocating an ethnically-based sense of Scottish identity: "Wallace redefines what it means to be noble and Scottish, and the national identity which emerges from the poem is both heroic and racial, with the outlaw-hero Wallace as the greatest representative of the noble Scottish race" (178).

⁵⁶ Goldstein, "Blind Hary's Myth of Blood : The Ideological Closure of Hary's *Wallace*," *SSL* 25 (1990): 76.

and English cannot define themselves by choosing their political allegiance; their allegiance is bestowed upon them from birth and cannot be altered with an act of the will. Richard J. Moll offers a slightly different interpretation, acknowledging the *Wallace*'s focus on Scottish blood as a marker of patriotism, but noting the poem's complication of "blood" by describing "all of the ethnic groups of Scotland as 'trew Scottis,' as long as they support the ideology of Scottish independence."⁵⁷

The implications of an ethnically-based Scottish identity on the depiction of Wallace's leadership lead to an entirely different portrayal than that of Barbour's Bruce. While Barbour depicts Bruce as a leader who achieves his goals for Scotland by respecting the interdependent nature of his rule, Harry's Wallace is a social outsider credited with numerous single-handed victories over Englishmen, often in groups. At the age of eighteen, writes Harry, Wallace was "semly, stark and bauld" (I. 191-192); if he saw an Englishman alone, he would "cutt his thrott or steik hym sodanlye" without hesitation (I. 197).⁵⁸ It is not uncommon to read in Harry's verse accounts such as the following, in which a group of Englishmen confronts a young Wallace after he kills a strongman at market:

⁵⁷ Richard J. Moll, "'Off quhat nacioun art thou?' National Identity in Blind Harry's *Wallace*," *History, Literature, and Music in Scotland, 700- 1560*, ed. R. Andrew McDonald (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002) 126-127. Moll does note that Harry presents a few exceptions to his view that a desire for independence renders one of "Scottis blud," a prominent example being the men of "cruell Scottis blud" (VIII. 84) who die fighting for Earl Patrick against Wallace at Dunbar. Moll argues that examples such as these, which were invented by Harry and therefore deliberately intended to complicate questions of Scottish identity, ultimately demonstrate that Scottish identity is rooted deep in one's physical being, even if it is partially obscured by anti-Scottish allegiances (133-134).

⁵⁸ All quotations from the *Wallace* are from *Harry's Wallace*, ed. Matthew P. McDiarmid, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood for the STS, 1968-1969).

The Inglismen semblit on Wallace thair,
 Feill on the feld of frekis fechtand fast,
 He unabasyt and nocht gretlie agast.
 Apon the hed ane with the steing hitt he,
 Till bayn and brayn he gert in pecis fle.
 Ane other he straik on a basnat of steille;
 The tre to-raiff and fruschit euire-deille.
 His steyng was tynt, the Inglisman was dede,
 For his crag bayne was brokyn in that stede. (II. 46-54)

Such (presumably) exaggerated examples of Wallace's righteous rage have been seen by John Balaban to fit the conventions of a folkloric hero: "The *Wallace*'s inaccuracies, unlikelyhoods, exaggerations, and fictions serve Blind Harry's dramatic ends. [...] Indeed, [in the poem's physical description of Wallace] it is no ordinary man which Blind Harry describes but one of the supermen out of the old legends."⁵⁹ Wallace's unreal exploits, however, provide more than a link to folkloric patterns; they also create an image of a protagonist who appears to depend only on himself, who follows only his own code and is obligated only to himself. Stefan Thomas Hall focuses on Wallace's identity as an "outlaw-hero," as well as what he sees as the poem's "anti-feudal [and] anti-legal" stance.⁶⁰ The *Wallace* thus presents a view of Scottish societal structure quite different from that advanced in the *Bruce*. While the *Bruce* appears to advocate the idea that a more structured societal order (one with debts to

⁵⁹ John Balaban, "Blind Harry and *The Wallace*," *Chaucer Review* 8.3 (Winter 1974): 249.

⁶⁰ Stefan Thomas Hall 178.

feudalism) will actually lead Scotland to freedom, the *Wallace* contends that Scotland's freedom from oppression must come from outside a feudal or legal framework. The noble Wallace must step outside the social strictures in which he was raised and live as an outlaw in order to inspire the Scottish people to fight for their freedom. This image seems to challenge the idea that, in Scottish historical writing, true power requires responsibility and mutual dependence.

A second look at Harry's poem, however, makes it apparent that Wallace is not the purely self-sufficient outlaw that he may first appear to be. This is clear even from the work's earliest books, in which readers discover that Wallace acknowledges at least one governor: God. After a young Wallace stabs an Englishman to death (I. 223-227), he escapes and finds his way to his mother, who weeps and fears that he will soon be killed (I. 263-265). He replies, "Modyr, [...] god reuller is of all. / Unsouerable ar thir pepille of Inland. / Part of that Ire me think we suld gaynstand" (I. 266-268). Wallace refuses to tolerate the petty tyranny of the English, accepting only God as the sovereign of all. When Wallace is later captured and imprisoned by the English, he prays to God to "resawe / [His] pretows spreit and sawle amange the law" (II. 174-175) and leaves his fate to divine forces, saying, "'Quhen-so thow will out of this warld I wend, / Giff I suld now in presoun mak ane end" (II. 178-179). While Wallace does question why he, a faithful soul, may end his days a prisoner (II. 181-182), even imploring at one point, "'On our kynrent, deyr god, quhen will thow rew [?]" (II. 196), the very fact that Wallace asks these questions of God indicates his belief in God's

power to change the situation of both Wallace and the Scots.⁶¹ From early in the poem, Harry establishes Wallace's faith in an external authority.

As the poem progresses, Wallace demonstrates his faith in—and need of—his supporters, though the relationship between the leader and his men does not occupy as prominent a place as in the *Bruce*. As Wallace's fame grows, he enlists the support of men such as Adam of Ricardtoun (III. 44); Edward Litill (III. 57); Robert Boyd, “quhilk walk no langar bide / Undir thrillage of Segis of Ingland” (III. 52-53); and Sir Ronald Crawford, who “luffyt [Wallace] with hart and all hys mycht” (IV. 20), among others. Wallace's men exude both a desire for Scottish freedom and a fierce admiration for their leader, and Wallace in turn grows attached to his supporters. After one battle with the English in which many of Wallace's men are killed, Wallace was “glaid [...] that he had chapyt swa, / Bot for his men gret murnyng can he ma” (V. 227-228); only the thought of avenging their deaths on the English returns Wallace to a courageous state of mind (V. 235-236).

Wallace does demonstrate one more allegiance: to the royal authority of Robert the Bruce. The extent of Wallace's loyalty to Bruce, oddly, is expressed in negative terms, as Wallace is shown to be angered and heartbroken at Robert's efforts for the English side. At the battle for Dunbar castle, Wallace sees among the fleeing Englishmen “Robert Bruce contrar his natiff men” (VIII. 241), causing Wallace to be “wa fra tyme he couth him ken. / Off Brucis deid he was agrewit far mar / Than all the laiff that day at semplit thar” (VIII. 242-244). Harry's

⁶¹ After Wallace's daring escape from prison and Longcastle, he thanks God “off his fre happy chance” (II. 441). Wallace may now be free, but he attributes this freedom to God's authority over the events of his life.

description of Robert's affiliation with the English not only elevates Wallace's heroic status by comparison; perhaps even more significantly, Wallace's dismay at Robert's allegiance reveals his respect for the authority of the Scottish crown, which he now believes Robert to have tarnished. Despite Wallace's outlaw status, he is shown here to be emotionally invested in the maintenance of Scotland's monarchical hierarchy. Wallace is willing to submit to authority, as long as it is that of an autonomous Scotland. Since Robert has made clear through his actions that he does not currently uphold that ideal, Wallace "[t]o resist Bruce [...] him pressit fast" (VIII. 261). Despite Wallace's violent response, however, he is primarily hurt by Bruce's treachery:

For worthi Bruce his hart was wondyr sar;
 He had leuer haiff had him at his large,
 Fre till our croun, than off fine gold to carge
 Mar than in Troy was fund at Grekis wan. (VIII. 394-397)

To Wallace, Bruce's loyalty to a free Scottish kingdom is of more value than all the gold of Troy.

In the absence of the king's loyalty, Wallace takes on a governing role (VIII.415-416), parcelling out portions of Scotland to various lords for their care (VIII. 417-424), a sign that Wallace depends on his men to help achieve a common goal of Scottish autonomy. Eventually, several lords attempt to make Wallace their king in order that Scottish forces may officially fight the English (VIII. 630-632). Goldstein has noted Harry's ideological contradiction in including this episode, as it appears to defy the concept of a "hereditary claim through blood" in favour of the view that "parliamentary election can make a king

in Scotland.”⁶² This tension is resolved, however, in Wallace’s refusal to be crowned, even for one day: “Remaining true to his lofty principles [...] Wallace refuses to usurp the royal dignity.”⁶³ Wallace’s actions indicate his respect for the true royal line and his reluctance to breach the code of blood. Wallace remains steadfast in his refusal to take on the role of king: even at Falkirk, where he says that he and not Lord Stewart will lead the vanguard (XI. 120-121), Wallace declares that he will only occupy the position until his “rycht king” (XI. 122) takes his proper place before his men. As it stands, Bruce fights on the opposite side of the battle, a state of affairs that leads Wallace to lament, “Allace, [...] the world is contrar-lik! / This land suld be 3on tyrandis heretage, / That cummys thus to stroy his awn barnage” (XI. 210-212). The situation causes Wallace a great deal of internal conflict over how to respond to the Scots fighting on Bruce’s side, eventually bringing him to angry tears (XI. 218-242). Bruce and Wallace even come to physical blows on the battlefield (XI. 337-366).

Wallace and Bruce finally exchange words, first on the field (where, as Goldstein has noted, Wallace’s assertion that he is “a man” [XI. 443] is intended to insult Bruce’s lack of loyalty to the Scots) and later in a private meeting, where Wallace tells Bruce that he must defend Scotland even from its rightful heir because of Bruce’s “fals cruell deid” (XI. 461).⁶⁴ Wallace rejects Bruce’s request for him to join Edward’s side (XI. 474) and says that Bruce “willfully dystroyis [his] awn off-spryng” (XI. 472), an opinion that reinforces Wallace’s (and Harry’s) belief in the blood base of Scottish identity. Robert’s affiliation with the

⁶² Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland* 243.

⁶³ Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland* 243.

⁶⁴ Goldstein, *Matter of Scotland* 274.

English does not (as Wynthoun might have it) make him English; he is still a Scot, but now he is one who kills his own. Significantly, Wallace refuses to use force to prevent Bruce from assuming the Scottish crown (XI. 484-486). Despite his disappointment in Robert, Wallace has too great a respect for the Scottish royal hierarchy and bloodline to interfere with it in such a violent manner.⁶⁵

Wallace's sentiments have a deep effect on Bruce. After their meeting, Bruce goes to dine with King Edward at Lithgow, where he is ridiculed for eating with Scottish blood still on his hands (XI. 535-536). Bruce's reply reveals that Wallace has helped him rediscover his true place in the conflict: "This blud is myn. That hurtis most my thocht" (XI. 540). After this dinner, Bruce "contrar Scottis he faucht nocht fra that day" (XI. 545), a statement that loses only some of its dramatic power when it later emerges that the Bruce must not fight actively against the English until the expiration of his bond with Edward (XI. 609-616). Even given this compromise, the effect is profound: Wallace's steadfast loyalty to the idea of the Scottish crown has led the rightful owner of that crown to alter his own loyalties in order to satisfy Wallace. Wallace's devotion to God and to the Scottish royal line, therefore, has helped to advance his dream of an independent Scotland. While Barbour's *Bruce* advocates more directly the interdependence of a ruler and his people as a prerequisite for ensuring a greater freedom for the entire Scottish nation, Harry's *Wallace* demonstrates in subtler ways how

⁶⁵ Goldstein perceptively remarks that in this scene, both Bruce and Wallace fail to recognize that each *needs* the other—Bruce needs Wallace to remind him of his responsibilities as Scotland's king as much as Wallace needs Bruce to assume his natural place as the kingdom's ruler (*Matter of Scotland* 274). The two figures thus embody the dynamic of mutual dependence that infuses Scotland's political and literary traditions.

Wallace, the ostensible “outlaw,” relies on his relationships with others in order to achieve the same national goal.

In the Scottish chronicles and historical romances, several recurring trends characterise the construction of Scottish nationhood and governance. Each of these trends reinforces a dynamic of governance through interdependence, whether through the adaptation of source texts, the development of a narrative of proper leadership, or occasionally a combination of the two. Scottish chronicles often do not reject the generally more prominent English accounts of history; rather, as with the stories of Brutus and Arthur, these legends are incorporated into a separate Scottish genealogy in order to invest the Scots’ account of their history with greater authority. Moreover, points of connection between the English and the Scots—as with the case of St. Margaret—are emphasised in the chronicles in order to increase Scotland’s stature on the isle of Britain and give the Scots a greater claim to power on the island.

The historical romances of Robert the Bruce and William Wallace offer distinct yet powerful accounts of the qualities required in a leader working towards Scotland’s autonomy. Barbour’s *Bruce* chooses to explore the paradox that interdependence between a ruler and his followers (as expressed most notably in the bonds between Bruce and his men) can lead to greater benefit and freedom for both parties and for Scotland at large. Harry’s *Wallace*, while appearing to privilege the outlaw hero, also ultimately subscribes to the notion that a leader cannot achieve freedom on his own; he must compromise with and occasionally submit to other forces (including loyal men, worthy kings and even God) in order to achieve independence for himself and his nation.

The Scottish chronicles and historical romances examined in this chapter, then, both advocate a particular strategy of governance and employ that strategy in their own construction. The romances repeatedly stress the thematic importance of reliance on external authorities as a means of assuring one's own leadership as well as the ultimate autonomy of one's nation. The chronicles internalise this lesson in their incorporation of foreign traditions in order to achieve their greater goal of portraying Scotland's history in the best possible light, one that showcases the nation's ability to rule itself.

As the following chapters shall demonstrate, the paradigm of governance evident in Scottish chronicles and historical romances as a political phenomenon also manifests itself in the relationship of Middle Scots poets with their most prominent and widely read English literary predecessor, Geoffrey Chaucer. The next chapter examines how the poet of the *Kingis Quair* employs this paradigm, responding to his Chaucerian sources in a manner that owes much to his concurrent engagement with Scottish ideals of kingship and governance. In so doing, the *Quair*—the earliest extant Scottish poem to engage with Chaucer—acts as a point of departure in the development of a complementary, yet autonomous, Scottish literary tradition.

Chapter 2

Steering the (King)Ship:

Literary and Political Governance in the *Kingis Quair*

The very existence of Bodleian MS Arch. Selden B.24 illustrates the reciprocal dynamic of Anglo-Scottish literary relations. The late-fifteenth/early-sixteenth-century manuscript contains the only extant version of the *Kingis Quair*, which Gregory Kratzmann calls the first Scottish poem to be “written in the Chaucerian style of courtly allegory which descends from the *Roman de la Rose*.”¹ The MS also contains a number of English works, including Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, *Legend of Good Women* and *Parliament of Fowls* and poems by Lydgate and Hoccleve.² Even if one sets aside the cosmopolitan nature of the MS, however, a self-contained examination of the *Quair*’s content and style reveals its striking intertextual relationship with its English, and particularly Chaucerian, sources. Kratzmann argues that the poem’s narrative style (especially the speech-like rhythms of the verse and the narrator’s numerous self-disclosures) creates an “authorial presence” highly indebted to Chaucer’s own narrative style.³ The *Quair* also alludes to several of Chaucer’s works, most notably the *Knight’s Tale*, the *Troilus* and the *Parliament*.

The poem does not, however, demonstrate its relationship with Chaucer merely through allusion and tone. In addition to these forms of response, the *Quair* creates its own philosophy of governance, which it applies to its

¹ Kratzmann 24.

² Julia Boffey and A.S.G. Edwards, “Bodleian MS Arch. Selden B.24 and the ‘Scotticisation’ of Middle English Verse,” *Rewriting Chaucer* 166.

³ Kratzmann 27-28.

engagements with its Chaucerian intertexts. The poem advances a loosely Boethian position on the role of free will in human existence, but adapts key aspects of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* in order to champion the freedom inherent in service to a noble authority, a paradox the *Quair* applies not only to the narrator's journey towards true love and wisdom but also to the poet's journey towards an autonomous literary identity, one in which Chaucer's poetic authority is respected but also channelled into building the *Quair*'s own status as a separate, "free" work.

Several critics have noted that governance is a prevalent theme of the *Quair*. In an important study, Lois Ebin contends that the poem possesses as its primary theme the centrality of divine governance to the functioning of the universe.⁴ The (still somewhat contentious) attribution of the *Quair* to King James I of Scotland has shifted readings of the poem's treatment of governance into the political realm. Sally Mapstone, drawing on contemporary "advice to princes" literature, discusses the role James' kingship plays in the composition of the *Quair*, arguing that the poem generates "a fusion of personal and public roles, of King of Love and King of Scots,"⁵ and therefore advocates self-governance as a model both for good kingship and for success in love.⁶ John Bowers and, most recently, Joanna Martin both situate their readings of the *Quair* within the context of Scottish response to England's Lancastrian regime. Bowers contends that the *Quair* subverts material from the *Knight's Tale* to establish a sense of poetic

⁴ Ebin, "Boethius, Chaucer, and *The Kingis Quair*" 340.

⁵ Sally Mapstone, "Kingship and the *Kingis Quair*," *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, ed. Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997) 52.

⁶ Mapstone, "Kingship" 57.

superiority in a way that parallels James' manipulation of Lancastrian policy to assert Scottish political independence.⁷ This, argues Bower, renders the *Quair* "part of [James'] cunning, wide-ranging and politically ambitious appropriation of Lancastrian royal culture."⁸ Martin concurs, observing that "[i]n asserting his literary freedom in the reinterpretation of these English writers [i.e., Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate], James's narrating persona is also emphasising his political independence from the Lancastrian regime that had held him captive."⁹

While the *Quair*'s political resonance is undoubtedly an important matter to consider when examining the poem's overall treatment of governance, certain details of the poem's political context must be qualified and placed in their proper perspective. Firstly, as outlined in the introduction and the previous chapter, the political and cultural relationship between Scotland and England was not solely adversarial, but marked at several points by détente and cultural exchange—the latter of which, as we shall see, becomes important to understanding the *Quair*'s response to its Chaucerian intertexts. Secondly, while the attribution of the *Quair* to James I is widely accepted, it is not definitive, and care must be taken before advancing heavily biographical arguments about the poem's content. We should pause at this point to examine briefly James' biography and the critical debate surrounding his authorship of the *Quair* before returning to the relevance of contemporary Scottish affairs to the poem.

The son of King Robert III, James Stewart was abducted at age twelve by English pirates and kept as the prisoner of Henry IV (and, later, Henry V) for

⁷ Bowers 279, 296.

⁸ Bowers 279.

⁹ Joanna Martin, *Kingship and Love in Scottish Poetry, 1424-1540* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008) 19.

eighteen years.¹⁰ Almost all of this time was spent as absent king of Scotland, as Robert died shortly after hearing of his son's abduction.¹¹ At the age of thirty, James was finally released; he married Joan Beaufort (niece of the Archbishop of Canterbury) and returned to Scotland, where he sought to strengthen his position as monarch by introducing reforms akin to the policies of his Lancastrian captors, including a more centralised government and increased taxation.¹² As Michael Brown notes,

James spent his formative years in the kingdom with the most centralised system of government in western Europe, and had observed at first hand the activities of the most aggressive sovereign of the age, Henry V of England. His English experience clearly moulded James's view of the means and ends of royal power.¹³

Brown sees the effects of Lancastrian influence in, among other places, James' efforts to control the small but powerful Scottish nobility and impose more centralised rule.¹⁴ Alessandra Petrina concurs, arguing that, faced with a nobility ready to rebel at any opportunity, and "a political environment that had never considered the king the absolute centre of authority," James drew from his association with the English court and especially Henry V to impose his power on parliament in an authoritarian, more English way.¹⁵ Ironically, then, James'

¹⁰ Linne R. Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn, General Introduction, *The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005) 7.

¹¹ Mooney and Arn 7.

¹² Bowers 296.

¹³ Michael Brown, *James I* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1994) xiii-xiv.

¹⁴ Brown xiii.

¹⁵ Alessandra Petrina, *The Kingis Quair of James I of Scotland* (Padua: Unipress, 1997) 12, 13.

English captivity and his use of the techniques of governance used by his captors furnished the Scottish king with the tools he would later employ to assert his own governance over Scotland and reinforce the nation's position as a strong and distinct kingdom. These policies chafed against Scotland's more decentralised administrative structure, which tended to grant magnates and major landowners more power, and in 1437, a group of rebel lords made known their displeasure by assassinating James.¹⁶

James' English influences, however, were not all as contentious as his governmental reforms. During James' imprisonment, Henry IV and V supplied the young king with a tutor; in his literary instruction, the Scottish monarch was exposed to the works of several English poets, especially Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate,¹⁷ and Petrina has remarked that Chaucer in particular "seems [to have been] central to the king's literary education."¹⁸ Whether James is the writer behind the *Quair*'s engagement with these poets is still uncertain. A handful of critics refrain from naming James as the poet in their discussions of the *Quair*.¹⁹ Most critics, however, accept the colophon in the Selden MS that attributes the

¹⁶ Bowers 296. While biographical scholarship on James I remains relatively limited, more detailed accounts of James' life may be found in two major biographies: E.W.M. Balfour-Melville's *James I King of Scots* (London: Methuen, 1936)—a volume which, despite its age, remains widely used—and Michael Brown's more recent *James I* (see note 13).

¹⁷ Mooney and Arn 9. According to Brown, Charles d'Orleans may also have shaped James' literary education; the two men shared imprisonment in 1415 (20).

¹⁸ Alessandra Petrina, "'My Maisteris Dere': The Acknowledgement of Authority in *The Kingis Quair*," *Scottish Studies Review* 7.1 (2006): 10.

¹⁹ See, for instance, Karin Fuog, "Placing Earth at the Centre of the Cosmos: *The Kingis Quair* as Boethian Revision," *SSL* 32 (2001): 143, and Clair F. James, "*The Kingis Quair*: The Plight of the Courtly Lover," *New Readings of Late Medieval Love Poems*, ed. David Chamberlain. (Lanham, MD: UP of America, 1993) 95.

poem to James.²⁰ As Joanna Summers notes, the poem's unique Anglicised Middle Scots dialect is appropriate to a Scottish writer who had spent many years in England, and the narrator's references to his abduction and lady love correspond closely to the circumstances of James' own abduction and love for Joan Beaufort.²¹ It is clear, however, that regardless of James' actual authorship, the *Quair*'s poet deliberately presents himself as James; as Martin has observed, "even detractors of this theory of [James'] authorship cannot deny that the poem draws attention to key events in the king's life in its narrator's account of his own experience."²² Thus, the *Quair*'s elaboration of an ideal of self-governance makes itself relevant to examinations of both literary and political governance in fifteenth-century Scotland.

In a poem that deals so centrally with the question of what forces govern the individual, it is intriguing to consider that the *Quair*'s treatment of both the theme of governance and its major English influences reflects James' experience and relationship with the English, and particularly his efforts to assert his power to govern both outside and within Scotland. Ebin has remarked that the *Quair* articulates a series of journeys—"from innocence to experience, from youth to maturity, [...] from instability and subjugation to Fortune to wisdom and self-governance," and finally the poet's journey "from ineffective and uncontrolled

²⁰ The attribution, which appears after the poem's conclusion, reads, "Quod Jacobus primus scotorum rex Illustrissimus" [Said James the First, most Illustrious King of Scots]. Mooney and Arn include the colophon in their edition of the *Quair* (*The Kingis Quair. The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems*, ed. Linne R. Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn [Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005] 31).

²¹ Joanna Summers, *Late-Medieval Prison Writing and the Politics of Autobiography* (New York: Oxford UP, 2004) 64.

²² Martin 15.

writing to ‘rype’ and purposeful poetry.”²³ To this should be added that the *Quair*-poet enacts his poetic control not only in a general sense, but specifically through his response to his English (and particularly Chaucerian) sources. Kratzmann drives closer to the nature of the poet’s literary response when he observes that the poem

appears to reflect a desire on the part of its author to enrich his kingdom with some of the more positive knowledge gained during his enforced sojourn in England. In this sense it is the literary counterpart of James’ attempt to introduce a bicameral parliament on the English model, adapted to suit the traditions of his own country.²⁴

Even if one approaches the question of James’ authorship more cautiously, Kratzmann’s parallel between Anglo-Scottish political relations and the *Quair*’s relationship with its English sources is useful. It is necessary, however, to define the parallels still further. The poet of the *Quair* is not passively influenced by English forces, be they literary or political; he instead actively chooses which aspects of those forces will guide his own work and, in doing so, asserts his ability to govern. The combination of personal, political and literary aspects of governance in the content and construction of the *Quair* provides a new way of exploring the intertextual relationship between the poet and his English sources—one in which the poet’s response to those sources has both literary and political relevance.

²³ Lois Ebin, *Illuminator, Makar, Vates: Visions of Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1988) 50.

²⁴ Kratzmann 34.

Throughout the poem's narrative, James explores the idea of governance as it manifests itself on philosophical, courtly and political levels. The poet's development of a philosophy of governance is rooted in his reinterpretation of the *Consolation*; the poet enacts his vision of proper governance not only in altering Boethius, but also in his ability to develop a philosophy distinct from yet complementary to the earlier philosopher's. By both describing and embodying his view of the proper relationship between guidance from above and individual agency, the poet provides the framework for interpreting his engagement with his Chaucerian intertexts. The nature of the *Quair*'s use of works such as the *Parliament*, the *Troilus* and the *Knight's Tale* reflects both a Boethian/Chaucerian view of the relationship between divine authority and free will and the poet's complementary addition to this influential philosophy, which stresses how freely choosing to submit to higher forces (whether divine or literary) allows one to govern one's own existence.

Specifically, the *Quair* advocates the possibility of individual freedom existing within a system ruled by strict cosmic and courtly hierarchies. In creating this distinct yet complementary response to his sources, the poet demonstrates that he is not passively governed by them but rather chooses how they play a role in his own narrative, thereby asserting governance over his own text. The *Quair* reaffirms this dialogue by reworking the conventional hierarchies of courtly literature, altering the notion of the subservient lover as it appears in works like the *Parliament* and the *Troilus*. The *Quair*'s courtly lover exercises his free will in order to serve, ultimately placing him in control—a notion that differs from Chaucerian conventions of the fully subservient lover without

fundamentally destabilising them, since the narrator's choice still technically makes him a servant to his lady and Fortune.

The poet develops his vision of governance with recurring images of political and legal hierarchy, deliberately calling to attention the narrator's self-presentation as James, an exiled ruler unable to govern his kingdom. While this idea of response to rather than submissive influence by one's sources finds some expression in the very definition of intertextuality, the poet's relationship with his intertexts is made unique by his focus on the theme of governance, a theme that resonates on many levels. Not only does the poem explicitly advocate the ability of the individual to govern himself by choosing to submit, it also demonstrates the poet's capacity to govern his own work by his conscious adoption of Boethian and Chaucerian intertexts. Moreover, the poem's assertion of James as its narrator recalls the king's experiences as an English prisoner and his adaptation of Lancastrian policies to strengthen the Scottish kingdom, a political strategy consistent with the literary strategy of the *Quair*.

The poem's balance between freedom and restraint of its literary sources parallels his narrator's careful negotiation between free will and submission to the forces of authority in his life—in particular his beloved and the goddesses Fortune, Venus and Minerva—to create a fascinating paradox: what Andrew von Hendy calls the “free thrall.”²⁵ The narrator's balancing of freedom and guidance in turn parallels the negotiation of Boethius and Chaucer's Troilus as they

²⁵ Andrew von Hendy, “The Free Thrall: a Study of *The Kingis Quair*,” *SSL* 2 (1965): 141. While von Hendy coins the phrase “free thrall,” he also notes that the paradox of the lover's behaviour had been described years before as a “beautiful oxymoron” by C.S. Lewis in *The Allegory of Love* (New York: Oxford UP, 1958) 236.

struggle, with varying degrees of success, to determine the extent of their agency in the face of powerful divine forces. While this paradox of the “free thrall” finds expression at numerous points throughout the poem, for the sake of greater focus this chapter will concentrate on the narrator’s relationships with his lady love and the three goddesses he encounters on his quest to win his beloved. An examination of these relationships will illuminate the poet’s relationship to the plots and ideas of his Chaucerian sources; it will also make clear how the *Quair*’s manipulation of its major influences both emphasises the theme of governance in the text and demonstrates the poet’s own governance over the texts that inform his writing.

The Transformation of Philosophy: The *Quair*’s Governance of Boethius

Before exploring the *Quair*’s use of Chaucer, however, the poem’s links to the *Consolation* must be addressed. That the narrator chooses to read Boethius in order to fall asleep is no fleeting nod to the philosopher; the *Quair* as a whole has long been recognised as a meditation upon the Boethian principles outlined in the *Consolation*. John MacQueen sees the Boethian influence in the poem (both directly and as mediated through Chaucer) as “perhaps the main controlling factor in the narrative of the *Quair*.”²⁶ Vincent Carretta contends that the *Quair* filters Boethian philosophy through the perspective of an unreliable narrator, resulting in the narrator undergoing “an inversion of Boethius’ progress.”²⁷ Ebin views the narrator’s treatment of Boethius more positively, calling it “a direct response to,

²⁶John MacQueen, “Tradition and the Interpretation of the *Kingis Quair*,” *RES* new series 12.46 (1961): 118.

²⁷Vincent Carretta, “*The Kingis Quair* and *The Consolation of Philosophy*,” *SSL* 16 (1981): 20.

rather than an imitation of,” the *Consolation* and Chaucer’s more Boethian poems.²⁸ She adds that, while in the *Knight’s Tale* and *Troilus*, “love increases the characters’ susceptibility to Fortune” and heightens the lovers’ feelings of helplessness at Fortune’s hands, the *Quair*’s narrator is guided by love to a greater understanding of and freedom from Fortune’s overbearing power.²⁹

While these perspectives are a useful point of departure for a study of governance in the *Quair*, they focus on the poem’s treatment of governance only on the narrative level. It is also important to consider how the poet’s manipulation of his sources itself embodies his vision of governance. The *Quair* alters its literary sources without directly challenging them, demonstrating in its very construction the possibility of submitting to governing influences while responding to them in a way that reinforces one’s own identity, be it literary, political or philosophical. In examining how the poem negotiates and reinterprets Boethian notions of governance throughout the poem, particularly through Chaucer’s Boethian poems, the reader may see how the poet’s dialogue with his literary influences nevertheless allows him to shape an individual voice in the *Kingis Quair*, one that demonstrates respectful governance over the texts that have helped form his poem.

The *Quair*’s reinterpretation of Boethian notions of governance is evident from the poem’s earliest stanzas. The insomniac narrator shares certain traits with Chaucer’s similarly-afflicted figure in the *Book of the Duchess*, but there is at least one important difference: the narrator, unable to sleep, picks up a book—not

²⁸Ebin, “Boethius, Chaucer, and *The Kingis Quair*” 321.

²⁹Ebin, “Boethius, Chaucer, and *The Kingis Quair*” 324.

a classical tale like that of Ceyx and Alcione in the *Book of the Duchess*, but the *Consolation* (14-17)³⁰. This deliberate alteration of the text marks the introduction of the poet's model of interaction with Chaucer's works, indicating that the *Quair* will distinguish itself through its peculiar engagement with another textual authority: Boethius. Moreover, this episode reveals that the *Quair* will employ Boethius in a manner that diverges from and yet complements the poem's Chaucerian intertexts, balancing a desire to incorporate authoritative sources with the assertion of its unique creative status. The narrator's decision to read the *Consolation* declares to the reader the important role philosophical questions of free will and divine necessity play in the *Quair*. The tension between passivity and action is reinforced by the contrast between the "mony diuerse thing" (10) which are said to enter the narrator's thoughts (connoting a passive state of mind) and the narrator's active choice to read Boethius (14). The narrator will remain preoccupied with this tension throughout much of the poem, and so this early engagement with Boethius foreshadows the narrator's—and poem's—later meditations on self-governance.

The narrator humbly declares that the *Consolation* is too "full of fruyte and rethorikly pykit" (45) for his "over 3ong" (46) learning and entrusts further examination of the book to someone with more understanding than he (47). By having the narrator end his explicit discussion of Boethius with skilful use of the modesty *topos*, the poet distances himself from his philosophical source and begins to develop his own poetic ideas—all while adopting a position of

³⁰All references to the *Kingis Quair* are from Matthew McDiarmid's edition: *The Kingis Quair of James Stewart* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1973).

deference to the master. The poet reinforces this respectful distance from Boethius by having the narrator shut the book and lay it down beside his head (51-52), indicating that his mind has received Boethius' ideas (especially that of Fortune governing men of all estates) but still remains separate from them. The narrator further asserts his agency through his failure to sleep immediately after setting down the book, a scenario common to Chaucerian dream-visions (as demonstrated in the *Parliament* or the *Book of the Duchess*). In these works, the narrator's dream is heavily influenced by the work he reads just before he falls asleep. By contrast, the *Quair*'s narrator meditates at length on his inability to organise his thoughts in poetic form, a situation he likens to being adrift on the sea:

With doutfull hert, among the rokkis blake
 My feble bote full fast to stere and rowe,
 Helples, allone, the wynter nyght I wake
 To wayte the wynd that furthward suld me throwe.[...]

The rokkis clepe I the prolixitee
 Off doubilnesse that doith my wittis pall.
 The lak of wynd is the deficultee,
 Enditing of this lytill trety small.
 The bote I clepe the mater hole of all,
 My wit vnto the saile that now I wynd
 To seke connyng, though I bot lytill fynd. (113-116, 120-126)

While the substance of the narrator's contemplation suggests utter subordination to the whims of the poetic muse, the fact that he is awake during this vision indicates he retains at least some self-control; this tenuous relationship between activity and passivity parallels the *Quair*'s balance of its literary influences with its own responses, allowing the poet to maintain some control over his creation.

Another image the poet develops to reinforce his thoughts on governance is that of worried thoughts as wild waves, dangerously pushing the rudderless ship that is the human soul:

Thus stant thy confort in vnsekirnesse,
And wantis it that suld thee reule and gye;
Ryght as the schip that sailith stereles
Vpon the rokkis most to harmes hye,
For lak of it that suld bene hir supplye,
So standis thou here in this warldis rage
And wantis that suld gyde all thy viage. (99-105)

The image of the human soul as a boat braving turbulent seas is a frequently recurring motif, found in works such as the *Troilus* (II. 1-4)³¹ and Dante's *Purgatorio* (I. 1-3) ;³² an even earlier version of the image, however, is also found in the *Consolation*, in which Philosophy laments, "Heu quam praecipiti mersa

³¹ "Owt of thise blake wawes for to saylle, / O wynd, o wynd, the weder gynneth clere; / For in this see the boot hath swych travaylle, / Of my connyng, that unneth I it steere."

³² "Per correr miglior acque alza le vele / omai la navicella del mio ingegno, / che lascia dietro a sé mar sì crudele..." [To run through better waters the little ship of / my wit now hoists its sails, leaving behind it a sea/ so cruel...]. Dante, *Purgatorio*, ed. and trans. Robert M. Durling (Toronto: Oxford UP, 2003).

profundo [Ah! How steep the seas that drown him!]" (Book I, Poem II, l. 1).³³

Later, the image is made more explicit when Philosophy likens fickle Fortune to the sea: "Ius est mari nunc strato aequare blandiri, nunc procellis ac fluctibus inhorrescere [The sea has a right to smile with a smooth stillness, and then shudder and rise with storms and great waves]" (Book II, Prose II, ll. 25-27). The *Quair*'s focus on Boethius in this section of the poem suggests that its nautical metaphor is drawn primarily from the *Consolation*. The use of the boat as a metaphor for the poet seeking inspiration gives the image a meaning distinctive to the *Quair* and its emphasis on control of one's life, one's love and one's poetry. In building on Boethius' image without contradicting its meaning, the poet pays homage to his philosophical source while giving the metaphor another layer of significance. Furthermore, the narrator gives the image an important historical-political dimension when he speaks of his distress at sea in terms that closely mirror James' own experience of capture by English agents on his sea voyage to France (148-168):

Vpon the wawis weltering to and fro,
 So infortunate was that fremyt day
 That, maugre playnly quhethir we wold or no,
 With strong hand, by fors schortly to say,
 Off inmyis takin and led away
 We weren all, and brought in thair contree.
 Fortune it schupe non othir wayis to be. (162-168)

³³ Boethius, *Philosophiae Consolationis* (*The Consolation of Philosophy*), trans. S.J. Tester (1973; Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1978). All subsequent references to Boethius come from this edition, except where noted.

While, earlier, the *Quair*'s use of Boethius' marine images focused on the poet's challenges in creating a unique work, here the poem imbues the metaphors of the ship and the sea with a deeply individual and topical significance, one with major implications for the poem's discussion of Fortune versus free will.³⁴ Even earlier, however, the poet's interest in the political implications of Fortune's nature is suggested in his idea that under Fortune

is non estate nor age

Ensured more, the prynce than the page,

So vncouthly hir werdes sche deuidith,

Namly in 3outh that seildin ought prouidith. (60-63)

It is true that the references to the prince and the page in the first pair of lines are conventional ways of referring to the world's privileged and deprived; the poet's odd assertion, however, that Fortune rarely smiles on the young is a decidedly untraditional way of looking at chance, particularly from a Boethian point of view. If one considers, though, that James was but twelve when he was apprehended by the English, the poet's decision to comment on the unluckiness of youth acquires a biographical and political meaning—and, by extension, the

³⁴ The political implications of James' metaphor of the directionless ship take on another dimension when one considers that the Latin verb *gubernare*, which along with *regere* and *imperare* became one of the main verbs used in reference to royal power, originally meant "to steer" in a more literal sense (Jean Dunbabin, "Government," *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 350-c.1450*, ed. J.H. Burns [New York: Cambridge UP, 1991]: 483). The steerless quality of James' ship, then, could suggest a lack of governance in an even more immediate way than is evident from the general tone of the image. Moreover, during James' imprisonment, his uncle the Duke of Albany was appointed *generalis gubernator* of Scotland (Petrina, *Kingis Quair* 7), marking another chapter in the power struggle between James and the Albany Stewarts. The poet's extensive development of Boethian ship imagery may thus be a reflection of contemporary anxieties over whether James could govern Scotland properly upon his return.

reference to the prince and page also draws attention to James' especial political interest in the wider Boethian concept of Fortune.

The poet's preoccupation with governance is also emphasised by his use of the Boethian image of the ship tossed at sea in stanzas 17-18 and 22-24. By using the same nautical image and its Boethian connections to fickle Fortune to refer both to his difficulty in composing his poem and to his narrator's capture at sea, the poet makes Boethian thought resonate with James' individual experience of capture and his own composition of the *Quair*. These two sets of circumstances deal principally with both the narrator's and poet's struggle to assert some measure of control in the face of forces (either political or literary) that threaten to overpower him. By adapting Boethius' conventional nautical image to better reflect the individual experiences of both poet and prisoner, the poet uses Boethius in a harmonious yet autonomous way, assuming governance over his own narrative while still acknowledging Boethius' great impact on his writing.

Boethius is clearly the dominant philosophical influence on the *Quair*, but this dominance does not inhibit the poet from offering a distinctive interpretation of vital Boethian concepts. The introductory phase of the *Quair* adapts Boethian perspectives on Fortune and the metaphors used to describe them in order to invest its own narrative with a unique relevance, all while embracing Boethius' philosophical authority. The body of the *Quair* engages more heavily with the poem's major literary influence, Geoffrey Chaucer. The *Quair*'s engagement with Chaucerian ideas and images parallels its strategy in incorporating Boethius, carefully negotiating between honouring Chaucer's literary legacy with presenting its own take on the ideas common to the *Quair* and its Chaucerian intertexts. This

process is most evident in how the poet tailors Chaucerian sources to develop a suitable compromise to the *Quair*'s central question: how to submit to Fortune without relinquishing free will.

From the Tower to the Wheel:

The *Quair*'s New Perspective on Chaucer

While the *Quair* is replete with examples of Chaucerian adaptation, this section will treat only a few key examples of how the poet reworks Chaucerian sources and characters—in particular those which treat the theme of control over one's fate—to articulate his own definition of self-governance. The poet draws heavily from the *Knight's Tale* for his scene in which the imprisoned narrator first sees his beloved in the garden below his tower, and his portrayals of Venus, Minerva and Fortune are inspired by and yet poetically distinct from those in the *Parliament* and the *Troilus*. The nature of the poet's alterations embodies a specific theory of governance, one in which there is room for freedom within a structured hierarchy.

The narrator's first glimpse of his beloved is one of the *Quair*'s most pivotal points. The poem's garden scene retains the *Knight's Tale*'s focus on courtly convention, but diverges from its source in ways that illuminate the *Quair*'s tension between free will and divine necessity, demonstrating how the poet governs his own work without rejecting Chaucer's overriding literary influence. Before the narrator first views his beloved, he blames God for his imprisonment:

Than wold I say, "Gif God me had deuisit
To lyve my lyf in thraldome thus and pyne,
Quhat was the cause that he me more comprisit

Than othir folk to lyve in suich ruyne?
 I suffere allone amang the figuris nyne,
 Ane wofull wrecche that to no wight may spede
 And 3it of eury lyvis help hath need!" (190-196)

The narrator emphasises that he suffers in solitude, revealing that he was "[b]ewailing in [his] chamber thus allone, / Despeired of all joye and remedye" (204-205). In its self-pitying and helpless tone, the narrator's complaint recalls Boethius' moaning before Lady Philosophy's visit in the *Consolation* (Book I, Poem I).³⁵ The scene also recalls *Troilus* I. 547, in which Troilus retires to his room to suffer his lovesickness for Criseyde in solitude.³⁶ The poet departs from both Boethius and Chaucer, however, in his narrator's emphasis on his "thraldome" and his questioning of a God that would subject him to such imprisonment (190-193). Since this speech occurs before the narrator sees his lady, it is clear that these lines refer not to the thraldom of love traditionally seen in courtly conventions like those of the *Troilus*,³⁷ but to imprisonment of a more literal kind. If one reads the poem as an autobiographical expression (either authentic or spurious) of James' life, these lines appear to refer to his captivity by

³⁵ Interestingly, Chaucer's version of the *Consolation* translates part of Boethius' opening lament as follows: "For lo, rendynge muses of poetes enditen to me thynges to ben written, and drete vers of wretchidnesse wete my face with verray teres. At the leeste, no drete ne myghte overcomen tho muses, that thei ne were felaws, and folwyden my wey (*that is to seyn, whan I was exiled*)" (*Boece*, Book I, Metrum I, ll. 3-10). This reference to exile does not appear in the Latin; rather, it is from Nicholas Trivet's commentary on the *Consolation* (see explanatory notes to *Boece*, p. 397 in the *Riverside Chaucer*). While it is unknown whether James read Chaucer's translation of Boethius, Trivet's gloss (replicated by Chaucer) indicates that at least one commentator on Boethius perceived the philosopher's inner turmoil as a form of exile, an angle of particular interest to James in his Boethian discussion of his own imprisonment.

³⁶ Mooney and Arn also note this parallel in their edition of the *Quair* (l. 204, n.).

³⁷ See, for instance, the *Troilus* I.235, where the narrator warns that to scorn Love is to tempt the god to "thralle" (enthrall) a person's heart, and II.856, where Criseyde refers to love as a type of "thraldom."

English forces; thus, the poet reworks Boethius' and Chaucer's philosophical and courtly conventions of imprisonment not only to historicise a literary commonplace, but to do so on a deeply personal level.³⁸ While the narrator's description of his literal imprisonment departs from similar motifs in the *Troilus* and the *Consolation*, however, these departures do not compromise or challenge these original works. The poet succeeds both in paying due honour to his literary sources and carefully adapting their ideas in order to create a distinct poetic position for the *Quair*. Significantly, the poet achieves this by carefully modifying his sources' image of imprisonment, asserting the poet's ultimate authorial freedom.

Having established the nature of the narrator's thralldom, the poet next has his narrator interact with divine forces in ways that will complicate that thralldom, allowing the poet to revisit his theme of governance and to reconcile the notions of freedom and servitude. The narrator is held captive in a prison tower, which recalls that in which Palamon and Arcite are imprisoned in the *Knight's Tale* (1009-1024). The tower is a powerful symbol of confinement; while one may see a type of literary confinement in the poem's adoption of this image from the *Knight's Tale*, the poet adapts the image for his own purposes by allowing the narrator to escape the tower, if only figuratively, through his sight of the lady and his vision of the three goddesses.

³⁸ While Boethius' imprisonment was political as well, this detail is discussed only in the first book of the *Consolation*. Throughout the rest of the work, Boethius prefers to examine Fortune, free will and divine necessity in terms that apply to all sufferers of perceived injustice, not merely political prisoners.

As the narrator gazes out his prison window, he sees “[a] gardyn faire, and in the cornere set / Ane herbere grene, with wandis long and small / Railit about” (212-214). Certain details of the ensuing description of the *hortus conclusus* indicate its similarities to the *Parliament* and the *Knight’s Tale*.³⁹ These include a choir of birds singing a hymn to love and spring similar to that of the *Parliament* (685-686 and 690-693):⁴⁰

‘Worshippe, 3e that loueris bene this May,
For of 3our blisse the kalendis ar begonne,
And sing with vs, away winter, away!
Cum somer, cum, the suete sesoune and sonne!
Awake, for schame, that haue 3our hevynnis wonne,
And amorously lift vp 3our hedis all.
Thank lufe that list 3ow to his merci call.’ (232-238)

The hymn’s recurring theme of worship and deference to Love could, if taken by itself, be construed as straightforwardly conventional. The poet, however, makes the hymn speak more directly to his theme of governance—and, on a larger scale, demonstrates his own governance over this Chaucerian allusion—by having his narrator offer an especially philosophical response to this hymn. The narrator does not merely accept the hymn and contemplate love, but instead uses it as an opportunity to return to his musings on the nature of Fortune, asking,

³⁹ In their edition of the *Kingis Quair*, Mooney and Arn cite *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Knight’s Tale*, the *Parliament of Fowls* and Chaucer’s translation of the *Roman de la Rose* as possible influences (ll. 211-238, n.).

⁴⁰ Mooney and Arn eds., ll. 234-235, n.

‘O Lord, quhat may this be,
 That lufe is of so noble myght and kynde,
 Lufing his folk[?]....

‘For gif he be of so grete excellence
 That he of euery wight hath cure and charge,
 Quhat have I gilt to him, or doon offense,
 That I am thrall and birdis gone at large,
 Sen him to serue he myght set my corage?
 And gif he be nought so, than may I seyne,
 Quhat makis folk to jangill of him in veyne?’ (253-255, 260-266)

Unlike his counterpart in the *Parliament*, the narrator of the *Quair* does not muse on romantic love so much as he meditates on the nature of the ruling gods, whose judgements on who shall be subject to their whims seem completely arbitrary.⁴¹ While the poet does little to alter his source material, the narrator’s unique commentary on that material offers a distinctive interpretation of its Chaucerian borrowings—one that allows the poet, appropriately enough, to guide his poem back to its central discussion of governance.

The narrator continues his meditation on Love’s power with an idea that later becomes integral to the poem’s new definition of governance; he muses that if Love “as a god may lyue and regne, / To bynd and louse and maken thrallis

⁴¹ While James invests the birds’ song with a philosophical weight not evident in its clearest analogue in the *Parliament*, it should be noted that a discussion of God’s supreme governance over his creation—including human beings—occurs in Theseus’ central speech in the *Knight’s Tale* IV. ll. 2987-3094. James’ decision to imbue the more courtly text of the *Parliament* with added philosophical significance demonstrates the writer’s desire to give a reading of the text that is clearly his own.

free,” the narrator should pledge his allegiance to “serue [him] in wele and wo” (268-269, 273).⁴² The narrator then vows his service to Love. This service is complicated, however, by the narrator’s *voluntary* submission to Love’s power, rendering him a “free thrall.” The narrator’s negotiation of divine servitude and free will applies to his relationship not only with Love, but with the object of his desire as well. The narrator recalls the first sight of his lady in the garden below his tower:

my wittis all
 Were so ouercome with plesance and delyte,[...]
 That sudaynly my hert become hir thrall
 For euer of free wyll [...] (282-283, 285-286)

The oxymoronic notion of the “free thrall” gives the narrator a measure of power over his own mind even as it is overwhelmed by Love’s “plesance and delyte.” The paradigm of governance encapsulated in the image of the “free thrall,” however, applies not only to the narrator’s sense of self-governance while under the influence of love, but also to the poet’s sense of literary self-governance in the face of a powerful influence like Chaucer. The concept of the “free thrall” thus has implications not only for the narrator’s self-governance within the poem’s narrative; it also offers a model to describe the relationship this scene enjoys with seemingly analogous works such as the *Troilus* and the *Romaunt of the Rose*. In these texts, Love’s forces repeatedly ensnare lovers regardless of

⁴² The words “wele and wo” bring to mind the opening lines of *Troilus*, in which the narrator relates how Troilus’ “aventures fellen / From wo to wele, and after out of joie” (l. 3-4). There are important differences in the situations of Troilus and James’ narrator, however, and not merely in their divergent fates; while Troilus’ “aventures” in love seem more the result of passively-endured Fortune, James’ narrator *actively* vows to serve Love, no matter what Fortune brings—a departure from the original context of “wele and wo.”

their desire to be ensnared; in the *Romaunt*, Cupid sets traps “[r]yght for to cache in his panthers / These damoysles and bachelors” (A.1621-1622), and the God of Love tells Amant after piercing him with Love’s arrow, “Yeld thee, for thou may not escape” (B. 1930).⁴³ While Amant eventually pledges his service to Love, saying, “I have right gret wille/ Youre lust and plesaunce to fulfille” (B. 2103-2104), this oath is only made under the (admittedly pleasurable) duress of Love’s arrows, demonstrating the god’s dominion over the lover. Love’s absolute power is also a preoccupation of the *Troilus*; in the Prohemium to Book III, Chaucer’s narrator invokes Venus and refers to her power as unstoppable, noting that “whoso stryvet with [her] hath the werse” (III. 38). The *Quair*-poet does not deny the power of Venus and Love, but his narrator at least has the power to submit *willingly* to Love’s command, creating a dynamic that will be paralleled in the narrator’s future pledges to figures such as his lady. The narrator’s oaths put him in a subservient position, but this position arises of his own free will.

The poet’s response to his Chaucerian sources extends beyond his reinterpretation of the narrator’s relationship with Love. In several respects, the lady of the *Quair* is clearly meant to evoke her counterpart Emily in the *Knight’s Tale*. The *Quair*’s reinterpretation of this source, however, establishes its poetic independence; specifically, the poem’s more active engagement with the concept

⁴³As Larry Benson notes, the Middle English translation of the *Roman de la Rose* is found in three fragments, only one of which (Fragment A) has been attributed—and cautiously at that—to Chaucer (“The Romaunt of the Rose,” *Riverside Chaucer* 686). With this in mind, only Fragment A is attributed to Chaucer here. The original French *Roman*, however, presents Love’s compelling power over the Lover in the same way as the translation, and it is reasonable to think that James, before writing his dream-vision, was acquainted with one of the most influential dream-visions of his time, whether in the original French or the Middle English translation.

of self-governance offers a model for interpreting its response to its Chaucerian source.

Many of the *Quair*'s divergences from its Chaucerian intertexts serve to enhance the poem's philosophical tone. This is true even of the *Quair*'s use of the *Knight's Tale*, a text well-known for its philosophical bent. In the episodes drawn from the *Knight's Tale*, the *Quair*-poet engages not so much with the tale's overtly philosophical aspects as he does with its more secular, courtly episodes, to which he adds a deeper philosophical dimension. An important example of this strategy occurs when the narrator pledges his service to the god of Love before he sees his beloved for the first time (270-273). By embracing the *idea* of Love's governance before being tested with its practical application, the *Quair*'s focus becomes more about the concept of love than about earthly romance, the latter of which tends to be at the heart of the *Quair*'s Chaucerian intertexts. The *Knight's Tale*'s Palamon embraces love only after he sees Emilye, saying to Arcite, "This prison caused me nat for to crye, / But I was hurt right now thurghout myn ye / Into myn herte, that wol my bane be" (1095-1097). Similarly, Love compels Chaucer's Troilus to fall in love at first sight with Criseyde (*Troilus* I. 206-210; 268-273). In these examples, the lovers fully embrace Love's power only after setting eyes on their beloved, suggesting that their love is initially motivated by physical rather than philosophical considerations. By contrast, the *Quair*'s narrator's submission to the idea of Love *before* seeing his lady love redirects the poem's depiction of love to the realm of ideas, while still retaining enough of its Chaucerian sources to give the poem greater poetic authority.

The poet employs a similar strategy in his narrator's description of his lady. On one level, this episode is highly indebted both to the *Knight's Tale* and to traditions of courtly literature generally:

And therewith kest I doune myn eye ageyne
 Quhare as I saw walking vnder the toure,
 Full secretly new cummyh hir to pleyne,
 The fairest or the freschest 3ong floure
 That euer I sawe, me thought, before that houre;
 For quhich sodayne abate anone astert
 The blude of all my body to my hert. (274-280)

As is conventional in courtly love poems, the narrator refers to the lady as a fresh young flower and emphasises his astonished reaction to her beauty.⁴⁴ In more significant ways, however, this scene is more philosophically-oriented than its most obvious source in the *Knight's Tale*, and is particularly distinctive in its focus on governance. While Palamon also sees Emily from his prison tower, he is only in the higher room from which he spies her "by leve of his gayler" (1064), indicating that this higher perspective is ultimately governed by another individual. Furthermore, Palamon sees Emelye "thurgh a window, thikke of

⁴⁴ In their note to the subsequent description of the lady in ll. 316-343, Mooney and Arn remark upon the similarity of the narrator's description of the lady to Charles d'Orleans' depiction of Fortune in his *Fortunes Stabilnes* (*The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems* 113-146), ll. 4974-5050. This similarity, however, is complicated by Charles' narrator's strongly negative portrayal of Fortune, whom he calls "false" and "full of gret despite" (Ballade 43, l. 1513), as well as deceitful, scornful and fraudulent (Ballade 118, ll. 6420-21). As the *Quair's* narrator never refers to his lady in such disapproving terms, it seems doubtful that readers are meant to link Charles' Fortune and the lady of the *Kingis Quair* in too detailed a way. Even a comparison between Charles' Fortune and the *Quair's* Fortune seems laboured, as the *Quair*-poet takes a more traditional view of Fortune as patroness of instability while Charles portrays the goddess more inventively as the only stable presence in a world she makes perpetually unstable (*FS Double Ballade*, ll. 4682-84). It may be, then, that the physical similarity between Charles' Fortune and the *Quair's* lady is purely coincidental.

many a barre / Of iren greet and square as any sparre” (1075-1076); his view is literally and figuratively obscured by his worldly circumstances. By contrast, when the *Quair*’s narrator looks out his prison window (which, notably, is not described as barred), it is “[t]o se the world and folk that went forby. / As for the tyme, though I of mirthis fude / Myght haue no more, to luke it did me gude” (208-210). Here, the tower is less a prison than it is a watchtower, and the narrator finds it a comfort to look down upon the world; this literal and mental perspective both separates him from the world’s activity and suggests that he has at least partially transcended it. The narrator’s belief that he will derive some good from observing the world resembles less Palamon’s state of mind in the *Knight’s Tale* than it does Troilus’ laughing at the earth below at the end of the *Troilus*, a scene itself ultimately shaped by Boethian notions of transcendence.⁴⁵ This elevated vantage point in the *Quair* evokes more philosophically-minded texts such as the *Troilus* or the *Consolation*, in which the gazer’s elevated perspective reflects his superior state of consciousness and self-awareness.

Upon first sight of the lady, the narrator pledges his fidelity to her (285-286), an oath he swore to the God of Love only two stanzas before. This service of two masters (albeit masters with similar requirements for fidelity) reveals the narrator’s desire and ability to determine the course of his future as he sees fit, regardless of the complications. This attitude reinforces the paradox of governance advanced throughout the poem: the freedom inherent in choosing to

⁴⁵In his *Disembodied Laughter: Troilus and the Apotheosis Tradition* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1972), John M. Steadman argues that Chaucer describes Troilus’ flight to the heavens and subsequent *contemptus mundi* to emphasise how Troilus’ soul is now free to ascend to its proper place above the earth and laugh at the physical world below (153); this idea reinforces the idea of a higher vantage point as representative of spiritual or philosophical enlightenment.

serve. This particular mode of governance has important implications not only for the narrator's success in love, but also for the poet's ability to govern the *Quair*, even while integrating influential intertexts.

Like Palamon in the *Knight's Tale*, the *Quair*'s narrator is confused over whether his lady is human or a goddess. The *Quair*, however, alters the motif to advance its view of philosophical and political hierarchies, a perspective vital to consider in relation to the poem's examination and embodiment of governance. In the *Quair*, the narrator initially considers the lady a goddess because she has captured his heart like Love had; this reasoning demonstrates the narrator's perception of divine authority as a force able to govern his thoughts and feelings. Even more significant is the narrator's striking concern with the lady's title and social estate, an important and unusual variation on the story in the *Knight's Tale*. The narrator ponders whether the lady is "Cupidis owin princesse," there to "louse [him] out of band" (295-296), or "verray Nature the goddesse" (297), and muses on asking the lady, "quhat reuerence / Sall I minster to 3our excellence?" (300-301). Soon after, the narrator notes the lady's "[w]isedome, largesse, estate and connyng sure" (347); these qualities, particularly that of "estate" or social rank, reveal the narrator's continued interest in the lady's nobility. Later, at a most pivotal moment, the narrator turns to the language of political hierarchy; after winning the lady, he says, "I am cumyn agayne, / To blisse with hir that is my souirane" (1266-1267). The narrator not only reveals that he has happily chosen to serve his lady, but also, in his reference to her as his "souirane," speaks of her

governance over him in very political terms.⁴⁶ The narrator's preoccupation with the lady's position and title reflects his overriding concern with matters of hierarchy and corresponds to the poem's defining engagement with the concepts of governance and self-governance.

The narrator, even after concluding that his beloved is an earthly rather than heavenly creature, submits to her power. He does so, however, by acknowledging Venus' supreme power in leading him to his lady, as seen in the "versis sevin" the narrator speaks while looking up to the heavens (thereby paying due homage to celestial forces):

‘O Venus clere, of goddis stellifyit,
To quhom I 3elde homage and sacrificise,
Fro this day forth 3our grace be magnifyit,
That me ressaut haue in suich a wise,
To lyve vnder 3our law, and do seruise.
Now help me furth, and for 3our merci lede
My hert to rest, that deis nere for drede.’ (356-364)

The narrator's allegiance is still to Venus but, as we must recall, this was an allegiance freely pledged. The narrator's apparent thralldom to the goddess of love actually grants him the freedom to pursue a higher, nobler love—a spiritual

⁴⁶ The DOST provides several definitions of "soverane" which have strong connections to temporal authority—including "superior, overlord, ruler" (1); "one who is set in authority above another" (1.b); and "a king or queen" (1.c)—but also defines the term more figuratively as one "used by a lover of his mistress, the 'ruler' of his affections" (1.f). The latter use of the term, however, is clearly meant to channel the political authority of the other definitions into a more literary context.

elevation represented visually by the narrator's upward gaze.⁴⁷ This more spiritually-focused love results in the narrator winning his lady, a happy ending in stark contrast to that of the *Knight's Tale*. Thus, in describing the narrator's glimpse of the beloved, the poet adapts material from the *Knight's Tale* to refine its philosophical commentary, asserting that *choosing* to embrace a governing influence may lead to greater freedom. By expressing this point through reinterpreting a Chaucerian intertext, the *Quair's* ideal of governance applies not only to the narrator's relationship with Venus, but also to the poet's relationship with Chaucer.

One final image of the lady should be addressed—the point at which she satisfies the narrator's inner wish and turns her face upward so that he may catch a glimpse of it (458-462). This upward lifting of the face parallels the narrator's own and may also be viewed through the lens of Lady Philosophy's words cited above. The chain of events causing this turning of the face reinforces the poem's vision of divine hierarchy. The narrator notes how, after the birds of the garden sing a hymn to May, their “gouvernoure” and “quene” (455)—a detail which places in the reader's mind the ideas of governance and hierarchy—the lady's face turns

⁴⁷ The narrator's action provides the positive converse to Lady Philosophy's words in Book 5 of the *Consolation*: “‘Nam ubi oculos a summae luce veritatis ad inferiora et tenebrosa deiecerint, mox inscitiae nube caligant, perniciosi turbantur affectibus quibus accedendo consentiendoque quam invexere sibi adiuvant servitutem et sunt quodam modo propria libertate captivae’” [“For when from the light of the highest truth they have lowered their eyes to inferior, darkling things, at once they are befogged by the cloud of unknowing, they are disturbed by destructive affections, by giving in and by consenting to which they strengthen that servitude which they have brought upon themselves, and are in a way held captive by their freedom.”] (Book V, Prose II, 22-27). By having his narrator look upward while affirming his service to Venus, the poet suggests that the romantic love the narrator feels for his lady is not of the lower realm described by Lady Philosophy, where “destructive passions” (a common trait of courtly romance) imprison men even as they believe they are free. One can see this harmful dynamic at work in the *Knight's Tale*, in which Palamon and Arcite's downward gaze upon Emily results in a courtly passion resulting in the cousins' bitter rivalry and Arcite's death.

upwards as a result of “goddis will” (458-459). In the narrator’s universe, the Christian God guides all actions, directly or indirectly, an idea reinforced when the narrator says of the lady, “[G]od mote hir conuoye, / That me may gyde to turment and to joye!” (496-497). The poet thus introduces a vaguely Christian note into his discussion of governance which will become more pronounced in the narrator’s conversation with Fortune; this Christian aspect is much more apparent than in the *Knight’s Tale*, where the ultimate ruling force as articulated in Theseus’ “First Mover” speech is an overtly classical, Platonic notion of God (2987 ff.). The poet’s alteration of this divine hierarchy while preserving other aspects of his Chaucerian source shows both his indebtedness to Chaucer and his desire to control his own text by distinguishing it from the sources to which it refers.

The relationships the narrator cultivates with the three ruling pagan forces in his universe—Venus, Minerva and Fortune—are also reflective of the *Quair*’s overall paradigm of governance, in which one can pledge allegiance to a ruling force while maintaining self-control. The narrator’s encounter with Venus describes the goddess in a way similar to her depiction in the *Parliament*.⁴⁸ There are, however, some significant differences, one of the most striking being that, while Chaucer’s Venus is “naked from the brest unto the hed” and otherwise covered only with a “subtly coverchef” (*Parliament* 269, 272), the *Quair*’s Venus is dressed far more modestly, with “[a] mantill cast ouer hir schuldris quhite”

⁴⁸ Mooney and Arn eds., ll. 667-79, n.

(671).⁴⁹ The poet's alteration to his Chaucerian source serves to reinforce the poem's strategy of literary governance. Venus' traditionally lustful nature is controlled here with this demure covering; this combination of freedom with restraint demonstrates how the *Quair*'s paradigm of governance is embedded even in the poem's smallest details.

The narrator, in a state of supplication to Venus, addresses her as “[h]y quene of lufe, sterre of beneuolence, / Pitouse princes and planet merciable, / Appesare of malice and violence” (687-689), alluding to her role both as a planet and as mollifier of Mars' bellicose impulses. Recalling the *Quair*'s clear efforts to relate its composition and narrative to James' imprisonment, one may also see a subtle reference to war and violence as the conflict that led to James' literal, political imprisonment. This interpretation is reinforced by the narrator's return to the image of “huge weltering wawis” to describe his “lufis rage” (696-697), a Boethian motif used throughout the poem to refer to the narrator's emotional and existential turmoil—and which strongly hints at the literal sea voyage on which the narrator (and James) was captured and imprisoned. The narrator believes Venus is the only force who can make his lady return his love, revealing that he sees the goddess as the universe's ultimate governing power (692-693). Crucially, the narrator willingly accepts Venus' role as his supreme governess, saying, “3e haue 3our man with his gude will conquest” (699). While the image of conquest may seem solely connotative of compulsion, the narrator's expression

⁴⁹ MacDiarmid finds it “notable that Chaucer's naked Venus has acquired a mantle” (st. 96 [l. 671], n.), though his point of Chaucerian comparison happens to be the *Knight's Tale*, ll. 1955-1956.

of “gude will” suggests his happy submission to love, demonstrating the narrator’s emancipating power to choose which force will guide his future.

The narrator must alter his impression that Venus is his ultimate ruler when the goddess reveals that this is not exactly the case. Venus acknowledges that, while it falls to her “[i]n lufis lawe the septr to gouerne” (744)—an image evoking both celestial and political rule—she is not in sole control of “thingis bothe to cum and gone” (748). In his past and future actions, the narrator is not governed solely by Love, but by many forces; it is only when the narrator has fulfilled certain other (unspecified) tasks for Love that Venus will be able to consider the narrator’s request for the lady’s favour (754-756). While Venus will make the choice concerning the narrator’s beloved, she suggests that the narrator assuage his anxieties by seeking the “help of othir mo that bene goddesse” (775) who will have “the menes and the lore / In this matere to schorten with [his] sore” (776-777). By seeking the help of various sources, the narrator garners wisdom (“lore”) from several authorities in order to find his own solution to his distress. The *Quair* employs a similar technique; the poet assembles selections from various Chaucerian sources in order to create his own examination of a dominant issue in Chaucerian literature: unrequited love.

Venus refers the narrator to her superior Minerva and orders him to take Minerva’s advice (780-781). The narrator thus finds himself serving not only Minerva, but also Venus as he accepts her edict. Once again, the narrator’s choice to serve paradoxically asserts his free will. Venus assigns Good Hope to be the narrator’s guide on the journey to Minerva (785-789), and presents this figure as servant, friend and guide: “I will that Gud Hope seruand to the be, / 3oure alleris

frend, to lete the to murn, / Be thy condyt and gyde till thou returne” (787-789).

Not only does Good Hope’s status as both servant and guide parallel the narrator’s depiction throughout the poem as both thrall and free man, in this situation the duality actually reinforces the narrator’s double role: in order for Good Hope to be both servant and leader to the narrator, the narrator himself must be both master and follower of Good Hope. That Good Hope is also described as the narrator’s “frend” is thus entirely appropriate, as the term indicates an equality borne out of mutual dependence.⁵⁰ The balance of power between Good Hope and the narrator therefore demonstrates the *Quair*’s nuanced vision of governance, which allows for both subservience and for leadership, at times even simultaneously.

Venus’ long parting speech includes an order to chastise those men on earth who are so arrogant as to “breken louse [of Love’s laws] and walken at thaire large” (804). The flouters of Venus’ edicts are, according to the goddess, free, but the portrayal of this freedom as something that makes Venus “wepe” (809) suggests that this “freedom” is a hollow one, and that being a prisoner of love is actually self-empowering. That the narrator’s imprisonment by Venus ends with his utter bliss and freedom from feelings of romantic torment serves to reinforce the liberating nature of service to love.

Good Hope leads the narrator directly to Minerva, and during the narrator’s conversation with this goddess, the poem asserts an alternative divine hierarchy. Specifically, Minerva insists that the narrator must submit to the Christian God in order to remove the torment from his life:

⁵⁰ For more on the interdependent nature of friendship, see the *Bruce*’s and the *Wallace*’s portrayals of the heroes’ friendships with their supporters (discussed in Chapter 1).

'Tak him before in all thy gouernance,
 That in his hand the stere⁵¹ has of 3ou all,
 And pray unto his hye purueyance
 Thy lufe to gye, and on him traist and call,
 That corner-stone and ground is of the wall,
 That failis nought; and trust, withoutin drede,
 Vnto thy purpose sone he sall the lede.' (904-910)⁵²

The *Quair* thus presents God as the counterpoint and resolution to two of the poem's predominant images: the ship and the wall. While the narrator has repeatedly referred to his distress as wild waves that toss him to and fro, God is figured here as the captain of the ship that will guide the narrator to safety. Similarly, the image of God as the cornerstone that "failis nought" turns the image of the tower, in which the narrator was imprisoned and from which he first saw the object of his lovesickness, into a structure of which God is the ultimate foundation. Through these transformed images, the God of the *Quair* is depicted as the ultimate governing force who, depending on the situation, either steers one out of emotional turbulence or engineers transitory turmoil as a means to attain spiritual growth.

The goddesses help guide the narrator towards recognition of God's centrality, but they also acknowledge the narrator's own power of choice. Minerva encourages the narrator to accept God's directions, but does not dismiss

⁵¹ For a discussion on the significance of the word "steer" to governance, see Jean Dunbabin's comment at note 34.

⁵² If there is any doubt about the nature of this God, it is resolved when the narrator later swears an oath "by him that starf on rude" (972).

the importance of the narrator's free will: "Ground thou thy werk therefore vpon the stone [i.e., God's foundation], / And thy desire sall forthward with the gone" (916-917). Here, Minerva asserts what the poet has reiterated throughout the *Quair*: deferring to proper authority can in fact enhance an individual's self-governance. In this particular exchange, Minerva goes a step further and suggests that submitting to God's authority will help the narrator achieve his own desires.

Minerva's advice concerning the narrator's beloved explores from a different angle the paradox of freedom in service. In order to win the lady's heart, says Minerva, the narrator must exercise self-control, considering carefully "[t]he place, the houre, the maner and the wise" in which he declares his love if he wishes his pledge of "seruise" to be accepted (923-924).⁵³ Furthermore, Minerva only agrees to help the narrator after he expresses his desire within the limits of Christian propriety (1002-1008). Through Minerva's submission to the authority of the Christian God, the poet alters the nature of Minerva's power—and, by extension, the traditional nature of the relationship between man and the pagan gods expressed in the works of Boethius and Chaucer. While, in these earlier works, man was often entirely subject to the whims of all-powerful divinities, in the *Quair* these forces must themselves answer to a higher authority. By weakening the position of goddesses such as Minerva, the *Quair* establishes a new paradigm of governance in which man can appeal to authorities even higher than these classical divinities. While Boethius follows a similar path in forsaking

⁵³ While this consideration is also found in texts like Ovid's *Art of Love* (*The Art of Love, and Other Poems*, ed. G.P. Goold [Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1979] 11-175)—in which the reader is given a list of locales where one can meet available Roman women (l. 67-88)—James' Minerva dispenses her advice so that the narrator can satisfy a noble rather than merely lustful desire, thus giving the convention of "advice to lovers" a more spiritual bent.

Fortune's false power for Lady Philosophy's wisdom, the poet extends the *Consolation's* argument by asserting an authority even higher than Minerva (Lady Philosophy's closest parallel in the *Quair*): the Christian God. The narrator wins the freedom to serve his lady through the exercise of moral self-control, thus reinforcing the theme of "free thraldom."

There is one more goddess, however, that the narrator must convince of his suit: Fortune, to whom even Minerva must pray (1008). Here, the poet offers a slightly different hierarchy from that described in the *Consolation*, asserting Fortune's supremacy over wisdom. While this hierarchy at first appears counterintuitive—why, one may ask, would a poem that privileges self-assertion subject human intellect to the vicissitudes of chance?—it soon becomes apparent that individual will *can* triumph over Fortune, provided that the individual puts his faith in God to help guide his decisions. In her discussion of the extent of Fortune's powers, Minerva rehearses arguments inspired by those of Troilus in Book IV of the *Troilus* (958-1078), a poem in turn influenced by Boethian ideas. While Troilus, however, is of the opinion that "al that comth, comth by necessitee" (IV. 958)—an incomplete understanding of Boethian philosophy—Minerva has also considered the argument that "man / Has in him self the chose and libertee / To cause his awin fortune" (1023-1025) and concludes with a compromise between Fortune and human agency:

'Fortune is most and strangest euermore
 Quhare leste foreknawing or intelligence
 Is in the man; and, sone, of wit or lore
 Sen thou art wayke and feble, lo, therefore

The more thou art in danger, and commune

With hir that clerkis clepen so “Fortune.” (1037-1043)

Minerva informs the narrator that, while his weakened will may make it seem that Fortune rules his life utterly, he can remedy this situation from within by increasing his “lore,” which will require concerted use of his reason. In differing from Troilus’ reasoning about Fortune, the poet may appear to be subverting his source; if one considers, however, that Chaucer portrays Troilus’ interpretation of Boethius as flawed, the *Quair*’s contribution to the debate over free will and divine necessity is actually a correction of Troilus’ ideas rather than a challenge to Chaucer’s. Once again, the poet reconciles his indebtedness to his source with the ability to create an original text.

After the narrator promises Minerva that he will follow her advice and “[p]ray Fortune help” (1049), he re-descends to earth, the realm of Fortune (1057). He finds himself, once again, in a garden, which resembles that of the *Parliament*.⁵⁴ Strikingly, however, the *Quair*’s garden is distinguished from those of its sources by a seemingly extraneous list of the “mony diuerse kynd” (1078) of animals who make their home therein (1079-1101). The narrator devotes three full stanzas to naming all the beasts he sees before remembering his point and saying, “Bot now to purpose” (1102). But has the narrator really strayed from his point? In naming all the garden’s animals, the narrator establishes a connection to Adam in the Garden of Eden, who was given the task of naming the beasts (Gen.

⁵⁴MacDiarmid notes that the garden here described resembles “the earthly paradise described by so many theologians and poets,” but offers a slightly different interpretation than that offered here, remarking that in both the *Parliament* and the *Quair* the garden “signifies the creative goodness of God” (st. 152 [ll.1058-1064], n.).

2:19-20). The Biblical episode demonstrates man's possession of reason, which gives him the capacity for free choice—a capacity with calamitous results for Adam and Eve. The *Quair*'s narrator, however, focuses merely on naming the animals, allowing the poet to focus on the positive aspects of free will and reason and reassert his narrator's possession of both within the boundaries of this walled garden. In terms of literary structure, this dynamic of freedom within structured limits is expressed by the poet's Edenic emphasis in a garden description otherwise heavily reliant on that of the *Parliament*.

The theme of free will's triumph within set boundaries resurfaces when the narrator encounters Fortune. Good Hope has led the narrator this far, but it is the narrator himself who finds the “round” and “wallit” place (1108) in which he sees Fortune and her wheel (1109-1113). The image of the wall returns, along with its simultaneous connotations of confinement and structure. It is therefore fitting that within this wall resides Fortune, whose very presence in the *Quair* contributes to the poem's exploration of the relationship between freedom and servitude. Fortune does not appear in the *Parliament*'s garden, and yet her presence here does not defy any central message of the *Quair*'s Chaucerian source. Rather, Fortune's inclusion in this setting serves to heighten the philosophical focus of the poem.

Fortune's physical description contains many similarities to that of both Venus and the narrator's lady love. The “surcote” (1114) worn by Fortune recalls the cape sported by Venus, while the “chapelet” (1118) on her head resembles

those ones worn by Venus (679) and the narrator's beloved (321-322).⁵⁵ These similarities among Fortune, Venus and the beloved demonstrate the strong role of Fortune in the narrator's romantic success. One detail, however, renders Fortune even more powerful than these others: Fortune's mantle "furrit was with ermyn full quhite, / Degoutit with the self in spottis blake" (1121-1122). Fortune's authority is given a royal dimension with the detail of the ermine mantle; moreover, the mantle reinforces the political dimension of the poem's focus on hierarchy and subservience.

The depiction of Fortune's wheel differs from the Boethian concept without contradicting it, demonstrating how the poet adapts his literary sources rather than subverts them. While the description is conventional in several respects, the poet adds that some people tumble into an "vgly pit als depe as ony helle" (1129) from which they never again ascend (1131-1132). This detail, while not in Boethius, adds to rather than contradicts its source and gives the process of Fortune a more overtly Christian slant. Details such as these permit the poet to deviate from his sources in a manner that nevertheless confirms them, allowing him both the prestige of literary innovation and the authority of literary precedent.

The narrator, having learnt after his experiences with Venus and Minerva when to defer to his superiors, falls on his knees before Fortune when she calls his name, "[f]ull sodaynly, hailsing, abaist for schame" (1158-1159). He asks for her help, knowing that she has the "powere [...] and myght" to give him what he desires (1168-1169). The subsequent scene presents a striking dynamic between

⁵⁵ For a discussion of the implications of the similarities between Fortune and the narrator's lady love, see note 44.

Fortune and the narrator: while Fortune must lead the weakened narrator to the wheel (1191-1192), it is the narrator himself who “steppit sudaynly” onto it (1193). Moreover, at the moment when Fortune takes the narrator by the ear (1203)—a gesture depicting Fortune as a sort of parental authority—the narrator wakes from his dream (1204), thereby avoiding a vision of himself turning helpless on Fortune’s wheel.⁵⁶ In the absence of such a vision, the narrator thus retains a degree of self-possession. Now awake, the narrator has recovered his reason and ability to control his own actions. Celestial forces, however, still play a role in his fate: a message delivered by a turtle dove informs him that his wish has been granted (1235-1246), “[f]or in the hevyn decretit is the cure” (1251). Upon receipt of this message, the narrator pins up the news at the head of his bed (1258-1259), offering a fitting counterpoint to the image of the narrator falling asleep with the *Consolation* at his head early in the poem; by now, however, the narrator’s view of Fortune is markedly different from that of the Boethian work he read earlier on. The narrator states that Fortune, in working to increase his “lore”—a term used earlier by Minerva to refer to the narrator’s wisdom and reason (1040)—has given him “blisse with hir that is [his] souirane” (1267). By combining Fortune’s good will with Minerva’s gift of mental self-control, the narrator wins his beloved, whom he happily serves. The notion of willing service is thus reinforced in the poem’s closing stanzas and is still further developed when the narrator reveals why he has related a tale about what some may consider a

⁵⁶ Even if one were to imagine how James’ vision would continue, the only clear outcome would be that he would ascend on Fortune’s wheel, since in his weakened condition he would have to step on at the wheel’s lowest point. Thus, the conclusion would be the same: by placing his trust in Fortune, James’ future will only improve.

matter of small consequence (1269-1270): “I ansuere thus ageyne—/ Quho that from hell war croppin onys in hevin / Wald efter o thank for joy mak sex or sevin!” (1270-1272). The narrator is grateful to the goddesses who helped him secure his freedom “from thraldom and peyne” (1275), and this gratitude motivates his writing. The narrator’s thankfulness denotes a certain amount of subservience, and yet the narrator is glad to serve after what he perceives as his deliverance from imprisonment; furthermore, the narrator demonstrates his agency by composing a poem that acknowledges both the value of hierarchy and the importance of free will.

In his happy state, the narrator thanks the animate and inanimate forces that brought him to his present blissful condition, ranging from the tower walls that imprisoned him (1331-1332) to the “sanctis martiall” that first caused his captivity (1333-1334) to “fortunys exiltree / And quhele, that thus so wele has quhirlit me!” (1322-1323). That the narrator should be so grateful to these confining forces reiterates the philosophy that these governing factors can act positively in a person’s life, so long as one possesses the self-governance necessary to act freely within the bonds they impose. If one approaches seemingly oppressive forces with a self-possessed attitude, the burden will not seem as heavy. The narrator applies this philosophical idea to the realm of love when he refers to “lufis 3oke that esy is and sure” (1346), a line that evokes Jesus’ statement in Matt. 11:30: “My yoke is sweet and my burden light”;⁵⁷ both the poem and the Biblical verses

⁵⁷“[I]ugum enim meum suave est et onus meum leve est” (<http://www.drbo.org/lvb/chapter/47011.htm>; 3 June 2009). All English and Latin Biblical citations are from the Douay-Rheims Bible and the Latin Vulgate, respectively; both may be found

champion the freedom to be gained from pledging one's service to a positive force. Here, the narrator's Christian allusion corresponds well to his ultimate conclusion: that it is Heaven where "powar is commytt / Of gouirnance, by the magnificence / Of him that hiest in the hevin sitt" (1367-1369). God is called Him who "all oure lyf hath writt" (1370), an image with particular significance for this poem; just as God governs people's lives and fates by writing them in the Book of Life, so too does the *Quair*-poet achieve literary self-governance by composing an autonomous work that nevertheless respects poetic tradition.

The *Quair*'s *envoi* overtly acknowledges Chaucer's influence, as well as Gower's, on the poet, calling them "[s]uperlatiue as poetis laureate, / In moralitee and eloquence ornat" (1376-1377). This humility *topos* is common and may even be seen in the *envoi* of the *Troilus*, where Chaucer dedicates his "litel bok" (V. 1786) to "moral Gower" and "philosophical Strode" (V. 1856-1857) and beseeches them to correct his work where necessary (V. 1858). Earlier, Chaucer asks his book to "kis the steppes where as [it] seest pace / Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace" (*Troilus* V. 1791-1792), an image that the *Quair*-poet echoes in his placement of Gower and Chaucer "on the steppes [...] / Of rethorike" (1374-1375). While Chaucer's *envoi* seems dominated by a modest, self-deprecating tone, Winthrop Wetherbee has pointed out that Chaucer also actively situates himself among the great classical poets, presenting himself as a fellow "participant in the continuum of poetic experience and poetic tradition," a more important position than that of a mere "maker" (*Troilus* V. 1787) writing courtly

love poetry.⁵⁸ In a similar use of parallel humility and self-validation, the *Quair*-poet's images of deference to his "maisteris dere" (1373) are countered by a final pair of lines that strongly suggest agency: "I recommend my buk in lynis sevin, / And eke thair saulis vnto the blisse of hevin" (1378-1379). In most conclusions and *envois*, medieval authors request the reader pray for the author's own soul;⁵⁹ here, however, the poet demonstrates sufficient confidence in himself and his work to instead request prayers for Chaucer and Gower. By finishing his poem with a reference to *his* book and *his* lines of poetry, as well as providing a good word for his influences upon their entry to heaven, the poet concludes his work with one last assertion of his control over his text and his influences.

Throughout the *Quair*, the poet uses Boethian and Chaucerian sources to tell a story that is clearly his own. Petrina perhaps overstates the case when she deems the poet's attitude to be "that of an enterprising pupil who strives to learn from his master so as to be able to surpass him";⁶⁰ the objective of the *Quair* seems not to be to surpass Chaucer, but rather to create a separate but equal sphere of literary authority. In making subtle changes to these sources without

⁵⁸ Winthrop Wetherbee, *Chaucer and the Poets: An Essay on Troilus and Criseyde* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1984) 226. Wetherbee goes on to argue that Chaucer's self-positioning among the classical poets reflects his journey from "the service of the god of love and a concern with the rhetoric of 'sentement' and 'loves art' to a concern with universal values and a recognition of the authority of poetic tradition as a repository of those values"; this philosophical enlightenment in turn demonstrates his newfound agency as a writer and signals his departure from the "hapless subservience in which, overwhelmed by the sorrows of love, he had abandoned himself to the pagan, tragic view of his material earlier in the poem" (226-227). In a similar manner, James' poem transcends the conventions of courtly love poetry and instead actively engages with Boethian philosophy, a move that signals both James' poetic sophistication and his governance over his text.

⁵⁹ See, for instance, the concluding stanzas of the *Troilus*, in which the narrator asks the Trinity to defend all of mankind "from visible and invisible foon" (V. 1866-1867); the end of the Prioress' Tale, where the Prioress beseeches St. Hugh of Lincoln to pray for "we sinful folk unstable" (687); and Chaucer's Retraction, in which Chaucer asks Jesus and the Virgin Mary, "[S]ende me grace to biwayle my giltes and to studie to the salvacioun of my soule, and graunte me grace of verray penitence, confessioun and satisfaccioun to doun in this present lyf" (1089).

⁶⁰ Petrina, "'My Maisteris Dere'" 19.

compromising their essence, the poet demonstrates that he is able to exercise freedom within structure, a theme that also manifests itself in the poem's content. The narrator's engagement with Boethius, his initial sight of the lady in the garden, and his encounters with Venus, Minerva and Fortune on his quest to win his lady's love also reveal the poet's balance between deference to authority and freedom within one's subservient position. This balance is akin to that negotiated by the *Quair*'s purported narrator-author, James I, a Scottish monarch known for adopting some of the political techniques of his English captors in order to best govern his own realm. This use of ideas from the state which had imprisoned him for eighteen years demonstrates James' ability to take from his governors that which he feels useful and to implement it in his own life—a process enshrined by the *Quair*'s treatment of Boethius and Chaucer. As the next chapter will demonstrate, Robert Henryson's *Moral Fables* and *Testament of Cresseid* advance their own definition of successful governance, be it royal, moral or literary.

Chapter 3

Sage Against the Machine: Navigating Systems of Governance in

Henryson's *Moral Fables* and *Testament of Cresseid*

A definitive identification of Robert Henryson may forever be elusive; the name is a common one, and so several Robert Henrysons whose names survive in historical records are possible candidates. As Robert L. Kindrick puts it, “The source of the problems [in identifying Henryson] is not a dearth of facts; indeed, there are too many facts.”¹ Critics have usually tended to identify him with a Robert Henryson of Dunfermline, described in the 1570 Charteris edition of the *Moral Fables* as a “scolmaister” and thought to have received legal training earlier in his life at the University of Glasgow.² That the poet Henryson may have been a notary and teacher would be consistent with a distinct preoccupation of both the *Fables* and the *Testament of Cresseid*: the process of learning to become a proper governor, be it of one’s courtroom, one’s kingdom or one’s own behaviour (and often a combination of the three). Contributing to a tradition of contemporary Scottish discourses on proper political governance and in particular a trend of critical literature concerning James III’s style of rule, three of the *Fables*—“The Sheep and the Dog,” “The Trial of the Fox” and the central tale of “The Lion and the Mouse”—specifically take issue with the king’s administration (or, more often, the lack thereof) of the Scottish criminal and civil courts for which he was responsible. Henryson’s criticisms in these fables reveal his

¹ Robert L. Kindrick, *Robert Henryson* (Boston: Twayne, 1979) 15.

² Kindrick 15. Douglas Gray acknowledges the possibility that the Robert Henryson who attended the University of Glasgow shares an identity with the poet, but cautions that such an identification “is not finally certain” (*Robert Henryson* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979] 3).

preferred model of governance: one in which a ruler exercises the self-control necessary to find the golden mean between tyranny and negligence in his treatment of his subjects. In other words, in order to govern others, a ruler must first learn to govern himself. The vision of governance articulated in the *Moral Fables* thus echoes the paradigm of exchange and compromise described in Barbour's *Bruce* and Harry's *Wallace*, in which the success of the titular figures' leadership is contingent on the support of those whom they govern. In these texts, a ruler's power lies in drawing on the strengths of external forces in order to bolster his powers. The *Moral Fables* also examine the dynamic of a king's proper personal governance, a subject explored from a more courtly and philosophical angle in the *Kingis Quair*.

The paradigm of governance enacted in the fables treated here also serves as a useful model for interpreting the nature of Henryson's literary relationship with his Chaucerian source in the *Testament of Cresseid*. In the *Moral Fables*, Henryson advocates a style of political governance that favours self-control and mutual exchange over tyranny or complacency; in the *Testament*, Henryson explores this paradigm of self-governance on three complementary levels: narratively, though the evolution of Cresseid from a figure paradoxically enslaved by her lack of discipline to a soul liberated by her embrace of self-control; allegorically, through the development of Troilus and Cresseid's relationship as reflective of Scotland's relationship with England during the reign of James III; and intertextually, through the poet's use of a strategy of controlled exchange with Chaucer's *Troilus* in order to give his own uniquely Scottish work the utmost literary merit and autonomy.

The *Moral Fables*: Lessons Fit for a King?

The issue of proper royal governance was the subject of numerous texts in fifteenth-century Scotland, as demonstrated by the prominence of the “advice to princes” genre.³ While this genre was also a staple of contemporary English literature, Scottish advice literature was distinct in its particular focus on the interdependent relationship between ruler and ruled, as discussed earlier in this dissertation. The preoccupation with governance was also evident in the proliferation of satirical literature concerning those leaders who did not heed good advice on their rule. Certain critics contend that James III was an implicit target of several late-fifteenth-century works, including the anonymous *Thre Prestis of Peblis*, Harry’s *Wallace* and several of the *Fables*.

It should not be concluded from the prevalence of such literary critiques of royal rule, however, that Scots did not desire to be governed under such a system. Cowan notes that the concept of a king’s responsibility to those he governed was “a notion which did not imply perpetual anti-monarchical revolt because the Scots respected and craved good kingship,” as demonstrated in part by a focus on the subject in late-medieval Scottish literature.⁴ Ultimately, then, medieval Scots writers’ political and literary criticism of improper rule stems not from a desire to

³ Scottish examples include John Ireland’s *Meroure of Wyssdome*, written in 1490. Craig McDonald points out that Ireland’s work advocates the idea of ‘equity,’ or the monarch’s ability to temper his sovereignty with a somewhat flexible approach to the law when circumstances warrant, a practice that Ireland identifies strongly with the concept of mercy (“The Perversion of Law in Robert Henryson’s Fable of *The Fox, The Wolf and the Husbandman*,” *Medium Aevum* 49 [1980]: 248). See Mapstone, “The Advice to Princes Tradition” for a more detailed exploration.

⁴ Edward J. Cowan, “Land and Freedom: Scotland, 1314-1707,” *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature, Volume 1: From Columba to the Union*, ed. Thomas Owen Clancy and Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007) 137.

eschew royal governance; in fact, “good kingship” in much of the literature of the day is depicted as key to a secure Scottish kingdom.

While the *Fables* offer a rich examination of the theme of self-governance in several of its forms (moral, spiritual, academic), the three tales discussed in this chapter provide Henryson’s most pointed discussion of what constitutes proper royal and political governance. Examining these fables is therefore critical to understanding Henryson’s philosophy both on a king’s relationship with his subjects in general and, more topically, the effect of James III’s style of rule on his kingdom and subjects. As shall be discussed later in the chapter, the dynamic of governance Henryson champions here is replicated in his response to Chaucer’s *Troilus*.

Several critics have noted the *Fables*’ allegorical references to James III’s reign, particularly his handling of the Scottish civil and criminal courts. “The Sheep and the Dog” has received particular attention for its description of Scottish judicial shortcomings. Marshall Stearns and John MacQueen both note the fable’s specific satire of both ecclesiastical and civil courts in the late fifteenth century.⁵ Neither Stearns nor MacQueen, however, explores the role of the king in the fable’s treatment of judicial corruption.⁶ Kindrick comes closer to examining the role of royal misgovernance in the fable’s injustices when he contends that Henryson “expounds on the oppression of the common men by the nobility as set

⁵ John MacQueen, *Robert Henryson: A Study of the Major Narrative Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 128-131; Marshall W. Stearns, *Robert Henryson* (New York: Columbia UP, 1945) 29-32.

⁶ Both Stearns and MacQueen perceive a satire of the king’s role in the court system in “The Trial of the Fox”; this view will be explored later in this chapter.

forth in the sheep's complaint" after his loss at trial.⁷ Robert Pope's statement that Henryson's ecclesiastical court embodies "a legal procedure which is as accurately delineated as it is systematically perverted" and his view that Henryson deliberately "insinuates a sense of historicity" also hint at an appreciation of the tale's satire of contemporary Scottish courts.⁸

While "The Sheep and the Dog's" criticism of the contemporary legal system is generally appreciated, however, the tale benefits even further from a consideration of the role played in the system's downfall by a lack of proper royal governance. While no animal figure in this tale is thought to represent King James III, the very absence of a royal figure is quite significant to understanding the full scope of the tale's satirical targets, given the expected role of the king in the proper administration of the Scottish courts. As Norman Macdougall notes, ensuring an effective justice system for his citizens was among a Scottish king's "traditional obligations," usually achieved through the "delegation of authority to responsible magnates who alone could represent the central government effectively in the localities."⁹ James' insistence on the right of civil litigants to appeal to the king and his council, however, created a backlog of appeals stretching into James IV's reign in the early sixteenth century.¹⁰ Moreover, James permitted those charged with crimes, even major offences such as murder, to buy remissions rather than face the charges in criminal court.¹¹

⁷ Kindrick 80.

⁸ Robert Pope, "Henryson's *The Sheep and the Dog*," *EC* 30.3 (July 1980): 206-207.

⁹ Norman Macdougall, *James III: A Political Study* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1982) 7-8.

¹⁰ Macdougall, *James III* 99.

¹¹ Macdougall, *James III* 99.

James' reforms to civil and criminal justice were unpopular among the estates, who believed the king to be sacrificing proper justice for the sake of extra revenue. By pursuing his desire for money at the expense of the oversight role that was one of the Scottish monarch's traditional responsibilities, James III is a ripe target for Henryson's satire. While the king plays an explicit role in "The Trial of the Fox" and "The Lion and the Mouse," the absence of a royal authority in "The Sheep and the Dog" offers just as severe an indictment of James' lack of proper governance towards his subjects.

Critics have observed "The Sheep and the Dog's" depiction of a corrupt consistory (ecclesiastical) court, comprising animal figures not exactly representative of trustworthiness or virtue, such as the "fraudfull volff" as presiding judge (1150),¹² the Fox as the case's notary and legal clerk (1174), and the Bear and Badger as arbiters who evaluate the Sheep's objections to the proceedings (1209-1211).¹³ A royal figure, however, is absent. While the king's absence is not initially surprising—monarchs did not officially oversee ecclesiastical courts¹⁴—the tale and *moralitas* do supply readers with fleeting but vital hints that the criticisms directed towards this court have a wider judicial applicability. Several critics have observed the broadening of the satirical

¹² All Henryson quotations are from *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. Denton Fox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981).

¹³ Cf. Stearns, *Henryson* 29-31, and Kindrick 79-81, for a general overview of the animals' respective roles in the legal context. Pope, comparing Henryson's fable with an analogue by the twelfth-century fabulist Gualterus Anglicus, observes that the presence of the Raven as summoner and the Fox as the clerk and notary are Henryson's unique additions to the fable, as is the Sheep's lament in the *moralitas* (206). Henryson has thus made an effort both to amplify the injustice of the court in his fable and to increase the sense of verisimilitude, reinforcing his fable's satirical function.

¹⁴ While ecclesiastical courts were officially outside the king's purview, James III did have a reputation for improper intervention into church affairs, one chief example being his provision of loyal subjects with benefices or other positions of ecclesiastical authority (Macdougall, *James III* 102-103).

target;¹⁵ while they have noted the narrator's condemnation of the corrupt sheriffs and coroners of the civil system, however, the passing reference to the "kingis hand" has attracted rather less attention. The fable's expansion of its satire to courts within the monarch's jurisdiction reveals another critical target of the fable: the king's regulation of the Scottish civil and criminal courts. This target becomes more apparent when one examines the sheep's lament in the *moralitas*, in which the persecuted creature appeals directly to a higher authority. After having been unfairly shorn of his wool as a form of restitution to the dog, the sheep cries to God, "O lord, quhy sleipis thow sa lang? / Walk, and discerne my cause groundit on richt" (1295-1296). Considering James III's reputation for a lackadaisical attitude towards his responsibilities overseeing the proper administration of Scottish justice, the sheep's question adopts a contemporary political meaning as well as a timeless spiritual one. The reference to a sleeping Lord/lord is intriguing; while it would be anachronistic to impute any definite significance to the lack of capitalisation, the possibility that the narrator may refer not only to God but also to a more earthly lord is worth some examination. Denton Fox has noted the variation between the Bannatyne MS' use of "O Lord" and the "Lord God" used in the Bassandyne and Charteris prints and the Harleian

¹⁵ MacQueen comments that the narrator's interpretation of the animal figures "extends his satire to include Civil as well as Consistory courts—the entire machinery of the law during his time" (Henryson 131), while Kindrick suggests that the *moralitas* combines its criticism of the Scottish courts with the sentiment that only a divine judge can offer true justice: "By attacking all courts Henryson stresses that man should not put his trust in temporal institutions, especially for the administration of justice" (81). Evelyn Newlyn also distinguishes between earthly and heavenly justice, arguing that "The Sheep and the Dog" flirts with questioning the justice of God, but backs away from this conclusion and places responsibility for earthly injustice on human beings ("Robert Henryson and the Popular Fable Tradition in the Middle Ages," *Journal of Popular Culture* 14.1 [Summer 1980]: 114). As will be discussed, however, the intermediary level of royal authority/justice has not been a focus of critical concern.

MS (BL Harley 3865),¹⁶ a variation that may indicate multivalent interpretations of the line among earlier readers. While Denton Fox has located the image of a sleeping Lord in Psalm 43 of the Vulgate, the tale's specific engagement with the sphere of *earthly* legal authority suggests a more mundane lord may also be referenced here.¹⁷ The political interpretation of this image becomes even more convincing when one considers the image of the eponymous king of beasts sleeping in "The Lion and the Mouse," the *Moral Fables*' central fable, which immediately follows "The Sheep and the Dog" in the Bassandyne order.¹⁸

The sheep's lament continues to blur the distinction between a heavenly Lord and an earthly lord:

‘Seis thow not, lord, this warld ouerturnit is,
As quha wald change gude gold in leid or tyn?
The pure is peillit, the lord may do na mis,
And simonie is haldin for na syn.
Now is he blyith with okker maist may wyn;
Gentrice is slane, and pietie is ago.
Allace, gude lord, quhy tholis thow it so?’ (1307-1313)

The sheep refers here to two kinds of lords. He first implores the lord (Lord) to see the chaos into which the world has fallen, suggesting that this lord

¹⁶ Fox 1.1295, n.

¹⁷ Psalm 43: 22-23: "Quoniam propter te mortificamur omni die: aestimati sumus sicut oves occisionis. / Exsurge, quare dormis Domine? (Because for thy sake we are killed all the day long: we are counted as sheep for the slaughter. / Arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord!)" 1. 1295, n. Latin from <http://www.drbo.org/lvb/chapter/21043.htm>. 21 May 2009.

¹⁸ As George Gopen notes, the Bassandyne order is shared by most early copies of the *Moral Fables*, the only dramatic exception being the order found in the Bannatyne MS ("The Essential Seriousness of Henryson's *Moral Fables*: A Study in Structure," *SP* 82.1 [Winter 1985]: 48). Most critics tend to accept the Bassandyne order, although John MacQueen argues for the earlier Bannatyne order in *Henryson* 189-199.

must view the world from a higher vantage point. The second use of “lord,” however, states in a somewhat bitter tone that he “may do na mis” while the poor are made to suffer; this lord seems to be very much of the world, susceptible to such sins as simony and usury (“okker”). The stanza’s final “gude lord” leads the reader back to God, reinforcing the distinction between the lord who perpetuates injustices and the Lord who sleeps through them. Stearns has argued that the earthly lord of this stanza is of the feudal variety, and that the sheep’s complaint condemns these lords’ abuse of their power over the peasants.¹⁹ One may extend this socio-political reading of the complaint, however, to suggest that the greater lord to whom the sheep addresses his objections is not meant to be read solely as God, but also more subtly as James III. Not only has the reader already been alerted to a possible contemporary reading by the earlier image of a sleeping lord, but the “world turned upside down” image of gold being turned to lead or tin (1308) may reflect one of the great mistakes attributed to James III by several chroniclers: his introduction of “black money,” or a rapid debasement of Scottish currency, into the kingdom’s economy from the early 1470s up to the Lauder Bridge crisis in 1482.²⁰

¹⁹ Stearns, *Henryson* 126. While Stearns believes that that ll. 1298-1320 of the complaint are in fact in the narrator’s voice and not the sheep’s (a view not shared by editors such as Fox, who keeps the complaint in the sheep’s voice until the end of the *moralitas*), the political significance of the sentiments expressed remains intact.

²⁰ One anonymous contemporary chronicle offers an account of public reaction to James’ monetary policy: “Anno domini m cccc lxxxii thir was ane gret hungry and deid in Scotland for the boll of meill was for four pundis for thir was blak cunzhe in the relame strikkin And ordinyt be king James the thred hald pennys and three penny pennys Innumerabill of coppir [...] And that sammyn zere in the moneth of Julij the king of scotland purposyt till haif passyt in Ingland with the power of scotland and passyt on gaitwart to lawdyr and thar the lordis of Scotland held thair consaill in the kirk of lauder and cryit downe the blak silver and thai slew ane part of the kingis housald and other part thai banysyt and thai tuke the king him self and thai put him in the castell of Edynburgh in firm keyping [...]” *The Short Chronicle of 1482* (excerpt), Appendix A of Macdougall, *James III* 312. As Macdougall states, the chronicle offers a rather confused view of

The complaint's final stanza seems directed solely at God; questioning why He sees fit to punish human beings with "troubill and plaigis soir" (1315) before conceding that these are likely punishments for humanity's refusal to repent (1317). The sheep concludes that the best that mankind can do is pray and hope that they will receive "gude rest" in heaven (1320). Evelyn Newlyn argues that the sheep's about-face from divine critic to apologist is an attempt to resolve "a conflict in the narrator's mind between his awareness of life's harshness and injustice," which stem from God's neglect of His creation, and the narrator's "personal conviction that there does exist a just and benevolent God."²¹ The narrator's delegation of this thorny dilemma to the voice of a sheep, furthermore, acts as a distancing mechanism from his criticisms of "not only the religious and legal systems, but even the condition of God's world, and God's governance of it."²² There may also, however, be a politically useful purpose to this distancing strategy. Henryson's *moralitas* evokes an image of a ruler asleep on the job; this harsh image of improper governance may be applied as suitably to James III as it is to God. Both the sheep's rapid re-affirmation of heavenly consolation and his very act of voicing the lament are just as useful in distancing Henryson from the charge of political rebel as they are in shielding him from religious controversy.

"The Sheep and the Dog" therefore reveals more about contemporary perceptions of James III as a governor than critics have previously acknowledged.

the exact nature of the "black money" James had circulated and places perhaps too much emphasis on the unpopularity of the "black money" as the impetus for the Lauder Bridge crisis (*James III* 158-159). Nevertheless, contemporary accounts such as these may have contributed to a public association of James with valueless currency, thus infusing with timely significance the image of valuable gold transforming into base lead or tin and reinforcing the possibility that Henryson's sheep may have the king among his targets for criticism.

²¹Newlyn 115.

²²Newlyn 115.

The fable's discussion of the corrupt Scottish courts is marked by the conspicuous absence of the figure meant to ensure their proper administration, while the *moralitas*' ambiguous comments on the "lord" offer the potential for parallel political and religious readings. In two of Henryson's other fables, "The Trial of the Fox" and "The Lion and the Mouse," James III's representation is somewhat more visible, but all three tales offer a consistent view of how a Scottish king should—and should not—govern. "The Trial of the Fox" delves deeper into James' power conflicts with both the Christian establishment and the English crown, while "The Lion and the Mouse" traces the evolution of a ruler at turns complacent and tyrannical to one who finally grasps the key to good governance: self-restraint. These three tales advance Henryson's view that proper governance of others is rooted in the ability to govern oneself.

"The Trial of the Fox," unlike "The Sheep and the Dog," features a king in a more active role, though the tale's actual "trial" component is far less elaborate than the description of the lion king's convention of his parliament of beasts. Despite the *moralitas*' contention that the leonine monarch is meant to represent "the world by liklynace, / To quhome loutis baith empriour and king" (1104-05), this allegory has perplexed some readers. Douglas Gray has gone so far as to call "The Trial of the Fox's" *moralitas* an example of one of the *Moral Fables*' "surprising arcane 'dark' moralities," asking, "Who would have guessed the reading offered [...], in which the Lion 'is the world be [liklynace]'"²³

While the *moralitas* may indeed provide no explicit indication that the text should be considered in the light of contemporary Scottish politics, the fable's

²³ Gray, *Henryson* 123-124.

unmistakable incorporation of both Scottish and English heraldic imagery strongly encourages the reader to associate the lion with James III. In his examination of the fable, John MacQueen argues that the unicorn summoning the animals to parliament is a Unicorn Pursuivant, a clear symbol for the Scottish parliament; furthermore, MacQueen contends that

heraldry makes it plain that the lion is the king of Scotland,
enthroned with sceptre, sword and crown, as on the Scottish arms.
The three leopards who serve him are those of England, and when
the lion says:

“I lat 3ow wit, my mycht is merciabill

And steiris nane that ar to me prostrait,” [929-930]

he is adapting the motto of the kings of Scotland, *Parcere
prostrates scit nobilis ira leonis*.²⁴

Gray notes Bruce Dickins’ earlier observations on this heraldic imagery, remarking, “Wittily, Henryson makes the three leopards of England pitch the tent of the Scottish lion.”²⁵

The critics’ detection of the fable’s Scottish and English heraldic imagery is a useful point of departure for a more political reading of the poem. Unfortunately, beyond the identification of this imagery, there is little analysis of what message Henryson may wish to convey about the Scottish crown, and particularly about James III. In fact, MacQueen argues that the fable’s main object of commentary is religious rather than political, contending that it critiques

²⁴ MacQueen, *Henryson* 150-151.

²⁵ Gray, *Henryson* 79, n. MacQueen acknowledges a debt to Dickins on p. 151, n. Dickins’ argument appears in *TLS* (21 February 1924): 112.

James III's attempts to encroach upon the authority of the Church in Scotland.²⁶

MacQueen's assessment of "The Trial of the Fox," while acknowledging the presence of the lion and his three servant leopards as representative of Scotland and England respectively, maintains that the fable's central topical concern James' religious governance rather than his political rule, namely his controversial intervention into the ecclesiastical hierarchy of Dunfermline Abbey in the late 1460s.²⁷ While such a reading explains the spiritual nature of the *moralitas*, the tale's heraldic imagery presents a striking tableau of Anglo-Scottish political relations that merits additional analysis. What is the purpose of this tableau? What (if any) conclusions should the reader draw from it with respect to Scotland's governance and relationship with England under James III's rule?

An answer may lie in the depiction of the lion's role in the administration of the parliament and court. The first image the reader receives of royal or

²⁶ MacQueen argues that "Henryson's central reference [...] is religious rather than political" (*Henryson* 150), contending that James' attempts to control the religious administration of Dunfermline Abbey motivate the *moralitas*' clear division between earthly and spiritual powers (*Henryson* 150). MacQueen stresses that James' efforts to intervene in church affairs were paralleled by other rulers of his time, particularly the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, to whom MacQueen believes Henryson is referring along with James III in his reference to "baith emperour and king" bowing down to serve the world represented by the lion (*Henryson* 152). More recently, MacQueen has stressed that while such struggles between political rulers and the Church were not exclusive to Scotland, "the king and parliament of Scotland, both unmistakably indicated [in the fable's imagery], become the type of all temporal authority opposed to spirituality" (*Complete and Full With Numbers: The Narrative Poetry of Robert Henryson* [New York: Rodopi, 2006] 243).

²⁷ MacQueen, *Henryson* 150-151. While MacQueen briefly notes the tale's portrayal of Anglo-Scottish relations through this heraldic imagery, however, he does not elaborate on the political significance of such a tableau, saying that "[t]he full point [of the tale] is established by the significance given to the mare and the fox only in Bannatyne," where the former represents Scotland's religious orders and the latter "the temptation for them to return to life in the world, represented by the lion himself" (*Henryson* 151). MacQueen concludes that the tale relates a battle between church and state, not merely between James III and the Scottish Church, but potentially also similar conflicts on the Continent, such as the "often strained" relationship between the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III and Pope Pius II (*Henryson* 151-152).

parliamentary authority is of the unicorn “pursephant” (844) who calls all animals to attend the lion’s parliament:

‘We, nobill Lyoun, off all beistis the king,
Greting to God, ay lestand but ending,
To brutall beistis and irrationall
I send, as to my subiectis grit and small.

‘My celsitude and hie magnificence
Lattis 3ow to wit, that euin incontinent,
Thinkis the morne with royall deligence
Vpon this hill to hald ane parliament.
Straitlie thairfoir I gif commandement
For to compeir befoir my tribunall,
Vnder all pane and perrell that may fall.’ (855-865)

As MacQueen notes, the “parliament” the lion convenes is rather more like a tribunal, where the king will hear legal complaints brought by his subjects against one another.²⁸ He adds, “In some limited respects it resembles the idealised Scottish gatherings described by Fordun and Bower, which took place in the open air on ‘the moothill on which stood the royal seat at Scone where the kings sitting on the throne in royal attire are accustomed to proclaim judgements, laws and statutes to their subjects.’”²⁹ These observations, in addition to the references to

²⁸ MacQueen, *Complete* 230.

²⁹From notes to Walter Bower’s *Scotichronicon*, vol. 2, ed. John MacQueen and Winnifred MacQueen (Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP, 1989) 414-417. Qtd. in MacQueen, *Complete* 230.

Scottish heraldic imagery described earlier, mark the scene as distinctly Scottish, suggesting a contemporary political significance.

The case for such a reading is bolstered by the lion's reference to his own "celsitude and hie magnificence" (859) and to his subjects' "brutall [...] and irratiounall" nature (857). The king of beasts later elaborates on this attitude in his direct parliamentary address to his subjects:

'My celsitude and my hie maiestie
With micht and mercie myngit sall be ay.
The lawest heir I can full sone vp hie,
And mak him maister ouer 3ow all I may:
The dromedarie, giff he will mak deray,
The grit camell, thocht he wer neuer sa crous,
I can him law als lytill as ane mous.' (936-942)

After this speech, which continues with the lion's promise to protect vulnerable goats and lambs from foxes (943-946), the animals "couchit all efter that this wes cryde" (947). This gesture does not merely reinforce the animals' position of subservience to their ruler; Henryson's choice of the word "couchit" may be a reference to the heraldic term "couchant," which would heighten even further these beasts' contrast with the Scottish lion, depicted on the Scottish coat of arms as rampant. The lion's self-aggrandising description may refer to a common contemporary criticism of James III: an opinion of his station that many

considered “dangerously exalted,” even for a king.³⁰ The lion’s similarly inflated self-opinion may indicate a specific and intentional resemblance to James III.

The parliament itself offers through its heraldic imagery a striking portrait of Anglo-Scottish relations, one with particular resonances for James III’s reign. The king’s arrival is accompanied by much pomp and circumstance:

Thre leopardis come, a croun off massie gold
 Beirand thay brocht vnto that hillis hicht,
 With iaspis ionit, and royall rubeis rold,
 And mony diueris dyamontis dicht.
 With pollis proud ane pal3eoun down thay picht,
 And in that throne thair sat ane wild lyoun,
 In rob royall, with sceptour, swerd, and croun. (873-879)

As mentioned earlier, several critics have argued that the three leopards are those of the English royal coat of arms, here serving the lion of the Scottish royal coat of arms. A more extensive discussion of this dynamic’s significance, however, is in order. Notably, Henryson chooses to refer to the animals on the English coat of arms as leopards, despite the fact that they are just as often identified as lions. This interchangeability of terms was common for the period, and Charles Boutell explains the origins of the ambiguity:

Only when [the Lion] was in [the] rampant attitude did the
 early Heralds consider any Lion to be a Lion, and blazon him by
 his true name. A Lion walking and looking about him, the early

³⁰ Macdougall, *James III* 98. A tangible indication of James’ elevated self-opinion, says Macdougall, may be found on silver coins from late in his reign, which picture the king with an imperial crown (*James III* 98).

Heralds took to be acting the part of a leopard: consequently, when he was in any such attitude, they blazoned him as “a leopard.”³¹

Therefore Boutell says, to refer to the lions as leopards is not a strategy “for derision and insult” employed by England’s enemies,³² which would seem to eliminate the possibility that Henryson intends such derision here. Even if the reference to leopards rather than lions is not some form of nationalistic insult, however, it is significant that Henryson deliberately distinguishes the Scottish heraldic lion from its English counterparts by referring to the latter as leopards. In the parliament of “The Trial of the Fox,” there can be only one ruler, and therefore only one king of beasts to preside. In granting this distinction to the Scottish heraldic lion, Henryson ultimately reasserts the sovereignty of the Scottish kingdom, particularly in relation to its English counterpart.

Having established the fable’s particular Anglo-Scottish dynamic, the question then becomes whether this dynamic comments specifically on James III’s particular approach towards England in Henryson’s time. It may be that Henryson had in mind James’ recent focus on domestic administration and wished to commemorate that policy shift in his fable; given “The Sheep and the Dog’s” trenchant criticism of the absence of royal authority from the Scottish courts, however, a less optimistic interpretation of the fable may be in order. Perhaps, then, this section of the lion’s depiction in “The Trial of the Fox” is meant to be an aspirational rather than actual depiction of James III’s domestic policies, especially with respect to the justice system. The fable’s portrait of a monarch

³¹ Charles Boutell, *English Heraldry* (London: Reeves and Tucker, 1908) 84.

³² Boutell 84.

able both to use his foreign counterparts to help strengthen his own kingdom and to administer his domestic affairs in a decisive and efficient manner may convey Henryson's view that a Scottish king must balance foreign clout with domestic authority in order to assure the proper governance of Scotland.

A significant moment for fifteenth-century Anglo-Scottish relations occurred in October 1474, when England and Scotland agreed to a political alliance.³³ Macdougall describes the alliance as James' "most profitable diplomatic achievement" and "the beginning of a consistent and realistic policy of Scottish friendship and alliance with England," although he also stresses its unpopularity with many Scots, particularly border magnates who benefited from periodic raids of English territory.³⁴ That Henryson may have taken the more positive view of the alliance is suggested by the hierarchy he establishes between his lion and the leopards. The latter act as servants to the former; they set up the pavilion and throne from which the lion will administer justice and bear the crown so symbolic of the lion's power. Henryson establishes a dynamic where the Scottish lion allows the English leopards to work alongside him, but makes it clear that the leopards also work *for* the lion to advance his image as the ruler of beasts. One may see a parallel in James' strategy with the English, undertaken to draw on England's power in order to assure Scotland's sovereignty. Among the chief terms of the 1474 alliance was a marriage treaty between Prince James (the future James IV) and Edward IV's daughter Cecilia, although this treaty's failure would be a factor in the outbreak of war between England and Scotland in 1480-

³³ Macdougall, *James III* 110.

³⁴ Macdougall, *James III* 110, 117-118.

1482.³⁵ While the alliance was ultimately unsuccessful, the fulfilment of the marriage treaty would in theory have given Scotland powerful connections at the highest levels of English rule while also allowing it to maintain its own sovereignty as a kingdom.³⁶ James appears to have been very aware of these probable effects, since the focus of Scotland's post-1474 foreign relations shifted from overseas endeavours to the establishment of more comfortable ties with England: "Foreign policy changed rapidly from projected royal expeditions or pilgrimages to Brittany, Gueldres, Saintonge and Rome, to equally determined efforts to make the most out of the 1474 English alliance; and the future was to show that James III hoped to use this rapprochement with Edward IV to enhance his prestige and travel abroad on pilgrimage."³⁷ At the same time as he established warmer relations with England, however, James spent considerable time in the 1470s touring his own kingdom, suggesting that the Scottish alliance with England was part of James' larger strategy to strengthen both Scotland's sovereignty and his own sovereignty over Scotland.³⁸

In "The Trial of the Fox," the lion's exchanges with the fox depict how the animal king relates to his subjects and administers justice—and, by extension, how Henryson may have wished a Scottish king to rule domestically. What is perhaps most remarkable about the lion's first encounter with the fox is that he immediately sees the fox's true nature, despite the fox's attempts to disguise

³⁵ Macdougall, *James III* 115, 143.

³⁶ 1501's Treaty of Perpetual Peace, which included among its terms the marriage of James IV to Margaret Tudor, constituted a later attempt at Anglo-Scottish rapprochement; the literary implications of these diplomatic developments are discussed further in the chapter on William Dunbar.

³⁷ Macdougall, *James III* 120.

³⁸ Macdougall, *James III* 120.

himself (966-968). The fox's efforts to go incognito using "falset" (965) are in vain, as the lion summons the fox to "Cum furth, Lowrie, lurkand vnder thy hude" (994). The fox's pleas of infirmity and his attempt to foist onto the wolf the job of summoning the old grey mare to the parliament also fall on deaf ears, as the lion—tellingly described as "[r]ampannd"—cries, "Ga furth, 3e brybouris baith!" (999). The lion's rampant stance further reinforces his representation of the Scottish crown; his actions in this exchange thus offer valuable insight into Henryson's vision of proper Scottish royal governance. Viewed from this perspective, the lion's attitude is notable in two ways. Firstly, the king of beasts can discern his subjects' deceit; he is not even momentarily misled by the fox's disguise, indicating familiarity with his subjects. Secondly, the lion's insistence that the mare attend the parliament suggests a desire to have authority over his entire kingdom and an unwillingness to let even one subject escape.

"The Lion and the Mouse," occupying the *Fables*' central position,³⁹ sees Henryson develop even further his ideal of governance and its application to the rule of Scottish kings (particularly James III). The fable offers the work's most sophisticated discussion of Scottish governance, tracing the lion's evolution from a tyrannical and lackadaisical ruler to one who tempers his punishments with self-restraint, thus transforming (as the tale puts it) cruelty into justice. Numerous critics have noted the tale's possible allusions to various crises in the reign of James III. In fact, "The Lion and the Mouse's" echoes of such sensitive political issues have been suggested as the reason Henryson chooses not to narrate this

³⁹ For discussion of this position, see n. 18 (above).

tale, assigning it instead to Aesop.⁴⁰ Stearns connects the lion's capture with the young James' own abduction and imprisonment in 1466 by members and supporters of the powerful Boyd family.⁴¹ Given that James was only around fourteen years old at the time, however, it seems unlikely that the fable's reference to the lion's capture alludes to this incident; the abduction in the fable occurs after the lion establishes a reputation as an irresponsible ruler, a charge that the young James would not yet have had enough time to merit. MacQueen favours a more plausible political reading, writing that the tale explores the issues of "wisdom and providence" and "applies those ideas specifically to the Scotland of James III."⁴² Specifically,

Henryson seems [...] to be suggesting that for James salvation from the power of the nobility [who would rebel against him in 1482 and eventually cause his death in 1488] depended on the equity with which his justice was administered; that so long as the commons felt no resentment against him, the nobility would be powerless to unseat him. Wisdom and providence are thus closely interconnected with justice and mercy, two words constantly repeated by the mouse.⁴³

⁴⁰ Stearns writes, "Henryson goes to extravagant lengths to keep himself in the background : not only is the vehicle for this criticism [of James' rule] a dream-vision from which the poet awakes at the conclusion of the *moralitas*, but also the criticism itself is placed in the mouth of Aesop. In view of the despotic power of the feudal lords, Henryson's precautions may have been quite necessary" (*Henryson* 18). While Stearns' assessment of the feudal lords' "despotic power" may be somewhat overdramatic, it does seem likely that Henryson's assignment of Aesop as narrator acts as a mechanism to distance the poet from the more controversial interpretations of his fable.

⁴¹ Stearns, *Henryson* 17. According to Macdougall, the abduction was part of a larger struggle for the king's person between the Boyd and Kennedy factions (*James III* 62, 71-72).

⁴² MacQueen, *Henryson* 170.

⁴³ MacQueen, *Henryson* 171.

MacQueen's observation that "The Lion and the Mouse" urges rulers to be merciful is valid, but it touches on only part of the fable's lessons on good governance. Just as importantly, "The Lion and the Mouse" asserts that successful governance is contingent on the governor's ability to compromise with the governed. Such an interpretation depicts the relationship between the king and his subjects as vital to the health of the king's reign. The "Short Chronicle" of 1482 contends that James' disregard for the advice of his established magnates was a major factor in the Lauder Bridge rebellion and James' subsequent imprisonment.⁴⁴ Conversely, James' freedom was secured by collaboration with several Edinburgh officials, to whom he later promised the right to administer the city's sheriff courts themselves.⁴⁵ This dynamic of reciprocity is mirrored in the fable, which contends that in order to retain power, a good ruler must occasionally exercise self-restraint in his behaviour towards his subjects.

Over the course of the fable, the lion learns that self-governance is the key to governing others. The first image of the king of beasts establishes just how far the lion must go to understand this lesson; the reader sees the lion "[b]eikand his breast and belly at the sun" (1407) after a tiring hunt (1405). While an apparently valid reason is given for the lion's apparent indolence, one cannot help but be reminded of the fox's similar behaviour after devouring a kid in "The Fox and the Wolf", where he retreats "[v]nder ane busk, quhair that the sone can beik, / To beik his breist and bellie he thocht best" (756-757). The fox is said to settle under

⁴⁴ According to the chronicle, James was imprisoned in Edinburgh Castle both for his monetary policy (see n. 20 for the chronicler's comments on this issue) and because "he wrocht mair the consaell of his housald at war bot sympill na he did of thame that was lordis" (qtd. in Macdougall, *James III* 312).

⁴⁵ MacQueen, *Complete* 171.

the bush out of “dreid” of being hunted down (755), a dread that the lion should perhaps share given his later capture by hunters (1514-1527). Similarly, the reference to the lion’s belly recalls the fox’s death by an arrow through his own “wame” (760; 765-767). “The Lion and the Mouse’s” opening portrait of the king of beasts thus serves both to establish the king’s inactive approach to governing his kingdom and to remind the reader of the consequences of such inactivity in other fables; in turn, these literary cues offer a sense of what may soon happen to the lion.

The lion’s torpor is soon contrasted with the appearance of a lively group of mice, who dance gleefully around and over what they believe to be the lifeless body of their ruler (1409-1416). Finally roused from his slumber, the lion shifts from one extreme of untenable governance to the other; while he no longer lounges lazily, the king’s capture of the “maister mous” (1418) and his subsequent lecture on the sweeping nature of his royal office and powers reveals a ruler overly convinced of his own importance. When the mouse contends that she and her friends were unaware the lion was alive (1444-46), the lion rejects her “fals excuse” (1447):

‘I put the cace, I had bene deid or slane,
And syne my skyn bene stoppit full off stra,
Thocht thow had found my figure lyand swa,
Because it bare the prent off my persoun,
Thow suld for feir on kneis haue fallin doun.

‘For thy trespass thow can mak na defence,
 My nobill persoun thus to vilipend;
 Off thy feiris, nor thy awin negligence,
 For to excuse thow can na cause pretend...’ (1449-1457)

MacQueen has argued that this passage “may be a caricature of Stewart ideas on the divine right of kings,”⁴⁶ an idea that Macdougall has pointed out is “somewhat anachronistic” but nevertheless consistent with James’ reputation for holding an inflated view of his kingship.⁴⁷ Just as important to observe, however, is how the two extremes of governance the lion has demonstrated early in the fable are united in the king’s unwillingness to compromise. The lion’s angry capture of the mouse and his initial sentence of “ane schamefull end / And deith” (1458-1459) reflects his capacity for tyrannical, uncompromising rule; on the other hand, the lion’s simultaneous expectation that he should be revered even when completely immobile manifests in another way his refusal to establish a mutually dependent relationship with his subjects. In one scenario, the king claims the sole privilege of action as an instrument of his rule; in the other, the lion’s refusal to perform any sort of action is also tacitly claimed to be his prerogative as ruler. Missing from both of these visions of governance is recognition that the retention of power is just as reliant on the will of subjects to be ruled as it is on the ruler’s own desire to govern, and that the ruler’s restraint is key to gaining the subjects’ assent.

⁴⁶ MacQueen, *Henryson* 172.

⁴⁷ Macdougall, *James III* 273. The concept of the king’s God-given right to absolute rule does not manifest itself explicitly in the writings of Stewart monarchs until James VI’s *True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598).

Integral to the lion's acquisition of self-governance is his understanding of the importance of mercy in a good ruler. The mouse describes this virtue as "kinglie" (1467), suggesting that mercy is a quality to be embraced by all rulers in their judgements. Without mercy, the mouse contends, "iustice is crueltie" (1470), lacking equity (1473). Several of the mouse's arguments, in fact, address the great imbalance of power between herself and the lion. She maintains that it would "degraid sum part off [the lion's] renoun" (1486) for him to triumph over such a weak opponent would and that her flesh is unworthy of consumption by such a regal creature (1489-1495). The mouse thereby contends that the lion's favoured style of lopsided rule casts him not as an heroic figure, but as a ruler without honour, a label extremely damaging to his reputation: "Quhat pryce or louing, quhen the battell endis, / Is said off him that ouercummis ane man / Him to defend quhilk nouthir may nor can?" (1479-1481). Alternatively, suggests the mouse, any mercy the lion chooses to show her may someday help him retain his power:

'My lyfe is lytill worth, my deith is les,
 3it and I leif I may peraduenture
 Supple 3our hienes beand in distres;
 For oft is sene, ane man off small stature
 Reskewit hes ane lord off hie honour,
 Keipit that wes, in poynt to be ouerthrawin;
 Throw misfortoun sic cace may be 3our awin.' (1496-1502)

The mouse's proposal of mutual assistance could potentially preserve the lion's position and status, an advantage that the lion's course of merciless

execution cannot equal. Significantly, the mouse suggests that she will help the king not merely when he is in any type of danger, but specifically when he is at risk of being “ouerthrowin,” a term that evokes James’ own crisis of rule at the hands of his magnates at Lauder Bridge; the mouse’s reference to this specific form of turmoil links the lion with James III and gives a contemporary political resonance to both the beast’s capture by hunters and the virtues of a dynamic of compromise a contemporary political resonance.

In one of the fable’s pivotal moments, the lion grants the mouse’s request for mercy after “his language / Paissit, and thocht according to ressoun, / And gart mercie his cruell ire asswage” (1503-1505). These lines describe how the lion tempered (“paissit”) his impulse for absolute domination over his subject, demonstrating an incipient ability for self-restraint that will ultimately save his life. Before the lion can truly appreciate this quality as a means to greater power, however, he must experience the crisis that leads to his redemption. Fittingly, this crisis is set in motion by the lion’s reversion to the single-minded pursuit of his own interests. Setting out on the hunt, the king

slew baith tayme and wyld, as he wes wont,

And in the cuntrie maid ane grit deray;

Till at the last the pepill fand the way

This cruell lyoun how that thay mycht tak. (1512-1515)

The lion’s undisciplined slaughter of both wild and tamed beasts leads to chaos throughout the land, driving the people to capture the lion in a net (1521-1525). By disregarding the distinction between the wild creatures of the forest

and the people's own animals, the lion makes enemies of those he deems to be his subjects, and the result is his confinement.

While enmeshed in the net, the lion begins to understand that he requires the aid of others to preserve his own power. He laments the loss of “the mycht off [his] magnyfycence, / Off quhome all brutall beist in eird stude aw” (1532-1533), and moans, “Thair is na wy that will my harmis wreik / Nor creature do confort to my croun” (1538-1539). The lion realises that the fear and awe he craved from his subjects is useless in his time of trial; he now understands that conceding some power to his subjects would in fact have increased his chances of being liberated from the net and restored to his position of governance.

Fortunately, the lion has empowered one of his subjects: the mouse, who by chance happens upon the imprisoned king as he makes his lamentation (1543-1544). Remembering the lion's mercy towards her, the mouse says, “Now wer I fals and richt unkynd / Bot gif I quit sumpart thy gentilnes / Thow did to me” (1547-1549). The mouse's vow to reciprocate the lion's kindness perfectly illustrates the benefits rulers may reap from compromise with their subjects; the lion's mercy to the mouse results in the mice freeing the king from his bonds and returning him to power:

Now is the lyoun fre off all danger,

Lows and delyuerit to his libertie

Be lytill beistis off ane small power,

As 3e have hard, because he had pietie. (1566-1569)

In the *moralitas*, Aesop advances a pointedly political interpretation of the fable; unlike in “The Trial of the Fox,” for instance, where the lion king more

abstractly represents “the world,” in the “Lion and the Mouse” he instead “[m]ay signifie ane prince or empriour, / Ane potestate, or 3it ane king with croun” (1574-1575). These rulers, whose proper role should be as a “walkrife [vigilant] gyde and gouernour” (1576) of their people, too often “lyis still in lustis, sleuth, and sleip” (1579). Aesop’s words criticise slothful leaders, but they also champion an image of a ruler as an active governor. Aesop soon specifies that this form of governance entails winning the people’s respect through merciful rule:

Thir lytill myis ar bot the commountie,
 Wantoun, vnwyse, without correctioun;
 Thair lordis and princis quhen that thay se
 Of iustice mak nane executioun,
 Thay dreid na thing to mak rebellioun
 And disobey, for quhy thay stand nane aw,
 That garris thame thair soueranis misknaw.

Be this fabill, 3e lordis of prudence
 May consider the vertew of pietie,
 And to remit sumtyme ane grit offence,
 And mitigate with mercy crueltie. (1587-1597)

While the common people may be unlearned, they can perceive when their rulers do not exercise justice, and they will not hesitate to rebel against those rulers. While Aesop’s earlier comments about lax rulers may suggest that it is only the lazy kings who need fear the people’s wrath, it is important to recall the

mouse's earlier statement to the lion that "[w]ithout mercie, iustice is crueltie" (1470), a sentiment indicating that Aesop's warnings about unjust rulers may be applied just as accurately to those who reign tyrannically. At their core, Aesop's words serve as a caution to any ruler, lax or repressive, who pursues only his own interests without any consideration of his subjects' sentiments. The relevance of this advice to James III appears not to be lost on even a fictional narrator, as Aesop notes that a ruler "[r]olland in warldlie lust and vane plesance" may suddenly be "ouerthrawin, destroyit, and put down / Throw fals fortoun" (1602-1604). The attribution of such depositions to Fortune, however, may be a red herring, especially given Aesop's subsequent reference to "rurall men" (such as those who ensnared the lion) holding long grudges against their mistreatment (1608-1611). Perhaps sensing that the *moralitas* may be approaching its contemporary target a bit too closely (even with the distance that Aesop's voice provides), Henryson has Aesop refer only briefly to the fact that his fable may have relevance to actual political events ("Bot king and lord may weill wit quhat I mene: / Figure heirof oftymis hes bene sene" [1613-1614]) and then conclude with what appears to be an about-face in his discussion of bad governors:

Perswaid the kirkmen ythandly to pray
 That tressoun of this cuntrie be exyld,
 And iustice regne, and lordis keip thair fay
 Vnto thair souerane lord baith nycht and day. (1616-1619)

Until these lines, Aesop's criticism of unjust rulers has been unequivocal, and the sudden shift in tone seems to be yet another device by which Henryson distances himself from a controversial criticism of James III's rule. Upon further

examination, however, the lines are not quite as royalist as they first appear to be. Aesop's principal hope is that the country be free of treason and ruled by justice; despite Aesop's subsequent hope that lords remain faithful to their "souerane lord"—which, notably, reads "souerane King" in the Bassandyne print, Andro Hart print and Harleian MS—one imagines from all that Aesop has said throughout his tale and *moralitas* that if one had to choose between serving an unjust lord and overthrowing that lord in the interest of justice, the latter should prevail. Additionally, Aesop's reference to a *sovereign* lord—a qualification he makes nowhere else in his tale or *moralitas*—may be a hint that men are only obligated to be faithful to lords who possess sovereignty over their own impulses (whether towards listlessness or oppression), as those lords are the only truly just rulers. While its conclusion may be somewhat obscure, "The Lion and the Mouse's" overarching message is clear: a worthy ruler must recognise that compromise with his subjects, achieved through judicious restraint of the ruler's baser impulses, will ultimately lead to greater power and truly successful governance. The ambiguity of Aesop's final quatrain seems only to bolster the fable's contemporary relevance. "The Lion and the Mouse's" veiled references to the troubled rule of James III suggest that Henryson articulates his ideas on governance-by-compromise as an alternative to the combination of lax justice and arbitrary decision-making that many contemporaries believed characterised—and doomed—James' rule.

These fables each present a different perspective on the nature of Scottish governance in the era of James III. "The Sheep and the Dog's" satire of judicial corruption is marked by the conspicuous absence of the royal authority

responsible for ensuring the system's proper administration, thus advancing a subtle criticism of James' lack of active legal governance. "The Trial of the Fox" depicts an evidently Scottish monarch who is able to balance his foreign ambitions (particularly with England) with efficient domestic administration; the fable seems to support James' attempts to achieve a similar balance in his own policy, though in reality the king was not as successful with these efforts as the fable's ruler appears to be. Finally, "The Lion and the Mouse," with its indirect reference to the Lauder Bridge crisis, both extols the value of self-governance in ruling others and warns against the consequences of insufficient regard for one's subjects. All three fables ultimately espouse the view that compromise with external or opposing forces should not be viewed as an automatic abdication of authority; not only is a certain degree of compromise or dependence necessary to retain power, but it may even lead to greater power over or freedom from those other forces. This paradigm of governance, various responses to which may be seen in the domestic and foreign policies of James III, has literary as well as political applicability, as will be shown through an analysis of Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*.

(Self-)Authorised Biographers:

Cresseid and Henryson as *Makars* of the *Testament*

The *Testament of Cresseid* comments subtly but extensively on Henryson's contemporary political and literary milieux. This commentary is unified by Henryson's articulation of a paradigm of self-governance in which the regulation of one's desires and ambitions, and the ability to harness the power of external forces to suit one's own ends is key to Cresseid's ultimate emancipation. Just as vitally, however, the *Testament* advocates self-governance not only in its narrative but also in its relationship with its main Chaucerian intertext. By crafting a poem that offers a complementary yet distinct view of the Troilus-Cressida story, Henryson channels Chaucer's influential text to serve his own text; in doing so, Henryson champions the autonomy both of Scottish literary production and of his own poetic abilities.

The *Testament's* relationship with Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* has been characterised in various ways.⁴⁸ Marshall Stearns, for instance, refers straightforwardly to Henryson as a "Scottish Chaucerian" and the *Testament* as "a sequel to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*."⁴⁹ Stearns, however, also stresses

⁴⁸ Some critics have also explored potential Lydgatean influences on Henryson's *Testament*, though such influences remain a relatively unexplored area of study. Examples include Marshall W. Stearns' "A Note on Henryson and Lydgate," an early observation of Henryson's potential debt to Lydgate's *Assembly of Gods* (*MLN* 60.2 [Feb. 1945]: 101-103), and Julia Boffey's "Lydgate, Henryson, and the Literary Testament" (*MLQ* 53 [1992]: 41-56). As the criticism referenced in this chapter makes clear, however, the majority of scholarship on the *Testament* tends to favour Chaucer as Henryson's primary literary influence.

⁴⁹ Marshall W. Stearns, "Robert Henryson and the Leper Cresseid," *MLN* 59.4 (April 1944): 265.

Henryson's innovations in the *Testament's* narrative, setting and structure, particularly Cresseid's leprosy and her relationship with Calchas.⁵⁰ He concludes,

It is clear that in matters of characterisation, plot, and setting, as well as in the less tangible matters of mood and feeling, Henryson was directly and profoundly influenced by Chaucer. The Scot's borrowings are never servile imitations, however, and even his use of conventional devices is characterised by considerable originality. The impression of freshness and creative independence which Henryson's verse conveys is confirmed by a comparison of his work with that of his master.⁵¹

Stearns begins to articulate Henryson's complex relationship to Chaucer, noting both the *Testament's* apparent debts to a literary authority and its desire to be more than a "servile imitation" of the *Troilus*. The result, as Stearns contends, is simultaneously innovative and familiar. While Stearns' general vision is useful, however, it lacks definition of the specific literary relationship Henryson envisions with his Chaucerian source—beyond, perhaps, the master-apprentice dynamic implied in Stearns' reference to Chaucer as Henryson's "master."

⁵⁰ Stearns notes of Cresseid's affliction and its impact on the Troilus-Cressida story, "The credit for conceiving of the punishment of leprosy is entirely Henryson's, and the general adoption of this detail by later authors, including Shakespeare [*sic*] and Dryden, testifies to its poetic justice" ("Leper Cresseid" 265). In an article treating Henryson's response to Chaucer more broadly, Stearns writes that "[t]he extent to which Henryson is an innovator may only be appreciated in the light of the dislike that exists between Calchas and Criseyde in Chaucer" and in earlier versions of the Troilus-Cressida story and the more loving depiction of Calchas in the *Testament* ("Henryson and Chaucer," *MLQ* 6.3 [September 1945]: 273-274). He further proposes that "Henryson's use of the sequence of contract, crime, and punishment for the plot of the *Testament of Cresseid* is not entirely original," but may instead be inspired by the similar structure of *Envoy de Chaucer a Scogan* ll. 1-28 and 49 ("Henryson and Chaucer" 278) and maintains that Henryson also innovates on Chaucer's use of conventions involving the narrator, weather and dream vision ("Henryson and Chaucer" 280-282).

⁵¹ Stearns, *Henryson* 69.

More recent scholars have attempted to identify more precisely the relationship between the two writers, with varying degrees of success. C.W. Jentoft notes that any differences between the two poems are mitigated by an “essential affinity of spirit between the *Troilus* and the *Testament* which itself transcends the superficial resemblances”; this “affinity” manifests itself mainly in Henryson’s “ironically detached point of view that is, perhaps, more distinctly ‘Chaucerian’ than anything else in Chaucer” and in the *Testament*’s affirmation of the “courtly code” outlined in the *Troilus*.⁵² The vagueness of Jentoft’s observations, however, makes it difficult to determine where Henryson saw himself as a writer in relation to Chaucer. Derek Pearsall asserts a more active literary role for Henryson; he sees the *Testament* as Henryson’s attempt to rectify “what he perceives as Chaucer’s failure to provide a satisfactory conclusion for the story of Criseyde”; while Henryson understood that “Chaucer’s refusal to judge [Criseyde...] is an act of great human and poetic significance,” the poet “was sure, as he began his thinking about his poem, that Chaucer’s decision to allow Criseyde to go unpunished was insufficient, and determined that Chaucer’s

⁵² C.W. Jentoft, “Henryson as Authentic ‘Chaucerian’: Narrator, Character, and Courtly Love in *The Testament of Cresseid*,” *SSL* 10.2 (October 1972): 94, 95, 100. It should be noted that the question of whether the *Troilus* and the *Testament* do in fact embrace the code of courtly love is itself still much debated. C.S. Lewis maintains that Chaucer’s main innovation on the Troilus-Cressida tradition is the inclusion of a courtly love code (192), which C. David Benson contends is “reduced to ashes in the *Testament*” (“Critic and Poet: What Lydgate and Henryson did to Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*,” *MLQ* 53 [1992]: 38). Lee Patterson has argued that the *Testament*’s ostensibly pagan setting acts as a basis of contract for Henryson’s “definition of Christian experience” through Cresseid’s moral evolution, a strategy Patterson maintains Henryson picks up from the *Troilus* (“Christian and Pagan in *The Testament of Cresseid*,” *PQ* 52.4 [October 1973]: 713). Malcolm Pittock contends that the *Testament*, while not overtly Christian, offers a moral critique of the conventions of *fin’amors* even as its depiction of Troilus’ extramarital love for Cresseid appears to champion them (“The Complexity of Henryson’s *Testament of Cresseid*,” *EC* 40.3 [1990]: 212).

heroine should be brought to the bar of judgement.”⁵³ Pearsall’s retroactive mind-reading aside, he articulates a specific role for Henryson: the Scottish poet, while an admirer of Chaucer’s poem, detects a lacuna whose resolution will help establish his own poetic reputation.⁵⁴ Melvin Storm detects a mutually informative intertextual dynamic between the two poems, arguing that a literary ‘chain’ links the *Troilus* and the *Testament*, providing “useful evidence for evaluating the character of Cresseid in Henryson and offer[ing] at least an indication of Henryson’s reading of Chaucer’s own heroine.”⁵⁵ This intertextual relationship is “an extended sequence in which antecedent elements in Chaucer’s narrative are given richer significance through the fruit they bear in Henryson.”⁵⁶

Storm’s vision of the Henryson/Chaucer relationship is intriguing for its articulation of just that: a relationship *between* the two poets rather than a one-way transmission of influential details and devices. This model implies a degree of mutual dependency between the two works, and even the two writers: Chaucer’s *Troilus* benefits from works such as the *Testament* because they perpetuate the literary status of both work and author. Equally, Henryson’s *Testament* profits from its links to Chaucer and the *Troilus* precisely *because* of

⁵³ Derek Pearsall, “‘Quha Wait Gif All That Chauceir Wrait Was Trew?’: Henryson’s *Testament of Cresseid*,” *New Perspectives on Middle English Texts: A Festschrift for R.A. Waldron*, ed. Susan Powell and Jeremy J. Smith (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000) 173.

⁵⁴ That the *Testament* seeks to correct deficiencies in Chaucer’s narrative is a view shared by, among others, C. David Benson, who writes of the *Testament*: “The Chaucerian absence that Henryson wants to fill is the narrator’s admission that he does not know what Criseyde felt in her heart toward Diomedes and the refusal of [the] *Troilus* to tell the end of her story: ‘Men seyn—I not—that she yaf hym hire herte’ (V. 1050). Criseyde’s heart, mind, and soul (and what happened to her among the Greeks) are the subject of the *Testament*” (“Critic and Poet” 24-25). Similarly, Sabine Volk-Birke argues that in the *Troilus*, “Cressida’s story is left hanging in mid-air. It is this deficiency which Henryson’s narrator wishes to amend” (“Sickness Unto Death: Crime and Punishment in Henryson’s *The Testament of Cresseid*,” *Anglia* 113.2 [1995]: 163).

⁵⁵ Melvin Storm, “The Intertextual Cresseida: Chaucer’s Henryson or Henryson’s Chaucer?” *SSL* 31 (1993): 109.

⁵⁶ Storm 109.

their literary reputation. It is difficult to determine which work, and which author, needs the other more.⁵⁷

This dynamic of mutual dependency and benefit strongly echoes the ideal form of Scottish governance articulated in such works as Barbour's *Bruce* and Harry's *Wallace*. It also recalls the relationship that Scottish historical chronicles establish with selected authoritative English sources, in which dominant English narratives such as the Brutus and Arthur myths are not rejected but instead incorporated into Scottish origin myths in order to boost the authority of Scotland's history. As seen in the *Fables*, the consent of the governed was considered a vital element of successful kingship in fifteenth-century Scotland; its absence was thought to be a fatal error in any king's rule and a transgression that merited his downfall. The *Testament* offers an even more complex discussion of this Scottish paradigm of governance, exploring it not only as a vehicle for contemporary political allegory but also for its capacity to enrich individual narrative, through the story of Cresseid's evolution to a self-governing being. In turn, these allegorical and narrative innovations permit the work the capacity for literary self-governance, since the *Testament*'s dynamic of mutual exchange with the *Troilus* ultimately gives Henryson's work greater literary authority.

In examining the contemporary political resonances of the *Testament*, it is useful to recall briefly James III's attitude towards foreign relations. While the later years of James' reign saw him primarily concerned with Anglo-Scottish

⁵⁷ This phenomenon is evident from the *Testament*'s earliest appearance in print. As Barry Windeatt notes, the 1532 Thynne edition of Chaucer's *Troilus* publishes the *Testament* "without attribution so as to follow immediately after the [*Troilus*'] conclusion" (*Oxford Guides to Chaucer: Troilus and Criseyde* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1992] 369). As a consequence, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, many believed the work was the *Troilus*' sixth book (Windeatt 369).

relations, his interest in broader European issues was evidenced by his “imperial pretensions,” whose manifestations included his expansionist intentions in Gueldres, Brittany and Saintonge.⁵⁸ James’ ambitions were apparently not lost on Scotland’s elite, who as early as 1473 attempted to steer him subtly towards more domestic concerns by suggesting that “his showing himself an able ruler by restoring law and order and justice within Scotland was the most effective way of securing European fame.”⁵⁹ There was, then, a perception among Scotland’s politically aware that James was forsaking the proper governance of his own realm in his need for power and approval from foreign nations. The prelates’ assertion that James could in fact obtain the European clout he desired by first focusing on the rule of his own kingdom resonates powerfully with the main theme of the *Testament of Cresseid*. The *Testament*’s setting against the conflict between Troy and Greece, combined with its relation to Chaucer’s *Troilus*, conjures a set of political associations that may be read as applicable to contemporary Scottish policy.

This argument stems from previous critical readings of Chaucer’s Troy as embodying a form of *translatio imperii*, evoking medieval London or even England as a whole. Benson, while noting that the *Troilus* (as well as the *Testament*) “keeps the [Trojan] war in the background,” also observes that Chaucer “does evoke that history at significant moments. The love of Troilus and Criseyde develops in the shadow of the Greek siege, and the end of the affair

⁵⁸ Norman Macdougall observes that James’ respect for his father “was unfortunately reflected in a desire to emulate that ruler’s later excesses,” including “his efforts to play a major role in northern European politics” (*James III* 88).

⁵⁹ Macdougall, *James III* 98.

presages the destruction of the city.”⁶⁰ The fortunes of Troy, then, reflect the emotional turmoil of the characters in a version of the pathetic fallacy.⁶¹ Sylvia Federico, in a broader study of the significance of Troy in late-medieval English literature, contends that English writers embrace a mythical Trojan history in order to “help create an empire of English letters that is just as fantasmatic and just as ultimately definitive.”⁶² At the same time, the use of the Trojan myth to elevate the “new Troy” of London was

complicated by the treachery that, according to medieval versions of the story, undid Troy from within [...] The Trojans were considered a noble society, but they also were considered lecherous and traitorous; their ultimate defeat was but the natural result of their unnatural desires. The troubling implication of this aspect of the Trojan legacy was that London, too, was full of deviant rulers whose passions would lead to the destruction of the city.⁶³

⁶⁰ C. David Benson, “Critic and Poet” 34.

⁶¹ Elsewhere, C. David Benson observes that “his knightly pride, glory in victory, love-longing, and wealth make him an exemplum of those who trust in earthly things,” but that this worldly focus renders him blind to his—and Troy’s—impending destruction by that same worldliness (*The History of Troy in Middle English Literature* [Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1980] 144, 147). Here, Troilus’ individual failings are conflated with the failings of the entire city-state, identifying Troilus’ and Troy’s respective fates.

⁶² Sylvia Federico, *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2003) xvi. Federico notes that Troy, while a city-state rather than an empire, “signified ‘imperial’ for English and French authors alike in the later Middle Ages,” which Federico contends points to late-medieval England’s preference for constructing “fantasies of empire” that sought to validate their attempts to control other nations by appealing to a mythical historical precedent (xv).

⁶³ Federico 2. Federico here builds on D.W. Robertson’s argument that “[t]o Englishmen of the fourteenth century the Trojan origin of their nation and of their capital city was both an inspiration and a warning [...] [I]t was remembered that Old Troy was burned by the Greeks, having first weakened itself through lust” (D.W. Robertson, Jr., *Chaucer’s London* [Toronto: Wiley, 1968] 3).

In English narratives, Troilus, as a “little” version of Troy, by extension embodied London and England as a whole, acting as the utmost individual expression of England’s Trojan history. Viewed from this perspective, Troilus’ military downfall at the hands of the Greeks—and his personal downfall at the hands of one woman consorting with the Greeks—had the literary potential to become a powerful symbolic warning about England’s political future. The *Troilus*, argues Federico, hints at the demise of Richard II’s rule through its chronicle of the hero’s—and Troy’s—decline.⁶⁴

As a poet possessing both connections to the Ricardian court and a prudent sense of political detachment, Chaucer manages to compose a poem during the tense period of the 1380s that comments on Richard’s crisis of rule without making explicit reference to it. As Federico argues,

At the end of the composition period for *Troilus*, the failure of Richard II’s new Trojan movement was imminent. The event was not foreseen literally by a clairvoyant Chaucer, but—according to the dreadful logic of Trojanness explored so fully in the poem—this future, once it happened, nevertheless must have been foreseen. The concluding movements of *Troilus and Criseyde* become, in retrospect, part of the record of the disintegration of Ricardianism. Attending this destruction is the transformation of Chaucer’s identity as a poet of the Ricardian court.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Federico 93.

⁶⁵ Federico 93.

While the issues of Chaucer's Ricardianism and the Lancastrian response to his poetry will not be discussed at length in this chapter, the fact that the poet's political stance is the subject of such critical speculation indicates that works such as the *Troilus* convey a message about Chaucer's political context in addition to their more explicit literary objectives, and that English literary responses to the *Troilus* often responded as much to its political elements as to its literary aspects.⁶⁶ With this in mind, it seems appropriate to consider the possibility that the *Testament* extends the *Troilus*' use of *translatio imperii*, responding to Chaucer's very English Troy with a Scottish-Greek counter-narrative located on the outskirts of the Trojan domain. A reading of the *Testament* should thus include an examination of Henryson's reaction to the *Troilus*' implicit treatment of contemporary English politics.

While the *Testament* dates from roughly a century after the *Troilus*, the earlier poem's Ricardian context and its championing of England's Trojan history offer much that would have been relevant in Henryson's late-fifteenth-century Scottish milieu.⁶⁷ The crisis of rule which plagued Richard during the period of the *Troilus*' composition centred mainly on criticism of Richard's overstretched

⁶⁶ Federico notes that Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, anticipating Richard's downfall, and Lydgate's *Troy Book*, looking back on the Ricardian era, "work hard to dissociate the glory of Troy from its Ricardian locus, and to reattach the benefit of that ancient city to the Lancastrians, as they process 'memories' of Troy in the service of specific political goals" (99-100). In the process of this Lancastrian revision of the symbolism of Troy, Lydgate's *Troy Book* and *Siege of Thebes* place Chaucer definitively in the category of "Ricardian poet," a label which Chaucer's politically polyvalent writings seemed determined to repel (122). By omitting Chaucer from the "line of literary authorities on the matter of Troy" at the same time he omits Richard III from the "noble line of descent that flows from Aeneas to Brutus to Arthur to Henry," Lydgate links Chaucer's vision of Troy to an assertion of Ricardian authority and eliminates both from his narrative, supplanting them with his own vision of a Lancastrian "new Troy" (122-23).

⁶⁷ It is difficult to date the *Testament*'s composition precisely, but it is generally believed that the account of Cresseid in the *Spektakle of Luf* (1492) draws from the *Testament*, and most scholars believe the poem to have been written sometime in the 1480s.

foreign policy, imperial pretensions and arguably undeserving preferential treatment of favourites. As discussed earlier with respect to the *Moral Fables*, very similar criticisms were levelled against James III during the 1470s and 1480s. An examination of the *Testament*'s treatment of the theme of divine and personal governance demonstrates how Henryson uses the poem to examine and evaluate his own political governors.

The *Testament* should be examined not only as a literary but a political reinterpretation of the *Troilus* because of its response to Chaucer's employment of the Trojan narrative. As noted, the *Troilus* participates in a larger English literary tradition of using the Trojan story to establish an authoritative origin myth for the English nation. The *Testament*'s necessarily Trojan context may initially cast doubt upon the claim that Henryson's poem asserts a specifically Scottish literature. Just as Scottish historical chroniclers, however, accommodate English Brutean and Arthurian discourses into their own origin myths to give Scotland's history a greater authority, so too does Henryson use England's Trojan narrative to advance an authoritative Scottish literary vision.

Central to Henryson's strategy is his narrative's emphasis on Cresseid. This is meaningful not only for how it distances the *Testament* from Chaucer's focus on Troilus—'little Troy,' a metonym for London and England—but also for how it draws the reader's attention towards the Greek dimension of the Trojan narrative. While Cresseid is a Trojan woman, her betrayal of Troilus is inextricably intertwined with her removal to the Greek camp and her affair with

the Greek Diomede.⁶⁸ As Jamie C. Fumo notes, Henryson's physical translation of the *Troilus*'s landscape may have political implications: "[T]he Greek camp in which Cresseid's transformed life finally ends corresponds by analogy to the chilly Scotland to which Chaucer's poem has been transported," thus "effect[ing] a *translatio* upon his source material in specifically Scottish terms."⁶⁹ The *Testament*'s shift to the Greek camp also aligns it more closely with Scottish origin myths. While these myths tended to emphasise the Scots' purported descent from the Egyptian princess Scota, they also stressed that the founding father of the Scots was Gathelos, the "good looking but mentally unstable" son of the Greek king Neolus.⁷⁰ While Scottish chroniclers with varying degrees of vehemence distanced the Scots from the Trojan origins of the English, their very impulse to pull away from the Trojan myth rather than deny it altogether indicates their acknowledgement of that tradition's dominance in English history, if not the consequent assertions of English superiority.⁷¹ Cresseid's link to the Greeks,

⁶⁸ In Book V. of the *Troilus*, Cresseid is taken "unto the Grekis oost" (16) and soon grants favours to Diomede (1037-1043), though the narrator is reluctant to say that "she yaf hym hire herte" (1050).

⁶⁹ Jamie C. Fumo, "Books of the Duchess: Eleanor Cobham, Henryson's Cresseid, and the Politics of Complaint," *Viator* 37 (2006): 449. Fumo's comments are made in passing in the context of a larger argument for the *Testament*'s literary debt to the anonymous mid-fifteenth-century *Lament of the Duchess of Gloucester*, a "framed complaint" chronicling the trial, downfall and penance of Eleanor Cobham, the Duke of Gloucester's second wife (449-450). While Fumo's argument will not be explored at length here, it is worthwhile to note her observation that Eleanor's story was documented in several Scottish chronicles and her contention that Henryson would likely have taken an interest in at least the legal dimensions of Eleanor's trial for treason and necromancy (456-457). These ideas suggest that Scots were more interested in English affairs than has often been thought, lending weight to the possibility that the *Testament* consciously re-interprets not only Chaucer's *Troilus-Cressida* narrative but also its subtle warnings over the consequences of Richard's flawed rule of 'new Troy' in order to have the *Testament* serve a similar critical function with respect to James III's rule.

⁷⁰ The quotation is a translation of Bower's *Scotichronicon* I.9. 3. For more on the role of Gathelos in the Scota myth, see Chapter 1.

⁷¹ The "Scottis Originale" concisely accepts the Trojan origins of the English while simultaneously challenging the origins' gloriousness and rejecting that heritage for the Scots: "þe opiniones of þam ar' nocht trew þat / sayis or trowis þat we come of brute quhilk come / of tratouris of troye"

then, acts as a means for Henryson to participate in rather than reject the power of the Trojan narrative; at the same time, however, the shift of focus (and, arguably, sympathy) from Troilus to Cresseid also acts as a means for Henryson to assert his identity as a Scottish writer, by subtly supporting Scotland's Greek origin myth. Over the course of the *Testament*, Cresseid's perception of governance evolves from the conviction that external forces completely control her life to the ultimate recognition of her ability—and duty—to govern her own behaviour. Somewhat paradoxically, Cresseid's embrace of self-discipline is what gives her spiritual freedom at the end of her life. If one views Cresseid as representative of Scottish national identity, her journey towards self-governance articulates Henryson's vision of how Scotland—and Scotland's rulers—should rule themselves: with an emphasis on their power to control their own territory, affairs and identity rather than a reliance on defining their nation solely in relation to external referents, particularly foreign powers such as England. In other words, Scotland's rulers should not sacrifice their domestic obligations in order to achieve their foreign aspirations—a message with particular resonance for James III.

In addition to its relevance for Cresseid's moral well-being and the health of the Scottish kingdom, however, Henryson's advocacy of self-governance also resonates with his own situation as a Scottish writer responding to a Chaucerian work. Notwithstanding the famous line “Quha wait gif all that Chauceir wrait was trew?” (64), the *Testament* does not reject Chaucer's *Troilus* or seriously

(fol. 93, ll. 23-25 [p. 185]). For further discussion of Scottish chroniclers' response to the Trojan myth and its manifestations in Geoffrey of Monmouth, see Chapter 1.

question its validity as a poem. Rather, Henryson seeks to use Chaucer's work as a departure point from which to launch his own refocused and reinterpreted version of the Troilus-Cressida narrative. Henryson's emphasis is on the establishment of his *own* literary identity and authority, not on the subversion of Chaucer's. In this respect, Henryson subscribes to a paradigm of literary self-governance that parallels both Cresseid's eventual embrace of self-discipline and contemporary Scottish ideals of how the kingdom of Scotland should be administered. Ultimately, all three manifestations of self-governance demonstrate how it can lead to greater personal, political and literary freedom.

Henryson's narrator asserts his creative abilities almost immediately; the first lines of the *Testament* tell us that it is during a "doolie sessoun" (1) that the narrator "began to wryte / this tragedie" (3-4). Walter Scheps has argued that Henryson uses distinctly Scottish climatological imagery in his opening stanzas—the "doolie sessoun," the April "[s]chouris of haill" (6) that act in counterpoint both to the *General Prologue*'s "shoures soote" (1) and to the pleasant and sweet April during which Chaucer's Troilus first sets his eyes on Criseyde (I. 155-161)—in order to indicate the *Testament*'s status as "a Scottish extension of and reply to" the *Troilus* rather than a critique of Chaucer's narrative or poetic skill.⁷² David J. Parkinson concurs, viewing the *Testament*'s cruel winter as part of a larger set of conventions in Middle Scots poetry in which "sudden, even violent change dominates."⁷³ Scheps stresses that Henryson does not reject Chaucer's poetic devices, but instead redirects them to foreground his own poem's status as

⁷² Walter Scheps, "A Climatological Reading of Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*," *SSL* 15 (1980): 81.

⁷³ David J. Parkinson, "Henryson's Scottish Tragedy," *CR* 25.4 (1991): 355.

a Scottish work: “It is not [...] that Chaucer and Henryson disagree about the nature or importance of seasonal decorum, but rather that the geographical displacement of Henryson and his poem forces him to view such decorum very differently from the way in which Chaucer perceived it.”⁷⁴ From the very first lines of the poem, then, Henryson employs Chaucerian devices but actively manipulates them in ways that emphasise the *Testament*’s status as an autonomous and peculiarly Scottish work. The narrator may later imply that his poem is derived from “ane vther quair” (61) which he reads after Chaucer’s *Troilus*, but the reader cannot ignore the narrator’s original assertion that *he* is writing this poem. Henryson wishes to make it clear from the *Testament*’s earliest stages that he controls the narrative.

Henryson’s championing of artistic control becomes clearer in his ambivalent portrayal of the narrator as a slave to love (or, more precisely, to lust). The narrator relates how the cold forces him against his will from the window where he had been contemplating Venus, “the bewtie of the nicht” (11):

For I traistit that Venus, luifis quene,
 To quhome sum tyme I hecht obedience,
 My faidit hart of lufe scho wald mak grene,
 And therupon with humbill reuerence
 I thocht to pray hir hie magnificence;
 Bot for greit cald as than I lattit was
 And in my chalmer to the fyre can pas. (22-28)

⁷⁴ Scheps 82.

The narrator's thoughts of Venus are replete with images of hierarchy. He refers to the planet-goddess as "luifis quene," a monarch to whom he as a subject has for "sum tyme [...] hecht obedience" and even regards with "humbill reuerence." The narrator clearly views himself as a supplicant to Venus' rule, an impression reinforced by the hope that his "faidit hart of lufe scho wald mak grene." The narrator pledges his servitude to the goddess, which may explain his apparent sympathies with Cresseid later in the poem.⁷⁵ Henryson's distinction from his narrator, however, is evident through his hints of doubt that the narrator's servile obedience is desirable. The stanza is in the past tense, making it uncertain whether the narrator continues to feel the same attachment to Venus that he expressed in his ardent recollection. Furthermore, the narrator's reverence of the planet-goddess does not prevent the cold from driving him to his chamber, suggesting that devotion to the gods does not guarantee the fulfilment of one's desires. Despite the narrator's longing for (physical) love, he remains cold, a condition that even the narrator perceives is the result of his advancing years:

Thocht lufe be hait, 3it in ane man of age
 It kendillis nocht sa sone as in 3outheid,
 Of quhome the blude is flowing in ane rage;
 And in the auld the curage doif and deid
 Of quhilk the fyre outward is best remeid:
 To help be phisike quhair that nature faillit

⁷⁵By contrast, Kevin J. Harty finds the *Testament*'s narrator to be most *unsympathetic* to Cresseid's plight, even in these early stages of the poem; Harty argues that the narrator first hints at Cresseid's transgressions, then "catalogues offenses" openly around ll. 71-91, thus "[using] the medieval antifeminist tradition skilfully to undermine Cresseid's reputation at every turn" ("Cresseid and Her Narrator: A Reading of Robert Henryson's 'Testament of Cresseid,'" *Studi Medievali* 23.2 [1982]: 754; 756-757).

I am expert, for baith I haue assaillit. (29-35)

The narrator realises that, as he ages, he is increasingly beholden to forces outside of his own body (such as the fire, Venus, and dodgy medical concoctions) in an attempt to restore his once-inherent lustiness. The narrator's acknowledgement that age has occasioned this condition, and his weary admission that he has "assaillit" numerous methods to recover his virility, indicate an incipient acceptance of the futility in combating the law of nature. The narrator must come to accept fully that he cannot defy this ultimate governor, and that a better course would be to change that which he *can* control: his perception of his gradual, inevitable decline.

The narrator, having established at least a superficial allegiance to Venus, now reveals his respect for a literary authority: Geoffrey Chaucer. He sits by the fire with a book "[w]rittin be worthie Chaucer glorious / Of fair Creisseid and worthie Troylus" (41-2). Again, while the narrator offers substantial praise for Chaucer and his work, Henryson the writer subtly indicates his intention to take that work in a new direction. Firstly, while the narrator deems Chaucer "worthie" and "glorious," he also calls Troilus "worthie," linking the two figures in a way that initially seems complimentary to both but is complicated by Troilus' secondary status in the *Testament*. Secondly, the narrator views Chaucer's poem as the story of "fair Creisseid and worthie Troylus;" the order is striking given that the fortunes of Troilus are the focus of Chaucer's narrative, particularly in Book V, the text the narrator is reading.⁷⁶ While the narrator does take two

⁷⁶ In addition to Book V's concluding stanzas, which feature prominently Troilus' death in battle and ascent to the eighth sphere (V. 1805-1810), the central position of Troilus in Chaucer's poem

stanzas to summarise part of the *Troilus*' plotline, it is precisely that: a *selective* summary of Chaucer's account. Significantly, the narrator focuses only on Criseyde's shift of affections from Troilus to Diomedes and touches only briefly on how "sorrow can oppres / [Troilus'] wofull hart in cair and heuines" (55-56), both plot elements that are far more central to the *Troilus*. The narrator even breaks off his relation of the *Troilus*' discussion of its hero's sufferings, remarking,

Of his [i.e., Troilus'] distres me neidis nocht reheirs,
For worthie Chauceir in the samin buik,
In gudelie termis and in ioly veirs,
Compylit hes his cairis, quha will luik. (57-60)

These lines achieve seemingly irreconcilable goals. On one level, the narrator's commendation of Chaucer's work to the reader employs a version of the modesty *topos*: the narrator cannot paraphrase Troilus' distress as well as the master could compose it, and so he refers the reader to the authoritative original. At the same time, however, the narrator's recommendation allows him to avoid discussing Troilus' death by heartbreak, a fate which, if mentioned explicitly, would make Criseyde less sympathetic to the reader and therefore render more difficult Henryson's efforts to rehabilitate her character. Through his narrator's abortive summary of the *Troilus*' last book, Henryson frees his poem from the necessity of confronting Chaucer's interpretation directly; as a result, the *Testament* can portray Cresseid more sympathetically. The narrator's focus on

is indicated in the opening lines of Book I, where the narrator writes that his "purpose" is "[t]he double sorwe of Troilus to tellen" (1). Criseyde, by contrast, is not mentioned by name until line 55, eight stanzas into the poem.

Cresseid rather than Troilus deflects attention from the “new Troy” of England that Troilus represents and permits the reader to entertain an alternative version of events from Cresseid’s point of view; significantly, Cresseid’s ties to the ancient Greeks are consistent with a Scottish rather than English account of history.

Henryson’s manipulation of Chaucer’s work to suit his own national literary project, however, refrains from becoming a rejection of the *Troilus*. By describing Chaucer’s work while concurrently privileging Cresseid’s role in that work, Henryson allows the *Testament* to participate in the *Troilus*’ literary status while transforming its contemporary English undercurrents to Scottish ones. Henryson’s sophisticated method of governing the tone of his poem profits rather than suffers from the reader’s knowledge of Chaucer’s text; the reader is aware of exactly what Henryson is choosing to omit and thus perceives how Henryson forgoes straightforward contradiction (which would require him to nullify any positive associations his work could have with the *Troilus*) in favour of the gentler techniques of omission and refocus, which require the reader to think actively about Henryson’s strategy and thus allow the poem to reveal a greater intellectual depth.

As a means of transition into his own story, Henryson has his narrator take up another book “[t]o brek [his] sleip” (61).⁷⁷ Here, too, Henryson balances a

⁷⁷ The possible identity of this “vther quair” (61)—and whether it even exists—has generated much academic debate. James Kinsley proposes that Henryson may be referring to G. Myll’s translation of the *Spektakle of Luf* (“A Note on Henryson,” *TLS* 14 Nov. 1952: 793); Eleanor R. Long suggests that Henryson may have been referring instead to a version of Guido delle Colonne’s *Historiae Destructionis Troiae* included in the original Latin moral treatise on which the *Spektakle* is based, though she acknowledges that this treatise has not been found and may be as fictional as Chaucer’s *Lollius* (“Robert Henryson’s ‘Uther Quair,’” *Comitatus* 3 (1972): 97–101). William Stephenson is more convinced of the “vther quair’s” mythical status, noting that “[i]n each of the major early witnesses of the complete *Testament* (Thynne, 1532; Charteris 1593;

debt to the authority of Chaucer's work with his manipulation of the *Troilus*' conventions. The act of selecting a book to stay awake is an echo of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, in which the narrator reads to "drive the night away" (49). Henryson uses this echo in a context where Chaucer's *Troilus* is the very text from which Henryson's narrator needs to rouse himself, a detail which appears to poke gentle fun at Chaucer's poetic skill. The narrator pursues this technique by stating that this new, more engaging book deals with "the fatall destenie / Of fair Cresseid, that endit wretchitlie" (62-63). The narrator selects a work that stems from the *Troilus*, yet which departs from it significantly; furthermore, it addresses a topic in which the narrator clearly has a greater interest. This new narrative acts as a complement to rather than imitation of Chaucer's work—and may even be more entertaining to the narrator.

Thus even before the narrator's famous question, "Quha wait gif all that Chauceir wrait was trew?" (64), the reader receives several indications that Henryson does not accept Chaucer's version of events as the sole authoritative account of the *Troilus* and *Cressida* story. Lest Henryson appear simply reactionary or subversive, however, the narrator's doubts that the "vther quair" offers an authorised version indicate Henryson's reluctance to have the *Testament* be considered superior to the *Troilus*: "I wait nocht gif this narratioun / Be authoreist, or fen3eit of the new / Be sum poeit" (65-67). The narrator's use of the pronoun "this" is ambiguous. Does he refer to the "vther quair's" narrative, or

Anderson, 1663), the acrostic "FICTIO" appears in the first letters of lines 58-63, the same lines in which the reference to the 'vther quair' appears" ("The Acrostic 'FICTIO' in Robert Henryson's *The Testament of Cresseid* [lines 58-63]," *CR* 29.2 [1994]: 164). If indeed the "vther quair" does not exist, the reference acts as a reminder of Chaucer's own use of the technique in the *Troilus* with his "autour called Lollius" (I. 394).

to his own description of that narrative? Either way, the narrator's doubts reveal Henryson's concern with the limits of literary authority. The narrator's tone thus far hints at Henryson's view that the Troilus-Cressida narrative has not reached an authoritative conclusion with Chaucer's version, and that the story remains open to reinterpretation. Clearly, however, Henryson also sees how a simple rejection of Chaucer's narrative could lead to an overall devaluation of literary authority, where no one's narrative is "authoreist" and every poetic creation could conceivably be merely "fen3eit of the new / Be sum poeit." The narrator's comments on the *Troilus* and the "vther quair" allow Henryson to explore the idea of literary authority—whether it exists and, if so, whether it should. The nature of the *Testament*'s response to the *Troilus* does not contest the latter's authoritative status, but there is an element of self-empowerment in this apparent submission to Chaucer's work; the *Testament*'s departures from the *Troilus* illuminate Henryson's poetic talents while permitting him to participate in Chaucer's literary legacy.

When Henryson officially begins to relate Cresseid's story, the nature of his relationship with his Chaucerian source becomes even clearer. Henryson eschews both simple imitation and subversive rejection in favour of refocusing Chaucer's narrative to achieve Henryson's own emphasis on self-governance, whether personal, political or literary. While Henryson does alter aspects of Chaucer's version of the Troilus and Cressida story, there remains a fundamental continuity between the two texts that allows Henryson to extend the narrative in his own way while still benefiting from the background established in Chaucer's account. When Henryson deviates from details established in the *Troilus* (such as

his rehabilitation of Calchas' character), his very attempt to redirect the narrative requires the reader's familiarity with Chaucer's version in order to appreciate Henryson's innovations. Even when Henryson's account extends rather than contradicts the *Troilus*, however, the reader's acceptance of Chaucer's version of events is vital to understanding Henryson's literary strategy, thus requiring Henryson to accept the extent of the *Troilus*' authority. When Henryson, for instance, addresses the issue of Cresseid's reputation, he does not deny her infidelity to Troilus, even devising dire consequences to Cresseid's affair with Diomedes:

Quhen Diomeid had all his appetyte,
 And mair, fulfillit of this fair ladie,
 Vpon ane vther he set his haill delyte,
 And send to hir ane lybell of repudie
 And hir excludit fra his companie.
 Than desolait scho walkit vp and down,
 And sum men sayis, into the court, commoun. (71-77)

This series of events is entirely Henryson's invention; notably, however, his strategy for asserting the *Testament*'s independence from the *Troilus* consists of an acceptance rather than rejection of Cresseid's Chaucerian reputation. Henryson retains Cresseid's faithlessness but shifts the direction of Chaucer's narrative, altering Cresseid's role from that of mere catalyst for Troilus' behaviour to a more central position in which the focus on the impact of

Cresseid's infidelity *on herself*.⁷⁸ Henryson's strategy neither undermines nor imitates Chaucer's story, but instead uses the *Troilus*' memorable account of Cresseid's falseness as the starting point for his own distinct narrative. Henryson appears to be answering the question his narrator posed in line 64: perhaps all that Chaucer wrote was true, but Chaucer's narrative does not reveal the truth in its entirety. Henryson fills what he deems to be gaps in the *Troilus*' account, an action that implies both gentle criticism of the *Troilus*' insufficiencies and a respect for Chaucer's text sufficient to merit its completion.

The sympathy of Henryson's narrator for Cresseid also maintains the same delicate balance between criticism and completion. The narrator declares that, despite Cresseid's descent into "foull plesance" (83), he "sall excuse als far furth as [he] may / [Her] womanheid, [her] wisdome and fairnes" (87-88), "quhat euer men deme or say / In scornefull langage of [her] brukkilnes [fickleness]" (85-86). The narrator does not deny Cresseid's behaviour—in fact, he addresses her "filth" (80) and "fleschelic lust" (81) directly—but he also stresses that he will champion Cresseid's *positive* qualities, such as her wisdom and fairness. This passage, while ostensibly about Cresseid, reveals even more about Henryson's narrator. The narrator's references to Cresseid's beauty and wisdom and to other men's opinions about her fickle nature do point towards Cresseid's own preoccupation with how she appears to others, but these comments also illuminate the narrator's

⁷⁸ Anna Torti remarks on this shift of focus in her contention that the *Testament* engineers a "reversal of emphasis" from Chaucer's text: "Troilus is overlooked and the consequences to herself of Criseyde's infidelity, and her end, become [Henryson's] chief concern ('From 'History' to 'Tragedy': The Story of Troilus and Criseyde in Lydgate's *Troy Book* and Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*," *The European Tragedy of Troilus*, ed. Piero Boitani [Oxford: Clarendon, 1989] 171). The relevance of this shift to Cresseid's evolution towards self-governance and to Henryson's own literary self-governance is the focus of the present argument.

own fixation on the external forces creating and reinforcing Cresseid's reputation, from the men of the city to the narrator himself. As the poem progresses, Henryson makes the reader ask whether Cresseid and the narrator are able to move beyond this focus on external opinion.

The misery of Cresseid's moral descent is compounded by her belief that she is entirely subject to the whims of the gods. This attitude manifests itself both in Cresseid's unfair expectation that the gods will guide her through her romantic attachments and in her later blasphemy against Venus and Cupid when her expectations are not realised. Both facets of Cresseid's overdependence lead her to her wretched state. Henryson's emphasis on Cresseid's unhealthy reliance on divine favour rather than her own will is a distinct innovation on Chaucer's narrative. The dangers of this reliance also motivate one of Henryson's few direct contradictions of Chaucer's text: the recasting of Calchas as a priest of the temple of Venus and Cupid. Calchas is transformed from Chaucer's portrayal of a "traitor" (I.87) who abandons Troy and Criseyde in his flight to Greece (I. 92-94) to Henryson's apparently benevolent "keiper of the tempill as ane preist / In quhilk Venus and hir sone Cupido / War honourit" (107-109). This evolution places him in a position of deference to the gods, replicating and perhaps even encouraging his daughter's reliance on divine forces. Henryson's changes to Chaucer's narrative advance Henryson's objective to make the *Testament* a meditation on self-governance—both Cresseid's and Henryson's.

When she runs to Calchas' temple to complain of her unfair treatment by Diomedes, Cresseid reveals in various ways her unhealthy dependence on external authority: not only does she seek the help of her father but also that of the gods, to

whom she prays “with baill aneuch in breist” (110). Cresseid flees to “ane secret orature” (120) in the temple—much as the narrator withdraws to his oratory in the poem’s opening lines—from which she “wald not hir self present, / For giuing of the pepill ony deming / Of hir expuls fra Diomeid the king” (117-119). Cresseid’s sequestration within Venus’ temple exemplifies an unhealthy view of external authority, revealing both her fear of wagging tongues and her unlimited faith in Venus and Cupid’s ability to save her from what the narrator calls “hir wofull desteny” (121). At this point in the narrative, Cresseid still relies on others rather than herself to guide her behaviour and shape her future, a strategy that will lead her even further astray.

Henryson soon reveals the ugly consequences of Cresseid’s dependence. While Cresseid falls to her knees in the oratory, physically enacting her submission to the gods’ will, it becomes obvious that she feels slighted by the gods’ apparent cruelty, lamenting, “Allace, that euer I maid 3ow sacrifice!” (126). Cresseid reminds Venus of what she understands to be their agreement, whereby the goddess would reward Cresseid’s allegiance by making her “the flour of luif in Troy” (128). She brings similar charges against Cupid, arguing, “3e causit me alwayis vnderstand and trow / The seid of lufe was sawin in my face, / And ay grew grene throw 3our supplie and grace” (136-138). Cupid, Cresseid contends, has reneged on the deal, leaving her cold and alone (139-140). Lee Patterson has observed that “[t]he relationship between Cresseid and the gods is *contractual*: when she did them sacrifice they made her attractive but now that she denies that

sacrifice they make her hideously unattractive.”⁷⁹ Patterson is right to illuminate the contractual rhetoric in Cresseid’s objection to the gods, but closer examination of Cresseid’s view of the agreement reveals how the weight of obligation rests with the gods, suggesting an inequitable contract. Cresseid promises sacrifices to Cupid and Venus, expecting in exchange eternal favour from men, particularly Diomede; Cresseid’s allegiances and sacrifices, however, are vague in nature and seem to consist primarily of Cresseid abandoning herself to her lusts, which hardly seems a sacrifice at all. Also, despite Cresseid’s intimations to the contrary, the contracts show no indication of being indefinite, nor does Cresseid indicate any awareness of her obligation to love in a noble rather than base manner. Cresseid’s view of the arrangements essentially requires the gods to sanction all of her romantic excesses, a self-serving expectation doomed to failure. Cresseid’s angry rejection of Cupid and Venus reveals her unfounded dependence on their power and her refusal to regulate her lusts. That Cresseid swoons into a dream at the end of her tirade (141-142) only reinforces her association with passivity and abdication of responsibility, as well as her selfish expectation that the gods will guarantee her a comfortable life. Cresseid cannot possibly maintain a fair deal with the gods because she steadfastly refuses to take active steps to govern her own behaviour; she expects Venus and Cupid to regulate her romantic fortunes for her, and this lack of agency has led to Diomede’s rejection.

Cresseid’s blasphemous outburst motivates the planetary gods to convene in judgement on her behaviour. As Edwin Craun notes, critical debate over the

⁷⁹ Patterson 700.

trial scene tends to focus on the question, “[W]hat does Cresseid’s act of blasphemy—and the trial by the gods it provokes—have to do with the self-discovery which so poignantly ends the poem?”.⁸⁰ Cresseid’s blasphemy, Craun contends, stems from her belief that the gods shape the course of her life, adding that her process of self-discovery includes the realisation that “her own character has brought her adversity in love.”⁸¹ Cupid’s opening argument against Cresseid reinforces this view. Cupid articulates that subservience to the gods consists not only of an initial pledge of obedience, but also a sustained regimen of self-disciplined behaviour demonstrating the servant’s loyalty to “his awin god” (275). Such discipline will lead its practitioners to their divine reward. Cresseid’s rejection of the proper reciprocal arrangement between god and supplicant angers Cupid; he states that “3one wretchit Cresseid / [...] throw me was sum tyme flour of lufe” (278-279) but that she betrayed his gift by attacking him and Venus after Diomedes’s abandonment:

‘Me and my mother starklie can reprove,

‘Saying of hir greit infelicitie

I was the caus, and my mother Venus,

Ane blind goddes hir cald that nicht not se,

With sclander and defame iniurious.’ (280-284)

Crucially, Cupid specifies that his principal objection to Cresseid’s blasphemy was her debasement of the gods’ gift of love: “Thus hir leuing vnclene

⁸⁰ Edwin D. Craun, “Blaspheming Her ‘Awin God’: Cresseid’s ‘Lamentacioun’ in Henryson’s *Testament*,” *SP* 82 (1985): 25.

⁸¹ Craun 40.

and lecherous / Scho wald retorte in me and my mother, / To quhome I schew my grace abone all vther” (285-287). Cupid’s condemnation of Cresseid’s “vnclene and lecherous” life illustrates his perception that the love he and Venus govern is of a higher order, devoid of unbridled lust and lechery. Cupid states emphatically that his gift to Cresseid—his making her the “flour of lufe”—in no way excuses her from actively regulating her own romantic behaviour. The gift of love is a noble one, but she has squandered and abused it, a clear violation of the gods’ perception of the contract. Cresseid’s lack of understanding of her contractual obligations has resulted in her current misfortune; furthermore, it is her own blasphemy—her own failure to regulate her behaviour and understand her relationship with the gods—that has led to the divine tribunal.

The gods unanimously choose Mercury “[t]o be foirspeikar in the parliament” (266) convened to judge Cresseid’s actions, thus it is to him that the gods turn for advice on how Cresseid ought to be punished.⁸² Mercury’s position as advisor is especially significant given his reputation for songwriting (243) and general rhetorical skill (240), attributes that suit the narrator’s description likening him “to ane poeit of the auld fassoun” (245). As Priscilla Bawcutt observes, Henryson’s Mercury sports a “croun” (244) under his hood, which Bawcutt maintains is likely the “laurel, ivy or myrtle” crown associated with great classical poets and medieval Italian admirers such as Dante and Petrarch.⁸³ Bawcutt’s

⁸² It should be noted that Henryson’s use of the word “parliament” is intended not in the sense in which it is now generally employed, but is instead meant to refer to a trial or tribunal.

⁸³ Priscilla Bawcutt, “Henryson’s ‘Poeit of the Auld Fassoun,’” *RES* 32 (1981): 431-432. Marshall Stearns’ earlier comment on the nature of the planet-gods in the poem complements this argument; he contends that Henryson’s portrait of Mercury is based in astrology, and cites W. Lilly’s description of Mercury in his 1647 work *Christian Astrology* as representative of men of letters as

reading supports a depiction of Mercury not merely as a figure of authority, but a figure of *poetic* authority, reinforcing Henryson's practice throughout the *Testament* of privileging those who embrace authorial impulses to create narratives. Mercury is not the ultimate judge of Cresseid's fate, but he does advise that Saturn and Cynthia be given the task, as they are respectively the planets of the highest and lowest degree (296-300). Mercury thus engineers the conditions that lead to Cresseid's divine punishment—a task not unlike that of Henryson, who also controls the fate of his protagonist. Mercury's status as a poet, then, may be a self-conscious nod to Henryson's role as a *makar*, a fashioner of his characters' fates.

Just as the gods refuse to be held responsible for Cresseid's bad behaviour, however, so too does Henryson forbid Cresseid from merely fulfilling the role of false woman established for her in the *Troilus*. Henryson's insistence that Cresseid take control of her portrayal and legacy echoes the poet's own desire and responsibility to develop Cresseid's character beyond the traits outlined in Chaucer's poem. Henryson's work owes allegiance to Chaucer's just as Cresseid owes her initial success in love to the gods; in order to achieve the status of independent forces, however, both must understand their responsibility to build on what they have been given and demonstrate a capacity for governing their own achievements.

It is significant that Mercury chooses the most and least powerful planets to decide jointly on Cresseid's fate, as the two gods' deliberations exemplify the

a later example of the astrological views prevalent in Henryson's day ("The Planet Portraits of Robert Henryson," *PMLA* 59.4 [December 1944]: 924).

proper interaction between governors and governed. Saturn's portrait in the procession of the gods creates an intimidating image; from his frozen, drooping face (155-157) to his low opinion of Cupid (152), Saturn exudes an antipathy towards warmth and love that cannot bode well for Cresseid.⁸⁴ While his portrait of Saturn conveys an imposing authority, the narrator describes Cynthia as "last of all and swiftest in hir spheir" (254), implying both her inferior position and a changeability that sets her apart from Saturn's overbearing and static power. Furthermore, Cynthia is said to borrow all of her light from "hir brother / Titan, for of hir self scho hes nane vther" (258-259). This detail stresses that Cynthia's radiance comes solely from without, suggesting that she, like Cresseid, lacks agency.⁸⁵ Cynthia's tendency to absorb the traits of her fellow gods is reflected in her appearance in other ways. Jill Mann has observed that Henryson's Cynthia "has no trace of the virgin beauty of the huntress Diana," with whom the moon is traditionally associated, but rather has a dark colouring and sports apparel "gray and full of spottis blak" (260).⁸⁶ While Mann argues that Cynthia's description increases her physical resemblance to Mercury,⁸⁷ it may also be intended to match Saturn's own dark, grey and heavy demeanour, a likeness that would be within Cynthia's malleable nature to emulate.

⁸⁴ Stearns remarks that Lilly counts among Saturn's friends Jupiter, Mercury, and the sun, while his enemies include Venus ("Planet Portraits" 913). Stearns contends that these attributes also enjoyed currency in Henryson's time ("Planet Portraits" 912).

⁸⁵ Pliny's *Natural History* describes Cynthia as being "governed by the sun's radiance as are the rest of the stars, as in fact she shines with a light entirely borrowed from him" (I, 193-97, qtd. in Stearns, "Planet Portraits" 926).

⁸⁶ Jill Mann, "The Planetary Gods in Chaucer and Henryson," *Chaucer Traditions: Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer*, ed. Ruth Morse and Barry Windeatt (New York: Cambridge UP, 1990) 97.

⁸⁷ Mann 97.

With the two gods' respective portraits in mind, one might expect Cynthia to accept Saturn's judgement passively rather than advance her own opinions on Cresseid's punishment. Both Saturn and Cynthia, however, "proceidit" (302) to their judgement of Cresseid "[q]uhen thay the mater rypelie had degest" (303). The explicit reference to a thorough discussion between the two gods indicates that both forces, irrespective of their position in the planetary hierarchy, have an obligation to make judgements *actively*. That Cynthia arrives at the same conclusions as Saturn, demonstrated in the similar phrasing the two gods use in their sentencing speeches (313-322 and 334-343 respectively), does not detract from her active dialogue with the senior god. Cynthia's self-directed course towards conclusions akin to Saturn's demonstrates that self-governance does not require *rejection* of established authorities or ideas, but merely a strength of mind sufficient to draw one's own conclusions; whether those conclusions are significantly different from those of others is of secondary importance. This principle of self-governance is helpful in understanding Henryson's response to the *Troilus*. While the *Testament's* narrative may not directly contradict much of Chaucer's text, this does not necessarily indicate thoughtless imitation; the reader must also consider how Henryson arrives in his own way to a narrative largely consistent with Chaucer's.

Saturn and Cynthia jointly sentence Cresseid to the life of a leper, stripped of her beauty, warmth and moisture, at which point Cresseid awakens from "[t]his doolie dreame, this vglye visioun" (344). This detail demonstrates that Cresseid remains a passive creature—the gods mete out their punishment while Cresseid is unconscious, unable either to repent or rebel in response to the divine judgement.

Upon Cresseid's waking, however, Henryson hints at her incipient recognition of her power to regulate her own moral behaviour; Cresseid "rais scho vp and tuik / Ane poleist glas, and hir schaddow culd luik" (347-348). For the first time, Cresseid looks closely at herself, a gesture that foreshadows her acceptance of her personal accountability. At this point, however, Cresseid's self-perception is still superficial; she is preoccupied with her looks rather than with more profound concerns about her character. Sabine Volk-Birke contends that Cresseid's examination in the mirror does not indicate any moral evolution and only serves to reinforce her role as "a passive sufferer, who complains, but who does not act"; she adds, "Her glance into the mirror subsequent to her dream reveals to her not only her outward appearance; it proves the sentence of the planet gods. The mirror does not have the function of a *speculum*; Cresseid's self-inspection remains narcissistic, even though it is not her beautiful, but her disfigured face which she contemplates."⁸⁸ Indeed, Cresseid's reaction to her leprosy mingles a sense of self-blame with further criticism of the gods, a response indicative of how far Cresseid still needs to go before reaching a true understanding of her own responsibilities:

Weiping full sair, "Lo, quhat it is," quod sche,
 "With fraward langage for to mufe and steir
 Our craibit goddis; and sa is sene on me!
 My blaspheming now haue I bocht full deir;
 All eirdlie ioy and mirth I set areir.
 Allace, this day; allace, this wofull tyde

⁸⁸ Volk-Birke 174.

Quhen I began with my goddis for to chydle!” (351-357)

Cresseid laments her criticism of the gods, which initially seems to indicate a nascent awareness of her role in creating her present situation. Given, however, Cresseid’s view of the gods as “craibit” (“ill-natured,” according to the DOST), her regret over chiding them seems rooted less in a growing sense of agency than in a persistent over-emphasis on the gods’ power to ruin her life. This impression is reinforced when Cresseid summons Calchas to her chamber, where she explains “the vengeance and the wraik / For hir trespas Cupide on hir culd tak” (370-371). Cresseid continues to stress Cupid’s actions rather than her own; this attitude, combined with her refusal to leave her room and her insistence that Calchas come to her, casts Cresseid’s behaviour in a resolutely passive light. Cresseid’s requests that Calchas “let [her] gang / To 3one hospitall at the tounis end” (381-382) and that he send her “sum meit for cheritie [...] / To leif vpon” (383-384) reiterate her passivity. She does not decide to go to the leper house, but instead asks Calchas to *let* her go; she does not anticipate gathering her own food there, but instead relies on Calchas’ charity. Cresseid’s belief that this new life is her “wickit weird” (385) cements her helpless attitude towards the events that define her life. Cresseid must overcome this inert mindset in order to achieve spiritual freedom.

Cresseid’s life at the leper-house is initially dominated by her self-pity and dependence on Calchas’ daily alms (392). Secluding herself in “ane dark corner of the hous allone” (405)—a house, one must remember, that is itself isolated from mainstream life—Cresseid perpetuates the pattern of exclusion first seen when she is exiled from Diomedes’ company. In a slight variation, however,

Cresseid consigns *herself* to this dark corner, presaging her increased self-governance later in the poem. For the moment, though, Cresseid remains mired in self-pity, and her complaint, which weaves together images of captivity, loss and Fortune's power, reveals Cresseid's continued delusion that her fate is entirely in others' hands.

Cresseid's complaint, particularly its perception of Fortune as responsible for her feelings of imprisonment, reveals how far she is from accepting her own role in her emotional captivity. Moreover, Cresseid's emphasis on the loss of her worldly comforts demonstrates her continued attachment to physical pleasures. Cresseid's reference to herself as "catue Creisseid" (408) establishes from her complaint's earliest lines Cresseid's perception that external forces, specifically "fell" Fortune and "wicket" Fate (412), imprison her. These sentiments reinforce Cresseid's persistent overvaluation of powers outside herself, behaviour that evokes Criseyde's lament for her reputation in Book V of the *Troilus*:

'Allas, of me, unto the worldes ende,
Shal neyther ben ywriten nor ysonge
No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.
O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge!
Thorughout the world my belle shal be ronge!
And wommen moost wol haten me of alle.
Allas, that swich a cas me sholde falle!' (1058-1064)

Henryson, however, gives his Cresseid an additional and distinctive fear: that the world will forget her, and that she will be buried "[u]nder the eirth [...]" /

Quhair nane of Grece nor 3it of Troy nicht heird!” (414-415).⁸⁹ Cresseid laments Fortune’s malevolent attentions, but dreads even more acutely that her death will go unremarked by Greece and Troy. These two seemingly contradictory impulses—the rejection of Fortune’s attentions and the fear of being ignored—are both rooted in Cresseid’s perception of an external locus of control; she is convinced that her character is shaped by forces other than herself, and thus she prefers to be defined negatively than to be stripped of any form of identity, which she believes must be imposed from without. Moreover, Cresseid’s anxiety over potential oblivion may be Henryson’s deliberate comment on the tenuous future of the Criseyde tradition—or, indeed, of any literary tradition; in order for a figure such as Criseyde to live on, future writers must take up her narrative. As much as Chaucer’s Criseyde permits Henryson’s Cresseid to exist, Henryson’s Cresseid permits Chaucer’s Criseyde to remain in readers’ consciousness; this relationship gives each writer a degree of power.

Cresseid’s complaint then takes on an “ubi sunt” quality as she mourns the loss of what she feels gave her life meaning and identity. She laments the disappearance of her erstwhile earthly delights, devoting one stanza to the loss of comforts ranging from her “chalmer wantounlie besene, / With burely bed and bankouris browderit bene” (416-417) to her “[s]pycis and wyne” (418) and “sweit meitis seruit in plaittis clene” (420). Soon after, Cresseid reminisces about her garden’s “greissis gay / And fresche flowris” (425-426), where “ladyis fair in carolling to gane / And se the royall rinkis in thair ray, / In garmentis gay

⁸⁹ Interestingly, the Thynne print reads “men” for “nane” (as noted in Fox’s edition, l. 415, n.) reinforcing Cresseid’s reputation as overly concerned with male opinion.

garnischit on euerie grane” (431-433). Cresseid’s nostalgic longings are united by their focus on the physical; whether it is the embroidered luxury of her bedchamber or the pleasant flowers of her garden, Cresseid is attached to the superficial sensual pleasures of her existence, pleasures ultimately seasonal and ephemeral. Unfortunately, Cresseid ignores that flowers eventually fade and die, a fact she must acknowledge in order to embrace the less tangible yet more enduring rewards that come from profound self-examination and consequent self-governance.⁹⁰

Cresseid’s complaint fixates on her reputation and how others perceive her. Having expressed her fear that she will be buried and forgotten, Cresseid continues to dread the prospect of her lost celebrity, wailing, “All is areir, thy greit royall renoun!” (424). Notable here is Cresseid’s reference to her “royall renoun,” a curious phrase for Cresseid to use given that she is not a royal figure. It may be that Henryson, at this moment of Cresseid’s lamentation of her material losses and her fear that she will be forgotten by both Troy and Greece, uses the term “royal” to evoke Cresseid’s possible symbolic embodiment as the Scottish kingdom. Significantly, Cresseid’s dependence on the love of other men (particularly Troilus) as a means to self-definition has led both to actual worldly

⁹⁰ Cresseid later laments to herself, “Thy greit triumphand fame and hie honour, / Quhair thou was callit of eirdlye wichtis flour, / All is decayit, thy weird is welterit so” (434-436). Alicia K. Nitecki discusses Cresseid’s syntactically obscure use of floral imagery to describe her loss of fame: “Flowers, of course, can decay, so that logically ‘decay’ points back to flower, not fame and honour, and the point of the metaphor is that the physical body is subject to decay. By turning fame and honour into the subject of ‘decay,’ Cresseid reveals the extent to which she has internalised her reputation; she has confused contingent attributes with her body or person, with her real physical presence” (Alicia K. Nitecki, “‘Fenyeit of the New’: Authority in *The Testament of Cresseid*,” *Journal of Narrative Technique* 15.2 [Spring 1985]: 122). While Cresseid has begun to understand that her fame and beauty are as subject to wilting and death as any earthly flower, she remains stubborn in her conviction that her downfall stems from fate’s twisted caprice.

loss and to the potential loss of her identity.⁹¹ Cresseid's loss of her "royal" reputation may therefore be an understated warning to Scotland's rulers: that an excessive interest in other nations' affairs may lead Scotland herself to suffer—and perhaps even lose her autonomous identity.

Cresseid maintains that her "hie estait is turnit in darknes dour" (437), an image evoking the movement of Fortune's wheel. Cresseid remarks on how her previous luxuries have now become the Spartan furnishings of a leper's existence (437-442) and how her natural charms have become rough and repulsive (443-449). While Cresseid remains largely in a state of self-pity, crying, "Sowpit in syte, I say with sair siching, / Ludgeit amang the lipper leid, 'Allace!'" (450-451), near the conclusion of her complaint she begins to consider how her misery may be of some use, musing on how her life may serve as a warning to her peers:

‘O ladyis fair of Troy and Grece, attend
 My miserie, quhilk nane may comprehend,
 My friuoll fortoun, my infelicitie,
 My greit mischeif, quhilk na man can amend.
 Be war in tyme, approchis neir the end,
 And in 3our mynd ane mirrour mak of me:
 As I am now, peradventure that 3e
 For all 3our micht may cum to that same end,
 Or ellis war, gif ony war may be.

⁹¹ As Fumo notes, in lamenting her fate Cresseid focuses not so much on the infidelity and blasphemy that led to her punishment as she does on their consequence: her separation from Troilus (463). In this way, Cresseid demonstrates her continued investment in her external reputation rather than her inner well-being.

'Nocht is 3our fairnes bot ane faiding flour,
 Nocht is 3our famous laud and hie honour
 Bot wind inflat in vther mennis eiris,
 3our roising reid to rotting sall retour [.] (452-464)

Cresseid has not yet learnt to accept personal responsibility for her current situation; she continues to speak of her "friuell fortoun," "infelicitie" and "greit mischeif" as if her punishments have fallen on her without provocation. In the final stanza of her complaint, Cresseid's primary warning to her fellow women is not an active injunction against bad behaviour, but a more passive observation on the inevitable transience of earthly pleasures like "fairnes," "laud and hie honour" (461-462). Cresseid's concluding message, "Fortoun is fikkill quhen scho beginnis and steiris" (469), summarises her view that Fortune, not Cresseid herself, has occasioned her miserable state.

Despite the incomplete nature of Cresseid's moral insights, however, the complaint still offers the reader hope that Cresseid will eventually acknowledge her capacity (and moral necessity) for self-governance. Cresseid's plea to the "ladyis fair of Troy and Grece" to "in [their] mynd ane mirrour mak of [her]" indicates that, despite her belief that she has been the victim of undeserved misfortune, Cresseid wants her current misery to be of use to others. The image of the mirror no longer applies solely to Cresseid gazing at herself, but reflects Cresseid outwards so that others may learn from her mistakes. Cresseid rearticulates her plea for women to take note of her story when she implores,

“Exempill mak of me in 3our memour / Quhilk of sic thingis wofull witnes beiris”
(465-466).

Craun sees in Cresseid’s complaint her “new awareness of the irresistible law of time and change,” which leads her to “use the language of lament not to malign supposed oppressors but to warn other women of the mutability which they, too, are bound to experience eventually [...] Cresseid now responds to suffering by condensing it into the generalised, though urgent, admonitions of a *de casibus* history.”⁹² Cresseid here begins to grasp—albeit in a self-pitying fashion—that she can mitigate the disastrous effects of outside forces through her response to them. Her desire to have her misery serve a purpose for others hints that she has begun to take control of her life, to believe that she can use it to achieve constructive ends. Cresseid has stopped waiting for the gods to give her life meaning; while it has taken a miserable disfigurement to spur the process, Cresseid has begun to imbue her life with a purpose of her own.

While Cresseid does not explicitly articulate until late in her complaint her ambition to be a “mirrour” to others, her increased control of her life’s narrative has been manifest in subtler ways from the complaint’s very beginning. Cresseid’s interpretation of the causes of her plight may still place excessive blame on Fortune, but Cresseid offers this interpretation in her own voice for sixty-two uninterrupted lines. Cresseid’s story is not mediated through the narrator, but is set forth by the woman herself. Henryson gives Cresseid the opportunity to craft her own version of her story, which allows her to share the

⁹² Craun 37.

role of *makar* with the poet and begin to embrace her ability (and obligation) to govern her own behaviour.

Cresseid's journey to control and communicate her own story parallels Henryson's efforts to master his own narrative. Through the increased prominence of Cresseid's voice, Henryson offers his poem's most powerful innovation on its Chaucerian source: while the *Troilus*' focus (particularly in Book V, which Henryson's narrator is said to have read before taking up the "vther quair") is largely on its hero, the *Testament* centres on Cresseid, a focus that does not contradict the core of Chaucer's account but that nevertheless asserts Henryson's literary independence. As Götz Schmitz observes, "Henryson complements rather than supplements his master's version."⁹³ This complementary relationship between Henryson and Chaucer's texts moves beyond the idea of the *Testament* "filling in the [*Troilus*'] gaps" to suggest that Chaucer's work provides much of the background necessary to understand Henryson's work fully.⁹⁴ By privileging Cresseid's voice in the complaint without seeking to deny her reputation in the *Troilus*, Henryson recognises that participating in rather than rejecting Chaucer's narrative will ultimately result in greater authority for the *Testament*, increasing its chances of becoming known as an autonomous Scottish response to the *Troilus* and, in turn, building its author's

⁹³ Götz Schmitz, "Cresseid's Trial: A Revision. Fame and Defamation in Henryson's 'Testament of Cresseid,'" *Essays and Studies* 32 (1979): 45.

⁹⁴ Storm goes so far as to assert, "[T]he usefulness of reading the texts together, treating them, in a sense, as if they were the unified work, the latter Chaucer's own continuation of his poem, that readers as late as the nineteenth century thought them to be" (108). While Storm believes this manner of reading would be more useful to understanding Henryson's Cresseid than Chaucer's *Troilus* (thus maintaining the overall forward flow of influence), his argument hints at a dynamic of mutual exchange between the texts that conceivably could allow us to see a unified Chaucer-Henryson text as a separate, more comprehensive poem; viewed this way, the *Testament* enjoys a position of equal importance to the *Troilus*.

reputation as an independent Scottish poet. Documenting Cresseid's journey towards moral self-governance aids Henryson's own journey towards literary self-governance.

Cresseid's trajectory of growth does suffer setbacks; her complaint finished, Cresseid reverts to a "dule" and "cairfull cry" (472) that the narrator states "[m]icht not remeid, nor 3it hir murning mend" (473). Cresseid has relapsed into useless self-pity, but Henryson offers a small glimmer of optimism, writing that Cresseid is "chydand [struggling] with hir drerie destenye" (470). This phrasing suggests Cresseid may not merely be struggling with a bleak future, but with the idea of that future's inevitability. Further hope comes in the unlikely guise of a "lipper lady" (474) who asks,

'Quhy spurnis thow aganis the wall
To sla thy self and mend nathing at all?

'Sen thy weiping dowbillis bot thy wo,
I counsall the mak vertew of ane neid;
Go leir to clap thy clapper to and fro,
And leif after the law of lipper leid.' (475-480)

The narrator's reaction to this speech—"Thair was na buit [option]" (481)—deliberately obscures Henryson's interpretation of this moment. Cresseid does indeed have a choice; as articulated by the leper lady, she can either wallow in fruitless self-pity or "mak vertew of ane neid" and set out to beg (478). Cresseid chooses the more active option, taking up her cup and clapper and begging for alms (481-483). In so doing, Cresseid adopts a way of life where she must *ask* for

what she requires, rather than wait for others to provide it. While the narrator may cast Cresseid's beggardom as a life to which the "cauld and hounger sair / Compellit hir" (482-483), the poem presents a greater element of choice than the narrator is willing to admit: for the first time, Cresseid chooses to work for what she needs.

Cresseid has taken several positive steps towards realising the importance of self-governance, but remains vulnerable to her earlier attitudes. At this crucial stage, Henryson introduces Troilus, the defining figure from Cresseid's previous life of indulgent irresponsibility, to illustrate how the current Cresseid will react to this confrontation with her past. Critics generally agree that the *Testament* is meant to take place in Chaucer's timeline between Criseyde's final letter to Troilus (V. 1590-1631) and Troilus' death,⁹⁵ and so in Henryson Troilus is alive and well, riding towards Troy after a glorious victory over the Greeks (484-489). The Trojans' triumphant attitude is juxtaposed with the misery of Cresseid and the other lepers (489-490), drawing attention not only to the wide range of fates possible under but also to the significant divergence of Henryson's and Chaucer's versions of the Troilus and Cressida story.

It may seem that Cresseid's impassive reaction during her encounter with Troilus is proof of her having achieved ultimate control over her emotions. Cresseid's response, however, stems from her inability to recognise Troilus rather

⁹⁵ These critics include Storm, who believes that inserting the *Testament's* action amid that of the *Troilus* may provide readers with a clearer sense of the state of Troilus' soul at the end of Henryson's poem (121), and C. David Benson, who argues that Troilus' victorious return is "undercut by our knowledge of the imminence of both his death and the fall of Troy" ("Troilus and Cresseid in Henryson's *Testament*," *CR* 13.3 [1979]: 263). While these critics' interpretations of Troilus himself vary greatly, they are united in their placement of the *Testament's* action in the midst of Chaucer's Book V.

than from an active exercise of self-control. It is unclear, then, whether this reaction is evidence of Cresseid's increased self-governance. She is not consciously being tested, and therefore her reaction does not conclusively demonstrate self-governance. The true mark of Cresseid's ability to regulate her feelings and behaviour does not occur during her meeting with Troilus, but afterwards, when she finally becomes aware of who he is. Just before the other lepers reveal Troilus' identity to Cresseid, she asks who has been so generous in his alms-giving: "'Quhat lord is 3one,' quod scho, 'have 3e na feill, / Hes done to vs so greit humanitie?'" (533-534). Cresseid's phrasing indicates her moral growth during her time with the lepers. Cresseid asks specifically who it is that has given so generously to *all* of the lepers, not merely herself. Furthermore, Cresseid no longer views gold as a mere decorative luxury, but rather as a useful gift that serves the needs of both herself and her fellow beggars. That Cresseid is literally blind not only to the gold's visual charms but also to those of its donor demonstrates her evolution beyond mourning her former life.

When Cresseid learns that Troilus was the benefactor, she apparently reverts to a superficial mindset by repeating several of the behaviours that marked her early reaction to her new life. A sharp pain pierces her heart, and she falls to the ground (538-539); she recovers, only to engage in

siching sair and sad,

With mony cairfull cry and cald ochane:

'Now is my breist with stormie standis stad,

Wrappit in wo, ane wretch full will of wane!' (540-543)

Cresseid then swoons, proclaiming Troilus' trustiness and her own faithlessness (544-546). Cresseid's reaction, from her wailing to her swooning, replicates many of the details of her earlier laments. There is, however, one vital difference: Cresseid's swoon does not lead to a passive unconsciousness, as it did when she was put on trial by the gods, but to a second monologue in which she finally comes to terms with her own role in her tragic downfall.

Cresseid begins by praising Troilus and cursing her cruelty towards him, punctuating her self-flagellation with the theme, "O fals Cresseid and trew knight Troilus!" (546; 553; variant at 560). Cresseid's lament moves beyond self-pity, however, in her acknowledgement of specific character flaws that led to her mistreatment of Troilus:

'Thy lufe, thy lawtie, and thy gentilnes

I countit small in my prosperitie,

Sa efflated I was in wantones,

And clam vpon the fickill quheill sa hie.

All faith and lufe I promissit to the

Was in the self fickill and friuolous:

O fals Cresseid and trew knight Troilus!' (547-553)

Cresseid admits her underestimation of Troilus' loyal love and acknowledges that her own affections were "fickill and friuolous" (552), a self-revelation indicating a major step in Cresseid's journey towards self-governance. According to Craun, Cresseid here recalls her lost "prosperitie" in love, "but she responds to that memory by focusing not on her own loss of sexual power or of a

pleasurable life as ‘flour of luif in Troy’ but on her betrayal of Troilus,”⁹⁶ thus trading her self-centredness for a wider view of how her actions have offended others. Craun also points out that this lament makes greater use of active rather than passive verbs, reflecting Cresseid’s increased recognition of her agency.⁹⁷ While Fortune still plays a role in Cresseid’s account of her doomed liaison with Troilus, she states that she *climbed* onto the wheel.⁹⁸ Cresseid’s verb choice indicates her awareness that she was also responsible for her behaviour as a lover, and that she erred in allowing herself to be swept up by Fortune. Later, Cresseid addresses her error of surrendering to her lusts, an action she attributes to her own inclinations: “My mynd in fleschelic foull affectioun / Was inclynit to lustis lecherous” (558-559). Here, Cresseid admits and regrets her propensity to capitulate to her physical desires.

In the second half of her lament, Cresseid turns her attention outwards from a focus on her mistakes with Troilus to an attempt to give those mistakes a practical use. Cresseid advises all lovers to value whatever true love they experience, for “thair is richt few thairout / Quhome 3e may traist to haue trew lufe agane” (563-564). Cresseid maintains that the world contains “greit vnstabilnes” (568), but her view on this instability’s origin has been transformed; instead of insisting that the world’s volatility is created by the gods or by Fortune, Cresseid states that it comes from within:

‘Becaus I know the greit vnstabilnes,

⁹⁶ Craun 37-38.

⁹⁷ Craun 38.

⁹⁸ Cf. the *Kingis Quair*, when the narrator recalls how he “steppit sudaynly” (1193) onto Fortune’s wheel. Both Cresseid and the narrator of the *Kingis Quair* articulate a complex relationship with Fortune in which they have some control over how they approach her wheel.

Brukkill as glas, into my self, I say—
 Traisting in vther als greit vnfaithfulnes,
 Als vnconstant, and als vntrew of fay[...]’ (568-571)

Cresseid now realises that “fickle Fortune,” at least in her incarnation as an arbitrary external force, is an illusion; it is Cresseid herself who engendered her life’s instability through her fickle treatment of Troilus. Parkinson contends that this revelation is not “gentle [or] kind,” but rather “disillusioned, even austere.”⁹⁹ While Cresseid ends her counsel to lovers on a somewhat pessimistic note—“Thocht sum be trew, I wait richt few ar thay” (572)—her overall message is hopeful in its assertion that, with the fidelity that comes from proper self-governance, true love can last. Cresseid’s concluding statement, “Nane but my self as now I will accuse” (574), transcends her earlier stance of self-pity; Cresseid continues to lament her mistakes, but she now acknowledges that those mistakes were *hers*, not the gods’, and this acknowledgement forms the basis for a better life. As in her first complaint, Cresseid reserves the latter part of her second speech to give her story a useful external application. Cresseid wishes to give her errors some positive use, reinforcing her role as a *makar* of her own life. Henryson’s guidance of Cresseid towards this goal in turn serves his own desire to make his own distinct contribution to the Troilus and Cressida tradition.

In the *Testament*’s final phase, Henryson offers his most powerful analogy between Cresseid’s expression of her self-governance and his own control of his Chaucerian source. After asserting that she alone is to blame for her behaviour, Cresseid “with paper scho sat down, / And on this maneir maid hir testament”

⁹⁹ Parkinson, “Henryson’s Scottish Tragedy” 360.

(575-576). Cresseid's action is meaningful on several levels. As Jana Mathews has noted, "[O]nly one circumstance in fifteenth-century Scotland allowed for the legal revocation of the rights of personhood: a diagnosis of leprosy";¹⁰⁰ thus, that Cresseid undertakes to compose a testament at all is a bold declaration of her existence as an individual in a time when she "should rightly be prohibited from having a 'will' (in both senses of the term)."¹⁰¹ Mathews elaborates on the significance of Cresseid's act:

In erasing a subject from legal memory, the law simultaneously released him from the constraints of legal subjectivity. While the leper is not included in the law, then, he is technically not governed by it either. This legal gap allows Cresseid to exist outside the law—to carve a legal space for herself in the narrative that is completely divorced from the feudal court system and set within her own prescribed (and self-controlled) boundaries.¹⁰²

Mathews examines Cresseid's self-construction in legal terms, arguing that Cresseid actively creates a place for herself in a world that has excluded her. Cresseid's decision to draft a written testament, however, transcends a merely legal meaning and adopts a literary significance as well. In composing a written account of her possessions, their significance to her, and the individuals to whom they should be bequeathed, Cresseid sets her version of her life on paper,

¹⁰⁰ Jana Mathews, "Land, Lepers, and the Law in *The Testament of Cresseid*," *The Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England*, ed. Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2002) 57.

¹⁰¹ Mathews 63.

¹⁰² Mathews 63.

reinforcing her newfound identity as a creator of her own fate through the process of written composition. Volk-Birke, in what she calls a “provocative hypothesis,” proposes that Henryson

did not write a poem about a crime and punishment mechanism, but a poem about the spiritual emancipation of a woman which begins and ends with a document. Her suffering begins when her fate is decided by a text written by somebody else, that is the letter of separation from Diomed[e], and it ends when she makes decisions in her own text about her possessions, her body, her memory, and her soul, which embody her coming of age as a socially, morally, and spiritually responsible adult.¹⁰³

This hypothesis may be provocative, but it is also very insightful. For Cresseid, literary expression is the means through which she is finally able to present—and view—herself accurately; Cresseid’s newfound subjectivity is the culmination of her journey towards self-governance.

Cresseid’s depiction in her testament of her body and worldly goods offers an insightful counterpoint to her earlier complaint and indicates her enlightened perception of the physical world. Cresseid no longer laments the loss of her youthful beauty, but instead commends what she now possesses to its future owners: “Heir I beteiche my corps and carioun / With wormis and with taidis to be rent” (577-578). Mathews observes that the legal ambiguity over Cresseid’s personhood allows her to make such a bold claim of self-governance: “It is precisely through [Cresseid’s] marginalised position within the law and the

¹⁰³ Volk-Birke 182.

church structure—the ownership of her body is ambiguous—that she is able to claim her corpse for herself.”¹⁰⁴ Having been rejected by the social institutions of her time, Cresseid has consigned herself where she deems fit; now that she controls her body, she freely wills it to the animals and insects. Similarly, while Cresseid once mourned the loss of her embellished and embroidered fripperies, what little she now possesses is freely bestowed on her fellow lepers: “My cop and clapper, and myne ornament, / And all my gold the lipper folk sall haue, / Quhen I am deid, to burie me in graue” (579-581). Cresseid donates her worldly wealth to others, asking only that some of it be used to bury her in an individual grave. Cresseid’s generous bequest of her goods and her desire to have her own grave indicate both her newfound priority on more profound, intangible matters (such as generosity and a proper death and burial) and her desire to preserve her individual identity, even in death. While Cresseid expressed a similar desire to be remembered in her complaint, that desire stemmed largely from a fear of being forgotten; her earlier fruitless fear of being “grauin [...] Quhair nane of Grece nor 3it of Troy nicht heird” (414-415) has been resolved by Cresseid’s active directions on how she wants her body to be treated after her death. Cresseid’s concern is no longer with whether her former peers will remember her (a perception that she cannot possibly control) but rather with what she can do to ensure she is buried in the manner she wishes.¹⁰⁵ The directives of Cresseid’s testament enshrine her newfound agency; her wish to be commemorated as an

¹⁰⁴ Mathews 64-65.

¹⁰⁵ Cresseid’s wishes may also have a political significance; her realisation that she must secure her own affairs before worrying about her reputation is consistent with Henryson’s advocacy of Scotland’s primary focus on domestic rather than foreign affairs, a view expressed at other points in the *Testament* and to a greater extent in several of the *Fables*.

individual takes on a deeper significance. Cresseid is aware that she will likely be remembered as a woman punished for her faithlessness, but she chooses to embrace this legacy for several reasons: because it is true; because she hopes it will help others avoid the same course; and because she now recognises that her life, as unfortunate as it has become, is and has always been her own, and thus merits remembering. Cresseid works actively to construct how she will be remembered after her death, and her efforts convey confidence in her capacity to shape her life.

Other significant directives in Cresseid's testament illuminate even further her efforts to control her identity. She asks that her ruby ring be returned to Troilus, who had given it to her as a love-token, in order that he may know of her "cairfull deid [sorrowful death]" (585). By restoring the ring to Troilus, Cresseid once more rejects the physical ornaments so important to her in the past; even more significantly, Cresseid's directive reveals her wish to present her life and death to Troilus in a particular way. Cresseid wants the returned ring to bear the news of her death; she wishes Troilus to know that her demise was a sad one engendered by her own failings in love. Cresseid not only wishes to convey to Troilus her awareness that their parting and subsequent miseries were her own doing; her careful staging of these admissions also reveals her desire to construct how her life is portrayed after her death.

The testament also bequeaths Cresseid's more intangible qualities, suggesting she now possesses a fuller sense of their true value. Cresseid leaves her soul to Diana "[t]o walk with hir in waist woddis and wellis" (588). Given that Cresseid's life and death have seemingly been defined by her utter lack of

chastity, her desire to commend her spirit to Diana's service may seem unrealistic. Cresseid's previous promiscuity, however, is precisely what makes her testament's commendation so powerful. Through sheer will, Cresseid hopes to achieve in death what she refused to do for most of her life: lead a chaste existence in service to the gods. Cresseid thus actively tries to determine her soul's future; she does not deny her flawed past, but instead attempts to control her future through her vow to Diana. Moreover, the relationship with Diana that Cresseid aspires to achieve—to walk with her in a new life—demonstrates Cresseid's understanding of the proper relationship between an individual and the gods. Instead of passively waiting for Cupid and Venus to bestow their blessings on her, Cresseid now knows that she must walk with the gods and regulate her behaviour to receive their true favour. This action, combined with the particular self-discipline required by Diana, demonstrates that Cresseid is now prepared to work to earn the gods' respect.

Cresseid's final words—an apostrophe to Diomedes, who she says still possesses the “broche and belt / Quhilk Troilus gaue me in takning / Of his trew lufe” (589-591)—serve both to remind the reader of Cresseid's infidelity (which has led to her present circumstances) and to demonstrate Cresseid's recognition of Troilus' worthiness: Troilus' name is the last one she utters, and her final words are “trew lufe,” indicating that her last thoughts are with what she now realises was the most important part of her life. While Cresseid's last sentence seems unfinished, this lack of completion illuminates Cresseid's efforts to her final breath to rectify as best she can the wrongs she has wrought upon others.

Cresseid dies, then, actively working to redeem herself, thereby embodying the essence of self-governance.

Cresseid's directives do not fall on deaf ears. After her death, a leper ensures her swift burial (593) and "[t]o Troilus furthwith the ring he bair, / And of Cresseid the deith he can declair" (594-595). To this point, Cresseid's testament has succeeded in fulfilling her wishes after her death; it has served to present her life in the light she wished. To the end of the poem, however, Cresseid's efforts to shape her legacy are threatened by the voices of Troilus and the narrator. Fittingly, while Cresseid's attempts to govern her identity are expressed most vividly through the acts of speech and writing, both Troilus and the narrator strive to undermine Cresseid's efforts by truncating their speech, by attempting to impose silence on the subject of Cresseid's life. This strategy also seeks to redirect the focus to a more traditional—and more negative—depiction of Cresseid.¹⁰⁶ When Troilus hears of Cresseid's death, "He swelt for wo and fell doun in ane swoun" (599), a passive and silent reaction that recalls Cresseid's initial strategy in dealing with her situation. Troilus recovers enough, however, to sigh and say, "I can no moir; / Scho was vntrew and wo is me thairfoir" (601-602). Troilus' terse statement that he can say no more than that Cresseid was "vntrew" seeks to reconfine Cresseid's newly-liberated identity to its previous, more pejorative boundaries. After Cresseid's lengthy efforts to redeem herself

¹⁰⁶ See Gretchen Mieszkowski's *The Reputation of Criseyde: 1155-1500* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon, 1971) for a survey of Criseyde's largely negative portrayal from Benoît de Saint-Maure's *Roman de Troie* to sixteenth-century ballads and prose works. Mieszkowski observes that, by the time Chaucer wrote the *Troilus*, readers already "would have recognised Criseyde as a standard example of an unfaithful woman" and "a figure to laugh at or moralise over" (73). Henryson's depiction of Cresseid is consistent with the traditional depiction of the false lover, but also offers the character potential for rehabilitation through her ultimate repentance for her past, thereby both perpetuating the tradition and innovating on it.

verbally, however, Troilus' feeble outburst seems too simple in the face of Cresseid's more complex character. The inscription on the marble tomb Troilus erects in Cresseid's memory also tries to undo Cresseid's recent self-construction: "Lo, fair ladyis, Cresseid of Troy the toun, / Sumtyme countit the flour of womanheid, / Vnder this stane, lait lipper, lyis deid" (607-609). Troilus' epitaph emphasises Cresseid's past identities—her beautiful youth and her leprous end—and attempts to close discussion on her repentance, potential redemption and afterlife by focusing on her death. The tomb itself, a marble monument with its golden-lettered epitaph, is constructed *above* her grave (605). This location physically re-enacts Troilus' attempts to cover Cresseid with his own interpretation of her life, but it also highlights the fact that the tomb covers—but does not *contain*—Cresseid. Troilus thus fails in his efforts to make his version of Cresseid definitive; Cresseid's construction of her own legacy, particularly through her testament, endures and prevails.

The *Testament*'s final stanza, in which the narrator offers his own interpretation of Cresseid's character, employs a strategy of oppressive silence similar to that embraced by Troilus. In seven lines, the narrator attempts to use Cresseid as a moral example of a woman brought low by her personal failings. The narrator advises "worthie wemen" (610) not to taint their love with deception, exhorting them to remember "this sore conclusion / Of fair Cresseid" (614-615). The narrator emphasises twice in this last stanza that his conclusion—and his "ballet" as a whole (610)—are "schort";¹⁰⁷ long enough only, it would seem, to

¹⁰⁷ In the Charteris and Anderson prints, line 614 reads "schort conclusioun" (as observed in Fox's textual note on the line), reinforcing the narrator's efforts to truncate discussion of Cresseid's life.

stress Cresseid's fairness (a left-handed compliment at best) and her deceitful love. The narrator seeks to impose on the reader a simplistic view of Cresseid that centres on her beauty and infidelity. As Cresseid's own voice has made clear, however, by the end of the *Testament* the "flower of Troy" is a more complex individual than either the narrator or Troilus wants others to believe.

Henryson's narrator bears many resemblances to the narrator of the *Troilus*, suggesting that he, too, may represent the Chaucerian tradition (and particularly its portrayal of Cressida) from which Henryson strives to distinguish his work. While Henryson's narrator may wish to characterise Cresseid as a fickle woman, then close discussion on the matter by stating, "Sen scho is deid I speik of hir no moir" (616),¹⁰⁸ such an abrupt conclusion after Cresseid's complex process of redemption is inevitably unsatisfactory. This terse finale serves a purpose quite opposite to the narrator's: to set into even greater relief Henryson's far more nuanced portrayal of Cresseid, thereby encouraging readers to accept that depiction. Troilus and the narrator's attempts to stifle Cresseid's self-construction fail, and that failure means victory in both Cresseid's and Henryson's fight to govern their own legacies.

The *Testament* thus champions self-governance on several levels. Chief among these are Cresseid's personal evolution towards governing her own morality and identity and Henryson's efforts to govern his own narrative in the face of its powerful Chaucerian forebear. At points, the text also reflects Henryson's views on political self-governance, drawing on Cresseid's and

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Troilus' "I can no moir" (601); both Troilus and the narrator attempt to close discussion on Cresseid by claiming an inability to address the matter further.

Scotland's common ties to the Greeks to imbue Cresseid's ultimate self-governance with an additional contemporary relevance: that Scotland's autonomy is best achieved through proper administration of its own kingdom rather than through excessive concern over its status abroad. The *Testament*'s representation of self-governance is consistent with that of the *Moral Fables*, particularly those fables which deal with official mechanisms of governance such as the legal system and the monarchy. In "The Sheep and the Dog," "The Trial of the Fox" and "The Lion and the Mouse," Henryson explores several complementary aspects of governance. While his conclusions in these fables are more overtly political than in the *Testament*, all of the works explored in this chapter advocate the importance of regulating one's own beliefs and actions in order to achieve greater freedom and power in the long run, whether one is ruling a nation, falling in love, or writing a poem.

Chapter 4

“Joyus Disciplyne”:

Gavin Douglas’ *Eneados* and *Palice of Honour*

In Gavin Douglas, various dimensions of governance intersect. A younger son of Archibald, Earl of Angus, Douglas was a member of one of Scotland’s most prominent and active political families, particularly following his nephew Archibald’s marriage to James IV’s widow Margaret Tudor.¹ Douglas also ascended the ranks of Scottish ecclesiastical power, obtaining through considerable political and royal manoeuvring prestigious positions such as the provostry of St. Giles’ Cathedral in Edinburgh (c. 1503) and the bishopric of Dunkeld (1515).² Douglas’ ecclesiastical ambitions reached even higher than those he attained; he lobbied unsuccessfully through Queen Margaret and her brother, Henry VIII of England, for the abbacy of Arbroath and the archbishopric of St. Andrews respectively.³ Douglas’ career was further intertwined with the upper echelons of Scottish royal power through his role as poet in the employ of James IV until the king’s death at Flodden in 1513.⁴

¹ Priscilla Bawcutt, *Gavin Douglas: A Critical Study* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1976): 3, 10. Bawcutt’s book-length survey of Douglas’ life and works remains the only such study available. David Coldwell’s introduction to his edition of the *Eneados* also contains sections on Douglas’ life and political context (*Virgil’s Aeneid Translated into Scottish Verse*, ed. David F.C. Coldwell, 4 vols. [Edinburgh: William Blackwood for the Scottish Text Society, 1964] : vol. 1, 1-38).

² Bawcutt, *Douglas* 8-13.

³ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 11-12.

⁴ As David Parkinson notes in the introduction to his edition of the *Palice of Honour* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications for TEAMS, 1992), Douglas finished the *Eneados* on 22 July 1513, just over a month before James’ death (2); he adds that the work concludes “with a farewell to poetry” (2), which may explain why no poetry by Douglas from after this date is extant. Bawcutt remarks that “Flodden was a disaster for Scotland; for Douglas it was a turning-point in his career. Politics, which seem previously to have competed for his attention with poetry, now became his chief interest,” at least in part because the Douglasses would soon become more intimately connected with Scottish royal power through Angus’ marriage to Margaret (*Douglas* 10).

It is known that Douglas travelled in France, England and Rome, and that he had an interest in European political and religious affairs.⁵ It may even be argued, as Bawcutt has done, that Douglas was a member of the “international, Latin-speaking world” of European scholars, an unofficial confraternity that transcended national boundaries and in which Scots such as Douglas, Bishop of Aberdeen William Elphinstone, and theologian John Ireland played an important role.⁶

To say that Douglas devoted himself solely to intellectual matters, however, would be to ignore both his family’s and his own deep involvement in domestic Scottish affairs and Anglo-Scottish relations. The Douglas family had long played a powerful role in Scottish political culture; the long panegyric digression in Richard Holland’s *Buke of the Howlat* on the history of the Douglas family, particularly the section on James Douglas’ devotion to Robert the Bruce, testifies to the Douglasses’ influence among the noble families of Scotland.⁷ Douglas’

⁵ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 24. Douglas even formed part of a diplomatic mission to France in an effort to renew the old alliance, partly by arranging a marriage between James V and one of King Francis I’s daughters; the result was 1517’s Treaty of Rouen. Douglas worked with Albany to achieve the deal, but their apparently close relationship would turn sour at approximately the same time as his relationship with Margaret (Bawcutt, *Douglas* 17-18).

⁶ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 24. Elphinstone and Ireland also made significant contributions to the perception of kingly governance during the reign of James IV. In 1470, Elphinstone discussed with French jurists the question of whether a king’s power had limits; as Leslie J. Macfarlane notes, Elphinstone emerged “committed to the belief that a ruler should express the will of his people or of their responsible, elected representatives, since his authority came to him from below; and to the belief that even though full sovereignty belonged to the king, he should not lightly override customary law, nor arbitrarily alter those laws which had already been accepted by the nation” (Leslie J. Macfarlane, *William Elphinstone and the Kingdom of Scotland, 1431-1514* [Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP, 1985]: 47. John Ireland is known for the *Merour of Wyssdome*, an advice manual presented for James IV that advocated the general principle of a king putting his subjects’ interests before his own (Macfarlane 447).

⁷ In the preface to his edition of Holland’s work, David Laing notes that the poem “was composed to please the Countess of Moray,” Mary Dunbar, the wife of Archibald Douglas, Earl of Moray, sometime in the mid-fifteenth century (iii). During this period, William, 8th Earl of Douglas, held particular sway over “the councils and affections” (iii) of the young James II before his marriage to Mary of Gueldres in 1449 (iv). While James would stab William to death in February 1452 (v),

father Archibald “Bell-the-Cat” Douglas was a leading figure in not one but two rebellions against James III: the 1482 Lauder Bridge revolt and the 1488 uprising that led to the king’s death at Sauchieburn.⁸ Archibald became James IV’s guardian after James III’s death, a position that did not prevent him from promising Henry VIII in the late 1480s or early 1490s that he would do his utmost to prevent James IV from waging war with England.⁹ While Archibald suffered some loss of influence in Scotland as a result of his arguably treasonous English affinities, he nevertheless held the office of Chancellor of Scotland from 1493-97 and lived until 1514.¹⁰

Gavin Douglas appears to have adopted a similar attitude as his father towards Anglo-Scottish relations, implicating himself in both sides of the dynamic through his complex relationships with James IV, Margaret Tudor, Margaret’s brother Henry VIII, and his own nephew Archibald, Earl of Angus, who became Margaret’s second husband after James’ death at Flodden. At times, Douglas’ connections with these figures of power would conflict. In early 1515 Douglas was lobbied by Adam Williamson, a Scottish envoy to London, to convince Queen Margaret to flee with her children to England, as per Henry VIII’s wishes. Williamson offered Henry’s efforts in Douglas’ promotion as an enticement; as Bawcutt observes, “Douglas’s replies make it clear that although he was not averse to Henry’s help with his ‘promocion,’ he was opposed to the scheme suggested by Williamson. Despite his English sympathies he could perhaps see

Laing notes that Holland’s work was likely composed in 1453, during an “interval of reconciliation” (vi) between James and the Douglas family. (Preface, *The Buke of the Howlat by Holland*, ed. David Laing [Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club, 1823]).

⁸ Coldwell, Introduction 4.

⁹ Coldwell, Introduction 4.

¹⁰ Coldwell, Introduction 5.

the folly of allowing the infant James V to leave Scotland and enter the keeping of an English king.”¹¹ Douglas’ diplomatic response to Williamson’s entreaties suggests a desire to protect Scottish interests, but also a will to retain any possible chance for English favour. Douglas’ family loyalties added another level of complexity to his relations with Scottish royal power, eventually leading to enmity; his positive rapport with Queen Margaret soured in 1519 when, in a dispute between the queen and her estranged husband the Earl of Angus over revenues due to her from her properties, Douglas advocated for his nephew.¹²

Perhaps the most significant intersection of Douglas’ life with Anglo-Scottish relations had as much to do with Scotland’s internal political strife as its foreign relations with England. The duke of Albany returned to Scotland in November 1521 in order to assume his regency during James V’s minority; this shift in Scotland’s governance was less than favourable to both the Earl of Angus and to Douglas. Angus removed himself to the Borders, sending Douglas to London with a letter to Henry suggesting that Margaret and Albany were consorting with each other both politically and romantically.¹³ Albany in turn “wrote to Henry and complained that in Gavin Douglas, he harboured a rebel,” while Margaret wrote to her brother accusing Douglas of being “the caus of all the dissention and trobill of this Realme...and sen I helpit to get hyme the

¹¹ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 11.

¹² As Bawcutt observes, “On 28 February 1519 [Douglas] acted as ‘forspekar’ for Angus in the legal dispute between him and Margaret, and quoted chapter and verse from the *Regiam Majestatem* to show that, since Angus was the queen’s husband, ‘he is lord of hir persoun, doury, and all uthir gudis pertenynge to hir hienes, and maye dispone tharupon at his plesour according to all lawis, and in speciall the lawis of this realme here be me schewin and producit’[...] In view of this it is not surprising that Margaret grew hostile to Douglas” (*Douglas* 18).

¹³ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 20.

benefice of Dunkeld I sall help hym to want the samyn.”¹⁴ In early 1522, notes Bawcutt, the Lords of Council issued a decret “stating that Douglas was guilty of high treason, had entered England against the orders of the Governor, and stayed there even after Henry VIII’s declaration of war against Scotland [leading to intense raids on Scotland throughout 1522¹⁵]; they ordered the sequestration of his Dunkeld estates,” effectively exiling him to England.¹⁶ He died there (likely of the plague) in September of that year and was buried in the Hospital Church of the Savoy; his grave marker bore the words, “Gavanus Douglas, natione Scotus, Dunkellensis praesul, patria sua exul.”¹⁷

Douglas’ tangled implication in Scotland’s foreign affairs sheds light on his view of the Scottish nation and its place in the rest of the world, particularly England. Ruth Morse observes that Douglas, as revealed through his intellectual association with the historian John Mair, was interested in the concept of “Scottish difference, a kind of linguistic and political proto-nationalism”;¹⁸ at the same time, Morse argues, both men saw themselves as “Scottish Britons,”¹⁹ a term which simultaneously connotes Scotland’s distinction from and inclusion within Britain. While Bawcutt notes Douglas’ (often personal) interest in preserving strong and peaceful relations between England and Scotland, Douglas’ reluctance to agree to send James V to England and his epitaph’s description of

¹⁴ Qtd. in Bawcutt, *Douglas* 20.

¹⁵ Richard Glen Eaves, *Henry VIII and James V’s Regency, 1524-1528* (New York: UP of America, 1987) 18.

¹⁶ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 20.

¹⁷ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 22.

¹⁸ Ruth Morse, “Gavin Douglas: ‘Off Eloquence the flowand balmy strand,’” *Chaucer Traditions: Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer*, ed. Ruth Morse and Barry Windeatt (New York: Cambridge UP, 1990): 108.

¹⁹ Morse 109.

him as “of the Scottish nation” and “an exile of his homeland” suggest Douglas’ view of Scotland as a separate and viable kingdom, worthy of its own king (even an infant king)—and a nation to which he believed he belonged. The first prologue and the end-matter of the *Eneados* indicate Douglas’ belief that Scotland was also worthy of its own language.²⁰ Douglas is among the first to use the word “Scottis” in reference to Scots rather than Gaelic, and he is clear in his distinction of the Scots language from English.²¹ At the same time, however, Douglas’ prologues (particularly the first) acknowledge both the influence of Scots by several other languages (including Latin, French and English) and his own debt in his nationalist poetic project to those literary authorities who came before, particularly Virgil and Chaucer. This tone of deference mingles with Douglas’ assertions of his own poetic ability to create a climate of exchange in which Douglas draws from Virgil and Chaucer but steers their ideas to fulfil his own goal of founding a Scottish literary tradition.

Critics have tended to agree that Douglas’ involvement in political, ecclesiastical and poetic circles leads to a complicated relationship among these roles in his *Eneados* and *Palice of Honour*; the precise nature of that relationship, however, is a matter of some debate. In her assessment of the role of Douglas’ narrator in the *Eneados*’ prologues, Lois Ebin observes that the narrator “involves us in the process of his art and the resolution of the moral and aesthetic conflicts

²⁰ “End-matter” refers here to Douglas’ conclusion, his dating of the work’s composition, his verse “to know the naym of the translatour,” his list of his poetic compositions, and his “Exclamatioun aganyst detractouris and oncurtais redaris.”

²¹ As J. Derrick McClure notes, while Adam Loutfut’s 1494 version of Caxton’s *Order of Chivalry* contains the first documented reference to the Lowland dialect as “Scots,” it is Douglas who explicitly champions Scots as not only a language separate from English, but one which can borrow from foreign tongues such as English, French and Latin (“European Poetry in Scots,” *Scotland in Europe*, ed. Tom Hubbard and R.D.S. Jack [New York: Rodopi, 2006] 89, n. 1).

represented by his triple stance as poet, priest, and translator,” and ultimately “provides a significant defence of his craft,”²² depicting himself in the “double role of Scots ‘makar’ who seeks to extend the limits of his native medium as poet in a broader sense who attempts to defend the value of his art.”²³ A.E.C. Canitz refers more indirectly to Douglas’ conflicting roles of priest and poet in the *Eneados*, discussing how several of Douglas’ prologues allow him to offer a Christian reinterpretation of Virgil’s poetry without compromising Virgil’s own words.²⁴ Bruce Dearing’s reading of the *Eneados* sees Douglas’ “political and poetical careers” as “essentially consistent and intimately related.” Dearing notes, “As poet and as politician Douglas was steadfastly on the side which advocated peace with England and the suppression of the turbulent noblemen at home,” a position which informs what Dearing regards as the *Eneados*’ strong current of “practical instruction for all Christian men, but most particularly for princes and magistrates.”²⁵ Considerably less scholarship has addressed the relationship between the various roles of Douglas’ narrative persona in the *Palice*; among the

²²Lois Ebin, “The Role of the Narrator in the Prologues to Gavin Douglas’s *Eneados*,” *CR* 14.4 (1980): 354. Ebin further contends that the evolution of Douglas’ conflicted stance as a Christian poet “establishes a movement from doubt and uncertainty to renewed creativity which complements the larger journey of Aeneas within the poem” (353), a view Ebin reiterates in *Illuminator*. Ebin ultimately sees a more important commonality between Aeneas and Douglas: the quest to “define different aspects of the quest for honour and virtue,” a goal also pursued by the poet-narrator of the *Palice* (*Illuminator* 363). Douglas’ national goals in translating the *Aeneid* into Scots and the interrelationship of themes between this poem and the *Palice* will be elaborated later in the chapter.

²³Ebin, “The Role of the Narrator” 363.

²⁴ “The Prologue to the *Eneados*: Gavin Douglas’s Directions for Reading,” *SSL* 25 (1990): 12. Canitz provides several examples, including Prologue X, “principally a sermon on the Trinity,” which Canitz argues “offers a strong Christian reinterpretation of the Book that follows and implies the refutation of the Olympian gods from which Douglas had refrained in Prologue VI” (15).

²⁵ “Gavin Douglas’ *Eneados*: A Reinterpretation,” *PMLA* 67.5 (Sep. 1952): 861-862. Canitz concurs with Dearing’s view, writing that Prologue I “offers a first preview of [Douglas’] interpretation of the role of Aeneas as the model prince” (2) and that Prologues XI and XII further develop the image of Aeneas as “a prototype of the model Christian soldier, who of his free will stands firm against the onslaughts of the Flesh, the World, and the Devil” (20).

few to have explored the question is David Parkinson, who focuses primarily on Douglas' narrator's relationships with powerful forces, which lead to "[c]omic lapses [that] imply kinds of ambivalence: of the cleric towards Venus and Mars, of the Scots poet towards his Roman and English predecessors, of the courtier towards honour itself."²⁶

Douglas' simultaneous roles as poet, priest, translator and political figure do enjoy a complex relationship in the *Palice* and the *Eneados*. These roles are not, however, necessarily in conflict, nor does their interrelationship always generate ambivalence. Douglas establishes consistency between his various personae by advocating a similar power dynamic among these personae and the authorities whom they serve. This interaction embraces the two aspects of effective political governance whose poetic antecedents include the verse histories *Bruce* and *Wallace*, the dream-vision of the *Quair*, and Henryson's *Fables* and *Testament*: the interdependency of the ruler and the ruled and the notion of wilful submission for the purpose of greater freedom and power. In the *Eneados*' first prologue and end-matter, Douglas advances a theory of translation that offers great insight not only into his relationship with Virgil, but also into his relationship with English sources such as Caxton and especially Chaucer. The tone he adopts in discussing these authors is one of pragmatic admiration, giving both credit and criticism where he feels it is due, but in both cases seeking to draw on what is good and authoritative about his sources and using it to empower his own Scots literary project. Douglas' attitude towards his own project evolves from a traditional posture of modesty to a defiant defence of his work's artistic merit, signalling

²⁶ "The Farce of Modesty in Gavin Douglas's *The Palis of Honoure*," *PQ* 70.1 (Winter 1991): 14.

Douglas' ultimate desire to champion the *Eneados* as his—and Scotland's—own literary creation.

The theoretical framework Douglas articulates in the *Eneados* prologues may be usefully applied to a study of his relationship with Chaucer in Douglas' earliest major poem, the *Palice of Honour*. A dream-vision in the manner of Chaucer's *House of Fame*, the *Palice of Honour* nevertheless reinterprets aspects of Chaucer's work in ways that illuminate Douglas' emerging goal of creating a distinctly Scottish literary tradition. The narrator's interaction with such figures of authority as Venus, the Muses, Honour and the great poets of history indicate to the reader Douglas' strategy for elevating his (and Scotland's) poetic works. By balancing an attitude of deference with moments of respectful defiance (a dynamic paralleled in Douglas' treatment of Chaucer's *House of Fame*), Douglas' narrator navigates ever-greater levels of poetic inspiration, an ascent that suggests the poet's best strategy is not simply to imitate or subvert, but to judge actively what aspects of authority must be embraced in order to further his interests. This strategy parallels Douglas' treatment of the *House of Fame*; the *Palice*'s innovations on Chaucer's poem are effective because of the status of Chaucer's poem in Douglas' time, and Douglas accordingly balances his alterations with an awareness of Chaucer's authority. Douglas' simultaneous assertion of his literary strengths and recognition of his source's power also characterises the tone of his verses to James IV at the end of the *Palice*, verses that must achieve two seemingly contradictory goals: furthering Douglas' self-promotion as a poet and expressing deference to the authority who can offer him an ecclesiastical promotion.

Before continuing, it should be noted that this examination of the *Eneados* seeks principally to establish Douglas' explicit response towards poetic authority and the articulation of his goal for a separate and vibrant tradition of Scots poetry. It is in the opening prologue and the end-matter where Douglas offers his most self-conscious examinations of the challenges, benefits and nature of his efforts to create a Scots poetic tradition; it is also in these sections that Douglas concentrates his few explicit references to Chaucer.²⁷ The following reading will therefore focus on these sections of the work, exploring how Douglas uses them to construct his relationship to Chaucer and articulate a more general philosophy of literature and translation. The implications of this examination will then be applied to a reading of the *Palice of Honour*'s relationship to its Chaucerian source. While there is an inherent risk of anachronism in applying ideas articulated in 1513 to a poem written around twelve years before, as Priscilla Bawcutt has noted, the *Eneados* prologues "form an excellent introduction not only to the *Eneados*, but to the *Palice of Honour*. From them we learn something of [Douglas'] critical preconceptions as well as his aims and difficulties as a translator."²⁸ An analysis of Douglas' views on literary authority in the *Eneados* is indeed useful to a study of the same concept in the *Palice*; given that both poems date from a similar period in Douglas' life—one in which he served James IV, devoted considerable time to his poetry and used his compositions as a means

²⁷ Some critics have noted Chaucerian echoes and allusions in other parts of Douglas' poem; see, for instance, Elizabeth Archibald's perceptive reading of Prologue IV and its response to Chaucer's *Troilus* ("Gavin Douglas on Love: The Prologue to *Eneados* IV," *Bryght Lanternis: Essays on the Language and Literature of Medieval and Renaissance Scotland*, ed. J. Derrick McClure and Michael R.G. Spiller [Aberdeen: Aberdeen UP, 1989] 244-257). The present discussion of the *Eneados*, however, focuses less on Douglas' allusions to Chaucer's work than on Douglas' response to the figure of Chaucer as a literary authority.

²⁸ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 190.

of professional advancement—it is reasonable to argue for a certain degree of consistency in Douglas’ attitudes towards poetry and authority. Moreover, as critics have noted, each of Douglas’ works appears to refer to the other; in the *Palice of Honour*, the narrator recounts his promise to Venus that he will translate a book she has given him (1753-57),²⁹ and in the “Directioun” of the *Eneados*, the narrator says that the completion of his translation has “fully quyt” (119) the promise he made to the goddess in the *Palice* (120-22).³⁰ Douglas therefore invites readers to consider the earlier poem through the lens of the later, as will also be done here.

The Eneados: Douglas’ Translatio Scotiae

In the Prologue to Book I of the *Eneados*, Douglas articulates how he will approach his Scots translation of the *Aeneid*, with specific emphasis on how he will both preserve Virgil’s literary authority and assert his own. Douglas’ self-conscious exploration of his role as vernacular translator and poet may be fruitfully examined through Rita Copeland’s work on medieval vernacular translation, which examines how late-medieval authors such as Dante (in the *Convivio* and *De vulgari eloquentia*) and Chaucer (in the prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*) view the vernacular not as a language inferior to Latin, but as a

²⁹ As Parkinson notes in his edition, here the *Palice*’s 1553 Copland print bears the marginal note, “By thys boke he menis Virgil” (1756, n.); while this attribution would be suspect on its own, that Douglas himself refers to Venus’ command to write the *Eneados* in the poem itself lends more support to this conclusion.

³⁰ For an opinion supporting this interpretation, see Thomas Rutledge’s “Gavin Douglas and John Bellenden: Poetic Relations and Political Affiliations,” *Langage Cleir Illumynate: Scottish Poetry from Barbour to Drummond, 1375-1630*, ed. Nicola Royan (New York: Rodopi, 2007) 101-102. By contrast, Morse finds the connection “retrospective” and noting that other marginal notes in the Copland edition are patently inaccurate (112). While Morse may be correct that Douglas did not intend at the time for Venus’ book to be the *Aeneid*, he makes the connection explicit in the *Eneados*, thereby consciously linking the two texts.

powerful means of opening academic discourse to as many readers as possible, not merely to a highly-educated elite.³¹ Of particular relevance to an examination of Douglas' attitude towards translation is Copeland's reading of Chaucer's prologue to the *Legend*. Copeland calls the prologue a form of "auto-exegesis" wherein Chaucer's narrator situates his work within a "tradition of vernacular translation" from Latin to English.³² Chaucer's statement that it would take too long to translate Virgil word for word in his version of the Dido story, Copeland notes, creates a façade of modesty towards Virgil that in fact asserts "liberation from the constraints of that source."³³ This strategy advocates the "Roman model of translation as displacement" rather than merely seeing translation as "a supplement to an authoritative source."³⁴

Douglas' own response to literary authority extends this model of displacement to advance his own Scottish literary project, addressing not only the transmission of authority from Latin to the vernacular, but also from one vernacular (English) to another (Scots). In his prologues to the *Eneados*, Douglas champions the Scots tongue—and his own authority as a Scots poet—by linking Scots to the authority of both his Latin and vernacular poetic predecessors, particularly Virgil and Chaucer. Douglas subscribes to a philosophy of translation that both respects the source and gives the greatest power possible to the vernacular translator. As Ebin notes, "[Douglas'] purpose in turning to Scots is

³¹ Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1991) 181-184.

³² Copeland 185, 189-195. Daniel Pinti concurs, asserting that Douglas's marginal commentaries in the *Eneados* seek to present the vernacular as a vehicle for authoritative assessment of Latin texts ("The Vernacular Gloss[ed] in Gavin Douglas's *Eneados*," *Exemplaria* 7.2 [Fall 1995]: 446).

³³ Copeland 200.

³⁴ Copeland 202.

not only to make his native tongue equal to Virgil's Latin or to Chaucer's 'English,' but to create a medium in Scots that is capable of the important role he envisions for style as the vehicle of the poem's sentence."³⁵ This emphasis on vernacular authority and the importance of style leads several critics to define Douglas as a humanist rather than medieval poet. Louis Brewer Hall sees Douglas' professed commitment to accurate translation as reflective of a more rigorous, Renaissance-style attitude towards translation (as opposed to the looser style of adaptation that Hall associates with the medieval era).³⁶ Canitz contends that Douglas "rejects the medieval view of the translator as one who culls narrative materials from other writers' works in order to retell them in his own manner, and instead emphasises the translator's obligation to treat the text with the strictest fidelity," thereby "separat[ing] himself from Chaucer and other medieval adapters and adopt[ing] the humanist view of genuine translation, with its stress on the integrity and inviolability of the text."³⁷ Daniel Pinti does not overtly state that Douglas is a humanist, but notes that Douglas' commentary appeals to his readers to be aware of writers including the Italian humanist Landino, thus "clearly aligning himself and his translation with the authoritative Latin learning of his Renaissance sources."³⁸

At the same time, however, to place Douglas solely within the humanist camp may be too simple a classification, given the relatively late arrival of humanist ideas to Britain and Douglas' position within a very medieval system of

³⁵ Ebin, *Illuminator* 106.

³⁶ Louis Brewer Hall, "An Aspect of the Renaissance in Gavin Douglas' *Eneados*," *Studies in the Renaissance* 7 (1960): 184.

³⁷ A.E.C. Canitz, "From *Aeneid* to *Eneados*: Theory and Practice of Gavin Douglas's Translation," *Medievalia et Humanistica* new series 17 (1991): 81.

³⁸ Pinti, "Vernacular" 463.

royal patronage. Bawcutt corroborates Douglas' awareness of Italian humanists such as Landino, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Lorenzo Valla, and Poggio, noting that several of them are mentioned in the *Palice*; she is careful to stress, however, that "[a]lthough many of the values of the humanists were congenial to Douglas, he himself was not a humanist in the strict sense of the word [...] Douglas was clearly familiar with the cosmopolitan world of Latin culture and scholarship. But his own poetry, though modified by this tradition, was rooted in the traditions of Scottish life and literature."³⁹ In light of the critical debate, it seems most reasonable to state that Douglas embodied the transitional climate of his time in embracing both medieval and humanist attitudes towards translation and literature.

Douglas' motives for translating the *Aeneid* into Scots, however, also have a more particular contemporary relevance. As David Coldwell notes, "Translating the *Aeneid* is in itself a political act," not only because any vernacular translation from Latin engages an audience united by a native tongue, but because the *Eneados* was commissioned by Henry Sinclair, a prominent member of Scotland's nobility. Moreover, Coldwell contends, Douglas maintains that "Virgil's poem is designed for princes" because of its elevated style and its titular protagonist, whom Douglas' translation seeks to render even more regal.⁴⁰ Coldwell argues that the *Eneados*' attitude towards rule is consistent with Renaissance political

³⁹ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 32-33; 36.

⁴⁰ Coldwell, Introduction 32-33. Douglas Gray perceives the reading of Douglas' translation as a politicised mirror for princes "somewhat exaggerated," but acknowledges that "that idea could certainly emerge from the text as a whole" ("As quha the mater beheld tofor thar e': Douglas's Treatment of Vergil's Imagery," *A Palace in the Wild: Essays on Vernacular Culture and Humanism in Late-Medieval and Renaissance Scotland*, ed. L.A.J.R. Houwen, A.A. MacDonald and S.L. Mapstone [Leuven: Peeters, 2000]: 99, n. 20). It would seem that critics find some level of contemporary political significance to the poem inescapable.

philosophies asserting “the despotic privilege of kings” and their roles as “the terrestrial representative of the Deity.”⁴¹

The extent to which the prologues of the *Eneados* reflect Douglas’ vein of philosophy, however, must be examined more closely. Even Coldwell acknowledges that theoretical forerunners of the ‘divine right of kings’ are not universal during the period in which the *Eneados* was composed; Fortescue’s *De Laudibus Legum Angliae*, for instance, advocates both the king’s and the subjects’ submission to the rule of law,⁴² an argument which Coldwell describes as “a measure of self-government through common consent.”⁴³ Furthermore, the principle of a ruler’s self-restraint for the achievement of collective stability and freedom captures the particular interest of Scottish writers and is cited in texts both preceding and contemporaneous with Douglas’ period. Previous chapters of this study have contended that this governing ideal of mutual consent and responsibility manifests itself in various strains of Scottish literature, from historical chronicles and verse-histories to the poetry of James I and Robert Henryson. While Coldwell cites William Drummond’s *History of Scotland* as an

⁴¹ Coldwell, Introduction 19. Dearing concurs, arguing that Douglas is “throughout his translation deliberately emphasising the political lessons to be gleaned by a sixteenth-century prince from the pages of Virgil” by foregrounding Virgil’s ‘sentence’ over his literal phrasing (“Reinterpretation” 859).

⁴² Fortescue writes that the king of England, as both a royal and a political ruler (i.e. a monarch who must work in tandem with some form of government or administration of the many), “is not able to change the laws without the assent of his subjects not to burden an unwilling people with strange impositions” (Sir John Fortescue, “In Praise of the Laws of England,” *On the Laws and Governance of England*, ed. Shelley Lockwood [New York: Cambridge UP, 2002]: Book IX, p. 17). Given the joint administration of Scotland by a king and a Parliament, and the established tradition of advice literature advocating a king’s responsibilities to his subjects, such a philosophy would not have been foreign to that kingdom.

⁴³ Coldwell, Introduction 20.

example of humanist thought advocating the absolute power of the king,⁴⁴ the example seems somewhat out of place in his analysis, given that the work dates from the early-to-mid-seventeenth century and is separated from Douglas' and Lindsay's poetry by the Scottish Reformation and the Union of the Crowns. Soon after Douglas, the notion of kingship as a combination of rule and self-restraint in the face of divine law and concern for one's reputation is still a focus in poetry by writers such as David Lindsay, and it seems more logical to situate Douglas within a more immediate context than does Coldwell.⁴⁵

The *Eneados*' first prologue makes it clear that Douglas' translation project specifically seeks to articulate a nationalist message promoting Scotland's unique cultural viability. Douglas' strategy in pursuit of this goal participates in views of governance that enjoyed a distinctive currency in Scotland at the time, specifically the strategy of drawing power from dominant cultural discourses (in this case authoritative Latin and English texts) in order to bolster the autonomy of Scottish literary culture. Douglas achieves this by using a conventional humility *topos* praising and elevating both Virgil and Chaucer while inserting occasional moments of critical agency, pointing out what he sees to be flaws in their work

⁴⁴ Coldwell quotes from the prefatory note to the 1655 edition of William Drummond's *History of Scotland*, which states that the work's central thesis is that "the ability and excellency of the Prince hath been the most powerful ascendant of the Genius of a Nation, and that the Governing mind of the World, when ever it determines any to glorious actions, raises up such leaders, as by their wisdom, and example, may lead them to the performance of its own secret determinations" (qtd. in Introduction 23).

⁴⁵ Coldwell, Introduction 22-23. Coldwell's excerpts of "The Complaynt of Schir Lindesay" highlight Lindsay's concern that a young king (whose circumstances, it must be said, bear a telling resemblance to those of James I) could be controlled by "feudal factions" who care only for their individual advancement rather than for the common good: "The kyng was bot twelf 3eris of aige / Quhen new rewlaris come, in thare raige, / For commoun weill makand no cair, / Bot for thare profite singular" (ll. 127-130, qtd in Introduction 22). "The Buke of the Monarche" makes the king's responsibility to his subjects even clearer: "The principall point Sir of ane kingis office / Is for to do everilk man iustice, / And for to mix his iustice with mercie / But rigour, fauour or parcialite" (ll. 1882-1885, qtd. in Introduction 23).

and actively expressing his own goals in creating his own Scots translation. While Douglas Gray is correct to point out that, “[i]n spite of his self-consciousness and his evident pride in his work, [Douglas] shows a genuine humility towards the great poet he is translating,”⁴⁶ Douglas’ need to maintain Virgil’s elevated literary status does not obligate him to see himself so very far below the classical poet; rather, Douglas seeks to elevate his own literary reputation by undertaking the translation of such a monumental work. Moreover, Douglas emphasises that his role as translator and adaptor helps *maintain* Virgil’s (and Chaucer’s) literary authority, thereby recasting his apparent dependence on his poetic predecessors as a form of power.

Douglas begins the prologue with an apparently straightforward ode of praise to Virgil, whom he calls “patroun of poetry” (5) and “of Latyn poetis prynce” (3), the poet to whom he gives “[l]awd, honour, praysyngis [and] thankis infynyte” (1).⁴⁷ He continues by lavishing Virgil with compliments:

Royss, regester, palm, lawrer and glory,
 Chosyn charbukkill, cheif flour and cedyr tre,
 Lantarn, laid stern, myrrour and A per se,
 Maister of masteris, sweit sours and spryngand well
 Wyde quhar our all rung is thyne hevynly bell—
 I meyn thy crafty warkis curyus
 Sa quyk, lusty and maist sentencyus...(6-12)

⁴⁶ Gray, “Douglas’s Treatment of Vergil’s Imagery” 114.

⁴⁷ All quotations from the *Eneados* are from Coldwell’s edition (Edinburgh: William Blackwood for the STS, 1957-64). Line numbers are noted in in-text parentheses.

Douglas also fulfils the other requirement of the modesty *topos* by deprecating himself and his language:

Quhy suld I than with dull forhed and vayn,
 With rude engyne and barrand emptyve brayn,
 With bad, harsk spech and lewit barbour tong
 Presume to write quhar thy sweit bell is rung
 Or contyrfate sa precyus wordys deir?
 Na, na, noth swa, but kneill quhen I thame heir. (19-24)

He then goes on to liken the disparity between Virgil and himself to that between night and noon, darkness and light, and black and white (25-27).

So far, Douglas' opening invocation to Virgil establishes a conventional relationship between a literary authority and his translator; Douglas creates what appears to be an uncomplicated hierarchy in which Virgil occupies the highest echelon and Douglas a considerably lower rank. In the ensuing lines, Douglas only reinforces this hierarchy by questioning how he can fashion Virgil's "facund sentence [...] / In our langage alsweill as Latyn tong—/ Alsweill? na, na, impossibill war, per de" (39-41). He also repeatedly refers to the Scots language in less-than-complimentary terms, calling it a "rurall wlgar gross" (43) and a "corruppit cadens imperfyte" (46).

Almost as soon as Douglas advances this conventional view of the relationship between Latin and the vernacular, however, he begins to hint that the status of the Scots language is more complicated than he has indicated. There is already a suggestion of this attitude in Douglas' reference to Scots as "*our*

langage” (40, *italics added*),⁴⁸ a phrase that claims the tongue as that of an entire people, not merely himself, and therefore gestures towards a more political motive for his translation. This motive becomes even more apparent later in the prologue (on which more shortly); at this point, however, Douglas offers clues that he intends to redefine Scots’ authority as a literary tongue. One of the ways in which he achieves this is by reapplying the terms he used to praise Virgil to other sources of authority, thus allowing them to enjoy a position analogous to Virgil in Douglas’ text.

Earlier in Prologue I, Douglas refers to Virgil as “patroun of poetry”; Virgil’s sole occupancy of this position is challenged, however, by the introduction of a more practical patron:

And that 3e knaw at quhais instans I tuke
 Forto translait this maist excellent buke,
 I meyn Virgillis volume maist excellent,
 Set this my wark full febill be of rent,
 At the request of a lord of renown
 Of ancistry nobill and illustir baroun,
 Fader of bukis, protectour to sciens and lair,
 My speciall gud Lord Henry, Lord Sanct Clair...(79-86)

Like Virgil, Henry Sinclair is also Douglas’ patron, albeit in a more concrete sense. Nevertheless, that he is permitted to share the role of patron widens the

⁴⁸ See Chapter 5’s discussion of Dunbar’s poems on Margaret Tudor, where the pronoun “our” is similarly used to claim an authoritative force as Scotland’s own.

term's definition in Douglas' work, allowing Sinclair to enjoy a measure of the authority conferred upon Virgil.⁴⁹

Later in the prologue, Douglas shifts his definition of poetic authority to include one more figure: Geoffrey Chaucer. After a lengthy diatribe in which Douglas lambastes William Caxton's inaccurate translation of Virgil (137-282), Douglas eventually turns to Chaucer, whom he praises generously. The points of verbal correspondence between Douglas' comments on Chaucer and his opening address to Virgil are numerous and striking:

<i>Douglas on Chaucer</i>	<i>Douglas on Virgil</i>
<p>Thocht venerabill Chauser, principal poet but peir,</p> <p>Hevynly trumpat, orlege and reguler,</p> <p>In eloquens balmy, cundyt and dyall,</p> <p>Mylky fontane, cleir strand and royss ryall.</p> <p>Of fresch endyte, throu Albion iland braid,</p>	<p>Lawd, honour, praysyngis, thankis infynyte</p> <p>To the and thy dulce ornat fresch endyte,</p> <p>Maist reuerend Virgill, of Latyn poetis prynce,</p> <p>Gem of engyne and flude of eloquens,</p> <p>Thow peirless perle, patroun of poetry,</p>

⁴⁹ Douglas' reference to Sinclair as "protectour to sciens and lair" not only elevates Sinclair to a position of literary authority; as Douglas' "Exclamatioun aganyst detractouris and oncurtass redaris..." demonstrates, the honour also brings responsibilities towards the text and its author, as will be discussed later in the chapter.

<p>In hys legend of notabill ladeis said</p> <p>That he couth follow word by word Virgill,</p> <p>Wisar than I may faill in lakar stile. (339-346)</p>	<p>Royss, regester, palm, lawrer and glory,</p> <p>Chosyn charbukkill, cheif flour and cedyr tre,</p> <p>Lantarn, laid stern, myrrour and A per se,</p> <p>Maister of masteris, sweit sours and spryngand well</p> <p>Wyde quhar our all rung is thyne hevynly bell—</p> <p>I meyn thy crafty warkis curyus</p> <p>Sa quyk, lusty and maist sentencyus...(1-12)</p>
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While Virgil is called “of Latyn poetis prynce” and “peirless perle,” Chaucer is said to be the “principal poet but peir”; both are praised for their “fresche endyte”; the eloquence of both is described with the image of flowing water (“flude of eloquens” and “cleir strand”); Virgil is “reverend,” while Chaucer is “venerabill”; both are referred to as a “royss” and “hevynly.” These verbal echoes, too frequent to be overlooked, admit Chaucer into the same circle of literary authority as Virgil. Further correspondences occasionally appear in the

prologue; for instance, Douglas later calls Chaucer his “maister” (410), recalling his reference to Virgil as “[m]aister of masteris” (9). Katherine Terrell, noting these verbal correspondences, argues that “Douglas’s elevation of Chaucer suggests the establishment of a new canon based on poetic merit, irrespective of language.”⁵⁰ Douglas’ question to Virgil, “For thou art all and sum, quhat nedis more / Of Latyn poetis that sens was, or befor” (65-66)—which Terrell interprets as a “dismissal of the Latin poetic tradition”⁵¹—also fits into Douglas’ larger strategy; by leaving room for an exceptional poet to achieve poetic authority, Douglas’ goal to elevate the prestige of the Scots tongue becomes more attainable.

One may wonder why Douglas ascribes Chaucer such a high level of literary authority, given that he is an English and not a Scottish poet. Why would an author interested in undertaking a work “[w]rittin in the langage of Scottis natioun” (103)—as mentioned above, one of the earliest references to such a linguistic distinction between Scots and English—elevate an English poet to the ranks of Virgil? An answer may lie in a comparison of Douglas’ view of Chaucer with his opinion of William Caxton. As noted, Douglas shows little respect for either Caxton or his translation, which he says is “[n]e na mair lyke [the *Aeneid*] than the devill and Sanct Austyne” (143). He enumerates various factual errors in Caxton’s version and derides in particular his treatment of the Dido and Aeneas story, which he says “rynnys sa fer from Vergill in mony place, / On sa prolix and tedyus fasson” (166-167) that it takes up half of his translation rather than the

⁵⁰ Katherine Hikes Terrell, “Translating the Past, Scripting the Nation: Poetry, History, and Authority in Late Medieval Scotland,” unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. Cornell University, 2005, 154.

⁵¹ Terrell 154.

one book the story merits in Virgil (168-172). Significantly, Douglas takes great care to make it known that Caxton is an Englishman. When first naming Caxton, Douglas quickly says he is “of Inglis natioun” (138) and that his translation is a “buke of Inglys gross” (139) which he implies does not merit the name “Eneados” (140). Near the end of his screed, Douglas claims that he “lyst with nane Inglis bukis flyte” (272), but that he merely wants Virgil’s work to be treated with the respect it deserves (277-278). Caxton and his work are consistently designated as “Inglis,” a deliberate label in a text that seeks to translate the *Aeneid* into a distinct Scottish tongue.⁵² In Douglas’ eyes, Caxton’s literary talents are not worthy of being claimed—if only in part—by Scotland.

By contrast, Chaucer’s “Englishness” is never mentioned by Douglas in the first prologue. Douglas makes exactly one reference that situates Chaucer geographically, saying that his *Legend* is “throu Albion iland braid” (343). Terrell views Douglas’ use of Chaucer’s reputation as a means of “[m]odelling his poetic career on Chaucer’s”;⁵³ it should be added, however, that Douglas’ response to Chaucer moves beyond an effort to pattern his own career on that of his forebear and actively seeks to recast Chaucer’s literary significance, subtly claiming part of it for Scotland in order to give more credence to his own project for increased Scots literary authority. Crucially, Douglas refers neither to England nor Scotland in his placement of Chaucer and his works, but rather to the entire isle of Britain; Chaucer’s literary authority unites his readers in a pan-national

⁵² Cf. Terrell: “Douglas avers that unlike Chaucer, Caxton is not a poet of Albion but merely an English writer—and a poor one, at that” (160).

⁵³ Terrell 155.

readership, and both England and Scotland may claim him as their own.⁵⁴ At the same time, however, Douglas offers a subtle hint that he may wish to associate Chaucer with Scotland even more than with England. By using the term “Albion” instead of “Britain,” Douglas forgoes the dominant version of England’s Trojan foundation myth—a myth in which Aeneas plays an early role—in favour of “Albion,” a term that focuses on the section of the Brutus myth in which Brutus delegates power in the north to his son Albanactus.⁵⁵ In both his use of the term “Albion” and his praise of Chaucer as a British rather than English poet, Douglas effects the second part of a two-step strategy to elevate Scotland’s literary authority: first by allowing Chaucer to enjoy a literary status approaching that of Virgil, then subtly claiming Chaucer as British rather than merely English. In this manner, Douglas allows Scotland to participate indirectly in the highest levels of poetic authority in order to give his Scots vernacular translation a more authoritative status.

While Douglas may skilfully use Chaucer’s authority to bolster his own, he also seeks to establish a distinct literary identity by judiciously criticising Chaucer’s sympathetic treatment of Dido in the *Legend*. Douglas takes care, however, not to disturb the literary authority he ascribed to Chaucer earlier in his prologue, prefacing his critique by maintaining that his remarks are not meant to offend Chaucer: “For as he standis beneth Virgil in gre, / Vndir hym alsfer I grant

⁵⁴ Terrell notes that “Albion” means here, “as it does for John of Fordun, the entire island irrespective of its different nations. Chaucer thus offers Douglas a model of a successful writer whose work not only transcends the local limitations frequently associated with the vernacular, but whose poetics, characterised by his involvement with European traditions of vernacular and Latin literature, engages larger literary and cultural discourses” (154-155).

⁵⁵ For more on Scottish perceptions of Albanactus’ role in the Brutus myth, see Chapter 1’s discussion of Scottish responses to Geoffrey of Monmouth.

my self to be” (407-408). Douglas thus carefully situates his poetic authority beneath both Chaucer’s and Virgil’s before stating, “My mastir Chauser gretly Virgill offendit” (410). Notably, Douglas takes Chaucer to task not by denigrating his poetic skill but by asserting that he betrays a literary figure who outranks even Chaucer: Virgil, the “prynce of poetis” (418). By establishing before his criticism of Chaucer that he ranks himself below both Chaucer and Virgil, Douglas maintains a tone of deference that allows him to present himself favourably as a modest poet while at the same time asserting his distinctive literary voice.

A most skilful example of Douglas’ deft combination of flattery, deference and self-assertion is his plea to the reader to

[e]xcuss Chauser fra all maner repruffis

In lovyng of thir ladeis lyllly quhite

He set on Virgill and Eneas this wyte,

For he was evir (God wait) all womanis frend. (446-449)

Douglas, in asking the reader to forgive Chaucer, places himself in a position of both supplication and power; he pleads on behalf of his poetic superior, but also claims authority to pass moral judgement on who should or should not be forgiven. Douglas’ reference to Chaucer as “all womanis frend” may also be a left-handed compliment implying that Chaucer’s sympathy for women leads to his distortion of Virgil’s authoritative text.

Douglas’ discussion of the status of Scots as a literary language also reveals his desire to establish a distinctly Scottish literary culture, one that can translate or compose works in its own tongue. Douglas’ conception of the Scots language

parallels his conception of literary authority; rather than adopt an isolationist attitude, Douglas sees Scots (and, by extension, the Scots literary tradition) as profiting from the necessary incorporation of foreign influences. Douglas relates how he initially tried to translate the *Aeneid* into a pure Scottish idiom, one free from all English influence: “I set my bissy pane / As that I couth to mak it braid and plane, / Kepand na sudron bot our awyn langage, / And spekis as I lernyt quhen I was page” (109-112). While Terrell sees Douglas’ desire to write in the “langage of Scottis natioun” (103) as an attempt to “repudiate[] the linguistic bond between England and Scotland,”⁵⁶ Douglas concedes that a pure and isolated Scottish tongue is a thing of the imagination:

Nor 3it sa cleyn all sudron I refuss,
 Bot sum word I pronounce as nyghtbouris doys:
 Lyke as in Latyn beyn Grew termys sum,
 So me behufyt quhilum or than be dum
 Sum bastard Latyn, French or Inglys oyss
 Quhar scant was Scottis—I had nane other choys. (113-118)

Douglas’ acknowledgement here is vital, acting as a microcosm of his general literary strategy in the *Eneados*. Douglas rejects a Scots tongue isolated from all other languages (particularly English) because such a move would compromise the poetic skill of his translation; in a phenomenon both ironic and understandable, the poem cannot act as the flag-bearer for Douglas’ national poetic project without incorporation of foreign phrases necessary to articulate Douglas’ ideas. Terrell acknowledges this inevitability when she notes, “Here,

⁵⁶ Terrell 138.

English becomes just one of many resources that Douglas draws upon to augment his own language: absorbing and transforming English words, Douglas puts the English language at the service of a project of linguistic enrichment, and establishes Scots as an evolving language whose linguistic boundaries are permeable.”⁵⁷ Thus, what may initially appear to be Douglas’ concessions to the English language actually demonstrate his ability to manipulate it to serve Scottish ends.

Just as significant as Douglas’ incorporation of foreign vocabulary is the rhetoric he uses to explain his decision. While Douglas does say that he “had nane other choys” but to expand his lexicon—a phrase that suggests a lack of agency in shaping his text—other moments in this passage point towards an active appropriation of foreign languages as tools for building Scottish literary authority. Douglas claims that he does not refuse “all sudron,” but that he pronounces “sum word [...] as nyghtbouris doys,” an active phrasing that refers to the English somewhat benignly as “neighbours,” thus making a selective use of their language less politically abhorrent. Douglas elevates Scots’ use of English terms to a more prestigious level by analogising Scots and English to Latin and Greek respectively: “Lyke as in Latyn beyn Grew termys sum,” Scots, which Douglas seeks to make a literary language in the tradition of Latin, occasionally incorporates English terms. This analogy also subtly privileges Scots over English; while Greek may be the older language, Latin borrows from its predecessor’s strengths to create a new, more advanced form of discourse, a

⁵⁷ Terrell 144.

relationship which Douglas is keen to replicate between English and Scots.⁵⁸

Though it is unclear whether Douglas is aware of it, his analogy also engineers a striking role reversal between the Scottish and English origin myths.⁵⁹ Scotland, normally associated with a Greek-and-Egyptian origin myth, is here linked with the Latin-Trojan myth of Brutus, common in England, which constitutes his era's dominant British origin narrative. Douglas' association of Scots with Latin thus allows Scotland to participate in England's authoritative foundation myth while simultaneously establishing its own cultural identity.

Douglas' thoughts on his responsibilities to Virgil's Latin original appear to show Douglas in a more captive, subservient position. As Douglas elaborates on his obligation to maintain the "sentens" of Virgil's verse, images of constraint prevail:

Quha is attachit ontill a staik, we se,
 May go na ferthir bot wreil about that tre:
 Rycht so am I to Virgillis text ybund,
 I may nocht fle less than my falt be fund,
 For thocht I wald transcend and go besyde,
 Hys wark remanys, my schame I may nocht hyde.

⁵⁸ Cf. Terrell: "Douglas' linguistic analogy implies a temporal as well as a philological hierarchy, one that asserts Scots to be the destined superior of the English tongue even while Douglas readily admits that English is, at present, the more sophisticated language" (145).

⁵⁹ Douglas was not only aware of but also advocated the Scots myth; the Italian-English intellectual and historian Polydore Vergil recounts in the *Anglia Historia* that Douglas promised to send him a "verie auncient originall" of the Scottish people that contained an account of the Scots story (*Polydore Vergil's English History*, vol. 1, ed. Henry Ellis [London: Camden Society, 1846]: qtd. in Bawcutt, *Douglas* 105). Vergil writes that Douglas defended the Scots myth against its sceptical treatment by John Mair in his 1521 *Historia Maioris Britanniae*: "[H]e vehementlie required mee that in relation of the Scottishe affaires I showlde in no wise follow the president of a certain contriman of his" (qtd. in Bawcutt, *Douglas* 30-31).

And thus I am constreynt als neir I may
 To hald hys verss and go nane other way,
 Less sum history, subtell word or the ryme
 Causith me mak digressioun sum tyme. (297-306)

Like a vine, Douglas says, he must wrap himself around Virgil's guiding text and conform to it as closely as possible, as much as he may wish to "transcend" it.

Douglas' image of a vine being trained around a stake may appear to offer an unequivocal view that Douglas has no freedom to assert his own literary authority in his translation. On closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that Douglas does leave himself at least one avenue in which he may exercise some creative control: the path of apparent incompetence. Douglas notes that he is "ybund" to Virgil's text and "may nocht fle less that [his] falt be fund"; in other words, were he to deviate from his source, his insufficient poetic skill would be discovered. Douglas gives himself another means of escape when he writes that Virgil's text restrains him "[l]ess sum history, subtell word or the ryme" causes Douglas to alter or digress from his source. In both situations, Douglas transforms what seem at first glance to be limitations—his inferior knowledge and the constraints of history, vocabulary or rhyme—and refashions them into tools which he can use to assert his individual creativity while keeping as faithful as possible to Virgil's text. These strategies are complemented by Douglas' focus in prologue I on maintaining Virgil's "sentens" in this Scots translation. Douglas asserts that he is "constreynt" to "kepe the sentens" of Virgil's poem (122), and this will oblige him to manipulate the length of certain sections of the *Aeneid* in order to preserve this Virgil's message (123-124). While Douglas attributes this

manipulation to his *lack* of “fowth [adundance] of langage” (120), one could argue that his focus on preserving Virgil’s “sentens” gives Douglas the freedom to use the language he chooses—a useful move for an author whose explicitly stated goal is to advance the status of Scots as a poetic language.

Douglas’ image of the vine also hints at an iconic image of interdependence: that of the hazel and the honeysuckle. This common trope, famously employed in Marie de France’s *Lai de Chievrefueil*, articulates a dynamic of mutual dependence, in which a love-struck Tristan laments that he and Isolde will both die if they are separated, just as the honeysuckle and the hazel tree around which it climbs will both die if they are severed from one another.⁶⁰ While Douglas’ image of the vine and the stake is somewhat less dramatic than Tristan’s love-struck analogy, a similar dynamic of interdependence is at work. The vine may require the stake for its growth, but the stake serves no purpose without a vine to support. As much as Douglas needs to draw on Virgil’s literary authority, this very authority exists only so long as Virgil’s poetic descendants consider him important and worthy of citation. The image of the vine and the stake thus establishes an interdependent, intertextual relationship between the two writers,

⁶⁰ Marie writes, “Kar ne poeit vivre senz li. / D’els dous fu il tut altres / Cume del chievrefueil esteit / Ki a la coldre se perneit: / Quant il s’i est lacies e pris / E tut entur le fust s’est mis, / Ensemble poent bien durer; / Mes ki puis les vult desevrer, / La coldre muert hastivement / E li chievrefueilz ensement. / ‘Bele amie, si est de nus: / Ne vus senz mei ne jeo senz vus!’” (67-78) [“For he could not live without her. / With the two of them it was just / as it is with the honeysuckle / that attaches itself to the hazel tree: / when it has wound and attached / and worked itself around the trunk, / the two can survive together; / but if someone tries to separate them, / the hazel quickly dies / and the honeysuckle with it. / ‘Sweet love, so it is with us: / You cannot live without me, nor I without you.’”] French from “Le Chèvrefeuille,” *Lais de Marie de France*, ed. Karl Warnke (Paris: Livre de Poche, 2007) 262-269; English from “Chevrefoil,” *The Lais of Marie de France*, trans. Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante [Durham, NC: Labyrinth Press, 1982] 190-195.

granting Douglas a measure of authority in relation to Virgil even as Virgil maintains his authoritative status.

Douglas has thus far employed several subtle methods to champion his own literary authority while remaining (or at least *appearing* to remain) deferent to his Latin and vernacular models. Near the conclusion of prologue I, however, Douglas effects one more redefinition of authority, one that furthers his ascent as a respectable literary figure. Douglas once more invokes the ‘prince of poets,’ but he is no longer referring to Virgil:

Thou prynce of poetis, I the mercy cry,
I meyn thou Kyng of Kyngis, Lord Etern,
Thou be my muse, my gydar and laid stern,
Remittyng my trespass and euery myss
Throu prayer of thy Moder, Queyn of Blyss. (452-456)

In executing his poetic endeavour, Douglas calls for the approval of the ultimate creative force. By appealing to God (whom, like Virgil, he also calls the “laid stern”), Douglas once again occupies the dual roles of suppliant and moral authority; in other words, Douglas’ deference to God makes his work unimpeachable, as no one would dare criticize a work composed in such a spirit of religious devotion. Douglas offers one final preemptive apology to Virgil should he “offend” him (472), but it is clear that he now writes in, and derives poetic authority from, “Goddis name” (478). Terrell writes of this invocation, “In devoting himself to an infinitely more authoritative muse, Douglas makes a real

claim to surpass Virgil's poetic authority."⁶¹ While this point is valid, the idea can be explored more thoroughly with reference to Douglas' status as a priest.

Douglas' vocation allows his literary deference to God to act as an even more potent tool for creating literary authority than it would for a secular writer like Chaucer. Douglas' strategy presents him both as a modest poet and a devout priest, both qualities that Douglas would seek to highlight in composing poetry for potentially generous patrons such as Sinclair and James IV. Douglas' adoption of literary and religious modesty thus serves to accentuate the appearance of poetic and moral authority.

The first prologue is replete with Douglas' strategies for creating an autonomous Scots text—and, in the process, crafting his own Scottish poetic identity. By reassigning his terms of praise for Virgil to Chaucer, then claiming Chaucer as a British rather than English poet, Douglas gradually expands the circle of literary authority from Rome to England to Britain, creating a dynamic of *translatio studii* that allows him as a Scottish writer to participate in that authority. Later, when Douglas locates ultimate poetic authority in God, Douglas empowers his own moral and poetic identity by demonstrating his devotion to and emulation of God's creative abilities. Moreover, Douglas' self-defined limitations in translating Virgil's text, specifically his emphasis on "sentens" and his apologies for any deviations from the rules of vernacular verse, actually give Douglas the freedom to shape a text with a distinctively Scottish rather than Latin vocabulary and style. Douglas may seek to preserve Virgil's "sentens," but the vehicle for it will be entirely his own.

⁶¹ Terrell 166.

The end-matter of the *Eneados* offers a more explicit articulation of Douglas' attitudes on governing his own translation. This end-matter occurs in two stages, with two short verses after Book XII naming the author and his works and, following Book XIII (a translation of Maphaeus Vegius' fifteenth-century addition to Virgil's work), a conclusion, dedication (or "Directioun"), "Exclamatioun aganyst detractouris," a verse on the "tyme, space and dait of the translatioun of this buke" and a verse outlining Douglas' life and works. Douglas takes a more assertive stance in this concluding material, claiming authorship of his works and defending his translation of the *Aeneid* from critics. In so doing, Douglas ends the *Eneados* with an effort to control how his work and his literary identity will be received by future readers.

After finishing Book XII, Douglas offers a short, straightforward verse "mak[ing] mensioun of thre of hys pryncipall warkis." He states clearly that he has translated "[t]he batellys and the man" (2) and reminds the reader that in his "ondantit 3outh" (3) he translated "Lundeys Lufe the Remeid" (5) and then wrote "off hie Honour the Palyce" (6) ending his verse with a quotation of that poem's first two lines.⁶² This short poem is followed by another poem offering a puzzle on Douglas' name:

⁶² The identity of "Lundeys Lufe the Remeid" remains unknown. Bawcutt observes that "[early editor Thomas] Ruddiman's emendation to 'Oveidis Lufe' is palaeographically not very convincing, yet a reference here to the *Remedium Amoris* would make good sense, in view of Douglas's liking for Ovid" (*Douglas* 49). Coldwell argues that "*The Direction of the Book*, line 113, indicates that Douglas did not translate Ovid," and suggests instead that the work could be an original poem called "The Remedy of Wanton Love," translating "lundeys" as "strumpets" ("Mention of the Principal Works," n.). At the very end of the *Eneados* appears a verse (in both Latin and Scots) in which Virgil refers to his "notabill warkis thre: / Of pasturage, and eik of husbandry, / And douchty chiftanys full of chivalry" (3-5). Regardless of the identity of the mysterious "Lufe the Remeid," Douglas' list of his works seeks to establish yet another point of correspondence between his literary career and Virgil's.

The GAW onbrokkyn mydlyt with the WYNE,
 The DOW ionyt with the GLAIS rich in a lyne:
 Quha knawys nocht the translatouris naym,
 Seik na forthar, for lo, with litill pyne
 Spy leill this verss: men clepys hym swa at haym. (1-5)

Douglas then signs his name to the work. These verses mark a sharp contrast from the modesty *topos* employed in the first prologue. Here, Douglas names his works and seeks to make the reader remember his name by means of wordplay, finishing the process by adding his signature. Douglas' goal is to be remembered both as a translator and as a poet in his own right, and this attitude permeates the longer verses that follow Book XIII.

Douglas' "Conclusio," which immediately follows Book XIII's conclusion, sees the poet actively attempt to shape his future literary reputation. Douglas asserts that once he is dead,

The bettir part of me salbe vpheld
 Abufe the starnys perpetually to ryng,
 And heir my naym remane, but enparyng;
 Throw owt the ile yclepit Albyon
 Red sall I be, and sung with mony one. (8-12)

Several details in this passage merit discussion. The first is Douglas' tone, which conveys utter confidence that his poetry and reputation will far outlive his time on earth; this confidence is consistent with the more assertive stance Douglas takes with respect to his poetry in the *Eneados*' end-matter. The second is Douglas' contention that the "bettir part" of him will "ryng" "[a]bufe the starnys

perpetually” (1-2).⁶³ Douglas’ verb choice is significant, as it links his poetic reputation to that which he earlier articulated for Virgil, his poetic “[m]aister of masteris”: “Wyde quhar our all rung is thyne hevynly bell—/ I meyn thy crafty warkis curyus / Sa quyk, lusty and maist sentencyus...” (Prol. I. 9-12). By the end of the *Eneados*, Douglas has moved from adopting a humble stance towards Virgil to likening himself to him by using similar metaphorical images. Thirdly, Douglas refers to his literary reputation throughout Albion, just as he did in his discussion of Chaucer’s poetic fame (Prol. I. 343). Here, Douglas establishes himself not merely as a *Scottish* literary authority, but as a *British* literary authority, conferring upon himself the same honour that he bestowed upon Chaucer (and, notably, doing so once again in terms that remind the reader of the Brutus myth’s Scottish dimension). In taking on the same terms of praise that he used to elevate Virgil and Chaucer at the beginning of the *Eneados*, Douglas indicates that he now fully shares their status as a literary authority—and one who has achieved that authority by pursuing a peculiarly Scottish literary project.

The final two components of the end-matter, the “Directioun” and the “Exclamatioun,” embrace a similar theme: Douglas’ response to those who would criticise his work. The “Directioun,” addressed to Henry Sinclair, is notable for the nature of Douglas’ requests of his patron. Douglas opens the poem with a rather conventional salutation and the statement that his efforts on the translation

⁶³Douglas here paraphrases not Virgil, but Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* XV. 875-878: “Still in my better part I shall be borne immortal far beyond the lofty stars and I shall have an undying name. Wherever Rome’s power extends over the conquered world, I shall have mention on men’s lips” (Frank Justus Miller, trans., *Metamorphoses*, 2 vols. [Cambridge, MA Harvard UP, 1984] 427). Much as he has done with Virgil’s work and authority, Douglas here adapts Ovid’s poem to effect a translation of literary authority from Rome to “Albion,” much as British origin myths engaged with the concepts of *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii* from Rome to Britain.

will have been worthwhile if Henry should find anything in it that is “aggreabill” to him (1-8). Douglas’ verse takes an interesting turn, however, when he asks of Sinclair:

Quhar I offendit, or mysteris correctioun,
Vndir 3our salfgard and protectioun
I me submyt; 3he be my scheld and defens
Aganys corruppit tungis violens. (9-12)

He later adds,

Gyf thai speir quhy I dyd this buke translait,
3he war the causs tharof, full weill 3e wait:
3he cawsyt me this volume to endyte,
Quharthrow I haue wrocht myself syk dispyte,
Perpetualy be chydit with ilk knak,
Full weill I know, and mokkyt behind my bak. (17-22)

Neither of these passages articulates a position of poetic subservience. The first excerpt states Douglas’ request politely but firmly: as a poet, he submits himself willingly to Sinclair’s authority, asking him to protect him from vicious criticism. The relationship of mutual duty Douglas seeks from Sinclair—“that of one equal to another,” as Bawcutt puts it⁶⁴—is similar to a feudal contract or to contemporary theories of kingship and governance: Douglas acknowledges Sinclair as his lord, but with this pledge of loyalty comes a responsibility for Sinclair to protect his new servant. Douglas phrases his expectations even more forcefully in the second excerpt, where his repeated use of “3he”—“3he war the

⁶⁴ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 93.

causs tharof, full weill *3e* wait: / *3he* cawsyt me this volume to endyte”—takes on an even more assertive tone as he assigns responsibility for the work (and for its defence from detractors) to Sinclair. One might even read a sense of preemptive accusation into the repeated use of “*3he*,” as if Sinclair is ultimately responsible for any critical disparagement, since it is he who commissioned the poem.⁶⁵ The line “For *3ou* maid I this buke, my Lord, I grant” (72) epitomises in one compact phrase Douglas’ ability to combine a posture of service with a delegation of responsibility.⁶⁶

Another dominant theme in the “*Directioun*” is Douglas’ assessment of the success of his vernacular Virgil. Douglas is confident in his Scots translation, noting that apart from “our wlgar toungis differens” which led him to translate Virgil into “haymly playn termys famyliar,” the translation “[n]a thing alterit in substans the sentens” (92; 94; 95), thus achieving the goal Douglas set in his opening prologue. In short, Douglas writes, “[S]et that empty be my brayn and dull, / I haue translait a volum wondirfull” (101-102), a phrase conveying equal parts modesty and ego. This combination is also evident in Douglas’ frequent possessive references to the Scottish tongue; in describing it variously as “our langage” (85), “our tong” (127) and “owr wlgar style” (136), Douglas continues his custom of referring to Scots as a crude vernacular, but he redeems it by claiming it for himself and Sinclair (and the Scottish people at large) as “our

⁶⁵ Bawcutt notes that Douglas’ insistence on making it clear that Sinclair requested the poem is a “device [that] was partly a ‘sort of free insurance against rebuke,’ partly a means of proclaiming one’s modesty as a writer” (*Douglas* 92-93; the interior quotation is from Tore Janson’s *Latin Prose Prefaces: Studies in Literary Conventions* [Stockholm: Almquist and Wiksell, 1964]: 52).

⁶⁶ Terrell alludes briefly to how Douglas makes these requests of Sinclair “from a position of kinship and reciprocity rather than as a humble petitioner” (151), but interprets the dynamic more by examining Douglas’ role than Sinclair’s responsibility, saying that Douglas contributes “to his patron’s prestige, as well as to the overall cultural capital of the Scottish nobility” (152).

tong,” which Douglas has proven worthy for use in translating a towering work of Latin literature.

Douglas’ “Exclamatioun” against critics continues the confident tone Douglas projects in his other concluding verses. He attacks those readers who see only his translation’s faults (15-18) and says that in translating such a massive work no one “mycht perfytylly all hys hie termys luge / In barbar langage, or thame dewly expon” (23-24). While Douglas acknowledges the potential presence of faults in his translation, this claim of inevitable error does not seem so much a sincere admission of imperfections as it does a means of repelling critics from attacking his work. This strategy suggests Douglas’ high degree of protectiveness over his translation and hints that he considers the work just as much his own as Virgil’s. Douglas’ challenge to his critics to undertake their own translations—a challenge he also voiced in the “Directioun” (111-114)—further illuminates his attitude that the vernacular translation is to some extent the translator’s creation (or, as Copeland puts it, a “displacement”), not merely a supplement to the original text. Douglas has become so attached to his Scots *Eneados* that he takes criticisms of that translation very personally, suggesting his desire to control the reception of what he now considers his own work. Douglas, however, is ultimately secure that his translation will stand the test of time; as he tells his own “wlgar Virgill” (37) in the *envoi* of the “Exclamatioun,”

Beys not afferyt to cum in prysaris sycht;

The nedis nocht to aschame of the lycht,

For I haue brocht thy purposs to gud end:

Now salt thou with euery gentill Scot be kend,

And to onletterit folk be red on hight,

That erst was bot with clerkis comprehend. (40-45)

A good translation, asserts Douglas, can stand up to criticism, and his *Eneados* is a good translation. In the *envoi*'s final lines, Douglas says that his poem will be enjoyed by all Scots, both gentle and illiterate; the poet thus reaffirms his nationalist goals for his translation and reminds readers of his desire to create a distinct literary tradition that will contribute to a vibrant and unifying Scottish culture.

In his framing verses for the *Eneados*, Douglas articulates very definite views about his and his translation's role in Scottish and British literature. In translating the *Aeneid* into Scots, Douglas seeks to elevate his native tongue's status not by creating an entirely indigenous epic, but by using an already-authoritative narrative to confer greater authority on the language used to translate it. In turn, by translating the *Aeneid* into a language all Scots can understand, Douglas allows Virgil's text to reach an even greater audience, thus contributing reciprocally to the expansion of the *Aeneid*'s own status as an authoritative text. In his efforts to establish himself as a poetic authority, Douglas affirms conventional literary hierarchies in which Virgil and Chaucer occupy positions of honour, then reshapes those hierarchies in order to make a space for himself among those poetic "masters."

The *Palice of Honour*: Douglas' Renovation of Chaucer's *House of Fame*

Douglas' *Palice of Honour* (1501) does not explicitly promote a separate Scots language and poetic tradition; rather, it offers a practical model of a positive Anglo-Scots literary dialogue through its relationship with its main Chaucerian intertext, the *House of Fame*. The general correspondences between the two texts have been addressed in the criticism; Denton Fox, for example, has remarked that the *Palice* is "a very useful commentary on the *House of Fame*," while Gregory Kratzmann has observed that the poem manages to be both "a *summa* of nearly two centuries of writing in the genre of the vision allegory" and a work that "is in many ways quite unlike the *House of Fame*," particularly in its "finely and elaborately wrought" stanzaic structure.⁶⁷

It is also generally agreed that the *Palice* is a poem about poetry and what it means to be a poet. Kratzmann contends that Douglas "regarded his work, in part at least, as a response to Chaucer's views about the proper allegiances of the literary artist, the problems which he confronts in reconciling the demands of life with those of art, and the nature of poetic composition."⁶⁸ David Parkinson sees these issues examined in the very movement of the poem through the vision, calling the *Palice* "a bookish poem" that draws on knowledge from fields ranging from Christian thought to courtly manners; Douglas' work rises above the

⁶⁷ Fox, "The Scottish Chaucerians," *Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature*, ed. D.S. Brewer (University: U of Alabama P, 1966): 193; Kratzmann 105. While Priscilla Bawcutt stresses that the poem has a multitude of poetic influences, ranging from the *Roman de la Rose* and the *Legend* to Ovid and Virgil, she also lists the *House of Fame* among them, albeit only in passing (*Douglas* 58, 67). Janet Smith argues for the debt of Douglas' poem to his contemporary Octavien de Saint Gelais' *Séjour d'Honneur* (c. 1500), but acknowledges that any French influence in Douglas' poetry is secondary to his use of Chaucer (122).

⁶⁸ Kratzmann 106.

pedantic, Parkinson argues, “by maintaining a close relation between reading (and writing) and progress, spatially considered towards realisation (if not possession) of an ideal.”⁶⁹

One may elaborate on Parkinson’s insight by noting that Douglas and his narrator progress towards literary and moral autonomy over the course of the poem. Douglas further establishes a poetic authority distinct from Chaucer’s by emphasising his ecclesiastical credentials. Parkinson contends that the *Palice* features the often-comic tensions among Douglas’ competing personae of poet, priest and courtier and that “[a]s Douglas’ poem proceeds, the heavenly becomes increasingly inconvenient; the dreamer can hardly relax in the expectation of pleasure and reward.”⁷⁰ While Parkinson sees an occasional reconciliation in the poem among Douglas’ conflicting roles, he maintains that the poet-narrator’s clerical credentials are not sufficient to gain acceptance to Honour’s court, implying Douglas’ failure to convey a sense of spiritual authority.⁷¹ As will be discussed more thoroughly later in this chapter, however, the very fact that Honour overwhelms the narrator before he even enters the god’s court only reinforces both Honour’s superiority to Chaucer’s Fame and Douglas’ own moral worth, reflected through his total submission to Honour’s glory. In his narrator’s reaction to Honour, Douglas enacts on a spiritual level the paradox of self-governance articulated in varying ways by the Scots poets discussed so far: the narrator’s deference to such a worthy force in fact demonstrates his desire to live

⁶⁹ Parkinson, Introduction 7.

⁷⁰ David Parkinson, “The Farce of Modesty in Gavin Douglas’ *The Palis of Honoure*,” *PQ* 70.1 (Winter 1991): 16.

⁷¹ Parkinson, “Farce of Modesty” 19-21.

a moral life, exercising spiritual self-restraint in order to transcend the variable world of Fame and achieve eternal happiness. It is important to clarify, however, that the *Palice of Honour* and the *House of Fame* understand the importance of humanity's commitment to virtue, and that the latter poem's ascription of supreme power to Fame is done with a great deal of irony. With the two poems' common impetus in mind, it is clear that Douglas' strategy of literary governance in the *Palice* is not to undermine Chaucer's ultimate point, but to arrive at it by a different route. When Douglas inverts Chaucer's images or plays with Chaucerian allusions while retaining the core of Chaucer's message, he demonstrates how Scots poetry can both complement Chaucer's and stand autonomously.

Douglas' strategy for moral self-governance is paralleled in the poem by his narrator's relationships with authority figures such as Venus, Calliope and the poets of the "court rethoricall." With these figures Douglas takes a stance of deference blended with judicious expressions of agency which consistently manifest themselves through the act of poetic composition. By asserting his autonomy and individuality through writing, as he does in response to Venus' judgement, the narrator associates his vision of spiritual self-governance with that of literary governance. Similarly, Douglas' poem both evokes and reinterprets the *House of Fame*, aware of the need to respect the status of Chaucer's work while simultaneously offering an alternative vision of what values the poet (and the human soul) should properly pursue. On two levels, Douglas seeks honour by referring to other literary traditions (including the English tradition) for guidance. Apart from its more conventional assertions on how to attain moral honour, the

Palice also demonstrates that poetic honour is rooted in the narrator's literary prowess: his ability to learn from the poets and other creative forces he encounters over the course of the poem and to contribute his own independent voice to the poetic tradition. This dynamic also occurs at the level of Douglas' engagement with the *House of Fame*. Douglas' poem employs narrative elements, images and themes similar to Chaucer's, but imbues them with a more explicitly moral (or Christian) significance, thereby paying respect to his source while demonstrating his own ability to develop his own literary style, his own sense of literary honour.

It is also vital to note the *Palice*'s relevance to understanding Douglas' relationship to the Scottish crown. Just as his narrator uses a combination of defiance and deference in negotiating with authority figures, Douglas' verses to James IV mingle a tone of submission with an implicit reminder that the poem acts as "a 'mirror' of proper comportment" for the king in his courtly behaviour.⁷² Douglas' position as a cleric (a spiritual authority) petitioning for a prestigious ecclesiastical post places him in a relationship with the king that is both authoritative and deferent. This dual role also manifests itself in the narrator's quasi-defiant stance against Venus and in Douglas' Christian re-evaluation of the *House of Fame*. On each of these levels, Douglas understands both his subservient position in the secular world and his ability to govern himself and his compositions on a spiritual and literary level. Douglas' Christianity thus expresses itself in the *Palice* as a means to self-governance, both for the narrator in his journey towards Honour and for Douglas in his efforts to assert a literary authority separate from Chaucer's.

⁷² Parkinson, Introduction 6.

Several episodes of the *Palice* have an identifiable basis in Chaucer's work; Douglas alters the main purpose of these episodes, however, to advance his poem's message that honour is the virtue to which all should aspire, and that the embrace of honour as a guiding force is best achieved by exercising moral self-governance and leading an honourable life. Douglas' message is not merely expressed in his narrative, but in his poetic technique: by accepting Chaucerian authority while at the same time exerting rigorous creative control over his own narrative, Douglas presents a model of poetic governance that mimics the dynamic he encourages readers to pursue with Honour. A selection of comparisons between Chaucer's work and Douglas', as well as other examples of the poem's attitudes on moral and poetic authority, make Douglas' vision of self-governance clear.

In their respective invocations of their own mental faculties, Chaucer and Douglas' narrators demonstrate a similar general humility while simultaneously hinting at a greater confidence in their poetic abilities; Douglas, however, takes Chaucer's model and renders it more rhetorically sophisticated even as he appears to minimise his talents as a writer, thus cleverly using his control over his poetic creation to comment on both his narrator's relationship with the vision he is charged to recount and Douglas' own relationship with the Chaucerian text with which he has decided to engage.

Chaucer's narrator invokes his thoughts in the *House of Fame*, expressing some uncertainty over whether his mind has the capacity to recount his vision properly:

O Thought, that wrot al that I mette,

And in the tresorye hyt shette
 Of my brayn, now shal men se
 Yf any vertu in the be
 To tellen al my drem aryght.
 Now kythe thyn engyn and myght! (523-528)

It is clear that this humility is superficial; the narrator's true opinion of his own wit is revealed in the determined tone of his resolution to show men the "vertu," "engyn and myght" of the "tresorye" that is his thought. Kratzmann, who also notes the similarities between Chaucer's and Douglas' invocations, observes that "both reflect a concern for clear and accurate expression, although what precedes the Chaucerian statement—comparison of the vision with the great visions of the Bible and classical literature—is hardly to be taken at face value."⁷³

Douglas' narrator, in invoking his own mind, adopts Chaucer's basic rhetorical technique but makes it more florid:

Thow barrant wyt overset with fantasyis,
 Schaw now the craft that in thy memor lyis,
 Schaw now thy shame, schaw now thy bad nystee,
 Schaw thyn endyt, reprof of rethoryis,
 Schaw now thy beggit termis mare than thryis,
 Schaw now thy ranys and thyn harlottree,
 Schaw now thy dull exhaust inanytee,
 Schaw furth thy cure and wryte their frenesyis
 Quhilkis of thy sempell cunnyng nakyt the. (127-135)

⁷³ Kratzmann 120-121.

This invocation deftly balances the narrator's dual attitudes towards his poetic authority. On one level, the lines are self-deprecating as they describe the narrator's "schame," "bad nystee," and "dull exhaust inanytee." And yet Douglas' use of anaphora ("schaw") demonstrates his true skill as a writer. Most significant, however, is that the narrator calls on his *own* inferior wit. He believes his poetic voice inadequate to the job of recounting the vision, but it is *his* poetic voice, and he summons it above any muse or god. Thus Douglas' narrator both defers to greater poetic authorities and asserts his right to use his own voice, regardless of the result.

Chaucer and Douglas' narrators occupy different roles in their respective visions; while Chaucer's narrator asserts his role as spectator, Douglas' narrator more actively voices his opinions to the figures that surround him. When Chaucer's narrator is asked by an anonymous bystander whether he is there to seek Fame, the narrator denies it, saying that he is responsible for his own reputation:

‘Sufficeth me, as I were ded,
That no wight have my name in honde.
I wot myself best how y stonde;
For what I drye, or what I thynke,
I wil myselven al hyt drynke,
Certeyn, for the more part,
As fer forth as I kan myn art.’ (1876-1882)

Shortly thereafter, the narrator tells the bystander what actually brings him to Fame's house: to learn "somme newe tydynges" (1886). The narrator's words

reveal that his priorities are centred on his own artistic development—to establish his own reputation and advance his own “art.” He is not concerned with intervening in or passing judgement on others’ affairs, but with recording them in a way that will enrich his own poetic status. While the *House of Fame*’s cautionary tales illuminate the importance of living a righteous life, the poem’s narrator is oblivious to the instructive potential his conversations hold.⁷⁴

In the *Palice*, by contrast, Douglas creates a narrator more spiritually perceptive than Chaucer’s, as reflected in his search for Honour rather than Fame. The narrator’s quest begins almost with that of the vision itself. Upon arriving in the forest, he is intrigued by an opulent procession and asks two laggards to explain the situation (234-238). The laggards, Ahithopel and Synone, have been cast away from Minerva’s procession to the Palace of Honour because of the former’s suicide and the latter’s role in the fall of Troy (236-286). The two men are aware of their wickedness; Ahithopel’s statement that his “wysdome ay fulfyllyt [his] desyre” (276) indicates his recognition of his insufficient moral control. Douglas’ narrator judges Ahithopel and Synone harshly, showing them no pity:

‘Cursit be he that sorowis for your harmys,
For ye bene schrewis baith, be Goddis armys!
Ye will optene nane entres at yone port

⁷⁴ The narrator’s unperceptive nature is readily identifiable throughout the *House of Fame* and other Chaucerian dream-visions; Sheila Delany, writing of the *House of Fame* narrator’s use of unrelated and contradictory exempla to “supplement” his sympathetic position on Dido, argues that this “obvious narrative incompetence is a characteristic ironic device with Chaucer [...] It signals a parodic intention, or at the very least a divergence between Narrator and poet” (Sheila Delany, *Chaucer’s House of Fame: The Poetics of Sceptical Fideism* [Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1972; rpt. 1994] 53).

Bot gif it be throw sorcery or charmys.’ (288-291)

The narrator’s reaction reveals the *Palice*’s more explicit treatment of Christian morality than its Chaucerian counterpart. Douglas’ narrator, unlike Chaucer’s, cannot merely observe; his identity as a clergyman motivates his need to judge the men for their sins and adopt a stance of moral superiority. The sinners in this exchange also demonstrate a desire to improve themselves spiritually, striving against all odds to at least glimpse the exterior of Honour’s palace: “‘Ingres tyll have,’ quod they, ‘we not presume. / It suffices us tyl se the Palice blume / And stand on rowme quhare bettyr folk bene charrit’” (292-294). While both the *House of Fame* and the *Palice of Honour* spotlight a special quality sought by characters and narrator alike, the motivations for that search differ significantly. While Chaucer’s characters seek Fame for its own sake, and Chaucer’s narrator is guided by a desire to observe and report through poetry, the goal of sinner and narrator alike in the *Palice* is more profound: to become better people by seeking Honour, even if (as in the case of Ahithopel and Synone) their quest is doomed to failure. In having his narrator and characters actively seek a virtue that will improve their spiritual rather than worldly condition, Douglas adds a moral level to the quest scheme established in the *House of Fame*.

The narrator’s encounter with Venus and her court further demonstrates his hybrid attitude of hopeless passivity and defiant moral agency, particularly during his trial for blasphemy. Significantly, it is his attitude of hopelessness that leads the narrator to blame the gods for his misery, thus leading him to be charged with blasphemy. The narrator lists a number of history’s most famous lovers, noting their variety of “every kynd and age” (598) and stating that, although “Sum leivys

in hope and sum in great thyrlage, / Sum in dispare, sum findis his panys swage” (601-602), they all wear rose garlands and sing together in voices “so clere” and full of “myrth” (604-605). These lovers find joy in their servitude to a higher power, a joy which the narrator has not yet learnt to embrace. Instead, the lovers’ happiness plunges him into yet another complaint, in which he bemoans his “constreynt hart” (607) and the world’s “frele unstedfastnes” (610). Significantly, however, the way in which the narrator describes his pain highlights his view of himself as *solely* a prisoner, a “cative thrall involupit in syte” (613) with a “predestinat” and “crewell fait” (617-618). It is his ultimate assignation of blame for his situation to Cupid and “fals Venus” (634), in fact, that occasions the narrator’s trial for blasphemy, much as Cresseid’s similar curse against these gods leads to her trial in the *Testament of Cresseid*. Just as Cresseid has not yet discovered her capacity to govern her own actions, the narrator is not yet aware of his responsibility to assert himself and be accountable for his own behaviour.⁷⁵ In Douglas’ poem, however, there is also a more explicitly Christian angle than in Henryson’s, as the narrator inhabits a Christian milieu. He is thus especially misguided in his blame of Fortune and Venus for his circumstances, as he ignores the Christian imperative to accept responsibility for the decisions made by one’s free will. Even at this juncture, however, Douglas hints that the narrator will

⁷⁵ Kratzmann has noted this episode’s parallels with the *Testament* (107). Priscilla Bawcutt contends that the poet is “most clearly indebted” in this episode to the Prologue of the *Legend*, in which “the poet had a vision of the god of Love, attended by a large retinue; like Douglas he was accused of a crime against Love—in Chaucer’s case, with heresy; he too had an advocate, Alceste, and in atonement was instructed to ‘spek wel of love’” (*Douglas* 55). Kratzmann also sees these similarities but adds that Chaucer’s “concern with the responsibilities of the poet” in the Prologue “has close affinities with the *House of Fame*” (114), thus justifying his decision to focus on the latter poem in his comparison. Bawcutt’s observations on the differences between Douglas’ and Chaucer’s trial scenes will be discussed shortly.

realise his ability to control his own journey through the act of writing; when the narrator orders himself to “[c]onfesse [his] fatale wofull wretchitnes, / Divide in twane and furth diffound all tye / Aggrevance gret in miserabill endyte” (614-16), he presents an incipient understanding of poetry’s power to express his state of mind, if not yet to shape his or others’ actions.

Venus and her attendants immediately perceive the narrator’s blasphemy, and the goddess summons the narrator from his position of observer, calling him a “reclus imperfyte” (645). The narrator timidly creeps on his knees towards Venus (647) and is bound by her followers (656), reinforcing the narrator’s self-construction as a captive. Varius the clerk reads the charge before a court comprising the judges Cupid, Venus and Mars:⁷⁶

‘Thou wikkyt catyve, wood and furious,
Presumptuously now at this present tyme
My lady here blasphemed in thy ryme.
Hir sonne, hir self and hir court amorus
For till betrais awatit here sen prime.’ (668-672)

Crucially, the clerk emphasises not merely that the narrator blasphemed Venus, but that he did so in his *rhyme*, revealing the power of the narrator’s poetry to critique the goddess’ omnipotence. The narrator, however, has not yet fully embraced this power; he immediately submits himself to the mercy of the

⁷⁶ Notably, Venus’ clerk in the *House of Fame* is not Varius, but Ovid, who occupies a position next to Virgil in Fame’s hall: “And next hym [Virgil] on a piler was, / Of coper, Venus clerk Ovide, / That hath ysowen wonder wide / The grete god of Loves name” (1486-1489). In downplaying Chaucer’s reference to Ovid and replacing the clerk with one whose name evokes the inevitable instability of Love and Fortune, Douglas reinforces the philosophical rather than romantic angle of his vision, responding to Chaucer’s device by using it while making it serve a loftier purpose.

court and promises to obey “Venus mandate and plesour” (677). Varius demands the narrator respond to the charges against him, while at the same time forbidding him from pleading for mercy (680-682). This order requires the narrator to assert himself, and indeed, he criticises the propriety of the judge and the proceedings:

Inclynand law, quod I with pietuus face,
 ‘I me defend, Madame plesyt your grace.’
 ‘Say on,’ quod sche, than said I thus but mare:
 ‘Madame, ye may not syt in till this cace
 For ladyis may be jugis in na place
 And, mare attour, I am na seculare.
 A spirituall man (thocht I be void of lare)
 Clepyt I am, and aucht my lyvys space
 To be remyt till my juge ordinaire.

 ‘I yow beseik, Madame with byssy cure,
 Till gyf ane gracios interlocutur,
 On this exceptionys now proponyt late.’ (691-702)

The narrator’s tone in this response to Venus contains a distinctive mixture of defiance and deference. He challenges Venus’ authority to sit in judgement over him on account of her sex, and yet still takes care to address her as “Madame” while beseeching her to rule in favour of his pleas. Douglas’ narrator questions Venus’ governance but nevertheless realises the necessity of following her rules, even though he questions them.

The narrator claims another basis for his rejection of Venus' authority: as a "spirituall man," he should not be subject to the laws of Venus' court.⁷⁷ The narrator asserts his allegiance to a higher governor in order to avoid subjection to Venus. Venus acknowledges his clerical status but uses it against him, maintaining that clerks such as himself "bene the men [who] bewrays [her] commandis" and "distrublys [her] servandis" (718-719). Bawcutt sees Douglas' conscious distinction between the churchman narrator and the goddess of Love as key to the poet's distinction of his work from Chaucer's Prologue to the *Legend*, which contains a similar trial scene: "Douglas employs themes and motifs very similar to Chaucer's, but his tone and style are quite distinctive. In the *Palice of Honour* the dreamer is a 'clerk,' and this introduces a potentially comic discrepancy between 'spirituall' and 'seculair' which does not exist in Chaucer's poem."⁷⁸ Venus and the narrator both perceive the gulf between the court of Love and the spiritual realm, but Venus sees the narrator's status as a detriment rather than an asset. Venus' attitude signals to the reader that the goddess' view is limited to the secular realm, while the narrator has a higher, more accurate perspective on universal authorities. Bawcutt's argument, however, does not address the streak of deference that runs through the narrator's assertions of spiritual superiority over Venus. While it is undeniable that the poem's value system ultimately privileges the narrator's Christian view over Venus' pagan one, the narrator does fear Venus' capacity to strip him of his properties for self-

⁷⁷ As Bawcutt notes, Douglas' defence here is strikingly similar to his later real-life defence in 1515 against charges of buying the bishopric of Dunkeld directly from Rome without the approval of the Scottish Lords of Council; the Acts of Council from that period report that Douglas claimed "he was and is ane spirituale man, and tharfor my lord governour and lordis of consell are na jugis to him in the said mater" (48-49, qtd. in Bawcutt, *Douglas* 55-56).

⁷⁸ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 55.

governance, and this eventually leads him to a form of compromise whereby the narrator both acknowledges Venus' power and stays true to his allegiances to God, Honour and his own poetic autonomy.

As he awaits Venus' sentence, the narrator is overcome with dread, finding himself unable even to recite the Creed (732-733). His overriding concern is that he will be transformed into "sum bysnyng best [...]/ As in a bere, a bair, ane oule, and ape" (740-741). The narrator broods on various tales of transformation, from Acteon to Nebuchadnezzar (745-762); by contrast, he cares "not half a fle" about the prospect that Venus may punish him with death (736). While the narrator's priorities may initially be puzzling, an explanation may be found in Douglas' preoccupation with proper self-governance; while death would permit Douglas' narrator to be with God—a form of authority to which he would freely submit—transformation into a beast would entail the loss of his free will and his governing mental capacity. The narrator's reaction to his possible fate demonstrates his refusal to be enslaved to secular love and his belief that embracing God's authority is the route to ultimate freedom. This hierarchy of priorities is consistent both with Douglas' Christian reinterpretation of dream-vision conventions and with the poem's emphasis on moral and spiritual self-governance.

Fortuitously, a procession of poets arrives at Venus' court before the goddess hands down her final judgement (787). The narrator believes that the poets' arrival is divinely ordained:

The glorious Lord ryngand in personis thre,
Providit has for my salvation

Be sum gude spretis revelation

Quhilk intercessioun maid, I traist, for me. (776-779)

Significantly, the narrator melds his faith in God's intercession with the poetic nature of his rescuers, thus fusing the governance of God with poetic authority and owing his life to both.

The poets' "court rethorically" (835) proclaims that it "wyll stop our mate / Till justefy thys bisning quhilk blasphemit" (833-834), accepting the narrator into its ranks. The court, as Ebin has pointed out,⁷⁹ defines itself in terms consistent with Douglas' preference of stability to variability:

'Yone is the court of plesand stedfastnes.

Yone is the court of constant merynes.

Yone is the court of joyus disciplyne

Quhilk causys folk thair purpos till expres

In ornat wyse provocand with gladnes,

All gentyll hartis to thare lare inclyne.' (844-849)

The court's self-description as steadfast, constant and disciplined parallels the narrator's praise of God and Honour as enduring. The phrase "joyus disciplyne" is particularly striking, as it conveys precisely the attitude of happiness through servitude that is implied in the narrator's relationship with God. Bawcutt sees "a hint of paradox" in the phrase "which recalls the Horatian synthesis of the *dulce* and the *utile*," thus demonstrating Douglas' advocacy of "the traditional view of

⁷⁹ "In contrast to the mutable Court of Venus, Douglas portrays the Court of Rhetoric as a constant source of comfort and pleasure" (Ebin, *Illuminator* 92).

the poet's office: to teach and to delight."⁸⁰ The paradoxical phrasing of "joyus disciplyne," however, seems also to evoke the similar paradox in Christian thought articulating the proper relationship between man and God. Douglas' message here portrays poetry, like religious devotion, as a challenging practice, but one leading to a life beyond that of this world. This poetic afterlife is not rooted in fame, however, but rather in enduring happiness—a state emanating from within the poet. Thus the "joyus disciplyne" that the poet applies to his work leads to a lasting inner joy in his own accomplishments, rather than from what others think or say.

The court features poets from all eras, ranging from the classical to the contemporary. It also includes poets of various nations, reflective of Douglas' unofficial membership in an international intellectual fraternity. Douglas' lines on the poets of England and Scotland are of particular interest here:

So gret a pres of pepill drew us nere
 The hunder part thare namys is not here.
 Yit thare I saw of Brutus Albion
 Goffryd Chaucere, as *A per se*, sance pere
 In his wulgare, and morell John Gowere.
 Lydgat the monk raid musand him allone.
 Of this natioun I knew also anone
 Gret Kennedy and Dunbar yit undede,
 And Quynntyne with ane huttok on his hede. (916-924)

⁸⁰ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 57.

The narrator here establishes a striking relationship of interconnection between English and Scottish poets. Bawcutt notes the balance between Douglas' lines on the poets of England and Scotland, pointing out that the narrator names three poets from each nation, and that both nations' achievements are dwarfed by earlier stanzas on Latin and Greek poets, suggesting a poetic hierarchy.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the lines dealing with England and Scotland's poets seek to assert Scotland's status as a distinct nation while simultaneously uniting the two countries' literary traditions. Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate are depicted as poets of "Brutus Albion" rather than of England, hinting that Douglas wishes to claim their authority for Scotland's benefit as well as England's. Crucially, however, Douglas uses the term "Brutus Albion" in reference to Britain; while this turn of phrase does remind the reader of the Brutus foundation myth commonly associated with the English chronicle tradition, the name "Albion" also conjures associations with Albanactus, the son of Brutus who is said in such works as Monmouth's *Historia* and Bower's *Scotichronicon* to have governed Scotland. Thus, by describing Britain in terms that acknowledge the Brutus myth while highlighting Scotland's role in that myth, Douglas creates a climate of interpretation in which English poets may also be claimed as part of the Scottish literary tradition. As Morse has pointed out, however, Douglas also makes a subtle but clear distinction between England and Scotland, referring to the latter as "this natioun" and describing Chaucer as matchless in "*his vulgare*" (italics added).⁸² While the prevailing current of a pan-national literary brotherhood is

⁸¹ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 42.

⁸² Morse 109.

not extinguished, Scotland is here semantically distinguished as a nation from England, a nation with a distinct literary tradition.

Just as Douglas claims Scotland's literary independence in his description of the court of poets' British contingent, so too does the narrator gain his independence from Venus' punishment through the act of writing. Calliope pleads on the narrator's behalf, using the defence that

‘[t]o sla him for sa small a cryme, God wate,

Greter degradying wer to your estate

All out than wes his sclander or sich plede.

Quhow may a fule your hie renoun chakmate?’ (957-960)

Calliope ensures the narrator's freedom by making him seem utterly powerless—it is her assertion of what she calls the narrator's foolishness and helplessness that rather surprisingly restores to him his life. Poetry also grants the narrator's freedom in a more literal way: Venus agrees to set the narrator free on the condition that “he will say sum breif / Or schort ballat in contrare pane and wo / Tuychand my laud and his plesand releif” (994-996). As long as he composes this poem—and, equally importantly, does not “ganestand” (resist) (998)—Venus will free him. The narrator dutifully submits to Venus' request and composes a short hymn of praise (1015-1044). Interestingly, however, apart from a brief moment of praise to Venus for his mind's salvation, the narrator composes a work that seems to address not the goddess, but his own mind. The poem emphasises the deliverance of the poet's “unwemmyt wit” (1015) from “servyce and bondage” (1017) and apostrophises that wit for the vast majority of his hymn, at one point asking it,

Quha is in welth, quha is weill fortunat,
 Quha is in peace, dissoverit from debbat,
 Quha levys in hop, quha levys in esperance,
 Quha standis in grace; quha standis in ferme estat,
 Quha is content, rejosyt air and lat,
 Or quha is he that fortune doith avance
 Bot thow, that is replenyst with plesance? (1025-1031)

The poet's praise of his own free wit—calling it the source of peace, hope, grace and stability of estate—overshadows the poem's ostensible purpose as a hymn to Venus. As articulated in the final line of the second stanza—"Thow hes thy wyll: now be not dissolat" (1034)—the poem is more of an ode of praise to the self-governing mind than it is to Venus. While the narrator calls upon his wit to "[r]endir lovyngis for thy salvatioun / Till Venus" (1039-1040), his contention that Venus will bring him "[r]est at all ease, but sair or sytful schouris" (1041) seems inconsistent with Venus' volatile reputation; one doubts that anyone would be able to "[a]byde in quyet" in Venus' "maist constant weelfare" (1043). The narrator's decision to finish the poem as it began, with an address to his "[u]nwemmyt wyt, delyverit of dangare" (1044), offers a final reassurance to the reader that this poem is not really about Venus at all. Furthermore, the repetition gives the poem a circular feel that reminds the reader of the constancy of the court of poets, linking the narrator's autonomous mind with the idea of poetic expression. While Venus and Calliope accept the poem as evidence of the narrator's servitude, with Calliope saying, "I stand content: thow art obedient" (1047), the narrator's verses demonstrate how he is able to dodge artfully what he

feels to be an unworthy authority and govern his own mind through poetry, all the while expressing a sufficient amount of deference in order for him to maintain his freedom. This strategy serves Douglas well throughout the entire poem with respect to his relationship with Chaucer; while never explicitly challenging Chaucer's literary authority, Douglas subtly asserts his own poetic independence through judicious departures from the *House of Fame*.

Douglas also advocates a higher morality in the *Palice* through other means, mainly centred on his narrator's goals and observations in comparison with Chaucer's. The *Palice*'s narrator is repeatedly commissioned to record the truth and to report what he sees; the nymph commands him to write of what he observes in Venus' realm—"Quhat thow seyst, luke eftirwartis thow write" (1464)—and is later told by Venus to "put in ryme that proces than quyt tynt" (1752). While the *House of Fame*'s narrator states that he does not presume to "shewe craft, but o sentence" (1100), he later expresses a less ponderous objective in his observation: "[T]o pleyen and for to lere" (2133). Douglas' narrator divulges no similar desire to amuse himself, focusing solely on his vision's capacity to reveal to him a greater truth.

The *Palice*'s focus on communicating a world of eternal wisdom is in clear opposition to the *House of Fame*'s emphasis on a quality known for its capricious nature. By transforming images associated with Fame's realm to serve his own goal of describing Honour's enduring kingdom, Douglas reinterprets Chaucer's poem to convey what he considers a more serious moral message. A clear example of this technique is Douglas' reinterpretation of the *House of Fame*'s engraved foundations of ice. In Chaucer's poem, the House of Fame stands upon

a huge glassy rock which the narrator finds difficult to scale (1115-1125). When he realises the “rock” is actually ice, the narrator cannot help but remark on the transience of such a material: “By Seynt Thomas of Kent, / This were a feble fundament / To bidden on a place hye” (1131-1133). The narrator continues to discuss the ice’s instability when he remarks on the names engraved upon it:

Tho sawgh I al the half ygrave
 With famous folkes names fele,
 That had iben in mochel wele,
 And her fames wide yblowe.
 But wel unnethes koude I knowe
 Any letters for to rede
 Hir names by; for, out of drede,
 They were almost ofthowed so
 That of the lettres oon or two
 Was molte away of every name,
 So unfamous was woxe hir fame.
 But men seyn, “What may ever laste?” (1136-1147)

The narrator’s remarks reveal the transient nature of fame: those on whom the sun shines will soon fade into obscurity.⁸³

Douglas’ version of these glassy surfaces, on the other hand, seems a direct response to Chaucer’s question, “What may ever laste?” Before reaching the Palace of Honour, the narrator climbs up “a passage ingrave, / Hewyn in the roch

⁸³ See Ebin: “Chaucer’s description emphasises the erratic and transient nature of worldly fame; the names of the famous people engraved in the hill of ice [...] melt from the sun’s heat on one side and remain undamaged on the other, the shaded side” (*Illuminator* 94).

of slyde hard merbyll stone. / Aganne the sonne lyk as the glas it schone” (1299-1301). Like the mountain of ice on which the House of Fame rests, the route to the Palace of Honour is slippery and difficult to climb; as Bawcutt has noted, the path to Honour is made of marble, not of ice, indicating Honour’s status as a more enduring virtue.⁸⁴ The contrast between the steadfastness of Honour and the fickle nature of the world is also reinforced in other ways, as when the nymph has the narrator look down from the hill onto the “wrechytt warld” (1344); the earth is engulfed by a “terribill tempest” (1351), and those people who seek refuge in a “peralus palyce” (1354) and a “lusty barge” (1358) are largely unable to escape the storm. The nymph explains that the ship is “the Carvell of the State of Grace” (1386), from which anyone can be thrown but only a few can find their way back—with the help of Christ (1387-1395). The “peralus palyce,” however, is not identified. This brief reference may be to Chaucer’s House of Fame, and perhaps Douglas includes it as a subtle means of highlighting the contrast between the values systems advanced in Chaucer’s poem and his own.

The Palace of Honour is constructed of “wallys of stone” (1774), a material that, unlike ice, will stand the test of time. While the walls are slippery like those leading to the House of Fame (1776), in this case the slipperiness conveys how difficult it is to attain Honour rather than how Fame melts away. The palace is made of crystal (1829), a substance that looks like ice but endures, a response to the fragile ice on which the House of Fame is built. Engraved on the walls are “[a]ll naturall thyng men may in erd consave” (1836), from the spheres and zodiac

⁸⁴ Bawcutt, *Douglas* 60. Kratzmann (116) has also noted the contrast between Fame and Honour’s environs.

(1840-1842) to the positions and motions of the planets (1855-1859). These images represent the larger, more stable patterns of the cosmos rather than the transitory nature of earthly events, and so when the narrator reveals that the engravings also include “mony gudly personagis / Quhilkis semyt all lusty quyky magis” (1860-1861), the reader understands that these personages enjoy not an ephemeral fame, but a lasting glory stemming from the enduring quality of goodness. The inner close of the palace is constructed of similarly durable materials—“cristall stanys” (1884) that shine with an almost blinding brilliance (1885) linked together with silver instead of cement (1886-1887) and fitted closely against beryls (1888). The doors are made of “massy gold” (1892) and the towers constructed of burnished ivory (1893), while Honour’s court is bedecked with various precious stones, ranging from topaz (1902) and amethyst (1907) to sapphires, diamonds and rubies (1913-1914). The palace’s bejewelled structure evokes the architecture of another eternal edifice, that of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:10-27; this parallel further entrenches Douglas’ poem within a Christian value system.⁸⁵ The overwhelming impression left by the description of the palace is one of eternity, a clear opposition to the House of Fame’s transience.

The respective descriptions of Fame and Honour in Chaucer’s and Douglas’ poems contribute further to the idea that the *Palice of Honour* both draws on the

⁸⁵ Bawcutt also points out the resemblances between Douglas’ description and that of the New Jerusalem, but adds that Douglas may also be drawing on the contemplative writings of St. Gregory in the narrator’s description of how he catches a glimpse of Honour through a crack in the wall of his palace (*Douglas* 61). Bawcutt contends that “by using such imagery he seems almost to equate Honour with God himself” (*Douglas* 61), although the fact that Honour’s court consists mainly of “heroic warriors and patriots” at times makes him seem more like Mars (*Douglas* 62). It should be noted, however, that the presence of figures such as Hercules and Achilles in Honour’s court is not necessarily inconsistent with a view of Honour as a Christian virtue, as medieval entertainments like the Pageant of the Nine Worthies attest.

House of Fame and seeks to distinguish itself with a Christian significance. Chaucer's narrator's recollection of Fame's multitude of eyes (1381-1382), golden hair (1386-1387) and "upstondyng eres / And tonges, as on bestes heres" (1389-1390) attest to her formidable nature. The narrator nevertheless remains sufficiently in control of his wits to describe Fame and her environs in detail, recounting not only his impressions of Fame's physical appearance but also peripheral details such as the Muses' song of praise to Fame (1405-1406) and the fact that she carries on her shoulders "[b]othe th'armes and the name" of Alexander and Hercules, who "hadde large fame" (1411-1413). The narrator also described the authors of old atop the pillars in Fame's hall, from "Ebrayk Josephus" (1433) and Statius (1460) to Homer, Dares, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Guido delle Colonne (1466-70), not to mention Ovid (1487) and Virgil (1483).⁸⁶ What is most significant about this scene is that it exists at all; the narrator's ability to recount the details of both Fame and her hall indicates that he (and Chaucer) possess the power to observe—and that Fame is ultimately subject to the powers of a skilled poet. This dynamic renders Fame less intimidating and allows Chaucer to assert his own status as a poet, an observer and creator of the scene.

By contrast, Douglas' depiction of Honour places the narrator squarely below the god in the *Palice's* cosmic hierarchy. While this ranking may make it seem that Douglas acknowledges his inferior capacity for self-governance and poetic composition (especially compared to Chaucer), the very fact that Honour has such an effect on the narrator speaks not only to the god's superior power over

⁸⁶ The mysterious and apocryphal Lollius, whom Chaucer claims as a source for the *Troilus*, is also mentioned (1468), perhaps a subtle means for Chaucer to insert himself among the ranks of the great authors.

Chaucer's *Fame* but also to Douglas' narrator's superior moral development in subjecting himself so willingly to a Christian virtue. Thus, through this apparently humble subjection Douglas actually asserts his poem's, and his own, worthiness.

The reader's first impression of Honour is not shaped by the narrator's direct experience of him, but rather by the nymph-guide's description of the god and his court. Honour is described in terms that clearly evoke strong political power; the nymph refers to him as "[t]he mychty prynce, the gretest Empriour" (1792) and describes his court in detail, assigning allegorical virtues such as Charity, Discretion, Temperance and Constancy positions corresponding to those in an actual medieval royal household (1795-1827). The nymph's careful attention to the inner workings of Honour's court invest the god with a political significance, one reinforced when the narrator, observing the court firsthand, notes that among those present are the Scottish kings Gregory, Kenneth and Robert, "[w]ith otheris mo that beis not here rehersyt" (2028). While Chaucer's *Fame* has no clear political associations, Douglas' *Honour* is clearly intended to be associated with the trappings of medieval royal power, particularly Scottish royal power. Significantly, of the leaders the narrator identifies in the court, all but the Scottish kings date from the biblical and classical eras; unlike the *Court of Poets*, whose denizens form a transnational and transgenerational literary brotherhood, examples of contemporary political honour in the *Court of Honour* are limited to Scots.

Honour is such an overwhelming presence that the narrator cannot bear to look at him directly for more than a moment before he is struck down:⁸⁷

Intronyt sat a god armypotent,
 On quhais gloryus visage as I blent,
 In extasy, be his brychtnes, atonys
 He smate me doun and byrsyt all my bonys.
 Thare lay I still in swoun, with colour blaucht,
 Quhil at the last my Nyphe up hes me kaucht.

(1921-1926)

The nymph initially mocks the narrator for his frailty (1936-1938), and when he responds angrily she chides him, saying that “[k]yrkmen wer ay jentill to ther wyvys” (1944). Parkinson sees the narrator’s ultimate inability to handle the sight of Honour as evidence that the narrator “is pushed away from the centre of authority and privilege, a push which occurs decisively quite early in the action and which is given fresh momentum at the close, thus demonstrating the irrevocability of the protagonist’s outcast state.”⁸⁸ It is debatable, however, exactly to what extent the narrator is an outcast from Honour’s authority. While the nymph’s remark is a rebuke, it reminds the reader that the narrator is a churchman, marking him (and, by implication, Douglas) as a member of the established spiritual hierarchy. When the narrator retorts that he fainted because the sight of Honour “[o]virset [his] wyt and all [his] spretis swa / [He] mycht not

⁸⁷Ebin contends that this scene is humorous—that the narrator, still not enlightened about the extent of Honour’s power, “comically fails to understand the significance of his vision” causing him to faint (*Illuminator* 95). While Douglas does employ humorous elements of the “ignorant dreamer” convention, the scene can also be read on a more spiritual level, as argued above.

⁸⁸Parkinson, “Farce of Modesty” 15.

stand” (1950-1951), therefore, the nymph understands the narrator’s reaction—and the reader, too, is meant to understand Douglas’ swoon as the natural response of a good Christian to a worthy governor. What might initially be perceived as an unacceptable loss of control is therefore recast as an expression of a higher moral discipline—an allegiance to Honour that suggests Douglas’ superior spirituality.

When the nymph subsequently explains the nature of Honour’s rule, she implicitly advocates Honour’s otherworldly and eternal governance over the ephemeral authority of worldly forces such as Fame. Honour, she says, rules “this hevinly ryng” in a way vastly different from “warldly honoring” (1972-1973); while “erdly glore is not bot vanyte / That, as we se, sa suddandly will wend” (1978-1979), “vertuus honour nevir mare sale end” (1980). While earthly glory is “[m]aist inconstant, maist slyd and transitore” (1982), shaking men “[b]aith up and doun, baith to and fro” (1988), their virtue will stay with them forever:

And not ellis bot vertuus werkis richt
Sall with thaym wend, nother thair pompe nor mycht.
Ay vertu ryngis in lestand honour clere;
Remembir than that vertu hes no pere. (1995-1998)

The nymph is adamant on the contrast between the transitory nature of “erdly pompe” (2013) and “fame of [people’s] estates” (1994) and the “perfyte sikkyr”(perfectly steadfast) nature of virtue and honour, which “lestand ay” (2008-2009). While the word “fame” is used only once in the nymph’s speech, it seems evident that this speech seeks to downplay the prominent position given to Fame in Chaucer’s poem and emphasise Honour’s eternal nature, a virtue to

which it is justified to subject oneself. As Kratzmann notes, “In place of Chaucer’s disavowal of interest in personal renown and a rather tentative affirmation of the enduring qualities of literature, we are offered in the *Palice* a confident statement that it is the poet’s task to be virtuous in the conduct of his own life, and to pay special attention to the quest for honour as the subject matter for poetry.”⁸⁹ Kratzmann believes this is a direct response to Chaucer, and this argument makes sense given Douglas’ clear reinterpretation of other images from the *House of Fame* throughout the *Palice*. The undeniable royal and political connotations of Honour and his court, moreover, suggest that the poet advocates deference to honourable figures in both moral and political realms, a message no doubt favourable to Douglas’ primary audience, James IV.

Douglas’ dedicatory verses to James IV employ similar strategies to those used throughout the *Palice* to establish Douglas’ literary authority. In these stanzas, Douglas affects a persona of poetic insufficiency in order to project an aura of modest deference—with the aim, paradoxically, of achieving greater ecclesiastical authority.

Douglas establishes a clear link between James and the poem’s sources of enduring power—God and Honour—by emphasising the lasting nature of the king’s rule. Douglas grants James a “laure crown of infynyte glory” (2144), an image of both royal and poetic power, and states that James “mot have eternally / Supreme honour, renoun of chevalry, / Felycité perdurand in this erd, / With etern blys in the hevyn by fatal werd” (2146-2149). Here, James is linked with eternal Honour, enduring felicity and “blys in the hevyn,” linking the monarch to

⁸⁹ Kratzmann 118.

a heavenly as well as worldly kingdom. Douglas' self-presentation in these verses, by contrast, associates the poet with change and error. He asks James to "pardon all sic variance / With sum benyng respect of ferme constance" (2157-2158), thus characterising his errors as variable and standing in contrast against James' constant nobility. Douglas further debases his work as "rusty, rurall rebaldry / Lakand cunnyng" (2150-2151) and a "burall quair, of eloquence all quyte" (2161); he even presents himself as James' "puyr lege onlerd" (2151), possessing only "vulgare ignorance" (2154). Douglas clearly employs the humility *topos* in his depiction of himself and his work, but he is also able to assert his goals for career advancement, expressing the hope that James will forgive his "pretendit negligence" (2159) and that the king, through his power, "may humyll thing avance" (2160). Just as his narrator's swoon at the sight of Honour superficially suggests unworthiness but can actually be interpreted as an appropriate Christian response, Douglas' critical self-presentation in his verses to James in fact promotes his value to the king. If Douglas is indeed an outsider to the courtly world, these stanzas imply, it is because he transcends it. That Douglas is unafraid to push for professional advancement in the midst of his self-deprecation clearly reveals the purpose of his rhetoric.

Furthermore, Douglas cannot resist renouncing the work he criticises so severely, establishing even further his autonomy and worth as an individual; he says to his poem,

Thy barrant termis and thy vyle endyte
Sall not be min; I wyll not have the wyte.
For, as for me, I quytcleme that I kend tha.

Thow art bot stouth. Thyft lovys lycht but lyte. (2164-2167)

Interestingly, Douglas seeks to separate his own intelligence from his work, even though he crafted it. Douglas' brief but tantalising reference to his poem being "stouth" and "thyft" makes one wonder whether he here refers slyly to his poem's relationship with the *House of Fame*. If so, the allusion is surely ironic, as throughout the *Palice* Douglas has fought to create a poem with a moral system superior to Chaucer's. Douglas' deferent pose to both James and, more implicitly, Chaucer in these final stanzas actually reveals his poetic self-confidence. Just as in his Prologues to the *Eneados*, Douglas asserts his capacity to write for Scotland; while the *Palice* sees him adopt a more deceptively deferent tone, the goals are the same as in the *Eneados*: to assert his own poetic skill, associate himself with his powerful literary forebears, and establish a Scottish poetic tradition.

Chapter 5

Minding the Kingdom, Tending the Text:

Governance in William Dunbar's Poetry

“My mynde to me a kyngdome is,” wrote Sir Edward Dyer in 1588,¹ and while these words were composed by an Englishman nearly a century after William Dunbar's flourishing in the early sixteenth century, they offer a metaphor useful in considering Dunbar's notably varied oeuvre. It is inevitable upon a first reading of Dunbar's poetry to remark upon his use of eclectic poetic personae, which range from the poverty-stricken supplicant and invective-hurling satirist to the political panegyrist and aureate rhetorician.² This variety of voices, combined with a relative lack of external historical evidence relating to Dunbar's life,³ make an intensive biographical reading of his poetry at best incomplete and at worst dangerously speculative.⁴ It is wise to recall Joanne Norman's statement that we “can only infer who/what Dunbar is from the discourses that exist connected to

¹ “My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is,” from Ralph M. Sargent, *The Life and Lyrics of Sir Edward Dyer* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968) 200, l. 1.

² This opinion has been advanced by several of Dunbar's biographers; Priscilla Bawcutt perhaps expresses it most concisely: “Dunbar is a poet of enormous variety. He speaks with almost too many voices” (*Dunbar the Makar* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1992] 1).

³ Much of the empirical data associated with Dunbar's career derives from contemporary public records, including the Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland and the Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland, which list payments made to a William Dunbar most critics agree to be the poet. See Aeneas J.G. Mackay's introduction to John Small's STS edition of Dunbar's poetry, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: William Blackwood for the STS, 1893), esp. xxxi- xl, for details on Dunbar's remuneration from the court of James IV. Earlier records featuring a William Dunbar, particularly the William Dunbar who studied at St. Andrew's in the late 1470s, are conventionally associated with Dunbar the poet, although the association is not conclusive. See Bawcutt, *Dunbar* 5-8, for a survey of the information and issues related to the biography of the poet.

⁴ Joanne Norman contends that this approach risks creating a “heuristic circle”: “The poetry is mined for autobiographical and historical references that are confirmed (or not) by external non-literary documentation; external history is then used to explain or interpret the poetry and, by extension, the poet” (“William Dunbar and the Bakhtinian Construction of the Self,” *Older Scots Poetry*, ed. Sally Mapstone [Edinburgh: John Donald, 2005] 244).

his name, and we can only examine the effects his language has in its context—not proceed from there to an analysis of the shadowy ‘personality’ of the author.”⁵

Within Norman’s sensible limitations, we can still derive a sense of Dunbar’s poetic preoccupations by noting the recurrence of certain motifs throughout his multifaceted works. While critics such as John Speirs and Edmund Reiss have respectively claimed an overriding “dark cast” and unifying “morality” in Dunbar’s poems,⁶ the vast and general nature of these themes limits their utility in illuminating Dunbar’s unique poetic contribution. It is here that Dyer’s words become most useful in describing a more specific concern infusing Dunbar’s work: that of the vital role self-discipline plays in autonomy, whether one is looking to establish mental serenity or a strong, self-governing kingdom. Dyer’s metaphorical association of the mind and the kingdom concisely describes and parallels Dunbar’s persistent relationship of the two in his own oeuvre, which is both preoccupied with and borne of James IV’s court. In his personal, petitionary, occasional and courtly poetry, Dunbar explores concentric spheres of self-governance, demonstrating how the concept regulates and liberates the realms of the mind, the court, the Scottish kingdom—and, ultimately, the Scottish literary tradition, as Dunbar exerts a form of poetic self-governance that distinguishes his work from that of Geoffrey Chaucer.

In “How sowld I gouerne me, and in quhat wyis?” and “He rewillis weill that weill him self can gyde,” Dunbar asserts that the individual must cultivate

⁵Joanne Norman, “A Postmodern Look at a Medieval Poet: The Case of William Dunbar,” *SSL* 26 (1991): 347.

⁶John Speirs, *The Scots Literary Tradition*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1962) 36; Edmund Reiss, *William Dunbar* (Boston: Twayne, 1979) 69.

self-discipline in order to lead a moral life. One can perceive the expression of this self-contained dynamic in the broader relationships explored in Dunbar's poetry. In his petitionary poems to James IV, including his benefice poems and the three "discretion" poems, Dunbar asserts through his articulation of the king's responsibility to reward Dunbar that a truly powerful king must fulfil his duties towards his subjects. The notion of political governance requiring parallel measures of autonomy and concession is especially prominent in Dunbar's occasional poems marking James' marriage to Margaret Tudor in 1503, a union that presaged the official union of the Scottish and English crowns a century later. In his poems for Margaret, "Gladethe, thoue queyne of Scottis regioun" and "Blythe Aberdeane, thow beriall of all tounis," as well as the dream-vision "The Thrissill and the Rois," Dunbar cultivates floral and natural metaphors in order to assert that Margaret's marriage to James will graft the best aspects of the English kingdom onto those of Scotland, a process that does not threaten Scotland's autonomy but rather reinforces its power. Dunbar establishes a similar Anglo-Scottish relationship with Chaucer's legacy as literary authority. In those works in which Chaucer is named specifically, the *Goldyn Targe* and "I that in heill wes and gladnes" (commonly known as "Lament for the Makars"), Dunbar makes clear that Chaucer's literary influence can both be championed and channelled by Scottish poets to create a stronger autonomous literary tradition. In doing so, Dunbar paradoxically establishes a sort of supremacy over Chaucer by commemorating him as a literary master, while simultaneously affirming the position of his own works and those of his compatriots in the establishment of a Scottish literary canon.

The Kingdom of the Mind: Dunbar's Philosophy of

Individual Self-Governance

In order to understand how Dunbar advocates a model of royal, national and literary self-governance in his poetry, it is useful to first examine how Dunbar's poetry treats the issue of mental self-governance. Even at this personal level, however, Dunbar emphasises the relationship between his individual poetic persona and his larger courtly context, a relationship from which the individual must detach himself in order to be mentally and spiritually autonomous. In "How sowld I rewill me or quhat whyis" (also known by its refrain, "Lord God, how sall I governe me?"), the speaker expresses his confusion and distress concerning how to avoid the court's reproach and derision.

Previous interpretations of the poem have tended to emphasise its debt to "a common medieval pulpit theme" (as Ian Simpson Ross puts it), and indeed, given the existence of several analogues featuring rhetorical constructions quite similar to Dunbar's, his poem may well participate in this tradition.⁷ Edmund Reiss offers a similarly morally-centred interpretation, arguing that the poem offers a "criticism of the particular judgements of the world and, moreover, of the ability of man to judge in any responsible way" and that "Dunbar's moralisings function actually as satires of the world and of those who embrace it."⁸ Tom Scott also

⁷ Ian Simpson Ross, *William Dunbar* (Leiden: Brill, 1981) 156. As an example, Ross quotes from a sermon by the Franciscan Nicholas Bozon: "[N]o one can please all; if he is quiet and natural in hall, then he is held particular or haughty; if he [is] affable and amusing, braggart or boaster [...] [I]f he is liberal or generous, then he is foolish or too lavish" (Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1961] 457, n. 2; qtd. in Ross 156).

⁸ Reiss 77, 78.

embraces a satirical reading, contending that the poem's criticism of the court illuminates Dunbar's "vengeful, deeply self-centred and ego-centred worldview."⁹

Scott's dark psychological assessment conflates Dunbar the persona with Dunbar the poet, precluding the possibility that Dunbar creates an exaggeratedly disconsolate speaker to infuse his petitionary poems with humour (on which more later). Scott's (and Reiss') identification of the poem as a satire of the court, however, is generally useful. A satirist adopts a position of distance in order to assess his targets, and in "How sowld I gouerne me" the speaker ultimately realises his spiritual health depends on him living as an outsider within the court, regulating his own behaviour with the help of God.

In contrasting the contradictory external pressures of his fellow members of court with the constant faith required by God, Dunbar conveys not only that the individual must govern himself in keeping with God's law, but that this very process of self-restraint is a step towards earning God's favour, which Dunbar presents as a form of liberation from the court's conflicting pressures. The laissez-faire moral environment of the court is presented here as more confining than the stricter codes of behaviour required in a moral life; as will be demonstrated later, this paradox of greater freedom through increased structure reverberates through Dunbar's poems on the proper behaviour of a king, the rapprochement between Scotland and England, and the relationship between the two kingdoms' literary traditions.

⁹ Tom Scott, *Dunbar: A Critical Exposition of the Poems* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966) 143.

As the poem begins, the speaker establishes his preferred dynamic of governance, yearning for a guiding force that will teach him how to guide himself: “How sowld I rewill me or quhat wyis, / I wald sum wyisman wald dewyis” (1-2).¹⁰ This dynamic between ruling oneself and being ruled is reinforced throughout the poem, most notably in the refrain that ends each stanza: “Lord God, how sall I governe me?” (5, 10, 15, etc.). This refrain asks for God’s advice to help Dunbar govern his own behaviour; in essence, it posits that Dunbar can use God’s help in order to increase his own self-discipline and ultimately prevail against the wagging tongues and fickle allegiances of the court. The very repetition of the speaker’s call to God at the end of each stanza evokes the inherent discipline of the poem’s structure, casting into even sharper contrast the court’s unstable and contradictory judgements of the speaker’s behaviour. The speaker’s frustration at the court’s rejections manifests itself diversely, from his assertion that, if he is “galland, lusty and blyth” (6), the court will say, “3on man, out of his mynd is he, / Or sum hes done him confort kyth” (8-9) to his belief that if he looks “sorrowfull and sad, / Than will thay say that [he is] mad” (11-12). The speaker is thus bullied into a seemingly inescapable position; his concern for the court’s opinion risks rendering him incapable of displaying any public emotion, placing him entirely under the power of his peers. The speaker’s increasing desperation reaches a climax in the eighth stanza, wherein he supplements his repeated calls for God’s guidance with the specific wish that his “gyding war dewysit” (36). These requests for guidance from above initially

¹⁰ All Dunbar quotations in this chapter are from *The Poems of William Dunbar*, ed. Priscilla Bawcutt, 2 vols. (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1998).

suggest a position of subservience identical to that which he currently experiences: just as the court orders the speaker to live according to unreasonable standards, this higher force to which the speaker appeals would also expect him to live according to a specific code. The difference, of course, is that the speaker asks God to help him rule *himself*—a position of supplication that nonetheless allows room for the speaker to exercise his own will. The speaker's desire to live a life that is both self-regulated and governed by God is given fullest expression in the final stanza:

Sen all is iugit, baith gude and ill,
 And I may no mans tung hald still,
 To do the best my mynd salbe.
 Latt every man say quhat he will,
 The gracious God mot governe me. (41-45)

The speaker here acknowledges that he is powerless in certain spheres—in particular, he cannot control the court's wagging tongues. But he does have dominion over his own mind, and he will seek to keep his thoughts in line with God, the only authority that truly matters. While the speaker explicitly states that God must govern him, the entire stanza suggests that the speaker's mind is his own kingdom, a place where he may escape the court's pressures and be free to devote himself to God. This freedom to serve paradoxically liberates the speaker from his earthly existence; by choosing to serve God, the speaker exercises dominion over his behaviour and mind, embodying the concept of self-governance.

“To dwell in court, my friend, gife that thow list” (better known by its refrain, “He rewillis weill that weill him self can gyd”) is often glossed over by critics as little more than a generic criticism of court life.¹¹ Deviating from this critical trend (albeit only slightly) is Ross, who notes the poem’s prevailing tension between the “volatility and deceitfulness of court life” and the speaker’s advocacy of “steadfast attention to business” and a “stable relationship with God as friend.”¹² Ross’ framing of the poem with these contrasting terms is useful, but one can go even further and contend that the poem does not contrast the court and God merely in terms of volatility and stability, but also in terms of liberty and constraint, with the connotations of those concepts shifting as the poem unfolds.

Dunbar’s poem explores the contrast between the restrictiveness of court life (which on the surface may appear libertine, but in fact adheres to exacting standards of social behaviour) and the freedom in pursuing a regimen of self-discipline. The speaker achieves this contrast in two ways: by advocating a retreat from the world of the court into the realm of the mind, in which one has true dominion; and by enlisting God as an ally—notably, not as a master—in the process. Retreating from the court rather than actively working towards its reform may seem superficially to be a form of defeat, but Dunbar frames this process as one of mental separation rather than rejection of or submission to the court. The shift towards mental governance is thus a journey towards increased autonomy.

¹¹ Bawcutt, for one, describes the poem as “highly generic,” in which “[p]ractical counsel on how to succeed in the world is interspersed with conventional moralising” (*Dunbar* 141). Scott contends the poem advances sound moral precepts, albeit ones from which Dunbar often deviates in other poems (155).

¹² Ross 141.

The speaker begins by advising his friend that if he wishes to “dwell in court” (1), he should define his position within the court as one of an observant outsider: “Behold and heir, and lat thy tung tak rest, / In mekle speiche is pairt of vanitie, / And for no malyce preis the nevir to lie” (3-5). Rather than implicate himself in the intrigues of the court, the speaker counsels, his friend should embrace a more liminal position in which he may enjoy the status of court membership while simultaneously possessing an outsider’s moral superiority. That this superiority is derived from self-governance rather than governance of others is clear in the speaker’s advice not to impose one’s admonitions on the unwilling audience of the court: “Als trubill nevir thy self, sone, be no tyd, / Vthiris to reiwll that will not rewlit be” (6-7). One should instead embrace self-governance, as it offers protection from the court’s social and moral pressures. This conclusion is reflected in the recurring refrain, “He rewlis weill that weill him self can gyd” (8, 16, 24, etc.), a repetition that serves a similar structural function as that of “How sowlde I gouerne me.”

The speaker’s advocacy of quasi-isolation extends into subsequent stanzas, engaging more explicitly with notions of worldly versus individual governance. The speaker warns his auditor to be careful of those whom he advises, cautioning him not to put his “honour into aventure” (11) since “[a]ne freind may be [a] fo, as fortoun steiris” (12). The speaker’s image of Fortune guiding a ship calls to mind the original definition of “gubernare” and recalls that the poem does not encourage an active battle against the court’s potentially corrupt forces, but instead recommends that the individual free himself from the urge to enslave himself to the court. The reference to Fortune’s ability to suddenly reverse

friendships reminds the reader of Boethius' *Consolation*, in which Philosophy counsels Boethius not to fight or rail against Fortune, but merely to detach himself from the belief that she is all-important.

In the third stanza, the speaker advises his friend, "Haif pacience, thocht thow no lordschip posseid, / For hie vertew may stand in law estait" (17-18). While the friend may not have the rank associated with secular power, his "vertew" offers an alternative, superior means of governance which can survive a shift to "law estait" and withstand Fortune's vicissitudes. While the speaker expresses momentary doubt that anyone can shun the "desyre" and "dispyt" (20, 23) required for true self-governance, the refrain's reiteration (24) suggests ultimate faith in the principle of self-rule.

In the fourth stanza, the speaker advises his friend to flee the corrupt elements of court life:

Fle from the fallowschip of sic as ar defamit,
 And fra all fals tungis fulfild with flattry,
 Als fra all schrewis, or ellis thow art eschamit.
 Sic art thow callit as is thy cumpany.
 Fle parrellus taillis foundit of invy.
 With wilfull men, son, argown thow no tyd,
 Quhome no resson may seis nor pacify:
 He rewlis weill that weill him self can gyd. (25-32)

The speaker advises avoidance rather than confrontation or argument; in so doing, he extends the sentiment first expressed when he counsels the auditor not to trouble himself with ruling others "that will not rewlit be" (7). Here, however, the

speaker differentiates more clearly between himself and the other members of court: he possesses the faculty of “ressone” (31), which satisfies wise men such as himself and the author but is of no value to the more shallow members of the court. The speaker reinforces this sentiment in the fifth stanza when he says, “Be war also to counsall or coreck / Him that extold hes far him self in pryd, / Quhair parrell is but proffeit or effect” (37-39). Combined with his warning against demonstrating any disapproval of the court, even with one’s facial expressions (35-36), the speaker counsels full intellectual detachment from court life, but not explicit rejection of it. This advice contradictorily yet pragmatically couples disapprobation of the court with tolerance of its faults. Once again, the speaker advises against attempting to impose reason on the unreasonable, favouring instead a focus on one’s own efforts to live a reasonable life; in his view, the latter is the best and most achievable form of governance.

In the sixth and final stanza, the speaker offers advice on what to embrace rather than avoid:

And sen thow seyis mony thingis variand,
 With all thy hart treit bissines and cure.
 Hald God thy freind, evir stabill be him stand,
 He will the confort in all misaventure. (41-44)

In these lines, the speaker makes clear that an important part of “self-governance” is in fact a dependence on God to guide one through life’s instabilities. This dependence, however, is not framed in terms of submission, but of friendship and comfort, a relationship in which the individual and God will stand side by side. The speaker’s particular way of expressing this relationship allows him to

maintain the spirit of the refrain, which returns to conclude the poem (48). While there is a suggestion, then, of embracing God's guidance, the poem's overall attitude towards governance is one of self-discipline, of making one's own mind a kingdom in which reason and virtue prevail. This process requires neither active confrontation with the world of the secular court nor denial of God's power, but nevertheless accords great authority to the individual as he creates an autonomous world within, one requiring God's aid but ultimately embodying an ideal of self-governance.

Order in the Court: Governance in Dunbar's Benefice Poems

In "How sowld I gouerne me" and "To dwell in court," Dunbar posits a model for individual governance that favours withdrawal from potentially corrupting influences and the creation of an interior mental realm. In his petitionary poems to James IV, Dunbar demonstrates how such a model of governance may be applied to interpersonal relationships, particularly those between a king and his subject. In general, Dunbar's petitionary poems have received relatively little analysis. Only two articles, published over thirty years apart, treat these poems in depth, both focusing on the extent to which the poems reflect (or do not reflect) Dunbar's actual position in the court.¹³ Certain critics, including Bawcutt and Reiss, have situated the poems as a group within the wider

¹³ T.S. Dorsch, who finds the poems various in tone if not in versification (287), offers an especially biographical reading, speculating on James IV's reactions to Dunbar's at turns annoyed and humble poetic attitudes towards his lack of a benefice and noting that the poems' frequently irritated tone suggested that "Dunbar was not always easy to get on with" ("Of Discretioun in Asking: Dunbar's Petitionary Poems," *Chaucer und Seine Zeit: Symposion für Walter F. Schirmer* [Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1968] 288). A.E.C. Canitz distinguishes more clearly between Dunbar the poet and Dunbar the persona, noting that the persona's repeated claims of poverty are not confirmed by the increasing sums Dunbar was paid for his service to the court ("A Benefice for the Prophet: William Dunbar's Petitionary Poems," *SSL* 33-34 [2004]: 42-43).

genre of the begging poem and remarked upon the poems' frequently humorous tone,¹⁴ a tone that would require a separation between Dunbar the tongue-in-cheek poet and Dunbar the impoverished and desperate petitioner. As Reiss puts it, in begging poetry, "the 'sincerity' of the poet is at least suspect."¹⁵

While it is useful to remember the comic separation between poet and persona in Dunbar's petitionary poems, it is also important to consider the motivations behind such a separation. An examination of two of Dunbar's most trenchant rants against court corruption ("Schir, 3e haue mony seruitouris" and "Complane I wald, wist I quhome till"), illuminates how Dunbar's comic exaggeration of the injustices he suffers at court allows him to safely express an attitude that could be construed as critical of the king.

Dunbar's "benefice poems"—not a deliberately unified series, but a collective term for his numerous poetic petitions to James for the gift of a parish—embody the concept of matching tone to context when making a request. Given that the poems were addressed to a powerful superior (and quite likely read aloud at court), Dunbar's petitioning persona mediates his request for a benefice in a layer of humour. By assuming the exaggerated role of a long-suffering, poverty-stricken poet-priest—an exaggeration matched by the numerous poetic iterations of his request—and repeating his request many times over, the speaker's desire for a parish takes on the status of a running joke, both expected and anticipated by his immediate audience. The speaker's exaggerated and repeated assertions that he has been unfairly treated by the king frame his requests in a

¹⁴ Bawcutt, *Dunbar* 105; Reiss 33.

¹⁵ Reiss 33.

humorous context, preventing the audience from taking the speaker's criticisms too seriously. At the same time, however, Dunbar was never actually granted a benefice, and so he and the speaker share the lack of a parish. The speaker's hyperbolic sense of injustice thus draws attention to the poet's situation while couching it in the humour of exaggeration, preventing the audience from interpreting the poems as harsh criticism.

Since several of Dunbar's benefice poems share common elements and motifs, it will prove advantageous to deal with some of the poems collectively rather than individually, illuminating a selection of devices Dunbar employs in them in order to create a poetic persona ("Dunbar") displeased with his lack of a benefice. Recurring themes in Dunbar's petitionary poems include the long-standing nature of "Dunbar's" service and request; his self-described poverty; the bitterness he feels towards his less deserving but more fortunate court rivals; and his efforts to capitalise on what he perceives as a friendly relationship with the king. Through the development of each of these themes, Dunbar crafts a speaker so unfortunate and bitter that the effect can only be construed as comic. By creating this persona, Dunbar skilfully distances himself from any genuine criticism his poems may be interpreted to contain.

Dunbar's persona in the petitionary poems lives in a state of poverty, which he contrasts with the luxurious lifestyle enjoyed by other, less deserving members of the court. In "Off benefice, sir, at everie feist," the speaker notes how he "stand[s] fastand in a nwke" (7) while those around him feast on swan and duck (6), and that they give him nothing despite his song of "*Charitas, pro dei amore*" (14). In "Schir, at this feist of benefice," the speaker broaches the subject

of his poverty more subtly, asking the king whether it is quite fair to “[f]ill a fow man quhill he brist, / And lat his fallow de a thirst, / Quhilk wyne to drink als worthie war” (8-10). The speaker’s veiled hints about his poverty heighten the apparent desperation of his situation, while simultaneously exalting the luxurious lifestyle of the other courtiers.

Dunbar’s persona makes much of the fact that he has served the king for many years in expectation of a benefice; this idea’s repetition creates a comic effect that increases with each subsequent rearticulation. In “Schir, 3it remember as befoir” (“Exces of thocht dois me mischief”), the speaker reminds the king, “[M]y 3outh is done forloir / In 3our service with pane and greiff” (2-3), and he remarks that he has reached an “age [that] now dois [him] greif” (63), all without having attained so much as the rank of a “sempill vicar” (64). This remark is made humorous, however, by the speaker’s somewhat grand claim that he had been dubbed a “bischof” from his earliest childhood (61-62), suggesting that he had been destined for far greater things than he has so far achieved. Dunbar also mitigates the critical nature of the speaker’s complaint by inserting a refrain appearing to acknowledge his fixation on his lack of a benefice: “Exces of thocht dois me mischeiff” (5, 10, 15, etc.). By implicitly criticising the speaker’s inability to restrain his own thoughts, as well as by phrasing the long-standing nature of his request in such exaggerated terms, Dunbar ensures that the poem is not interpreted as trenchant criticism of the king, but as an entertaining exaggeration of Dunbar’s actual lack of a benefice.

Dunbar makes even more of his status as loyal but aged servant in “Schir, lat it neuer in toune be tald.” Dunbar’s persona presents himself as an old horse who deserves comfort and special treatment at Christmas:

Suppois I war ane ald 3ald auer,
 Schott furth our clewch to squische the cleuer,
 And hed the strenthis off al Strenever
 I wald at 3oull be housit and stald. (1-4)

As he develops his equine self-portrait, the speaker emphasises his hard work for the king and his court: “I am an auld hors, as 3e knaw, / That euer in duill dois drug and draw” (9-10). He stresses that his “maine is turned in to quhyt, / And thair off 3e [the king] heff all the wyt” (21-22). At the end of his poem, the speaker returns to his belief that, just like any old horse, “[w]ith ane new hous I wald be happit / Aganis this Crysthinmes for the cald” (65-66). By complaining directly that age has caused the speaker to be cast out of the court’s favour, Dunbar’s poem may have risked offending its royal audience; the speaker’s sustained metaphor of himself as horse, however, adds a humorous, self-deprecating tone to the poem and offers a comforting distance between Dunbar and his poem’s criticisms.

“Schir, lat it neuer” is notable for its concluding “Respontio Regis” (69-76).

While there is debate over whether these lines were actually composed by James IV,¹⁶ the answer either way would support a reading of the poem as ultimately

¹⁶ Bawcutt offers a useful summary of the arguments for and against James’ authorship in *Dunbar* 127-128, ultimately deciding in favour of James’ authorship (although she does believe that Dunbar was “audacious enough” to have written the lines himself [*Dunbar* 128]). J.W. Baxter argues in *William Dunbar: A Biographical Study* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1952) that the

good-natured. The very fact that the poem presents a dialogic relationship between Dunbar and the king (whether real or constructed) indicates that Dunbar's rhetorical self-construction as an old horse is meant as an entertaining literary tool rather than a hard-hitting agent of persuasion—the fact that the king is credited with writing this response to Dunbar's poetic request suggests that the poet's claims of neglect are not taken too seriously. The "Respontio," furthermore, is playful in its engagement with the rhetorical trope of Dunbar's age, suggesting that the entire poem's treatment of age is also intended to reflect a similar attitude.

That the poem is intended to incite a positive response is clear from the "Respontio," in which James (or Dunbar adopting James' voice) asks his treasurer to "[t]ak in this gray hors, auld Dumbar, / Quhilk in my aucht with service trew / In lyart changeit is his hew" (70-72). While James notably does not offer the speaker his long-desired benefice (likely the sort of lodgings at which he hints throughout the poem), he does offer him housing and entertainment throughout the Yuletide, asserting that money is no object when it comes to "Dunbar's" accommodation (73-76). If James did indeed compose these lines, his skilful evasion of the bestowal of a benefice may be interpreted as the latest instalment of the humorous standoff between petitioner and king. If Dunbar himself is the author, he perpetuates his own literary persona as the luckless servant by having "James" offer everything except the one gift he truly desires. Moreover, if Dunbar is behind the king's response, he has skilfully used his poetic skills to

Reidpeth MS' lack of a colophon attributing the lines to Dunbar suggests they were not written by him (151).

assume the voice of the very authority to whom his poetic persona appeals—a powerful testament to Dunbar’s mastery of his craft. In either case, Dunbar successfully employs humour as a device to keep the lines of communication open between himself and James; by creating an exaggerated version of his situation, Dunbar voices his perspective confidently and autonomously, using humour to mitigate the risk of offence and empower his poetic voice.

Dunbar’s poetry continues to critique the court’s artifice and undeserving luxury in “Complayne I wald, wist I quhome till” and “Schir, ye haue mony seruitouris.” Each of these poems betrays bitterness about the great disparity between the standard of living enjoyed by many of the court’s false servants and the impecunious circumstances of the loyal Dunbar. Dunbar again uses a persona to distance himself from the rest of the court. This persona exemplifies the concept of self-governance on two levels: not only does he advocate a mental retreat from the court into one’s own mind, but his very existence permits Dunbar to govern his potentially risky message in a manner that protects him from reprisal.

In “Schir, 3e haue mony servitouris,” Dunbar remarks on the sizeable and diverse entourage of James’ court, cataloguing the many people—from “[k]irkmen, courtmen and craftismen fyne” (3) to “[p]ryntouris, payntouris and potingaris” (16)—who serve the king. Dunbar’s lengthy list (heightened by his use of one continuous stanza) prepares the reader rhetorically for the poem’s as-yet-implicit question: why is the *speaker* not recognised with the compensation he deserves?

The speaker reinforces his position as a court outsider by using a separate, rather shorter stanza to describe his own role. He asserts that he “among the laif / Vnworthy be ane place to haue / Or in thair nummer to be tald” (25-27). The speaker maintains that his poetic efforts are of equal value to the more tangible, conspicuous works of these other members of James’ court:

Als lang in mynd my work sall hald,
 Als haill in everie circumstance,
 In forme, in mater and substance,
 But wering or consumption,
 Roust, canker or corruption,
 As ony of thair werkis all,
 Suppois that my rewarde be small. (28-34)

By highlighting the singular, intangible nature of his craft, the speaker places distance between his role as a court poet and the work performed by other members of the king’s household, thus reinforcing his self-depiction as an outsider.

In the third and fourth stanzas, which resemble the first both in length and their use of catalogue, the speaker more explicitly criticises the flatterers at court. This darker list is of those who do not pull their weight and yet receive reward: “Fen3eouris, fleichouris and flatteraris, / Cryaris, craikaris and clatteraris, / Soukaris, groukaris, gledaris, gunnaris” (39-41) and many more besides who know no other skill than “to mak thrang, schir, in 3our duris, / And rusche in quhair thay counsale heir / and will at na man nurtir leyr” (52-54). The speaker’s frustration is rooted in the compensation of these “vthir fulis nyce” (65) while he

goes unrewarded with a benefice. This state of affairs leads him to “cry fy!” on “this fals world” (68).

Dunbar creates humour in “Schir, 3e haue mony seruitouris” by using complex detail to describe the court’s numerous and sundry members; his speaker’s exaggeratedly lengthy litanies and ruminations make his frustration appear slightly ridiculous. The speaker’s angry invective towards the court’s flatterers and sycophants—he calls them “[f]antastik fulis, bayth fals and gredy, / Off tounge vntrew and hand ewill diedie” (58-59) and individuals who possess “no schame” (49)—is mitigated by an awareness of the public circumstances of the poem’s performance. Given this context, it becomes easier to realise that Dunbar in fact engages in very black humour, accusing certain sectors of the court of such foul natures that the charge can hardly be taken seriously.

That the poem is ultimately humorous becomes clear at its conclusion, in which the speaker reveals his true motivation: not a sense of duty to warn the king about false courtiers, but his desire for a benefice. Dunbar shifts into this request almost casually by blending his speaker’s sense of indignation at others’ unmerited rewards into a pitch for his own compensation:

My hart neir bristis than for teyne,

Quhilk may nocht suffer nor sustene

So grit abusoun for to se,

Daylie in court befor myn e.

And 3it more panence wald I haue,

Had I rewarde amang the laif. (69-74; italics added)

Such a reward, the speaker argues, would not only alleviate his distress but also give him the luxury to turn a blind eye to the corruptions of the court:

It wald me sumthing satisfie
 And les of my malancolie,
 And gar me mony falt ourse
 That now is brayd befor myn e. (75-78)

The speaker Dunbar even introduces an element of blackmail in his poem's final lines, suggesting that if the "tryackill" (treacle) of royal compensation is not forthcoming, he will either die of melancholy or vent his frustrations through the "vennim" of his pen (83-88). The speaker's veiled threats, as well as the preceding criticisms of the court, are phrased so hyperbolically that any sincere petitions and critiques on Dunbar's part are safely diluted. Dunbar thus finds the means to express critical opinions on the superficiality and injustice of the court without risking his position within the court.

Dunbar pursues a similar strategy in "Complane I wald, wist I quhome till," creating a persona of a noble but slighted poet at the end of his tether. In pondering to whom he should make his complaint, he numbers among the possibilities the Virgin Mary and God, "that all things steiris" (3), thereby acknowledging that the world is ultimately governed by forces far beyond himself, the king and his court. He also considers complaining "wnto wardlie prince heir downe, / That dois for iustice weir a crownne" (7-8). By placing James so close to God and Mary on his list of powerful forces, the speaker establishes his high opinion of James' justice early in the poem, perhaps to

cement his position of respect for the king before denigrating his court in the following lines.

The speaker's objections to the court are similar to those raised in "Schir, 3e haue mony seruitouris": specifically, that "men of wertew and cuning" (11) are deprived of a reward for their "lawte, luiff [and] lang servys" (14). Another similarity is that the speaker does not mince words in describing the court's unsavoury elements, applying heavy alliteration to emphasise his disgust:

Bot fowll iow iowrdane hedit ievellis,
 Cowkin kenseis and culroun kewillis,
 Stuffettis, strekouris and stafische strummellis,
 Wyld haschbaldis, haggarbaldis and hummellis,
 Druncartis, dysouris, dyowris, drewellis,
 Misgydit memberis off the devillis...(15-20)

The extensive alliteration of these lines, however, may also indicate that they should be taken with a grain of salt; as A.A. MacDonald notes, Scottish alliterative verse was distinct from that of England in that it was more frequently used for comedic ends.¹⁷ Even in this apparently bitter passage, then, Dunbar uses form to offer a hint of humour.

The final lines of "Complane I wald" see the speaker further shift his focus from trenchant criticism to self-endorsement, thereby couching potentially sharp condemnations of court life with another level of humour. The speaker asks his "prince maist honourable" (67) to cast a favourable eye upon his "auld serwandis"

¹⁷ A.A. MacDonald, "Alliterative Poetry and its Context: The Case of William Dunbar," *Loyal Letters: Studies on Mediaeval Alliterative Poetry & Prose*, ed. L.A.J.R. Houwen and A.A. MacDonald (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1994) 267.

(69), including himself. Through his speaker's observation that his "vrytting vitnes beris" of his career in the king's employ (73), Dunbar calls attention to his own writing as a tool of self-expression. The speaker concludes rather abruptly with a strong hint of his expectations of a reward for his poetic service, saying to James, "And 3ete thy danger ay me deris. / Bot efter danger cumis grace, / As hes bein herd in mony plece" (74-76). Here, the speaker positions his suffering in James' court as a fortunate thing, suggesting that the king's "danger" has been but a prelude to the "grace" of a greater reward. While this sentiment at first appears to have strictly religious connotations, one may also interpret it as a call for more material compensation—the speaker has endured long enough, and it is time for James to reward him properly. Dunbar presents this *quid pro quo* relationship between king and subject in a deliberately obscure manner; by phrasing his speaker's expectations with a quasi-religious vocabulary, Dunbar conflates kingly governance and divine governance in a manner recalling the juxtaposition of those forces early in the poem. The ambiguity of the final lines, however, also makes the speaker's request of James less blunt, a wise strategy given the earlier, more confrontational criticism of the current system of courtly reward.

In his benefice poems, Dunbar constructs a "Dunbar" persona who is a peripheral figure in the court; this persona provides an opportunity to advance critiques of the court's corruption, but the often-extreme nature of the criticisms creates humour, allowing Dunbar to protect himself from potential reprisal. Dunbar's court-centred poems consistently advocate intellectual detachment from one's immediate environment as a means to a successful life and career. Similarly, Dunbar's efforts to create a detached poetic persona in these works

widens the spectrum of his potential poetic expression, demonstrating how poetic self-discipline—a form of compromise between poet and persona—is conducive to literary creativity.

The Mind of the Kingdom:

Scottish Governance in Dunbar's Occasional Poems

The qualities Dunbar contemplates in his benefice poems—the value of both subscribing to and detaching oneself from a powerful environment, the importance of self-control, the need to compromise—assume much larger implications in his occasional poetry. Here, Dunbar relates James IV and Margaret Tudor's personal comportment to the success of Scotland as an autonomous kingdom. In “Gladethe, thoue queyne of Scottis regioun,” “Blyth Aberdeane, thow beriall of all tounis,” and “Quhen Merche wes with variand windis past” (best known as “The Thrissill and the Rois”), Dunbar uses a recurring horticultural trope to demonstrate how the judicious grafting of Tudor rose to Stewart stalk/stock is vital to Scotland's future. While all three poems emphasise Margaret's role in rejuvenating the Scottish kingdom, “The Thrissill and the Rois” also stresses James' responsibility to take care of his wife and his subjects—a responsibility that, if fulfilled, will strengthen both his royal authority and Scotland's autonomy.

“Our rois riale most reuerent vnder crowne”:

Dunbar's Poetic Grafting of Margaret Tudor

The marriage of James IV to Margaret Tudor in 1503 marked a new chapter in late-medieval Anglo-Scottish relations, though perhaps not one as promising as the political rhetoric surrounding the union portrayed it to be. In 1502, England

and Scotland concluded the Treaty of Perpetual Peace, which, as Norman Macdougall notes, was not “occasioned by any spontaneous outburst of Anglo-Scottish amity” but was rather the final alternative to other unsuccessful policy options, particularly “an expensive and inconclusive war” which included James IV’s invasions of England in 1496 and 1497.¹⁸ Unlike the similar treaty of 1474—whose promised marriage of James IV to Edward IV’s daughter Cecilia never took place—James IV and Henry VII’s daughter Margaret Tudor were married on 8 August 1503.¹⁹ The treaty was soon to be challenged by James, who pursued a less friendly relationship with the English than did his father and sought alliances with both France and Denmark even after the Anglo-Scottish treaty was concluded; eventually, James was to consider the treaty dissolved in 1511 and later met his death at Flodden while at war with the English.²⁰

Dunbar avoids these conflicted elements of Anglo-Scottish relations in his poetry, choosing to depict his Thistle and Rose (largely) without thorns. This harmonious depiction of Stewart-Tudor relations, however, is not strictly egalitarian: while the marriage of James and Margaret in 1503 is represented in the best light possible, Dunbar continues to place Scotland in a position of power by presenting Margaret’s marriage to James as an opportunity for Scotland to assimilate Tudor power into its own kingdom.

In “Gladethe, thoue queyne,” written to mark Margaret’s arrival in Scotland in 1503, and in “Blyth Aberdeane,” written to commemorate the Queen’s royal entry there in 1511, Dunbar stresses the Tudor princess’ role as an instrument for

¹⁸ Norman Macdougall, *James IV* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1989) 249.

¹⁹ Macdougall, *James IV* 249.

²⁰ Macdougall, *James IV* 251.

Scottish growth.²¹ To achieve this objective, Dunbar employs the familiar courtly trope of lady as flower (or, in this case, of Margaret as Tudor rose) and develops the metaphor in an unusual way: Margaret is a fresh young English flower being grafted onto the stronger, more mature Scottish plant in order to reinvigorate it. By reworking this courtly convention to serve specifically political ends, Dunbar both asserts Margaret's potential to reinforce and perpetuate the Stewart line and maintains Scotland's primacy in the relationship, stressing its longer history and greater strength. Far from creating an oppositional model of Anglo-Scottish relations, Dunbar's horticultural metaphor illuminates not only Scotland's potential for growth through the judicious integration of English culture, but that this growth is natural, thereby figuring Scotland's autonomy as ingrained and inalienable.

"Gladethe, thoue queyne" is in certain respects a conventional courtly encomium. In fact, its apparent conventionality is perhaps what leads so few critics to discuss it in depth. Priscilla Bawcutt, for instance, calls the poem a "fairly conventional panegyric" and concentrates her analysis mainly on Dunbar's rhetorical elaboration of Margaret's name to emphasise her beauty.²² Indeed, Margaret is praised variously as a "[f]resche flour of 3outhie" (3), a "perle of price" (4), and "[d]ochtir to Pallas in angillik brichtnes" (12), among other

²¹While the poem "Now fayre, fayrest off euery fayre" (with its refrain "Welcum of Scotlond to be queen!") was thought by earlier critics to be Dunbar's, Bawcutt raises doubts about Dunbar's authorship, noting that the poem only appears in one manuscript and that its similarities with definitive Dunbar poems are highly conventional (Appendix to the Introduction, *Poems of William Dunbar* 29). Bawcutt, however, considers the possibility of Dunbar's authorship sufficiently plausible to include the text of the poem in the appendix to her introduction, if not in the edition proper (Appendix to the Introduction, *Poems of William Dunbar* 29). Given the poem's uncertain status, however, this chapter will refrain from including it in its discussion.

²² Bawcutt, *Dunbar* 87-89.

similarly enthusiastic epithets. In his treatment of these terms of praise, however—and particularly in his development of his metaphor of Margaret as flower—Dunbar uses these conventions to claim Margaret as Scotland's, thereby incorporating the English power she represents into that of Scotland.

Dunbar bookends his poem with lapidary comparisons, likening Margaret to pearls and precious stones in the first and final stanzas. In the poem's opening lines, he refers to Margaret as "[o]ur perle of price, our princes fair and gud, / Our charbunkle chosin of he imperiale blud, / Our rois riale most reuerent vnder crovne" (4-6). In the final stanza, Margaret is compared favourably to a succession of gems, with Dunbar asserting that Margaret, the "[f]air gem of ioy" (39), is more precious than beryls, diamonds, sapphires, emeralds and rubies (34-38). In these images, Dunbar plays on the meaning of "Margaret" as "pearl," portraying her as the Biblical pearl of great price (Matt. 13.46) and playing up her superiority to mere earthly jewels. Margaret is presented as a substantial prize, which makes it all the more significant that the poem subtly claims her as Scotland's. By referring to Margaret not only as a pearl, but "our" pearl and the prince's pearl (4), Dunbar integrates the "selcitud" (7) of Margaret into Scotland's domain, making her a jewel "vnder [the] crovne" of Scotland (6), a process reinforced with each stanza's refrain, "Gladethe, thoue queyne of Scottish regioun" (8, 16, 24, etc.). This line reflects Dunbar's strategy throughout the poem: not to deprive Margaret of the English power she represents, but to make it serve the "Scottis regioun." Margaret may not be Scottish, but her English blood is now responsible for bolstering Scotland's autonomy.

Dunbar's development of his floral metaphor, however, constitutes an even more creative reworking of courtly convention to assimilate Margaret's power into Scotland's. As mentioned earlier, Dunbar imbues the convention of lady as flower with the specific symbolism of Margaret as *Tudor* rose, a "[r]ois red and quhit, resplendent of colour" (25). Moreover, Dunbar uses this floral imagery to emphasise Margaret's youth and potential to reinvigorate Scotland. Early on, he calls her a "3ing tendir plaunt of plesand pulcritude, / Fresche flour of 3outhie, new germyng to burgeoun" (2-3), a conceit which he expands in a later stanza:

Rois red and quhit, resplendent of colour,
 New of thi knop, at morrow fresche atyrit,
 One stalk 3et grene, O 3ong and tendir flour,
 That with thi luff has ale this regioun firit,
 Gret Gode ws graunt that we haue lang desirit,
 A plaunt to spring of thi successioun,
 Syne witht ale grace his spreit to be inspirit.
 Gladethe, thoue queyne of Scottis regioun. (25-32)

In the first half of the stanza, images of youth abound: Margaret is a rose that blooms in the morning; her stalk is green rather than woody; she is still young and tender. In the second half, the focus shifts to what Margaret's youth and beauty can do for *Scotland*, saying that Margaret has set the kingdom's sentiments on fire and has come to grant the Scots what they have long desired: "A plaunt to spring of [her] successioun" (30). This line invites two possible readings, both of which advance the poem's claims that Margaret's integration into the Scottish royal line

will invigorate the kingdom. The first is that the Scots have long awaited a daughter of the English royal line to marry to one of the Stewart kings. The second is that the Scots hope for Margaret to bear James a son and heir, the ultimate use of Margaret's personal and political power to serve the interests of the "Scottis regioun." As Bawcutt notes, visual representations of family trees and other "genealogical plants" were popular in Dunbar's time;²³ Dunbar here integrates the Tudor rose into this horticultural conceit, grafting England's history onto Scotland's future. On two levels, "Gladethe, thoue queyne" demonstrates the benefits of assimilating and reinterpreting powerful external forces. Not only does Dunbar transform Margaret's Tudor identity into something useful for Scots to embrace as their own, but the poet's own personal refiguring of conventional and courtly imagery foregrounds an autonomous poetic identity.

"Blyth Aberdeane," which dates from later in Margaret's reign, describes the pomp and pageantry welcoming her to the town in 1511. While the poem's subject matter may imply that it is a simple panegyric, however, the poem establishes a broader relationship between Margaret and Aberdonians that reaches beyond a simple hierarchy of queen and subjects and suggests instead a form of mutual dependence. As Bawcutt has observed, the pageantry of royal entries such as Margaret's was simultaneously a demonstration of the citizens' "loyalty and deference" and a "manifestation of civic dignity and wealth," resulting in a form of "generosity [that] was intended to provoke a return of some kind."²⁴ One may extend Bawcutt's reading of the poem's portrayal of reciprocity beyond its

²³ Bawcutt, *Dunbar* 90. Bawcutt makes this point in relation to "Blyth Aberdeane," on which more shortly.

²⁴ Bawcutt, *Dunbar* 90-91.

implications for the relationship between Margaret and Aberdeen; the poem may also be read as a symbolic articulation of the ideal relationship between the English kingdom Margaret represents and the Scotland symbolised by her Aberdonian subjects. In “Blyth Aberdeane,” Dunbar briefly returns to horticultural metaphor to articulate Margaret’s role in reinvigorating Scotland, grafting her story onto that of the pageant outlining Scottish history—which, notably, is itself depicted as participating in a much larger Christian history.

The town’s pageant engages with selected aspects of Biblical history, presented in what is initially a puzzling order: the Salutation of the Virgin Mary (21-22) is followed by the presentation of the Magi’s gifts to the Christ-child (24-26) before travelling back to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (29-31). Reiss explains that this order would have been understood in Dunbar’s time in typological terms: “Mary, the second, blameless Eve, through obedience to God’s will bore Christ the New Adam so that humanity might be redeemed from the original sin of disobedience.”²⁵ Additionally, the Magi’s deference to the infant Jesus “could be taken as a reminder that earthly monarchy must defer to Christ the King.”²⁶ The sequence thus places vital importance on the virtue of obedience, a quality Reiss argues the pageants were intended to praise—and encourage—in Margaret.²⁷

Reiss’ perceptive reading highlights Margaret’s responsibilities towards her subjects. One might add that Dunbar immediately follows his discussion of

²⁵ Reiss 211.

²⁶ Reiss 211.

²⁷ Reiss 211.

the religious pageants with a description of the Scottish historical pageantry also presented by the town:

And syne the Bruce that euir was bold in stor
 Thow gart as roy cum rydand vnder croun,
 Richt awfull, strang and large of portratour,
 As nobill, dreidfull, michtie campioun.
 The stok ryell²⁸ syne of great renoun
 Thow gart vpspring, with branches new and greine,
 Sa gloriouslie quhill glaidid all the toun:
 Be blyth and blisfull, burcht of Aberdein. (33-40)

Immediately after Adam and Eve are banished from the paradisal garden, Robert Bruce enters the scene, followed by what Bawcutt takes to be a representation of Scotland's royal "family tree."²⁹ Neither Bawcutt nor Reiss (two of the only recent critics to have discussed "Blyth Aberdeane") comments on the juxtaposition of these Scottish pageants against the preceding Biblical pieces, but the order in which Dunbar presents them conveys a strong message about the pageant's depiction of Scotland as a kingdom. Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden, earlier reversed by the birth of Christ, is here given an earthly counterpoint in Robert Bruce's re-establishment of an autonomous Scottish identity and the subsequent creation of a new floral paradise, graced by the "branches new and greine" of Bruce and his descendents, including the Stewarts.

²⁸ "Stok ryell" is a "conjectural emendation" by Bawcutt; in the sole surviving manuscript of "Blyth Aberdeane" (the Reidpeth MS), the line contains a gap (Bawcutt ed., l. 37, n.).

²⁹ Bawcutt, *Dunbar* 90.

As Reiss has noted, Margaret is key to the perpetuation of this new family tree.³⁰

The horticultural imagery employed in this stanza is markedly similar to that of “Gladethe, thoue queyne,” and is used to much the same end: to emphasise Margaret’s power (and responsibility) to provide a Stewart heir.³¹

The final stanza of “Blyth Aberdeane” articulates most explicitly both Margaret’s power and her responsibility to the town and its people. The “potent princes” Margaret (65), writes Dunbar, has “[g]reat caus [...] to thank this nobill toun” (66), whose people went to such lengths to receive her (66-68). Therefore, just as the town “socht all way and mein” (70) to welcome Margaret, so too should the queen be “thankfull to this burcht of Aberdein” (72). These lines concisely advance a vision of reciprocity between Margaret and her subjects, reminding readers that the queen’s power should and will ultimately be channelled in a manner pleasing to the Scottish people.

“The Thrissill and the Rois”: James IV and the Scottish Country Garden

Critics have discussed extensively the political implications of “The Thrissill and the Rois,” a fact hardly surprising when one considers the poem’s fascinating combination of heraldic imagery, advice to princes and fusion of romantic and royal union in James and Margaret. Reiss calls the poem “Dunbar’s paramount effort as a court panegyrist” and focuses his analysis of the poem on Dunbar’s aureate diction.³² Ross acknowledges both the rhetorical and political skill of the poem, describing it as “a highly imaginative state poem validating the

³⁰ Reiss 211-212.

³¹ This message may have had particular resonance in 1511, by which time Margaret had borne three children that had not survived infancy (Macdougall, *James IV* 258). James V was born on 10 April 1512 (Macdougall, *James IV* 258).

³² Reiss 48, 48-50.

loyalty of subjects to a particular King, setting forth the privileges and responsibilities of the King, and prospectively seeing in his union of love and respect with this chosen bride a happy augury of the survival and flourishing of the body politic.”³³ Louise Fradenburg interprets the poem as Dunbar’s assurance “that marriage to an English princess will not corrupt [...] the incorruptible body of Scottish sovereignty,” but also perceives the poem as a meditation on Dunbar’s poetic sovereignty, of the tension inherent in desiring both individual expression and continued royal patronage.³⁴

These politically-oriented readings are all vital to understanding “The Thrissill and the Rois,” and Fradenburg’s extension of the concept of sovereignty to include Dunbar’s management of his poetic identity is an important contribution to the criticism. These readings, however, focus mainly on the concept of Scotland’s (or Dunbar’s) internal governance; while this is a necessary element to consider, Dunbar’s depiction of Anglo-Scottish relations is also vital to the poem. In “The Thrissill and the Rois,” Dunbar returns to the horticultural trope employed earlier in “Gladethe, thoue queyne” and “Blyth Aberdeane”; here, however, the floral imagery is used to depict not only Margaret, but James as well. Specifically, Dunbar uses the conceit of the garden to articulate the Scottish king’s responsibilities both to his new English bride and to the Scottish people. It is only by upholding these responsibilities, suggests the poem, that the king can rule properly. Undoubtedly, “The Thrissill and the Rois” engages with the concept of governance using various guiding metaphors, with depictions of the

³³ Ross 250.

³⁴ Louise O. Fradenburg, *City, Marriage, Tournament: Arts of Rule in Late Medieval Scotland* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1991) 140, 149.

Thistle, the Lion and (to a much lesser extent) the Eagle acting as meditations on James' responsibilities towards his kingdom. The relationship between the Thistle and the Rose also deserves examination, as it highlights both the important role that Margaret will play in James' governance and the extent to which James must serve her and their subjects in order to preserve his royal authority.

The poem's opening section establishes an overarching hierarchical structure, into which the role of the king will later be introduced. In the first six stanzas, May, the "mvddir [...] of flouris" (4), commands the surroundings; she makes the "birdis to begyn thair houris / Amang the tendir odouris reid and quhyt" (5-6); May is thus the impetus for the birds' "armony" (7), described later as "the blisfull soun of cherarchy" (57). The sweetness of May's structure testifies to the natural benefits of restraint.

May also commands the poem's narrator, here more closely associated with Dunbar the poet (likely because of the poem's more panegyric—and therefore less risky—subject matter). May stands before the narrator's bed and bids him rise: "“Slugird,’ scho said, ‘Awalk annone for schame, / And in my honour sum thing thow go wryt’” (22-23). Shortly thereafter, May repeats her command to write: "“Vprys and do thy observance. / Thow did promyt, in Mayis lusty quhyle / For to discryve the ros of most plesance’” (37-39). May is thus responsible not only for natural order, but also for the poet's structured depiction of nature. Significantly, she is dressed in a floral gown of "quhyt, reid, broun and blew" (19), traditional Tudor colours.³⁵ Given the earlier reference to red and white flowers and the later

³⁵ Deanna Delmar Evans, "Ambivalent Artifice in Dunbar's 'The Thrissill and the Rois,'" *SSL* 22 (1987): 98-99.

description of the Rose queen in similar terms, Dunbar conflates May with Margaret Tudor, reinforcing Margaret's role as a bringer of new life into the Scottish royal line.

After the narrator enters the garden, he hears the birds' "blisfull soun of cherarchy" (57):

‘O luvaris fo, away thow dully nycht,
And welcum day that confortis every wicht.
Haill, May, haill, Flora, haill, Aurora schene!
Haill, princes Natur, hail, Venus, luvis quene!’ (60-63)

These lines encapsulate the hierarchy that guides the poem's action. In their catalogue of praise, the birds first name May, Flora and Aurora (the first and last of which have so far been the major shaping influences of the poem), then ascend in their hierarchy, naming Nature as princess and Venus as queen of the garden. Nature, however, plays a more active role in this milieu than Venus, and it is she who is able to subdue the winds of Neptune and Eolus (64-66) and the sky of Juno (69-70). Nature also summons the plants and animals to the garden, where they will be expected "[t]o hir thair maker to mak obediens, / Full law inclynnand with all dew reuerens" (76-77). Even the Lion, the "gretast of degre" (87), "[b]efoir dame Natur come and did incline, / With visage bawld and curage leonyne" (90-91).

The Lion is clearly the Lion Rampant of Scotland's coat of arms; he is "Reid of his collour as as the ruby glance. / On feild of gold he stude full mychtely, / With flour delycis sirculit lustely" (96-98). Critics have linked the Lion to James' governance, although there is disagreement as to what facet of

James' rule the Lion is meant to represent. Evans believes the Lion symbolises James' "military prowess,"³⁶ clearly not yet diminished by the disaster of Flodden. Scott reads the Lion more broadly as representative of James "in his role of Government."³⁷ With either interpretation, however, it is significant that the "awfull" and "terrible" (92) lion is still deferent to Nature, bowing to her (90). In fact, it is Nature who grants the Lion—who is naturally the "gretast of degre" but as yet has no formal title—the rank of animal king:

[She] crownit him with dyademe full deir,
 Off radyous stonis most ryall for to se,
 Saying, 'The king of beistis mak I the
 And the cheif protector in woddis and schawis.
 Onto thi leigis go furth and keip the lawis. (101-105)

With this new status, however, comes a duty to "keip the lawis" and to show restraint:

Exerce iustice with mercy and conscience,
 And lat no small beist suffir skaith na skornis
 Of greit beistis that bene of moir piscence.
 Do law elyk to aipis and vnicornis,
 And lat no bowgle with his busteous hornis
 The meik pluch ox oppres for all hys pryd,
 Bot in the 3ok go peciable him besyd. (106-112)³⁸

³⁶ Evans, "Ambivalent Artifice" 102.

³⁷ Scott 50.

³⁸ Ross observes that Dunbar's discussion of the lion's responsibilities are similar to those articulated in Henryson's "Lion and the Mouse"; the poems share not only the figure of a lion king

The king's responsibilities to uphold the law are twofold. Firstly, he must ensure that larger beasts do not oppress smaller or meeker creatures, thus requiring their proper restraint (sometimes literally, as in the case of the "bowgle" yoked alongside the ox). Secondly, the king must take care to restrain *himself* in the application of the law, being sure to apply it "with mercy and conscience."³⁹ The animals respond positively to this arrangement, making a "noyis and soun of ioy" (113), crying "*Vive le roy!*" (115), then "till his feit fell with humilite, / And all thay maid him homage and fewte" (116-117). The king's response to this deference indicates the degree to which his relationship with his subjects is one of mutual compromise: "And he did them ressaif with princely laitis, / Quhois noble yre is *parcere prostrates* (to protect the fallen)" (118-119). In order for the king to rule effectively, he must restrain his "noble yre," and this self-censure leads to greater overall authority.

Dunbar briefly describes the Eagle's similar responsibilities in administering the kingdom of birds. Evans views the Eagle as symbolic of James' mandate (as per one of the Anglo-Scottish treaties concluded as a condition of the royal marriage) to maintain peace on the borders: "In this treaty each king [James IV and Henry VII] agreed to restrain the unlawful acts of his respective subjects

who is exhorted to show mercy but also "the structure of preamble, *somnium* and awakening" (241). Bawcutt concurs, arguing the elements of Dunbar's poem "read like a compressed version" of similar moments in Henryson's poem" (*Dunbar* 99). While Ross does note that Henryson makes "explicit reference to the political situation under James III" (240), neither Ross nor Bawcutt addresses the possibility that Dunbar may resurrect this leonine image from Henryson's poem as a subtle warning to James IV to be a wiser ruler than his father. This suggestion is advanced cautiously here, however, with the recognition that not all critics adopt an allegorical reading of Henryson's *Lion*; Sally Mapstone, for one, writes that "[t]o investigate [the poem] [...] for precise political references is to strain and restrict a subtle and suggestive poem" whose lessons may be applied to rulers in general ("The Advice to Princes Tradition" 462).

³⁹Given the emblematic significance of the lion's portrayal two stanzas earlier, it is possible that the reference to the unicorn in line 109 represents not only chastity (as noted by Bawcutt in her note on the line) but also England.

and to turn over to each other's respective warden those malefactors taking refuge over the border."⁴⁰ The treaty as described delineates one form of governance—that of the king over the borderers—and embodies another: James' agreement to respect the treaty is in itself a form of self-restraint. Allegorically, the poem parallels the king's responsibility to govern both others and himself: Nature commands the Eagle, even as she sharpens his talons to be as piercing as "steill dertis" (121), that he must apply the law equally to all birds (122-123). The eagle's rule is thus concisely depicted as a balance between coercive power and fair-minded administration of justice, providing further symbolic elaboration of the king's simultaneous authority and responsibility.

It is in the final phase of the poem, however, that Dunbar most thoroughly treats the king's parallel duties of personal and royal governance: in his description of the Thistle and the Rose, Dunbar articulates how James' authority cannot be valid without the fulfilment of his duties towards his wife and his subjects. Like the lion, the Thistle is described as "awfull" (129), reinforcing the construction of Scotland as a strong, fearsome kingdom. As Bawcutt notes, however, the Thistle's "primary significance is defensive, symbolising a king's duty to protect his realm from invasion."⁴¹ One may also read the Thistle's defensive symbolism on a more personal level: Dunbar notes that the bloom of the Thistle is "kepit with a busche of speiris" (130), suggesting that even the thistle requires the protection of his surrounding prickly leaves in order to keep his authority intact.

⁴⁰Evans, "Ambivalent Artifice" 102.

⁴¹ Bawcutt, *Dunbar* 100.

Nature's commands to the Thistle-king advocate mixing assertive aggression with judicious restraint; while she tells him, "In feild go furth and fend the laif" (133), she also says,

'[S]en thou art a king, thou be discret.

Herb without vertew hald nocht of sic pryce

As herb of vertew and of odor sueit,

And lat no nettill vyle and full of vyce

Hir fallow to the gudly flour delyce,

Nor latt no wyld weid full of churlichenes

Compair hir till the lilleis nobilnes.' (134-140)

This advice resembles that which Nature gives to the lion, but there are subtle differences. While the lion is charged with the fair and proper administration of justice, the thistle is also encouraged to be a moral arbiter, not only of himself (as shown in Nature's command for the thistle to be discreet as part of his regal duties) but of the plants under his sway. His responsibilities include the protection of the virtue of the "flour delyce" (138), a somewhat surprising duty given the Thistle's imminent union with the Rose. While Bawcutt cites contemporary sources that name the lily second in virtues only to the Rose,⁴² a more political reading is also possible. If one considers James IV's continued efforts to ally himself with the French before and even after his marriage to Margaret,⁴³ these lines serve to validate James' desire to maintain a Scottish

⁴² Bawcutt's edition cites Bartolomaeus Anglicus, XVII. 91: "[T]he lilye is next to the rose in worthiness and nobilite" (l. 140, n.).

⁴³ James ratified a new Franco-Scottish treaty in March 1492 (Macdougall, *James IV* 91) and renewed Scotland's alliance with France in 1512 (Macdougall, *James IV* 258-59).

foreign policy wider than and separate from the kingdom's relationship with England. Nature's command to respect the fleur-de-lys thus allows Dunbar to reinforce the idea of James' and Scotland's autonomy even as James marries a member of England's ruling family.

Nature next articulates the thistle-king's more personal responsibilities:

'Nor hald non vdir flour in sic denty
 As the fresche Ros of cullour reid and quhyt,
 For gife thow dois, hurt is thy honesty,
 Conciddering that no flour is so perfyt,
 So full of vertew, plesans and delyt,
 So full of blisfull angeilik bewty,
 Imperiall birth, honour and dignite.' (141-147)

As Bawcutt notes, these lines have a "peculiar aptness, since James had several mistresses."⁴⁴ The pointedness of this advice is mitigated, however, by its expression through the figure of Nature, permitting Dunbar to criticise his monarch's libertine ways without risking his position within the court.

It is worth pausing for a moment over the extended, glowing description of the Rose, which spans a total of three stanzas. In one particularly significant passage, Nature exalts the Rose using horticultural imagery similar to that of "Gladethe, thoue queyne":

Than to the Ros scho [i.e., Nature] turnyt hir visage,
 And said, 'O lusty dochtir most benyng,
 Aboif the lilly illustare of lynnage,

⁴⁴ Bawcutt ed., ll. 141-143, n.

Fro the stok ryell rysing fresche and 3ing,
 But ony spot or macull doing spring,
 Cum, blowme of ioy, with iemis to be cround,
 For out the laif thy bewty is renownd.'(148-154)

The rose outranks the lily in lineage; given the prevalence of heraldic imagery throughout the poem, one might read these lines to signify Dunbar's ultimate privileging of the English Rose above the French fleur-de-lys. Despite Nature's earlier injunction to the Thistle to take care of the Lily, her commands regarding the Rose suggest that James' priorities now rest with Margaret as his wife. All the same, Dunbar's comments may also be subtly political: James' marriage to Margaret establishes a new relationship between the two British kingdoms, requiring James to be far more conciliatory towards England than he had during his campaigns in the 1490s.

The Rose is depicted as rising "fresche and 3ing" from the "stok ryell" (151). While in "Blyth Aberdeane," Margaret becomes the means of generating new branches on *Scotland's* family tree, Dunbar's priority in this earlier work is to praise Margaret's *own* royal stock/stalk, praising her Tudor heritage not merely to compliment it, but to render it suitable for rejuvenating the Stewart line. Margaret thus combines the authority of a long and distinguished lineage with the energy and freshness of youth; all of these qualities are depicted as useful for Scotland's advancement. Margaret's potential significance to Scotland, however, extends beyond the borders of the kingdom itself. Nature's description of the Rose as "hairbis empyrce" and "freschest quene of flouris" (160) has distinct imperial connotations which are only reinforced by Nature's earlier reference to

the Rose's "[i]mperiall birth" (147). While the DOST defines "imperiall" in its celestial sense, it is possible to read it more politically, given that the first recorded use of this meaning for the word dates back to Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.⁴⁵ James IV, like his father, had harboured imperial pretensions—even going so far as to moot in 1495 "a treaty of friendship and alliance" with the Holy Roman Emperor-elect Maximilian's daughter Margaret⁴⁶—and so Dunbar's imperial depiction of Margaret may be intended to give greater credibility to James' wider aspirations.

After the Rose is crowned, the birds sing her praises in a joyful yet orderly fashion, recalling the idea of "blisfull [...] cherarchy" (57) announced earlier in the poem. The songs of the mavis (164-168), merle (169-170), lark (171-172) and nightingale (173-175) are followed by "[t]he commoun voce [...] of birdis small" (176), indicating the common approbation given to the queen's coronation. The birds' songs engage in several ways with the Rose's rejuvenating role in Scotland's future. The mavis praises the "blosome breking out of the blud royall / Quhois pretius vertew is imperiall" (166-168), reinforcing the idea that this "plant of 3owth" will add strength to the Scottish line and reasserting the queen's imperial associations. The merle accepts the Rose as "quene and souerane" of all the flowers (170), while the nightingale calls her "Naturis suffragene" (173), emphasising Margaret's revitalising force. The lark draws explicit attention to the Rose's Tudor provenance ("Haill, Rois both reid and quhyt, / Most plesand flour of mighty cullouris twane!" [171-172]), using the successful blend of the York

⁴⁵ DOST, s.v. "imperiall," definition a). OED, s.v. "imperial," definition A.1.I.

⁴⁶ Macdougall, *James IV* 119.

and Lancaster houses in Margaret to create an implicit precedent for her own reception into the Stewart line and suggesting that this new Anglo-Scottish union will only create a stronger kingdom.

The birds' collective voice employs a rhetoric of ownership similar to that of "Gladethe, thoue queyne," balancing the people's subservience and acquiescence to higher authority—as indicated by their pleasure that the Rose "wes chosin" (178) by the ultimate authority of Nature to rule over them—with a reiteration of their possession of Margaret as "[o]ur perle, *our* plesans and *our* paramour, / *Our* peax, *our* play, *our* plane felicity" (180-181; italics added). Through this interplay of deference and assertiveness, the common birds accept that they need the Rose, but also claim that the Rose needs their acceptance in order to rule successfully.

While the narrator's sudden return to consciousness amid the shout of the commons (183-184) reminds us these events were but a dream, Dunbar has successfully communicated several important points regarding James' and Margaret's governance of Scotland. As in "Gladethe, thoue queyne" and "Blyth Aberdene," "The Thrissill and the Rois" asserts that Margaret's Tudor heritage and power should not be ignored or suppressed, but rather celebrated and claimed as Scotland's own in order to rejuvenate the Scottish kingdom. Even more vitally, Dunbar examines at length James' responsibilities, suggesting that if the king wishes to secure his power and maintain his kingdom's respect, he must govern his behaviour both in his marriage to Margaret and his relationship with his subjects, great and small.

The British “Rois of Rethoris All”:

**Dunbar’s Treatment of Chaucerian Authority in “Lament for the
Makars” and the *Goldyn Targe***

In his court and occasional poetry, Dunbar’s approach to royal authority is two-pronged: to integrate Margaret Tudor’s authority into the Stewart line to bolster the Scottish kingdom, and to demonstrate that James’ authority as ruler is as contingent on the will of his subjects to obey him as it is on his power to govern them. Dunbar is not, however, merely a court poet; he is also a Scottish poet, composing in the century after Chaucer. The *Goldyn Targe* and “Lament for the Makars” both make explicit reference to Chaucer, testifying to Dunbar’s awareness that his work responds not only to Chaucer’s compositions, but the idea of Chaucer himself as a figure of literary authority. In responding to this authority, Dunbar applies to a literary context the techniques he uses to examine James’ and Margaret’s ruling status: he assimilates Chaucer’s reputation as “rois of rethoris all” into a larger British tradition that serves Scotland’s poetic interests as well as England’s, and he asserts his own poetic power by establishing an interdependent relationship between Chaucer and his literary successors: Chaucer’s legacy is in the hands of those poets who choose to perpetuate his name and works, therefore granting those later poets a status approaching that of poetic equals.

“Lament for the Makars”:

Dunbar’s Triumph over the Death of the Author

While critics have examined Dunbar’s response to Chaucer in a selection of his poems—particularly the *Tretis of the Tua Mariit Wemen and the Wedo*, “Schir Thomas Norny,” “Lament for the Makars” and the *Goldyn Targe*—much of the scholarship has centred on the nature and degree of Chaucerian allusion, rather than on Dunbar’s engagement with Chaucer as a figure of poetic authority.⁴⁷ Indeed, in the case of “Schir Thomas Norny,” there has been debate on whether there is a debt to Chaucer at all.⁴⁸ The nature of Dunbar’s response to Chaucer as literary personality—the role in which Chaucer is prominently featured in “Lament for the Makars” and the *Goldyn Targe*—has generated considerably less discussion, and yet the relationship Dunbar establishes with Chaucer in these poems offers valuable insight into how Dunbar views himself not only as a distinctive poetic voice, but also as a representative of an emerging Scottish literary tradition, a tradition that both draws on and distances itself from Chaucer’s poetic authority.

The “Lament for the Makars” offers a complex combination of conventional “Dance of Death” elements with highly specific details concerning Dunbar and his poetic brethren. This interplay of the conventional and the

⁴⁷ See, for example, Elizabeth Roth Eddy’s “‘Sir Thopas’ and ‘Sir Thomas Norny’: Romance Parody in Chaucer and Dunbar,” *RES* 22 (1971): 401–409; and A.A. MacDonald’s discussion of the *Tretis* in “Alliterative Poetry and its Context,” where he calls the poem indebted to Chaucer in content if not in form (263).

⁴⁸ Deanna Delmar Evans, responding to Eddy’s claim that “Schir Thomas Norny” displays a clear influence by Chaucer’s “Sir Thopas,” contends that there are “many differences between the two works” and that consequently there is “little justification for any claims that Dunbar [...] intentionally imitated Chaucer” (“Reconsidering Dunbar’s *Sir Thomas Norny* and Chaucer’s Tale of *Sir Thopas*,” *SSL* 33–34 [2007]: 447).

personal has inspired several critical readings. Robert Drexler contends that, while Dunbar briefly engages with his individual mortality in the poem's penultimate stanza, the poem finally "moves away from this direct confrontation to a moral commonplace—since death cannot be escaped, we should prepare ourselves for it so that we find life everlasting."⁴⁹ Bawcutt observes Dunbar's transition from using "representative social types" in the poem's earlier stanzas to naming specific poets and making greater use of the first person as the poem draws to a close.⁵⁰ While Bawcutt briefly notes that Chaucer is the first poet named in Dunbar's list, "both because he had died a century earlier and from a feeling for hierarchy,"⁵¹ she does not elaborate on the extent to which the "Lament" is self-reflexive not only regarding Dunbar as an individual, but Dunbar as a *poet* striving to situate himself in literary history.

And yet this reading must not be overlooked, considering Dunbar's frequent poetic self-representations. Terrell, one of the few to have considered the greater extent of the "Lament's" self-reflexivity, contends that Dunbar's emphasis on his literary forebears (beginning with Chaucer) and the fact that he alone remains is meant to convey not merely melancholy, but also power—Chaucer and his literary brethren are gone, but Dunbar is still living and writing.⁵² Terrell offers an insightful reading of the relationship Dunbar establishes with his English literary sources; this analysis, however, also posits a perhaps overly simple action-

⁴⁹ R.D. Drexler, "Dunbar's 'Lament for the Makaris' and the Dance of Death Tradition," *SSL* 13 (1978): 155.

⁵⁰ Bawcutt, *Dunbar* 156.

⁵¹ Bawcutt, *Dunbar* 156.

⁵² Terrell notes, "The trio of English poets are foundational, but here the fact of their deaths overwhelms other meaning [...] Dunbar acknowledges Chaucer as the best of poets while still putting him firmly in his place" (97).

reaction dynamic (Chaucer influences Dunbar; Dunbar writes back in a manner that asserts his own literary authority). If one considers the “Lament’s” implications more broadly, Dunbar’s attitude towards literary authority becomes a self-perpetuating circle in which Dunbar’s debt to Chaucer is not only counterpointed by his triumph at being the sole survivor, but also in itself punctuated by the knowledge that Dunbar himself will die one day, felled by the equalising power of death so eloquently described throughout the poem.

Significantly, however, Dunbar offers a way for poets to escape this inevitable fate—while the poets must die, their poetry has the potential to live on. This concept is common to poetic elegy, and critics have noted the “Lament’s” elegiac function.⁵³ Dunbar, however, approaches this consoling thought with an understanding of its implications; while the power of creation does leave poets such as Chaucer and Dunbar with a means of preserving their authority after their death, Dunbar demonstrates his awareness that this authority is contingent on future readers (and writers) engaging with and commemorating poets’ work in their own discourses. The poet thus becomes, in a sense, a ruler who is dependent on the goodwill of his subjects in order to preserve his power. In “Lament for the Makars,” Dunbar therefore inhabits a position similar to that he occupies in relation to the king in his benefice poems and occasional pieces: that is, he both situates himself both as a devotee of Chaucer and asserts that his very distance from the English poet empowers him to champion his own writing and that of an emerging Scottish tradition.

⁵³See, for instance, Bawcutt, *Dunbar* 153.

The “Lament’s” treatment of Chaucer is not its central feature, but it is nevertheless significant that the poet’s reference to Chaucer occupies the physical midpoint of his poem: Death “has done petously devour / The noble Chaucer, of makaris flour” (49-50). While these lines occupy the poem’s literal centre, however, their fleeting reference to Chaucer’s existence illustrates the ephemeral nature of both life and literary fame. The poem’s very structure thus manifests a tension between Chaucer as (literally) a central poetic figure and a transient being, vulnerable to the ravages of time. By being made thus vulnerable, Chaucer’s reputation is shown to be not absolute, but dependent on its perpetuation by his peers and the next generation of writers—including Dunbar.

This position, however, is not unique to Chaucer, but common to all individuals, as Dunbar makes clear throughout the “Lament.” Over several stanzas, Dunbar elaborates on life’s inevitable transience of life, beginning with Dunbar’s recognition of his own fragility:

I that in heill wes and gladnes
Am trublit now with gret seiknes,
And feblit with infermite:
Timor mortis conturbat me. (1-4)

From this moment of reflection on his individual mortality, Dunbar rapidly expands his scope to encompass the entire world—“This fals warld is bot transitory” (6)—and the “stait of man,” which “dois change and vary” (9). Dunbar elaborates on all the “states of man” from the fifth to the eleventh stanzas (17-48), reinforcing through various reiterations that death spares no one, from “[p]rincis, prelotis and potestatis” (18) to “[t]he bab full of benignite” (27) and

everyone in between, including knights (21), ladies (31), clerks (34), magicians (37) and doctors (42). To a certain extent, the focus on death is conventional; Drexler asserts that the poem's first forty-four lines are inspired by the conventions of moral poetry and the Dance of Death tradition.⁵⁴ In the "Lament," however, the presence of these conventions casts into even sharper relief the more personal nature of the stanzas that follow.

The emphasis on individual experience begins in stanza twelve, where Dunbar turns his sights to his own profession; he introduces his subsequent development of the theme of the death of poets with what appears to be a somewhat impersonal observation:

I se that makaris, amang the laif,
 Playis heir ther pad3anis, syne gois to graif.
 Sparit is nought ther faculte:

Timor mortis conturbat me. (45-48)⁵⁵

These lines, which occur nearly at the poem's physical centre, act as a bridge, concluding Dunbar's opening meditation on how Death comes to all while simultaneously offering a starting point to his commemoration of dead poets. The function of these lines thus hints at the "Lament's" ultimate elegiac message: poets may die, but their work and reputation live on, thus providing a form of life after death.

⁵⁴ Drexler 144.

⁵⁵ Terrell contends the opposite, arguing that the use of the personal pronoun evokes a sense of immediacy not seen in the poem until this moment (96). The speaker's disinterested tone, and the reference to poets' abilities as "theirs" rather than "ours," however, suggest otherwise.

In the poem's second half, Dunbar laments the death of his poetic peers, but asserts (both through his words and in his very act of commemoration) that literary creation—both of the poets themselves and, even more importantly, of those who receive their work and respond to it through their own compositions—keeps poets alive and powerful. Specifically, Dunbar offers assurance that *Scottish* writers will live on not only through their works, but also (and more importantly) through future literary references to those works. To this end, Dunbar uses Chaucer (and to a lesser extent Lydgate and Gower) briefly but vitally; by placing him before his catalogue of Scottish poets, Dunbar gives that list greater authority by association with “noble Chaucer” (50). As much as Dunbar needs Chaucer, however, he is also clearly aware that Chaucer needs *him*; in order for Chaucer's reputation to endure, he must be called into remembrance and explored in the writings of future poets, much as how Dunbar treats him in the “Lament.” This relationship exemplifies a dynamic of mutual literary dependence, wherein Dunbar governs Chaucer's literary future to the same extent that Chaucer governs that of Dunbar and other Scottish writers.

Dunbar uses his poem's central quatrain to memorialise the triumvirate of English poets celebrated in other Scottish poems:⁵⁶

He [i.e., Death] has done petously devour

The noble Chaucer, of makaris flour,

The monk of Bery and Gower, all thre:

⁵⁶ See, for instance, Douglas' *Palice*, ll. 918-921: “Yit thare I saw of Brutus Albion / Goffroyd Chaucere, as *A per se*, sance pere / In his wulgare, and morel John Gowere. / Lydgate the monk raid musand him allone.” Notably, Douglas says these poets are of Albion rather than England; this term's unifying effects are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4.

Timor mortis conturbat me. (49-52)

That Dunbar places these poets at the centre of his poem, using them to begin his discussion of *makars* lost, indicates his opinion of their importance not only to an English tradition, but to a Scottish tradition as well. This is particularly true of Dunbar's treatment of Chaucer, who he says is "of makaris flour" (51); Dunbar makes no distinction between English and Scottish writers, but unites them in a poetic brotherhood headed by Chaucer (much as Douglas does in the *Palice of Honour*). Chaucer's literary authority is thus incorporated into the Scottish literary tradition; Dunbar has not suppressed Chaucer's status, but harnessed it, gerrymandering the boundaries of the Chaucerian tradition in order to best serve the Scottish tradition.

This technique, it must be stated, does not seek to incorporate the Scottish tradition into the English. As Dunbar continues his lament, he subtly asserts that Scottish writers already occupy their own space, both geographical and literary. This is clear as he begins his litany of lost Scottish writers, lamenting that Death has "tane out of this cuntre" (55) Sir Hugh of Eglinton, the unknown poet known only as Heryot, and Andrew of Wyntoun (53-54). The word "cuntre" can have a number of meanings in Older Scots, from "land or region" to "district."⁵⁷ What unites all of these definitions is a sense of *place*, of a distinct territory (either physical or figurative) that Dunbar is attempting to carve out for Scottish writers—including, ultimately, himself.

In his list of felled Scottish poets, Dunbar seeks not only to keep their names in common remembrance (on which more later) but also to illuminate the

⁵⁷ DOST, s.v. "contre," definition 1.

variety and life of their works—a means of demonstrating that, while the poets may die, their literary tradition will continue to live and exert influence. “Maister Iohne Clerk and Iames Afflek” are known for their “balat making and trigide” (58-59), revealing the variety of genres of which these poets were capable. Death also takes the “Clerk of Tranent,” who “maid the anteris of Gawane” (65-66); this detail not only demonstrates the capacity of Scottish writers to compose Arthurian legend, but also recalls the particular Scottish fondness for Gawain as a son of Lot of Orkney, reminding readers once more of how Scots writers manipulated predominantly English Arthurian traditions to suit their own ends.⁵⁸ The most vivid association of poetry with life is found in the quatrain Dunbar dedicates to the still-unidentified poet Mercer:

He [i.e., Death] has reft Merseir his endite,
That did in luf so lifly write,
So schort, so quyk, of sentence hie:
Timor mortis conturbat me [.] (73-76)

While Mercer is dead, his words are “lifly” and “quyk,” indicating that their life endures far beyond Mercer’s own. Dunbar indicates through examples such as these how the Scottish poetic tradition is infused with a vigour that will survive the poets’ death—so long as the living take care to recall it.

For it is both the power and responsibility of survivors such as Dunbar to continue to imbue the Scottish tradition with authority through the act of remembrance. As critics have noted (and perhaps lamented), many of the poets in

⁵⁸For more on this strategy, refer to Chapter 1’s discussion on Scottish response to English Arthurian myth.

Dunbar's list—including Mercer, Heryot, and the clerk of Tranent—are unknown to modern readers. And yet readers continue to be aware of their names because Dunbar has invested the poets with a literary afterlife, taking on for himself a powerful role as preserver of an emerging Scottish literary tradition. Obscure as some of the names in Dunbar's list may be, the lines he devotes to them far outnumber the four he gives to the English poets he respects and reveres. Dunbar thus demonstrates through the very balance of words on his page his vision for an autonomous Scottish tradition: one that may have as one of its defining traits a respect for Chaucer, Lydgate and Gower, but that grows far beyond them, reaching into a variety of genres and developing into its own viable tradition. In this respect, Chaucer may be the flower of *makars*, but the Scottish writers claim that flower as their own, much as Margaret Tudor is claimed in Dunbar's poems as Scotland's own rose.

As with so many of Dunbar's poems, the final stanza offers hope of consolation:

Sen for the deid remeid is none,

Best is that we for dede dispone,

Efter our deid that lif may we:

Timor mortis conturbat me. (97-100)

This prayer for life after death, however, need not be interpreted solely from a Christian perspective. One may also see it as Dunbar's hope for a literary afterlife—that the poets' words may live on even after the poets themselves have died. By naming his fellow Scottish poets and enhancing their reputation by depicting them as both the inheritors and embellishers of Chaucer's literary

authority, Dunbar has given an afterlife not only to these individual Scottish poets, but to a national literary tradition as well. This strategy advances Dunbar's own implicit hope: that he, too, will be accorded a place in this Scottish literary pantheon.

A "Flour Imperiall":

The Goldyn Targe's Transnational Chaucer

More than perhaps any other of Dunbar's poems, the *Goldyn Targe* has attracted critical attention for what David DeVries calls its "representational and reflexive" nature.⁵⁹ Denton Fox famously described the *Targe* as "a poem about poetry,"⁶⁰ while Lois Ebin argues that the *Targe* "illustrates both in theory and practice the relationship between the poet and poetry."⁶¹ Even in criticism which focuses on the *Targe* for its "moral allegory"⁶² and "comic psychomachia,"⁶³ studies of the poem emphasise its self-contained, introspective qualities.⁶⁴ The conclusion of the *Targe* adds a collective dimension of Dunbar's poetic self-consciousness, defining not only his poetic identity, but the Scottish tradition's position relative to the great English poets of the age.

In the *envoi*, Dunbar invokes the English trio of Chaucer, Lydgate and Gower, devoting an entire stanza to the first of these three. As in the "Lament,"

⁵⁹ David N. DeVries, "The Pleasure of Influence: Dunbar's *Golden Targe* and Dream-Poetry," *SSL* 27 (1992): 114.

⁶⁰ Denton Fox, "Dunbar's *The Golden Targe*," *ELH* 26 (1959): 331.

⁶¹ Lois Ebin, "The Theme of Poetry in Dunbar's 'Goldyn Targe,'" *CR* 7.2 (Fall 1972): 154.

⁶² Roderick J. Lyall, "Moral Allegory in Dunbar's 'Goldyn Targe,'" *SSL* 11. 1-2 (July-October 1973), 47-65.

⁶³ Walter Scheps, "The *Goldyn Targe*: Dunbar's Comic Psychomachia," *PLL* 11 (1975): 339-356.

⁶⁴ One notable exception is Frank Shuffelton, who focuses on relating the *Targe*'s composition to a particular royal occasion: James IV's 1508 tournament of the wild knight and the black lady ("An Imperial Flower: Dunbar's 'The Goldyn Targe' and the Court Life of James IV of Scotland," *SP* 72.2 [Apr. 1975]: 202).

Dunbar constructs a complicated relationship with his English forebears, particularly Chaucer. On the one hand, he praises Chaucer's rhetoric in a manner that makes clear his own employment of a rhetoric of deference; on the other, he claims Chaucer's literary authority, not as England's but as *Britain's*, including Scotland. In this way, Dunbar uses Chaucer for the ultimate purpose of asserting a vibrant and powerful Scottish literary tradition.

Dunbar begins his *envoi* in the poem's antepenultimate stanza, which apostrophises "reuerend Chaucere" as "rose of rethoris all" (253). As he does in the "Lament" when he calls Chaucer the "flour" of poets, Dunbar invokes the image of Chaucer as a bloom. By figuring Chaucer as the crowning glory (rather than the roots or stalk) of a tradition of "rethoris," Dunbar implies that Chaucer's dependence on literary precedent is a vital component of his success. Dunbar portrays Chaucer not as the product of an exclusively English tradition, but as a flower that "raise in *Britane ewir*" (255; italics added), suggesting that Scotland may also use Chaucer's authority to enrich its own compositions.

The *envoi's* rose symbol also unites the English and Scottish literary traditions in a relationship similar to the Anglo-Scottish political dynamic advanced in the rose imagery of the occasional poetry examined earlier. Dunbar takes care to note that Chaucer is a "rose" (253) and a "flour imperiall" (254), both images used to describe Margaret in the occasional poems. The rose is evocative of Lancastrian, Yorkist and Tudor England, a hint that Chaucer's literary reputation is closely intertwined with the political development of England in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The notion of Chaucer being an *imperial* flower, however, is even more intriguing. The concept of

empire is suggestive of an ideology that transcends national boundaries. Just as Gavin Douglas posited an international poetic brotherhood in the *Palice of Honour*, and Dunbar himself explores the idea in “Lament for the Makars,” Dunbar here evokes the idea more explicitly: there is a transnational poetic empire, and Chaucer is one of its great figures.

Consequently, Dunbar shows Chaucer a certain degree of deference, maintaining that Chaucer’s “fresche anamalit termes celicall” (257) could have done much to illuminate Dunbar’s own dream vision (258). Particularly revealing is Dunbar’s elaboration of this theme in the stanza’s final three lines; he asks Chaucer, “Was thou noucht of oure Inglisch all the lycht, / Surmounting ewiry tong terrestriall, / Alls fer as Mayes morow dois mydnycht?” (259-261). Dunbar here intertwines a humility *topos* with a clear assimilation of Chaucer’s literary power into the Scottish poetic tradition, skilfully placing Chaucer at the head of poetry while simultaneously declaring him master of “oure Inglisch”; in doing so, he folds the English tradition and language, and all they represent, into those of Scotland. Moreover, Dunbar’s assertion that Chaucer’s English surpasses “ewiry tong terrestriall” places Chaucer in a central position in an international empire while also contending that national boundaries are irrelevant when it comes to poetic skill. With such boundaries rendered immaterial, it is much easier for Dunbar to claim Chaucer as master of “oure Inglisch” in a manner similar to his persistent claim of Scottish ownership of Margaret Tudor.

“[M]orall Gower and Ludgate laureate” (262) are used to similar ends in the poem’s penultimate stanza. In his address to these poets, Dunbar extends his technique of claiming the English poetic language as Scotland’s:

Your sugurit lippis and tongis aureate
 Bene to oure eris cause of grete delyte.
 Your angel mouthis most mellifluate
 Oure rude langage has clere illumynate
 And fair ourgilt oure spech, that imperfyte
 Stude or your goldyn pennis schupe to write.
 This ile before was bare and desolate
 Off rethorike or lusty fresch endyte. (263-270)

Dunbar's repeated use of "oure" indicates his desire to include Scotland—and the Scots tongue—in the definition of the "Inglisch" language explicitly named in the earlier stanza. Once again, Dunbar employs the technique of inclusion in order to appropriate the power of the English literary tradition. Interestingly, however, Dunbar's repeated pairing of "your" in close proximity to his use of "oure" conveys a sense of distinction even as he employs a technique of inclusion. In doing so, Dunbar makes clear that England's poets and Scotland's, while participating in shared sources of literary power, are nevertheless distinct—and that Scotland's literary tradition is an autonomous one even as it co-exists with England's on one "ile" (269).

In a final assertion of his own literary authority, Dunbar ends the *Targe* with an apostrophe to his own book. His self-assessment is typically self-deprecating, contending that the *Targe* possesses none of the glories of brilliant rhetoric: "Off all hir [i.e., rhetoric's] lusty rosis redolent / Is non into thy gerland sett on hicht" (275-276). The roses remind the reader of Chaucer, "rose of rethoris all" (253), and suggest that Dunbar's own work could never achieve such heights of

rhetorical skill. Indeed, Dunbar appears to conclude his poem by insisting on its insufficiency: “Eschame tharof and draw the out of sicht. / Rude is thy wede, disteynit, bare and rent, / Wele aucht thou be aferit of the licht” (277-279). The poem’s final line is particularly resonant when one recalls how Chaucer is described earlier as the illuminator of the English tongue (258-259). That Dunbar suggests his poem should fear that light appears to assert its abject inferiority to Chaucer’s work. And yet this line may be interpreted somewhat differently—as a statement that the poem must fear the light in an effort to remain distant from Chaucer’s work, thereby remaining autonomous. Undeniably, the *Targe* concludes with a clear declaration that the poem, for better or for worse, is *not* Chaucer’s. Given Dunbar’s earlier efforts to assimilate Chaucer’s literary authority into a larger British tradition, this final assertion of distance may seem inconsistent. Dunbar, however, may be seeking to strike a balance between inclusion and distinction in a manner similar to the way in which he employs “your” and “oure” in the *envoi*’s penultimate stanza: England and Scotland share a literary background, but nonetheless possess separate and autonomous literary traditions.

In the *envoi* to the *Goldyn Targe*, Dunbar invokes the literary authority of Lydgate, Gower and above all Chaucer, elevating these writers and then capitalising on this elevation in order to assimilate them into a transnational British literary tradition. Dunbar emphasises the importance of an autonomous Scottish thread within this tradition, however, by subtly contrasting the English writers against his own work. Dunbar may assert his work’s inferiority, but he also claims its distinct nature. He champions a British tradition that allows Scots

writers to incorporate the best aspects of the English literary tradition into their own, reinforcing an autonomous Scottish literature.

From works dealing with individual restraint to benefice poems and occasional pieces, and finally in poems that invoke Chaucer's name and reputation, Dunbar's oeuvre is preoccupied with the theme of self-governance on individual, interpersonal, political and literary levels. The central value in Dunbar's eclectic corpus is the vital importance of ruling oneself, whether morally, politically or poetically. Dunbar advocates restraint as a means of achieving greater power, whether one is a court member making a request of the king, a ruler seeking to secure his subjects' favour, or a Scottish poet attempting to uphold a national tradition in the face of powerful foreign influences. In each of these cases, Dunbar's poetic voices combine aspects of deference and assertiveness, demonstrating that it is far more useful to accept and harness outside powers than to suppress or ignore them. Dunbar is thus able to craft poetry that presents a critical view of court life using humour as a mediating device; depicts Margaret Tudor's arrival as a boon for Scotland rather than a threat to it; and champions a poetic tradition compatible with but separate from that of England. In all its varieties, Dunbar's poetry offers a paradigmatic model for Scottish self-governance.

Conclusion: The Future of Governance in Early Scottish Literature

This study of governance as both a major thematic preoccupation of fifteenth-century Scottish literature and a paradigm for interpreting its relationship with English intertexts is hardly as comprehensive as that description would suggest. Unlike the medieval kingdom at its heart, this study has definite boundaries, largely limiting its scope to four Scots poets' reception of one English forebear. While such an examination will inevitably fail to be exhaustive, some form of limitation is a mercy for author and reader alike, especially given the futility of any attempt to impose universal characteristics to the vast and still-largely-uncharted body of medieval Scottish literature. As Sally Mapstone remarks on Scotland's national self-perception in its literature, "Scotland has stories rather than one story, and both the contents and the perspectives of those different stories do not always accord," a statement that finds no exception in the medieval era.¹ By focusing on the *Quair*-poet, Robert Henryson, Gavin Douglas and William Dunbar's literary definitions of governance and their use of Chaucer to advance a vision of a self-governing Scottish literary tradition, this study seeks to reduce the number of stories within its purview; nevertheless, the rich variety of these poets' works and their individual interpretations of both Chaucer and the concept of governance inevitably—and happily—resist homogenisation, offering yet one more assertion of Scottish literature's vibrancy and autonomy.

It seems the lot of medieval scholars to argue for their research's "relevance" to later periods of study. Fortunately, belabouring connections between this study and contemporary issues in Scottish literary studies will

¹ Sally Mapstone, "Scotland's Stories," *Scotland: A History*, ed. Jenny Wormald (New York: Oxford UP, 2005) 305.

likely not be necessary, as this re-evaluation of Anglo-Scottish literary relations contributes to the continuing debate of how scholars should define “Scottish literature.” A major issue in this debate is whether scholars have evaluated medieval and Renaissance Scottish literature by historically appropriate criteria, or whether a re-assessment of these criteria (and particularly their application to Anglo-Scottish literary relations) is required.

As acknowledged earlier, the complexity of Scotland’s history and poetic tradition defies any one set of evaluative criteria; it therefore seems prudent (as this study has attempted to do) to read late-medieval Scots poetry with a sense of the context in which the poets perceived themselves, their poetry and their relationship with Chaucer (and often, by extension, Scotland’s relationship with England). This perspective, however, is not present in all criticism of medieval Scottish poetry. The introduction to this study alluded to R.D.S. Jack’s concern that many critics of early Scottish literature read medieval articulations of Scottish identity anachronistically, leading to dehistoricised, polarised and inappropriately retrospective evaluations of the era’s literature.² A.A. MacDonald has similarly argued for a study of Anglo-Scottish literary relations that is “concerned not only with intertextuality in a narrow sense but also with reception history and—perhaps most importantly—with cultural context,”³ all of which may shed greater light on the “patterns of

² R.D.S. Jack, “Critical Introduction: Where Stands Scottish Literature Now?”, *The Mercat Anthology of Early Scottish Literature, 1375- 1707*, ed. R.D.S. Jack and P.A.T. Rozendaal (Edinburgh: Mercat, 1997) xi. Other essays by Jack on the state of Scottish literary studies include “Of Lion and of Unicorn: Literary Traditions at War,” *Of Lion and Of Unicorn: Essays on Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations in Honour of Professor John MacQueen*, ed. R.D.S. Jack and Kevin McGinley (Edinburgh: Quadriga, 1993) 67- 99; “‘Translating’ the Lost Scottish Renaissance” (cited in the Introduction); and most recently, “‘In ane uther leid’: Reviewing Scottish Literature’s Linguistic Boundaries,” *SSL* 35-36 (2007): 164-183.

³ A.A. MacDonald, “Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations: Problems and Possibilities,” *SSL* 26 (1991): 172.

intercultural penetration” between early Scottish and English literature.⁴ The present study shares goals consistent with MacDonald’s proposed avenues of research. The past several chapters have contended that late medieval Scotland’s literary attitude towards its southern neighbour was not as straightforwardly Anglophobic as a modern nationalist viewpoint might conclude. For this reason, a more reciprocal model of literary exchange—one sensitive to the context and preoccupations of the writers involved—must be employed when examining Scottish reception of English writers such as Chaucer. This study has presented a model of interpretation that reflects the complexities of the Anglo-Scottish literary climate: a paradigm of poetic governance, in which Scots writers both confirm Chaucerian authority and control its perpetuation by interpreting Chaucer to suit their own poetic projects.

This interpretive paradigm seeks not only to understand how Scottish poets receive Chaucer, but how the nature of their response serves the development of a Scottish literary tradition. The dual nature of Scottish writers’ relationship with Chaucer fits well with Jack’s contention that a minority literary culture will balance its comparison to a dominant culture with the search for its own distinctive traits.⁵ In other words, Scottish literature of all eras will inevitably react to some degree against its English counterpart, but this alone cannot define a Scottish literary tradition: in order to assess Scottish literature accurately and fully, one must also understand how Scottish poetry actively creates its *own* hallmarks and defining traits. This combination of reaction and creation characterises the work of the poets examined in this

⁴ A.A. MacDonald, “Anglo-Scottish Literary Relations” 184.

⁵ Jack, ““Translating”” 77.

dissertation; the *Quair*-poet, Henryson, Douglas and Dunbar all make Chaucer's poetic authority serve their own purposes by pairing their use of Chaucer with their own rhetorical and thematic innovations.

By positing a model of governance to examine the issue of Scottish reception of Chaucer in the long fifteenth century, this study attempts both to offer an historically responsible reading of Scottish poetry from the era and to recognise Scots poets' distinctive strategies of reinterpretation of Chaucerian sources and authority. Each of the writers profiled adopts a variation on the model of governance—and in particular the concept of mutual dependence—in order to establish his relationship as a Scottish writer with a major English influence. This model is relevant to the Scottish context of the time because of the strategy of political relations pursued by Scotland both with England and within its own borders, where in both cases Scottish rulers were required to secure their own authority by negotiating and compromising with powerful factions and foreign rulers. In the same manner, the writers examined in the previous chapters respond to Chaucer by channelling his authority in a way that suits their own poetic projects and demonstrates awareness of the power they hold in maintaining Chaucer's literary status. The *Quair*-poet's multi-layered application (personal, poetic, political) of the paradox of freedom through service; Henryson's advocacy of active yet merciful rule—whether royal, moral or literary—in the *Moral Fables* and the *Testament of Cresseid*; Douglas' deft articulation of an interdependent poetic brotherhood in the *Eneados* and the *Palice of Honour*; Dunbar's wide-ranging explorations of individual, interpersonal, royal and poetic self-governance—these poets and

their works all lay the foundations for what later writers (and critics) would codify more formally as a Scottish literary tradition.

Chronologically, this study concludes with Douglas' *Eneados*, completed just a few weeks before Scotland's defeat at Flodden in 1513. James IV's death at this battle, of course, did not signal an end to the Stewart dynasty, nor bring an end to the complicated issues of governance that had surrounded the family for the past hundred years. James V, Mary I and James VI would all ascend to the throne as infants in the wake of their predecessor's premature death; while such a succession of minority rulers was potentially detrimental to the stability of the Scottish kingdom, the Stewarts retained their hold on power, culminating in James VI's coronation as ruler of the united Scottish and English crowns in 1603. The Stewart line's relative stability throughout the sixteenth century may be linked to the development of the Scottish parliamentary and legal systems, creating subsidiary institutions of power that could withstand sudden shifts in royal rule. The changing nature of governance in Scotland—shifting from the personal to the collective—ensured Scottish writers' continued preoccupation with the issues of proper governance and the maintenance of Scottish autonomy, particularly as Scotland moved towards the Union of the Crowns. From David Lindsay's recurrent poetic engagement with the concept of the "common weal" and George Buchanan's theoretical and literary articulations of the ruler's responsibility towards his subjects to James VI's own works asserting his right to absolute rule, Scottish writers' approaches towards issues of governance vary significantly over the course of the sixteenth century. It seems, however, that at their heart these works share a preoccupation with questions of self-governance: to what extent

is Scotland's autonomy dependent on the relationships a ruler establishes not only with his subjects, but also with emerging political institutions? Do Scottish writers in the sixteenth century conceive of these relationships in ways similar to their fifteenth-century counterparts, or does the collective nature of concepts of parliament and the common weal fundamentally change what is expected of a successful ruler? These questions certainly merit further investigation, and testify to the longstanding, ever-evolving, and utterly fascinating issue of literary and political governance in Scotland.

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