The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems

Edited by
Linne R. Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn

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General Introduction

Many readers have noticed that the fifteenth century saw a remarkable flourishing of poems written either in conditions of physical captivity or on the subject of imprisonment. The largest body of this poetry (6,530 lines) is from the pen of Charles of Valois, duke of Orléans, who was captured by the English at the battle of Agincourt in 1415 and not released until 1440, a full twenty-five years later. The longest single poem on the subject, 1,379 lines, is James I of Scotland's *The Kingis Quair*, purportedly written at the time of his release from an eighteen-year imprisonment in England.[1] This volume reflects the wide scope of these "prison poems" by bringing together a new edition of *The Kingis Quair*, a selection from Charles d'Orléans' *Fortunes Stabilnes*, a poem by George Ashby, who was imprisoned in London's Fleet prison, and the poems of two other poets, both anonymous, who wrote about physical and/or emotional imprisonment.

In her 1991 article "Chaucerian Prisoners: The Context of *The Kingis Quair*," Julia Boffey describes different kinds of prisons in Geoffrey Chaucer's writings: "Some prisons feature as simple circumstantial locations, necessary to the functioning of plot, but of no deeper symbolic resonance. . . . Other prisons are purely figurative, concerning ontological states in which human capacity is somehow restricted . . . [and,] frequently, these states of metaphorical imprisonment are connected with the experience of love" (p. 84). Sometimes both kinds of prison are featured, and metaphorically compared, in a single poem. Like Chaucer's knights Palamon and Arcite in The Knight's Tale, James I's circumstances in writing *The Kingis Quair* combined literal imprisonment with the metaphorical imprisonment of unrequited love — or at least the circumstances of his fictitious narrator did. This ambiguity of real versus fictitious narrators and the real versus metaphorical circumstances of their imprisonment applies as well to the other poems collected in this volume.

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[1] On the attribution of *The Kingis Quair* to James and the related issue of dating the poem, see below, p. 17nn1–2. Linne Mooney has been responsible for the choice of texts and for the edition of *The Kingis Quair*. Mary-Jo Arn, who joined the project late, contributed the edition of the selections from *Fortunes Stabilnes*. In general, Mooney has been responsible for the texts, Arn for the commentary, but each has read and made suggestions about the other's work.

Medieval prison poetry was not simply a way of presenting a life story, or part of one, in rhyme. The temptation to read a man's (or woman's) life out of such poetry (in part because the historical facts of the authors' lives are incomplete) has caused many readers to reduce much of this kind of medieval literature to versified biography. But the interplay between art and life was just as vibrant and complex in the Middle Ages as it is today. The three poets in this volume whose identities are known were all imprisoned — that is, literally in prison, though with varying degrees of discomfort. Nevertheless, as artists, each of them used the idea of imprisonment in his own way to create a literary work or works that carried more meaning than just a "this-is-what-I-lived-through" biography or a "see-how-unjustly-I-have-been-treated" complaint.

Prison is a place, but it is also an idea, an idea that has engaged writers and thinkers from the Middle Ages right up to the present because it offers a way of expressing the helplessness we all feel at some point in our lives when we face the troubles of this world. The idea of prison gives us a setting in which to imagine our relationship to the world when we are feeling frustrated, limited, hedged in, stymied. We can then go on to identify the forces that have landed us in this situation (God, fate, political enemies, a lover) and those that can release us. Boethius, author of the highly influential sixth-century Latin work *The Consolation of Philosophy* (about which more below), was imprisoned physically by the emperor Theodoric, but he was interested in writing a philosophical treatise, not a political tract, so he identified his jailor (his enemy, the one who deprived him of his freedom) as Fortune and his savior as Lady Philosophy herself (who represents man's rational side). The image of Boethius' Fortune constantly turning her wheel to raise some men up and cast others down became a fruitful and productive conceit in the hands of late medieval writers and artists all over Europe.

James shapes his idea of the effects of prison into a story of moral improvement. Indeed, Boffey points to the Christian context of this poem as the principal difference between James' resolution and that of Chaucer's Arcite and Palamon in The Knight's Tale or of his Troilus in *Troilus and Criseyde*: "The prisoner's liberation here, from the physical confinement which symbolizes his ignorant and ungoverned subjection to the neutral power of fortune, is brought about because he is enabled through his love for another to perceive the beneficence and harmony of God's creation, and eventually to become a functioning part of it" (p. 96). We know that James I was released from English captivity at the point where the work ends, but in his poem he does not even mention it. Instead, he gives us a "sentence" or pronouncement on the meaning of the speaker's experience that includes heartfelt thanks to the "fair castell wall" (line 1331), without which the entire train of events would not have taken place.

Charles employs the idea of prison as a metaphor for the sufferings induced by the God of Love (or the lady, which amounts to the same thing): he calls this place the "Prisoun of Grevous Displesaunce." But he also plays with the idea of Fortune as a tyrannical woman who keeps him immobilized in his search for a way to win his lady's heart. In doing so, he opens up the whole range of ideas handed down by Boethius, who offered the figure of Fortune as the controller of

all that happens in human life — and yet she is not ultimately in control, for she is subject to God, just as is Nature. The intellectual game played by poets like Charles or James involves the dramatic irony of presenting a speaker who believes that Fortune is omnipotent, though we know (if we have read Boethius) that she is not. The jailer thus jails himself; he has no one to blame for his "misfortune" but his own lack of vision or understanding. This "foolish narrator" also gives Charles (and many other poets) at times the wherewithal to turn the lover's "tragedy" into comedy, at his own expense.

George Ashby strikes a different note, though he works from many of the same sources. For one thing, he is both bourgeois and urban; the Fleet, where he was incarcerated was a well-known prison in the heart of London. For another, he eschews the subject of love in favor of complaint about the turns of Fortune in his life. In the pilgrimage of this life, he counsels patience as a way to "verrey [true] knowlege" (line 135). At the end of his poem, however, he brings us back to his prison cell ("Pryson propurly ys a sepulture" — line 344), showing us the foul prison of this life: he reminds us that prisoners and sinners are one and the same. In other words, prison, as real as it may seem at the opening of the poem, becomes a significant and extremely serious metaphor for the nature of the world, which makes more urgent his counsel of patience as the only way to endure its pains.

The two remaining poems in this volume are anonymous. The "Complaint of a Prisoner against Fortune" purports to be a lament written by an actual prisoner, but there is no way of establishing the truth of this implicit claim. The author strikes many of the same notes as Ashby does: "Fy on this world; it is but fantasie!" (line 99); "best is this world to sette at nought [account it worthless] / And mekely suffre all adversité" (lines 106–07); and he closes with the same appeal to the Christian God. "The Lufaris Complaynt," as the title suggests, is about lack of success in love. At one time attributed to Chaucer, this poem displays more obvious learning than the previous poem: the narrator compliments Chaucer, cites Boethius, and names such classical gods and heroes as Oedipus, Pluto, Tantalus, and Mars. The poet's use of Boethian ideas linked with the pains of love will sound familiar.

The fifteenth century was, in England, a time of upheaval and crises of many kinds. In 1422 Henry V died, leaving behind an heir only nine months old. The struggles of the regents over who should control the government — and more specifically the ongoing hostilities with France (and how they should be financed) — created chaos at the top and economic distress at all levels of society. In the second half of the century, the so-called Wars of the Roses created a different kind of socio-political chaos. The Black Death returned at intervals to claim significant numbers of lives and to reinforce deep feelings of insecurity about the tenuousness of life. There was agricultural depression. The incomes of the nobility were falling. But none of these problems was new, and listing them may give the reader the impression that there is some justification for the use of the phrase "the waning of the Middle Ages" to describe the fifteenth

century.[2] Historians these days dispute the idea that the fifteenth century represented some sort of decline in medieval civilization, and recent scholarship has emphasized the religious, social, and cultural vitality of the period. We cannot, therefore, chalk up the apparent emergence of something we call "prison poetry" to some sort of supposed late medieval crime wave or national depression. Prison was a literary trope and a generic marker as much as it was a description of real life. Nor was it intended to induce feelings of misery. On the contrary, in the hands of a good writer it was a vibrant and flexible literary tool for organizing and giving power to the thought of a poet, whether on the vagaries of the pursuit of love, on fortune, on the nature of this world, or on faith in God.[3]

Literary Context

Most readers of this volume will come to it after studying the works of Geoffrey Chaucer, and all of the writers whose works are compiled here were influenced to a greater or lesser degree by Chaucer. James I of Scotland makes the most evident use of his work, especially the part of The Knight's Tale in which Palamon and Arcite see Emelye from their prison window and instantly fall in love with her, but he also makes regular use of lesser echoes and devices that are detailed in the notes to his poem. The lyrics from Charles d'Orléans' poetry included here reflect neither the range nor the depth of Chaucer's influence on the duke, though there is something in the tone of the poet's double ballade on Fortune's stability (a unique idea) that is reminiscent of Troilus' wrong-headed attempts to sort out his problems in Book Four of *Troilus and Criseyde*. The anonymous "Complaint of a Prisoner against Fortune" was at one time attributed to Chaucer, and it is easy to hear in it echoes of the end of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.

The major literary influence on these poets was not the works of Chaucer, however, but Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae* (*The Consolation of Philosophy*). Anicius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boethius (AD c. 480–524) was a Roman statesman and philosopher. In his *De consolatione,* he writes of being stripped of his honors and thrown into prison by the emperor Theodoric (who later had him executed). While in prison he is visited by a wondrous

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[2] *The Waning of the Middle Ages* is the English title to the first translation of Johan Huizenga's 1919 work *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* (trans. Fritz Hopman [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1924]).

[3] In fact, because of its link with Boethius, prison literature was generally deemed a philosophical genre even as it was used as a vehicle for love poetry: witness its adaptations by Jean de Meun in the *Roman de la Rose* or Thomas Usk, himself another prisoner writing in a courtly/Boethian vein, in his monumental lament, *The Testament of Love*. Jean was one of the more influential translators of Boethius into the vernacular (in his instance French), just as Chaucer was with his English translation.

lady, whom he discovers is Lady Philosophy. She asks what his problem is (a question he finds impertinent since its answer seems to him transparent) and proceeds to demonstrate to him, in the course of a long dialogue, that if he is true to the wise teachings he has espoused all his life, he will see that his present misfortunes are nothing more than superficial trials. All fortune is good fortune, she says, for what we call bad fortune will either teach us something about the non-essential nature of this world, cause us to change our situation, or spur us to call on God for help. Boethius' work was widely known in the late Middle Ages, and the concepts of the mutability of fortune and of consolation in the face of it are found everywhere, in both literary and non-literary contexts. Boethius' text attracted translators in every period of early English literature: King Alfred translated it in the ninth century; Chaucer followed in the late fourteenth. John Walton (relying heavily on Chaucer's work) provided a fifteenth-century translation, and Queen Elizabeth I herself translated it in the sixteenth.

The big question in the mind of the eponymous character that Boethius creates is written in the form of a prayer in verse:

> Oo God, þ*at* all þing rewlest certanlie,
> Now onely mannes werk thow hast forȝete. [*forgotten*]
>
> Why schall fortune turnen vp-so-dou*n*
> Thing wiche þat is in thy gouernement, [*control*]
> Thise wicked folk to set in hy renou*n*, [*good reputation*]
> And dryuen dou*n* þe good [and] innocent[?] (*CP* 1.m.5.4.7–5.4)[4]

The biblical prophet Jeremias expressed the same perennial question in other words: "Why doth the way of the wicked prosper: why is it well with all them that transgress and do wickedly?" (Jeremias 12:1). From the point of view of one who believes in the power of Fortune,

> Sche . . . of wrecchis ha þ right no pite [*wretches (miserable people)*]
> Thogh þat þei waile *and* wepen day *and* nyght.
> Sche skorneþ eke, so wondir hard is sche, [*also; wondrously*]
> Þe wailynge þat hire-seluen haþ hem dight. (*CP* 2.m.1.2.1–4) [*given*]

But Philosophy explains that change is the nature of Fortune, who controls the world (under the all-seeing eye of God). If Fortune ceased to turn her wheel, she would cease to be Fortune. In modern terms, we might say that change is natural; if change ceased (if people did not age, if seeds did not sprout), the result would be not nature, not life, but death. Besides, asks Lady Philosophy on behalf of Fortune, "What wrong haue I the done? / What good of thyne haue I

[4] Unless otherwise indicated, this and all subsequent citations of Boethius are to John Walton's translation of 1410 as edited by Mark Science (EETS o.s. 170).

beraft away / Þat was thyn owne?" (2.pr2.1.6–8). We come into this world as naked babies with nothing, she says, and we can take nothing with us when we leave it. Fortune gives us everything we have and so has the right to take it away at any moment. If we do not complain about the goods she gives, how can we complain when she takes them away?

Ultimately, Fortune is neither good nor evil. Fortune just is, and she is ever-changing. Our only defense, therefore, is self-control. Do not covet fame, wealth, beauty, or any of the goods of this world. Enjoy them when they come, but be prepared at any moment to bid them goodbye. Lady Philosophy goes even further to suggest to Boethius that

> . . . contratious Fortune profiteth more to men than Fortune debonayre. For alwey, whan Fortune semeth debonayre, thanne sche lieth, falsly byhetynge the hope of welefulnesse; but forsothe contraryous Fortune is alway sothfast, whan sche scheweth hirself unstable thurw hir chaungynge. The amyable Fortune desceyveth folk; the contrarie Fortune techeth. (*Boece*, 2.pr8.11–19)

In pleasing you, she deceives you; in withholding good things from you, she teaches wisdom (and teaches you who your real friends are). The only attitude that will get you anywhere is patience. Turn your back on Fortune (which is a kind of illusion anyway), hold to the good, and be grateful for whatever comes your way — a hard lesson, to be sure, but a surprisingly popular one in late medieval England, at least as a literary trope.

James I and Charles, Duke of Orléans

James I of Scotland (1394–1437) was the third son of Robert III of Scotland (the second apparently died in early childhood). Robert III (formerly John, earl of Carrick) was considered infirm and therefore forced to share his rule with his ambitious younger brother, Robert, duke of Albany. Robert III's eldest son, David, duke of Rothesay, showed himself to be profligate and inept in the three years in which he held the office of lieutenant to the king (1399–1402), so that when this three-year lieutenancy was ended in 1402, the duke of Albany had him arrested and taken to Falkland Castle, where he soon died. This left young James as heir to the throne, the only remaining barrier to Albany's ambitions and the figurehead whom each side of Scottish conflicts over power wished to control. In early 1406, as these conflicts reached crisis proportions, a small faction contrived to get James out of harm's way by sending him abroad. As a boy of twelve, therefore, in mid-March 1406, James was put aboard a ship for France, together with a small retinue including the earl of Orkney, Sir Archibald Edmonstone, and William Giffart, the latter who, having been marshall to his mother Queen Annabella, was destined to spend ten years of his captivity with James. Perhaps due to the secrecy of their task or to the suddenness of the decision to evacuate the prince from Scotland, no safe-conduct was requested from Henry IV of England, so the ship (a merchant vessel from Danzig) was fair

game for the English pirates who captured it off Flamborough Head on 22 March. After the pirates recognized their prize and turned him over to the English king, James remained in English hands for the next eighteen years until his release in December 1423, at the age of thirty. Only two weeks after James' capture, on 4 April 1406, his father Robert III of Scotland died (of grief or shock at his son's capture), leaving James as rightful sovereign but unable to claim the crown as long as he remained in English hands.

James was initially taken to the Tower of London, the great fortress begun by William the Conqueror, where he remained for a year in the company of Griffith, the young son of Owen Glendwr. He spent some time in Nottingham because of an outbreak of the plague in the capital, and was housed elsewhere from time to time, but whenever he was brought to London, it was to the Tower (e.g., 1413–14 and 1416–18), the safest stronghold in the kingdom. This should not suggest, however, that he was kept, either at the Tower or in other castles, in some sort of dungeon. In the mid-fourteenth century King John of France, another royal prisoner, was housed in the Tower for more than two years, and in stark contrast to our own day, noble or royal prisoners (usually prisoners of war) were accommodated more like special guests than like criminals or enemies. As well as serving as fortifications, castles were by definition aristocratic or noble dwellings that provided suitable settings for important social occasions demonstrating the power of the owner. They were repositories for documents and treasure and sites for dispensing justice; they were sometimes surrounded by vast parks stocked with animals for hunting; and the structures themselves might include chapels, halls, chambers, and kitchens, as well as strong rooms for holding criminals. Within the confines of the Tower of London's outer walls, Henry III had built a magnificent palace (demolished in the seventeenth century), and the royal apartments, as well as the White Tower itself, were suitable for housing members of the nobility, whether in or out of favor, in the style to which they were accustomed. English kings and queens had themselves resided in the Tower from time to time since the twelfth century, though the Tower was also used as a prison and had dungeons that fully deserved the name.

James was not only well housed but well educated in the years that followed, becoming accomplished in Latin, French, and music, as well as in the other liberal and martial arts including wrestling, jousting, and archery. The fifteenth-century chronicler Thomas Walsingham records that Henry IV joked that the Scots could have saved themselves the trouble of trying to send James to France since he could learn French as well at the English court. He also learned statecraft from his English captors, observing the strong central government of the English court as a model of kingship that he would later try to impose on the Scottish barons after his release and return to personal rule in Scotland.

James may have been influenced in terms of political views and cultural tastes by his fellow prisoners as well, for he was not by any means the only prisoner either in English or Scottish hands at the time. In Scotland in his youth he had been tutored at St. Andrews with a contemporary prisoner of the Scots, Henry Percy, son of Henry "Hotspur" Percy, earl of Northumberland. The Scots also held at Stirling Castle, until his death in 1419, a man

purporting to be the deposed English king, Richard II. Other captives of the English included Griffith, son of Owen Glendwr, with whom James shared the first three years of his captivity; Murdac, son and heir of Robert, duke of Albany, with whom he shared occupancy of the Tower in the early years of Henry V's reign (1413–15),[5] and two French dukes: Charles, duke of Orléans, and his cousin, the duke of Bourbon, both captured at the battle of Agincourt in 1415 and held in the Tower in the months immediately following the battle.

In fact, seeing James' English experience through the lens of Charles' captivity, which is much better documented than his own, allows us to fill in some of the blanks. The two princes were of nearly the same age (both orphaned early in life) and attended by tutors, secretaries, chaplains, and other companions. Though kept conveniently out of the political picture as (potential) rulers of their respective countries, both were permitted to communicate with their families and followers back home and to carry out their duties as best they could *in absentia* (in part to enable them to raise ransom money to pay their English "hosts"). Both were known, in the long run, as lovers of peace and an ordered society. They were natural allies — which means that the opportunities to fraternize afforded to them by their captors (who knew the dangers of the Auld Alliance between France and Scotland all too well) would have been extremely limited.

Both royal prisoners were moved from castle to castle and in and out of the Tower depending on the political climate and financial situation of the times. James was housed at various times at Windsor, Nottingham, and Kenilworth Castles in the Midlands, and Pontefract Castle in the north, as well as in London at the Tower and at Westminster. Charles was similarly moved from one nobleman's castle to another, though never in the custody of the same nobleman as James. Financial records survive that tell us that Charles' "keepers" were reimbursed for their expenses and their trouble in accommodating him, and this is confirmed by records of James' keeping. In the early years of his captivity, James was maintained at a cost of 6 shillings and 8 pence a day, as compared with the contemporary maintenance of Owen Glendwr's son at 3 shillings, 4 pence a day. In 1415 James was given into the custody of Sir John Pelham, at the cost to the government of seven hundred pounds a year — almost two pounds per day — though other accounts suggest that he was not always so well accommodated. A stream of safe-conducts were issued for the duke of Orléans' household officers and servants from France to carry news and take back instructions. They even brought along a little dog. The duke traveled frequently with his hosts; his fellow-prisoner, the duke of Bourbon, had his horses and hawks brought to him from France so that he could indulge in one of his favorite pastimes, hunting.

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[5] Murdac, a prisoner since 1402, was released in 1416, his release having been a greater priority for his father as governor of Scotland than that of the heir to the throne whose liberation would effectively depose him.

Other kinds of evidence tell us that royal prisoners were involved in the social life of the lords who harbored them. Charles wrote a series of short lyrics that make sense only as gambits in a kind of social play that must have been common in late medieval northern Europe — the giving of little gifts, compliments, and even kisses. One social occasion, much grander than that of a provincial court in which we know Charles took part, was the banquet (and probably other festivities) surrounding the visit in 1416 of Sigismund, the king of Hungary and later Holy Roman Emperor, who was on a diplomatic mission to England and France to attempt to negotiate an end to the Hundred Years' War. It would be very surprising if James, who was being held elsewhere in the Tower at the time, had not also been put on display on such an occasion — no doubt as a measure of the glory and power of England. Although James' living situation may have differed from Charles' in the early years of his captivity on account of his youth, the assumption that he lived in much the same circumstances as his French counterpart is not unreasonable.

Unlike Orléans, however, James did not spend the whole of his captivity in England. In June of 1420, Henry V called him to France in order to use him in his contest with the army of the French. At the siege of Melun he forced James to order those Scots who were fighting alongside their French allies to lay down their arms. Having no choice, he did so, but the Scots refused to obey him because the order was given under duress, and when the siege ended a number were hanged for their obduracy. James returned to France to appear on the English side of the war in the autumn of 1421, but in the intervening spring he had played a different role for the king. At the queen's coronation banquet, dressed in a doublet of scarlet, trimmed in ermine, he was given the place of honor at the queen's side, after which he accompanied the king and queen on a royal progress through the Midlands. He was also probably present in France at the king's death and appeared as one of the chief mourners at Henry's funeral in 1422. We have no way of knowing what James' response to these events were, whether he had made his peace with the English and so acted willingly or whether he was displeased at being required to playact for his captors.

Such coincidences of circumstance between James I and Charles d'Orléans are not all that surprising in an age overshadowed by the Hundred Years' War, but there are some even more striking similarities: both men were excellent poets (perhaps the finest of the first half of the fifteenth century), and both wrote in English, a language not exactly their own (the English James learned at his mother's knee was quite different from that of London). They drew on a knowledge of French poetry (of which there was an ample supply circulating in the England of their day) as well as on the work of Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower. They were both deeply influenced by Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, a work about the loss of freedom, the seeming unfairness of life's experiences, and ways to surmount the difficulties dealt us by Fortune. Though Charles may have met John Lydgate, there is no evidence that he borrowed anything from him, but James seems to have been influenced by some of Lydgate's poetry, especially *The Complaint of the Black Knight,* a poem modeled on Chaucer's *Book of the*

Duchess. James and Charles both wrote dream visions in which allegorical figures appeared. Both wrote of being imprisoned by circumstance and by Love; both were musicians (they played the harp, a lap-sized instrument popular in courtly circles), as well as poets and lovers of books. We might rightly call them "intellectuals." Much as we would wish otherwise, however, it is unlikely that either knew the work of the other. James did not write *The Kingis Quair* until after he and Charles had shared time in the Tower, and, if those scholars are correct who say he wrote it only after he returned to Scotland, it is virtually certain that Charles could not have known it. Their poetic productions are thus a good hedge against our tendency to see such borrowings as in any way specific to them. The parallels that are drawn in the Explanatory Notes below point rather to ideas and phraseology that were abroad generally in literary circles.

Charles had to wait until his release in 1440 (when he was forty-six) to meet his future bride, the sixteen-year-old niece of the duke and duchess of Burgundy, but James apparently fell in love with a noble English lady during his captivity, though it is extremely unlikely that his poem presents an accurate account of their first encounter. (They probably met at Windsor Castle in May of 1423.) It is impossible to know precisely the proportions of political expediency and "true love" in the balance of his decision, but James was betrothed early in 1424 to Joan Beaufort, niece of Henry Beaufort, bishop of Winchester and uncle of Henry VI. At some time during the first two weeks of February 1424, they were married in London (actually in Southwark, at the church of St. Mary Overie — over-the-water — across the river from London and, coincidentally, the place where John Gower is buried). That the marriage was a sumptuous affair, as suited the royal house of Scotland, we know from a warrant issued in January by Henry VI for a quantity of "cloth of gold" to James, to be used for wedding garments.[6] They left for Scotland on 15 February. James, soon to be crowned king, was thirty. His 1,379-line poem, *The Kingis Quair*, is thought by many to have been written after his release and possibly after his marriage but while he was still in England, that is, in the first weeks of February 1424, perhaps as a tribute to his wife for St. Valentine's Day.

George Ashby

George Ashby, whose poem is slighter than James' (350 lines), claims to write from the Fleet prison, known in the nineteenth century as a debtor's prison. The reason for Ashby's imprisonment, however, may have been more political than economic. In the late Middle Ages the Fleet held prisoners from many walks of life and social ranks. In 1421, for example, Henry V sent Lord Grey de Codenore to the Fleet for remaining in England after he had been exiled. And

[6] Rymer, *Foedera* 10.350. Cloth of gold was woven of finely drawn gold wire, usually woven in one direction while colored silk was used in the other.

under Henry VI seven prisoners captured earlier at the battle of Harfleur were committed to the Fleet. Lodgings could be had at several levels of comfort, for which prisoners (at least until the early modern period) were expected to pay. In this period there is one sense in which the Fleet could be called a debtor's prison, for among those imprisoned there were citizens who were debtors to the king. John Ashton even writes that "in the fifteenth century it was a very common practice for delinquents who were confined in other London prisons to confess themselves, by a legal fiction, debtors to the King, in order to get *into* the Fleet prison, *which was more comfortable*" (emphasis added).[7] We should not, therefore, necessarily imagine Ashby in irons in a dungeon (or in a modern jail), but in more habitable and well-furnished surroundings than either — at whatever level of luxury he could afford. Another reason for prisoners requesting incarceration in the Fleet was its custom of permitting its prisoners to walk about at large during the day, in order to allow the possibility of raising the money to pay off their debts. Ashby's references to having been deprived of all his liberty should thus be taken relatively, unless it was stipulated specifically that he should not be allowed this privilege (for which no evidence survives).

Like Chaucer and the poet Thomas Hoccleve before him, Ashby was a government employee. He was for forty years (see line 64) a clerk of the Signet to Henry VI and to his queen, Margaret of Anjou, working on both sides of the Channel. The signet office, with the king's secretary at its head, was the only part of the administration of late medieval England which was always at the king's side (though this does not, of course, imply personal contact between the clerks of the signet and the king). At some time *after* his release from the Fleet, Ashby seems to have directed the education of Henry VI's son Edward before the prince died (most likely as a result of foul play) in 1471. It is probable that Henry's successor, the Yorkist Edward IV — seeing Ashby as an adherent of the Lancastrian dynasty he toppled — was the ultimate source of Ashby's misery ("Pullyng myn houses downe" and "Puttyng on me many fals lesyng," lines 21 and 26) and imprisonment. When he first usurped power in 1461, Edward acted with the swiftness and brutality necessary to strengthen his hold on the English throne while the old king still lived. Read this way, Ashby's lament at the lack of faith of his friends might be seen as reflecting their fear of being associated with a known Lancastrian adherent. We might therefore imagine Ashby as a fairly well educated bureaucrat (he must have known Latin, French, and English) working in London or in the provinces in the entourage of the king and associating with the post-1450 counterparts of Chaucer and Hoccleve. In *The Complaint of a Prisoner of the Fleet,* Ashby seems to resent that he is treated as "neyther wytty ne sage / Whyche grevyd me sore" (lines 75–76). Though he was obviously of a vastly inferior social status compared with James I or Charles d'Orléans, we might also imagine him, like them, employing the

[7] Ashton, *The Fleet: Its River, Prison, and Marriages* (New York: Scribner and Welford, 1888), p. 239.

metaphor of Fortune's wheel to express his frustration at being deprived of his liberty for political reasons.

Editorial Principles

Base texts for these editions are given in the introductions to individual texts. The following editorial principle applies to all editions: editorial changes have been made only where necessary for understanding. Those changes that have been made are not marked in any way in the text itself, but are indicated in the Textual Notes. All medieval abbreviations, including the medieval equivalent of the ampersand, have been silently expanded. We have ignored otiose strokes and normally transcribed *on̄* as *oun*. In other instances we have read the macron over a vowel as *n* (e.g., *mē* as *men*, *mȳ* as *myn*, or *begȳneth* as *begynneth*). And, in some instances, we have deemed the macron to be redundant (e.g., the scribe writes *non̄* where the word should simply be spelled *non*). See the Introduction to Ashby's poem for differences in these practices that are particular to that poem.

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Common Abbreviations

BD	*Book of the Duchess* (Geoffrey Chaucer)
Boece	*Consolation of Philosophy* (trans. Geoffrey Chaucer)
CA	*Confessio Amantis* (John Gower)
CBK	*Complaint of the Black Knight* (John Lydgate)
CP	*Consolation of Philosophy* (trans. John Walton)
CT	*The Canterbury Tales* (Geoffrey Chaucer)
De cons.	*De consolatio philosophiae* (Boethius)
FS	*Fortunes Stabilnes* (Charles d'Orleans)
HF	*House of Fame* (Geoffrey Chaucer)
KQ	*The Kingis Quair* (James I of Scotland)
LGW	*The Legend of Good Women* (Geoffrey Chaucer)
MED	*Middle English Dictionary*
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
PF	*Parliament of Fouls* (Geoffrey Chaucer)
Rom.	*Romaunt of the Rose* (trans. Geoffrey Chaucer)
RR	*Roman de la Rose* (Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Lorris)
TC	*Troilus and Criseyde* (Geoffrey Chaucer)
TG	*Temple of Glas* (John Lydgate)

James I of Scotland, *The Kingis Quair*

Introduction

The Kingis Quair (the "King's Book") survives in a single manuscript from the end of the fifteenth century, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Selden. B.24, on folios 192r–211r. The manuscript is a collection of minor poetic works by Geoffrey Chaucer and other poets of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, some of them, like *The Kingis Quair,* unique to the manuscript.[1] Although this sole surviving copy was probably written in the last quarter of the fifteenth century, the poem itself is generally considered to have been written by James I, king of Scotland (1394–1437), perhaps immediately after his release from imprisonment by the English late in 1423 and before he left England in the spring of 1424.[2] The heading and closing of the poem in the manuscript attribute the poem to James, and the details of his capture and captivity described in the poem (lines 148–96) correspond with our knowledge of these events in James' life from other sources.[3]

A previous editor of *The Kingis Quair*, John Norton-Smith, has commented upon the "eclecticism" of James' style, which he describes as "the blending of different aspects of literary *topoi:* description, song, complaint, self-analysis, prayer, moral instruction, dialogue, panegyric, allegorical excursus, dream adventure . . . into a medley, various yet whole" (pp. xii–xiii). This "eclecticism," derived in part from Lydgate's influence, makes this poem particularly difficult for modern readers. Yet to its original audience James' poem must have seemed a *tour de force,* demonstrating his mastery of many different *topoi* and styles current

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[1] On the dating and contents of the manuscript, see the introduction to the facsimile edition by Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards, pp. 1–5.

[2] On the attribution of *The Kingis Quair* to James, see Matthew P. McDiarmid's edition, pp. 28–48. The position that the poem is the work of an anonymous fifteenth-century poet purposely writing a pseudo-biography of James was first put forth by J. T. T. Brown in 1896; this position was subsequently adopted and revised in Alexander Lawson's edition of the poem in 1910. Even if authorship by James is accepted (as it is by the majority of scholars), the dating of its composition is disputed. John Norton-Smith (p. xxiv) argues for the first weeks of February 1424 (after his marriage but before leaving England — probably written for St. Valentine's Day); McDiarmid (p. 38) argues for a date around 1435; Skeat (p. xi) figures that it was begun in 1423, well before the marriage took place.

[3] The standard biography of James I remains the 1936 work by E. W. M. Balfour-Melville.

in medieval poetry, and that may well have been James' intent. Aside from the poetry of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, James would have had many medieval models, both English and French (especially the *Roman de la Rose*, perhaps in Chaucer's translation), of works intended to show off not only the poets' broad range of knowledge but also their mastery of literary forms and *topoi*.

The Kingis Quair focuses on "James'" love for a woman whom he has first seen during his captivity (historically Joan Beaufort), but he reveals nothing explicit about the lady or his courtship of her; instead he follows Boethian conventions in portraying his sufferings and his attempts to obtain "immortal" assistance. Modern readers will perhaps be frustrated by the lack of detail about actual encounters between lover and beloved; in fact, after the moment of his first looking down from his tower and seeing her in the garden, the lady never again appears in the flesh. He never actually exchanges a word with her in the course of the entire poem. Even at the end, when he tells us of his ultimate success in winning the hand of this woman, he refrains from telling us her name:

And thus this flour — I can seye no more —	*flower*
So hertly has unto my help attendit	*wholeheartedly*
That from the deth hir man sche has defendit. (lines 1307–09)	*she has saved me from death*

Michael Cherniss remarks that "whatever the historicity of the personal experience of King James in the *Quair*, that experience has been transferred into an artifact composed primarily of conventional literary elements" (p. 194). In spite of this lack of specific personal description, James' poem is a beautiful tribute to the woman he loved, describing in a formal manner his devotion to her and his sense that even his long imprisonment has been worth the opportunity to meet and court her. Still, the poet's descriptions of the dream landscapes he enters, his lively dialogues with the various deities he encounters, and his impassioned prayers for assistance add a vitality to the poem that moves beyond conventions.

James was influenced by Chaucer's poetry, by the poetry of later Chaucerians (notably John Lydgate), and especially by Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, which Chaucer had not only translated but used extensively as a basis for philosophical/psychological poetry.[4] Boethius' work was widely known in the late Middle Ages, and the concepts of the mutability of fortune and consolation in the face of it are found not only in literary works like *The Kingis Quair* but even in non-literary documents such as the famous *Epistola Consolatoria* sent to James early in 1414 from the University of Paris, whose real purpose was to enlist his aid in a papal controversy but whose plea was couched in terms of the consolation that comes from valuing adversity over prosperity.

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[4] On Boethius' literary impact on the Middle Ages, see above, pp. 4–6.

Chaucer's influence on James is pervasive: James' fictional frame — the reading a book to overcome sleeplessness and then having a dream which is related to the contents of the book — probably derives from Chaucer's framing of *The Book of the Duchess*; his falling in love at first sight with a woman he sees from his prison tower may derive from Chaucer's Knight's Tale; his description of the sudden onset of lovesickness, from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*; and his descriptions of dream landscapes and goddesses, from *The Book of the Duchess*, *The House of Fame*, and *The Parliament of Fowls*. As to James' debt to Gower, though he calls upon him in the closing lines of his poem, it is difficult to point to specific borrowings. In his edition, Alexander Lawson suggests that the *Quair* is "after the manner of Gower in its prevailing didactic strain and its frequent moralising," and he proceeds to list a few similarities of detail. Some scholars argue that the style of James' poem derives more from Chaucer's followers, especially John Lydgate, than from Gower or even Chaucer himself. James' blend of natural and artificial diction, of waking and dreaming perspectives, of realistic and allegorical encounters remind one of Lydgatean dream visions like *The Temple of Glas* and *The Complaint of the Black Knight.*

Various writers have seen the influence of *The Kingis Quair* in poems of the later fifteenth century. In an early work on the authorship of the poem, J. T. T. Brown (pp. 31–48) presents a table of similarities between *The Kingis Quair* and the anonymous poem, the "Court of Love," most of which are too common to be useful. Derek Pearsall and Matthew McDiarmid both discuss the influence of James' poem on the anonymous *Isle of Ladies*, though McDiarmid (pp. 34–36) limits the borrowings to the description of a single lady. McDiarmid also mentions a minor resemblance with Robert Henryson's fable, the "Trial of the Fox" (p. 34), and posits a relationship between the *Quair* and Lydgate's translation of Deguileville's religious allegory, the *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* (pp. 36–37), but it may not be easy to settle the priority of Lydgate's translation and the composition of the *Quair*. There may also be some connection of the *Quair* to two later Scottish poems, *Lancelot of the Laik* and *The Quare of Jelusy*.[5]

The poem's eclecticism — that is, the number of different literary *topoi* crowded into this poem — may make it difficult for modern readers to follow the course of events described in the poem. For this reason, we provide the following summary:

First, there is an author's frame around the poem (lines 1–133 and 1352–79), in which James deliberately speaks of himself as author: he writes that on a sleepless night in February, he chose to read Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (summarized in lines 22–49), and, inspired by the Boethian image of Fortune and her wheel, decided to write a new poem about his own turnings of fortune. He admits his need for guidance to choose the right way both in life and in writing, and calls on the Muses to assist him in the latter effort. The poem he purportedly writes

[5] McDiarmid, however, rejects these last claims (pp. 31–34).

follows (lines 134–1351). In the last four stanzas (the envoy), he addresses his poem, sending it forth to readers — and especially to his beloved lady — to ask them (her) to accept it in spite of its faults, closing with a recognition of the omnipotence of God who really governs our lives and with a prayer for the souls of his poetic predecessors, Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower.

Lines 134–1351 are the poem thus framed. James recounts the story of his capture by the English and his wonder that Fortune should be so cruel to him (lines 134–203). He then describes his first sight of his beloved as she walks in the garden that he can see from his prison window (204–511): he says the nightingales had been singing of love (232–38), causing him to wonder what love is that is so noble (248–73). It is then that he falls in love at his first sight of the lady and addresses her from afar as if she were a deity (274–308). He describes her beauty, then addresses Venus as he yields homage to love; he asks the nightingales to sing again to delight his beloved (309–413), and when they respond he is so enraptured by the effect that he pledges his undying love to the lady and the birds sing a song in praise of May, the season for love (421–62). When she leaves the garden, he describes the torment he feels; he mourns his state there at the window until he falls asleep and begins his dream (463–511).

The dream occupies lines 521–1204. In it, he visits three dreamscapes, encountering a deity in each: Venus, Minerva, and Fortune. First he is carried up into the heavens to the realm of Venus, where he sees all manner of lovers, old and young, successful and unsuccessful (538–651) as well as Cupid and his mother Venus herself. He proceeds to address Venus (687–721), asking her aid in his cause. She tells him of all the difficulties that stand in the way of his suit but promises to help if he will be patient. She offers him a guide, Good Hope, to find Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, who can offer more advice (729–861). Good Hope guides him thence to the palace of Minerva, where he is admitted by the porter, Patience, and receives Minerva's advice about how to conduct himself in order to win the love of his lady (862–966). She explains that those who will be truly happy in love put aside mere appetite and, intending marriage, love according to God's law. When she quizzes him about his intentions, he answers that his is a noble and true love (967–87, 991–1001), and she sends him on to Fortune for further assistance (1002–52).

He descends to the earth, but not to a waking state. He dreams he walks through an ideal landscape, with a flowing river swimming with fish, blooming plants, and an array of wild animals (1057–1101). Good Hope, his guide, appears again and leads him to an enclosed garden in which he sees Fortune turning her wheel, raising some to high estate and casting down others (1102–35). Fortune addresses him by name, asking why he has come. He explains his situation to her, and she explains the workings of her wheel (1156–90). At her urging, he climbs on the wheel, and Fortune reminds him that she can both raise up and cast down men's fortunes, taking him so firmly by the ear to demonstrate this that he wakes from his dream (1191–1204).

On awaking, the lover is more troubled still by the thought that only dreams can bring him nearer to what he desires (1205–31). Then a white turtledove appears, bearing an illuminated scroll on which are depicted "gillyflowers" (perhaps carnations) and a poem announcing the

glad news that heaven has decreed that he shall have his desire (1232–53). The poet tells us that after reading this over and over again he hung it up at the head of his bed to give him hope (1254–60). He then tells us briefly of the success of his courtship, and explains why this story has been worthy of writing in the form of this poem (1261–81). He prays to Venus to assist other men who are true lovers, and prays for those in each of the earlier stages of love (1282–1302). He asserts that it would take too long to explain how he eventually won the love of his lady and expresses his gratitude to the gods, the nightingale, his prison, the garden, and even his captivity that all played a part in his discovering love and his beloved (1303–37). Two final stanzas expressing his happiness end the poem (1338–51), followed by the four-stanza envoy (1352–79).

At a most basic level, then, *The Kingis Quair* is about James' suffering and feelings of impotence in the face of fortune (or the goddess Fortuna) in both his life and his love. After James takes instruction and advice from Venus and Minerva, both life and love take a turn for the better near the end of the poem and the whole seems a celebration of James' release both from captivity by the English and from the sufferings of unrequited love. However, when Matthew McDiarmid refers to the work as "a spiritual autobiography" (p. 50) and "James' 'divine comedy'" (p. 60), he points to a much broader field of meaning than the phrase "love story" suggests. The speaker in the poem is not the lover, but an older, wiser self telling the story of an event in the past and the lesson of that story. The work begins (line 1) and ends (line 1372, followed by the envoy) "heigh in the hevynnis figure circulere," in the firmament, the sphere of the fixed stars, which guide life on earth under the loving care of the Creator.[6] The imprisoned youth opens his copy of Boethius to while away the time, and in effect *becomes* the character of Boethius, turning over and over in his mind the puzzle of Fortune's nature (lines 52–65), as Boethius does — and clearly not seeing beyond her. The poem thus poses a problem, the same problem Boethius' work poses: what is the true nature of Fortune? what is this life all about? how do we escape from the ceaseless assaults of an apparently capricious, often malignant Fortune? In the case of James, the solution comes *through* the love situation and his working through it verbally and emotionally. Love is therefore his salvation in a very specific and profound sense. Minerva, Venus, and Fortune do not simply help him win his lady, they teach him how to live his life, with patience, steadfastness, and faithfulness.

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[6] The idea is akin to the envoy to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, where Troilus looks down from the eighth sphere of the fixed stars to review his life. "James," however, is filled with joyous thoughts and speaks from a perspective of beauty that hearkens back to Boethius' hymn at the end of Book 2 of the *Consolation*. See Explanatory Notes.

Form

The Kingis Quair is written in a seven-line stanza that rhymes *ababbcc*. James makes a point of calling attention to his stanza form in the penultimate line, "I recommend my buk in lynis sevin" (line 1378). He probably borrowed this form from Chaucer, who first introduced it into English poetry in his *Parliament of Fowls* and made it most famous in *Troilus and Criseyde*. Although many poets made use of this form in the fifteenth century (including Charles d'Orléans), and despite the fact that James did not invent it (nor, for that matter, did Chaucer, who borrowed it from French poetry), this particular stanzaic pattern was named "rhyme royal" for its use by James I in *The Kingis Quair*.

Manuscript Context

This edition uses the unique text of Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Selden. B.24 as its base text. See the General Introduction (p. 12) for editorial principles.

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Figures 1 and 2 (pp. 29–30)

These romantic images by William Scott Bell, a Pre-Raphaelite artist, were first painted on the interior wall of a spiral staircase in Scotland in the nineteenth century, but they were quickly threatened by dampness in the stone. Bell admired *The Kingis Quair* and intended to produce an edition of the poem with illustrations, but before he could do so, two other editions appeared. He therefore contented himself with preserving his images by producing etchings of the wall paintings and publishing them in a large folio with a short essay on the poem. This may well be the first time since 1887 that they have been reproduced together with the poem that inspired them. See William Scott Bell, *Illustrations to the King's Quair of King James I of Scotland Painted on the Staircase of Penkill Castle, Ayrshire, by William Scott Bell, June 1865 to August 1868; etched by him 1885* (Edinburgh: T. & A. Constable, 1887).

Figure 1: James Writes His Dream in Prison.
By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Figure 2: James' First Sight of His Lady in the Garden.
By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

The Kingis Quair

Heirefter followis the quair maid be King James of Scotland the first callit the kingis quair and maid quhan his majestee wes in Ingland

1

	Heigh in the hevynnis figure circulere	*High; heaven's circular schema*
	The rody sterres twynklyng as the fyre,	*ruddy (red)*
	And, in Aquary, Citherea the clere	*Aquarius, Venus*
	Rynsid hir tressis like the goldin wyre	*Rinsed*
5	That late tofore in fair and fresche atyre	*before; attire*
	Through Capricorn heved hir hornis bright,	*heaved*
	North northward approchit the mydnyght,	*approached*

2

	Quhen, as I lay in bed allone waking,	*When*
	New partit out of slepe a lyte tofore,	*Newly parted; a bit*
10	Fell me to mynd of many diverse thing,	*There came to my mind*
	Of this and that, can I noght say quharfore,	*wherefore*
	Bot slepe for craft in erth myght I no more,	*by any device on earth*
	For quhich as tho coude I no better wyle,	*which for then; pass the time*
	Bot toke a boke to rede apon a quhile,	*But took [up]; a while*

3

15	Of quhich the name is clepit properly	*which; called*
	Boece, eftir him that was the compiloure,	*Boethius; author*
	Schewing the counsele of Philosophye,	*Showing the counsel (instruction)*
	Compilit by that noble senatoure	*Written*
	Of Rome, quhilom that was the warldis floure,	*who once was*
20	And from estate by Fortunes quhile	*prosperity; Fortune's wheel*
	Forjugit was to povert in exile,	*Condemned; poverty*

4

	And thereto here this worthy lord and clerk,	
	His metir suete, full of moralitee,	*His verse sweetly rendered*

	His flourit pen so fair he set awerk,	*His ornate pen; set to work*
25	Discryving first of his prosperitee,	*Describing*
	And out of that his infelicitee,	
	And than how he, in his poetly report,	*versified retelling*
	In philosophy can him to confort;	*began to comfort himself*

5

	For quhich, thogh I in purpose at my boke	
30	To borowe a slepe at thilke tyme began,	
	Or ever I stent, my best was more to loke	
	Upon the writing of this noble man,[1]	
	That in himself the full recover wan	*Who; gained full recovery*
	Of his infortune, povert, and distresse,	*From*
35	And in tham set his verray sekernesse.	*true security*

6

	And so the vertew of his youth before	*virtue*
	Was in his age the ground of his delytis.	*basis; delights*
	Fortune the bak him turnyt, and therfore	*Fortune turned her back to*
	He makith joye and confort that he quit is	*is freed (released)*
40	Of their unsekir warldis appetitis;	*With these insecure worldly*
	And so aworth he takith his penance,	*patiently he bears*
	And of his vertew maid it suffisance	*made sufficiency*

7

	With mony a noble resoun, as him likit,	*many; as it pleased him*
	Enditing in his fair Latyne tong,	*Composing; tongue*
45	So full of fruyte and rethorikly pykit,	*rhetorically adorned*
	Quhich to declare my scole is over yong.	*my learning is insufficient*
	Therfore I lat him pas, and in my tong	*let*
	Procede I will agayn to my sentence	
	Of my mater, and leve all incidence.	*matter; digression*

---

[1] Lines 29–32: *Because of which [the content of Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy], though I began at that time on purpose to read in order to fall asleep, / [I was so caught up in the text that] before I ever stopped, my best [course of action] was to read further / Upon the writing of this noble man*

8

50	The long nyght beholding, as I saide,	*beholding [the book]*
	Myn eyne gan to smert for studying.	*hurt*
	My buke I schet and at my hede it laide	*shut; head*
	And doun I lay but ony tarying,	*without any delay*
	This mater new in my mynd rolling:	
55	This is to seyne, how that eche estate,	*estate (class of people)*
	As Fortune lykith, thame will translate.	*pleases, she will change them*

9

	For sothe it is that on hir tolter quhele,	*true; her insecure wheel*
	Every wight cleverith in his stage,	*Everyone clambers; turn*
	And failyng foting oft, quhen hir lest rele —	*footing; when she wishes to turn*
60	Sum up, sum doun — is non estate nor age	
	Ensured, more the prynce than the page,	*Safe (Assured)*
	So uncouthly hir werdes sche devidith,	
	Namly in youth, that seildin ought providith.[1]	

10

	Among thir thoughtis rolling to and fro,	*those thoughts*
65	Fell me to mynd of my fortune and ure:	*I fell to thinking about; destiny*
	In tender youth how sche was first my fo	*enemy*
	And eft my frende, and how I gat recure	*after; recovered*
	Of my distresse; and all myn aventure	
	I gan ovr-hayle, that langer slepe ne rest	
70	Ne myght I nat, so were my wittis wrest.[2]	

11

	Forwakit and forwalowit, thus musing,	*Too long awake and restless*
	Wery forlyin, I lestnyt sodaynlye,	*weary having lain so long; listened*
	And sone I herd the bell to matyns ryng	*soon*
	And up I rase, no langer wald I lye.	*rose; would*
75	Bot now (how trowe ye?) suich a fantasye	*(can you believe it?)*

---

[1] Lines 62–63: *So mysteriously does she distribute fates, / Specifically to the young, to whom [she] seldom provides anything [of good]*

[2] Lines 69–70: *I began to think over again, so that no longer could I sleep or rest, so [badly] were my wits twisted*

Fell me to mynd that ay me thoght the bell — *it seemed to me that*
Said to me, "Tell on, man, quhat thee befell." — *what happened to you*

12

Thoght I tho to myself, "Quhat may this be? — *then; What*
This is myn awin ymagynacioun, — *own imagination*
80 It is no lyf that spekis unto me, — *living person*
It is a bell; or that impressioun
Of my thoght causith this illusioun — *causes*
That dooth me think so nycely in this wise." — *makes (causes) me; foolishly; manner*
And so befell as I schall you devise. — *explain [to] you*

13

85 Determyt furth therwith in myn entent, — *Determined from then on*
Sen I thus have ymagynit of this soun — *Since; imagined; sound*
(And in my tyme more ink and paper spent
To lyte effect), I tuke conclusioun — *little; I made*
Sum new thing to write. I set me doun — *sat myself down*
90 And furthwithall my pen in hand I tuke — *without delay*
And maid a cross and thus begouth my buke.[1]

14

Thou sely youth, of nature indegest, — *naive; immature*
Unrypit fruyte, with windis variable, — *Unripened; blown about*
Like to the bird that fed is on the nest
95 And can noght flee, of wit wayke and unstable, — *fly; weak and insecure*
To fortune both and to infortune hable, — *To both; able (available)*
Wist thou thy payne to cum and thy travaille, — *If you knew the pain*
For sorow and drede wele myght thou wepe and waille. — *well might*

15

Thus stant thy confort in unsekernesse — *stands; instability*
100 And wantis it that suld thee reule and gye, — *is lacking what should; guide*
Ryght as the schip that sailith stereles — *Just; rudderless*
Upon the rok most to harmes hye — *must hasten toward harms*
For lak of it that suld bene hir supplye, — *lack of what should have helped it*

---

[1] *And made (wrote) [the sign of] a cross [at the top of the page] and thus began my book*

So standis thou here in this warldis rage — *world's*
105 And wantis that suld gyde all thy viage. — *lack what should guide; voyage (i.e., life)*

16

I mene this by myself, as in partye, — *I refer here to myself, in part*
Though nature gave me suffisance in youth, — *happiness*
The rypenesse of resoun lakit I — *maturity; lacked*
To governe with my will, so lyte I couth, — *my will with, I understood so little*
110 Quhen stereles to travaile I begouth, — *When rudderless; began*
Amang the wawis of this warld to drive, — *waves*
And how the case anon I will discrive. — *how the event [befell]*

17

With doutfull hert amang the rokkis blake, — *heart; rocks*
My feble bote full fast to stere and rowe, — *feeble boat*
115 Helples, allone, the wynter nyght I wake, — *stayed awake*
To wayte the wynd that furthward suld me throwe. — *wait [for]*
O empti saile, quhare is the wynd suld blowe — *where; wind [that] should*
Me to the port, quhar gynneth all my game? — *begins; adventure*
Help, Calyope, and wynd, in Marye name! — *Calliope; Mary's*

18

120 The rokkis clepe I the prolixitee — *I call; prolixity*
Of doubilnesse that doith my wittis pall: — *Of deceitfulness; impair*
The lak of wynd is the deficultee — *lack of inspiration*
In enditing of this lytill trety small; — *writing; treatise*
The bote I clepe the mater hole of all; — *boat I call; whole matter*
125 My wit, unto the saile that now I wynd — *now I hoist*
To seke connyng, though I bot lytill fynd. — *seek cunning; but little*

19

At my begynnyng first I clepe and call — *invoke; call*
To yow, Cleo, and to yow, Polymye,
With Thesiphone, goddis and sistris all, — *gods and sisters*
130 In nowmer nyne, as bokis specifye; — *number; books*
In this processe my wilsum wittis gye, — *willful wits guide*
And with your bryght lanternis wele convoye — *well convey (guide)*
My pen, to write my turment and my joye. — *[about] my torment*

20

	In Ver, that full of vertu is and gude,	*Spring; virtue; good*
135	Quhen Nature first begynneth hir enprise,	*When; her enterprise*
	That quhilum was be cruell frost and flude	*once was by; flood*
	And schouris scharp opprest in many wyse,	*sharp showers; ways*
	And Synthius gynneth to aryse	*Cynthius (Apollo)*
	Heigh in the est, a morow soft and suete,	*in [the] morning; sweet*
140	Upward his course to drive in Ariete,	*Northward; Aries*

21

	Passit bot mydday four greis evin,	*degrees exactly*
	Of lenth and brede his angel wingis bryght	*length and breadth*
	He spred upon the ground doun fro the hevin.	*down from heaven*
	That, for gladnesse and confort of the sight	
145	And with the tiklyng of his hete and light,	*tingling*
	The tender flouris opnyt thame and sprad	*flowers opened themselves*
	And in thair nature thankit him for glad.	*out of gladness*

22

	Noght ferr passit the state of innocence	*Not far past*
	Bot nere about the nowmer of yeris thre —	*round about; number*
150	Were it causit throu hevinly influence	*through [the]*
	Of Goddis will or othir casualtee	*cause*
	Can I noght say — bot out of my contree,	*not; but*
	By thair avise that had of me the cure	*their advice; care*
	Be see to pas tuke I myn aventure.	*By sea to journey I took*

23

155	Purvait of all that was us necessarye,	*Purveyed; [to] us*
	With wynd at will, up airly by the morowe,	*early in the morning*
	Streight unto schip, no longer wold we tarye,	*Straight onto; tarry*
	The way we tuke, the tyme I tald toforowe.	*told already*
	With mony "fare wele" and "Sanct Johne to borowe"	*for protection*
160	Of falowe and frende, and thus with one assent	*companion*
	We pullit up saile and furth oure wayis went.	

24

	Upon the wawis weltering to and fro,	*waves being tossed*
	So infortunate was us that fremyt day	*unfortunate [to] us; unlucky*

That maugré, playnly, quhethir we wold or no, — *in spite of, obviously, whether*
165 With strong hand, by forse, schortly to say, — *force*
Of inymyis takin and led away — *By enemies*
We weren all, and broght in thair contree:
Fortune it schupe non othir wayis to be. — *destined (shaped)*

25

Quhare as in strayte ward and in strong prisoun, — *Where under close guard*
170 So ferforth of my lyf the hevy lyne, — *forward*
Without confort, in sorowe abandoun,
The secund sister lukit hath to twyne — *applied herself to unwind*
Nere by the space of yeris twise nyne; — *Nearly for the period of*
Till Jupiter his merci list advert — *Until; chose to direct*
175 And send confort in relesche of my smert. — *release; pain*

26

Quhare as in ward full oft I wold bewaille — *Where in a guarded room*
My dedely lyf, full of peyne and penance, — *death-like*
Saing ryght thus, "Quhat have I gilt, to faille — *done wrong, to lose*
My fredome in this warld and my plesance? — *pleasure*
180 Sen every wight has therof suffisance — *Since; person*
That I behold, and I a creature
Put from all this, hard is myn aventure! — *chance (lot)*

27

"The bird, the beste, the fisch eke in the see, — *also in the sea*
They lyve in fredome, everich in his kynd; — *each according to its nature*
185 And I a man, and lakkith libertee!
Quhat schall I seyne? Quhat resoun may I fynd — *say*
That Fortune suld do so?" Thus in my mynd — *should*
My folk I wold argewe — bot all for noght, — *debate*
Was non that myght, that on my peynes rought.[1]

[1] Lines 188–89: *I would argue with my attendants — but all for nothing, / [Since there] was no one who might sympathize, who cared about (pitied) my pains*

28

190 Than wold I say, "Gif God me had devisit — *If; devised for me*
To lyve my lyf in thraldome thus and pyne, — *in imprisonment; torment*
Quhat was the cause that he me more comprisit — *reason; selected*
Than othir folk to lyve in suich ruyne? — *such degradation*
I suffer allone amang the figuris nyne, — *nine numerals*
195 Ane wofull wrecche that to no wight may spede, — *to no person may give assistance*
And yit of every lyvis help hath nede." — *yet has need of every necessity*

29

The long dayes and the nyghtis eke — *also*
I wold bewaille my fortune in this wise, — *way (manner)*
For quhich, agane distresse confort to seke, — *which, against; seek*
200 My custom was on mornis for to ryse — *mornings*
Airly as day — O happy exercise, — *Early*
By thee come I to joye out of turment!
Bot now to purpose of my first entent. — *But*

30

Bewailing in my chamber thus allone,
205 Despeired of all joye and remedye,
Fortirit of my thoght and wo begone, — *Exhausted*
And to the wyndow gan I walk in hye — *I walked quickly*
To se the warld and folk that went forby; — *by [there]*
As for the tyme, though I of mirthis fude
210 Myght have no more, to luke it did me gude.[1]

31

Now was there maid fast by the touris wall — *laid out near by the tower's*
A gardyn fair, and in the corneris set
Ane herber grene with wandis long and small — *green arbor; twigs*
Railit about; and so with treis set — *Railed (fenced); trees*
215 Was all the place, and hawthorn hegis knet,

---

[1] Lines 209–10: *Since for awhile, although I might not get any more of mirth's food (i.e., joy), it did me good to look*

That lyf was non walking there forby
That myght within scarse ony wight aspye,[1]

32

So thik the bewis and the leves grene — *thickly; boughs*
Beschadit all the aleyes that there were. — *Shaded; paths*
220 And myddis every herber myght be sene — *amidst; arbor*
The scharp grene suete jenepere, — *sweet juniper tree*
Growing so fair with branchis here and there,
That, as it semyt to a lyf without, — *person from outside*
The bewis spred the herber all about. — *boughs spread over all the arbor*

33

225 And on the small grene twistis sat — *branches*
The lytill suete nyghtingale and song — *sang*
So loud and clere the ympnis consecret — *hymns consecrated*
Of lufis use, now soft, now lowd among, — *To the practice of love*
That all the gardyng and the wallis rong — *garden; rung*
230 Ryght of thair song and of the copill next — *Just; couplet (verses)*
Of thair suete armony; and lo the text: — *harmony; behold*

34

Cantus "Worschippe, ye that loveris bene, this May, — *Honor; are (be)*
For of your blisse the kalendis ar begonne, — *first days have begun*
And sing with us, 'Away, winter, away!
235 Cum, somer, cum, the suete sesoun and sonne!' — *summer; sun*
Awake, for schame! that have your hevynnis wonne,[2]
And amorously lift up your hedis all:
Thank Lufe that list you to his merci call."[3]

35

Quhen thai this song had song a lytill thrawe, — *sung a little while*
240 Thai stent a quhile and therwith unaffraid, — *stopped awhile*

---

[1] Lines 215–17: *Was the whole place, and [with] hawthorn hedges knit [with intertwining branches], / [Such] that [there] was no person walking past there / Who might scarcely see anyone inside*

[2] *Awake, for shame! [you] who have won your heavens (i.e., merry companions)*

[3] *Thank Love who desires that you call upon his mercy*

As I beheld and kest myn eyne a lawe, *cast my eyes downward*
From beugh to beugh thay hippit and thai plaid, *bough to bough; hopped; played*
And freschly in thair birdis kynd arraid *birds' manner set forth*
Thair fetheris new, and fret thame in the sonne, *preened themselves*
245 And thankit Lufe that had thair makis wonne. *won their mates*

36

This was the plane ditee of thair note, *lyric to go with their notes*
And therwithall unto myself I thoght, *with this*
"Quhat lyf is this, that makis birdis dote? *dote [upon love]*
Quhat may this be? How cummyth it of ought? *Where does it come from*
250 Quhat nedith it to be so dere ybought? *Why; so dearly bought*
It is nothing, trowe I, bot feynit chere, *I trust; feigned appearance*
And that men list to counterfeten chere." *choose; gladness*

37

Eft wald I think, "O Lord, quhat may this be, *Afterwards*
That Lufe is of so noble myght and kynde, *nature*
255 Lufing his folk? And suich prosperitee, *such*
Is it of him, as we in bukis fynd? *books*
May he oure hertes setten and unbynd? *fix [on one object]*
Hath he upon oure hertis suich maistrye? *over our hearts*
Or all this is bot feynyt fantasye? *false imagination*

38

260 "For gif he be of so grete excellence
That he of every wight hath cure and charge, *person; [the] care*
Quhat have I gilt to him or doon offense *incurred guilt; done*
That I am thrall and birdis gone at large, *imprisoned; go*
Sen him to serve he myght set my corage? *Since; set my heart*
265 And gif he be noght so, than may I seyne, *if; then; say*
'Quhat makis folk to jangill of him in veyne?' *talk about*

39

"Can I noght elles fynd, bot gif that he[1]
Be lord, and as a god may lyve and regne *reign*

---

[1] *Can I no other [explanation] find, except that he*

To bynd and louse and maken thrallis free, *loose; prisoners*
270 Than wold I pray his blisfull grace benigne *[If so] then I would*
To hable me unto his service digne, *allow me to enter; worthy*
And evermore for to be one of tho *those*
Him trewly for to serve in wele and wo." *good times and bad*

40

And therwith kest I doun myn eye ageyne, *cast*
275 Quhare as I sawe, walking under the tour, *[To] where I saw*
Full secretly new cummyn hir to pleyne,
The fairest or the freschest yong floure[1]
That ever I sawe, me thoght, before that houre; *it seemed to me*
For quhich sodayn abate anon astert *weakness soon [caused to] flee*
280 The blude of all my body to my hert.

41

And though I stude abaisit tho a lyte *discomposed then a little*
No wonder was, forquhy my wittis all *because*
Were so overcom with plesance and delyte,
Onely throu latting of myn eyen fall, *through*
285 That sudaynly my hert became hir thrall *prisoner (slave)*
Forever, of free wyll; for of manace *menace (threat)*
There was no takyn in hir suete face. *token (sign); sweet*

42

And in my hede I drewe ryght hastily *withdrew very*
And eft sones I lent it forth ageyne *soon after I leaned it out*
290 And sawe hir walk, that verray womanly,
With no wight mo, bot onely wommen tueyne. *person else; two*
Than gan I studye in myself and seyne, *I began to reason*
"A, suete, ar ye a warldly creature *Ah, sweet; worldly*
Or hevinly thing in liknesse of nature?

[1] 276–77: *Quite privately newly arrived to express her complaint [about love or life], / The fairest or the freshest young flower*

43

295 "Or ar ye god Cupidis owin princesse — *Cupid's*
And cummyn ar to louse me out of band? — *have come to free me of my bonds*
Or ar ye verray Nature the goddesse — *truly*
That have depaynted with your hevinly hand — *painted (created)*
This gardyn full of flouris, as they stand? — *flowers*
300 Quhat sall I think? Allace, quhat reverence
Sall I minster to your excellence? — *minister (devote)*

44

"Gif ye a goddesse be, and that ye like — *If; and if you desire*
To do me payne, I may it noght astert. — *pain; escape*
Gif ye be warldly wight that dooth me sike, — *earthly being; causes me to sigh*
305 Quhy lest God mak you so, my derrest hert, — *Why does God form you thus*
To do a sely prisoner thus smert — *cause a poor prisoner; such pain*
That lufis yow all and wote of noght bot wo? — *completely and knows*
And therfore merci, suete, sen it is so." — *since*

45

Quhen I a lytill thrawe had maid my moon, — *When; while; moan*
310 Bewailling myn infortune and my chance,
Unknawing how or quhat was best to doon, — *Not knowing; what; to do*
So ferr I fallyng into Lufis dance — *far was I falling; Love's*
That sodeynly my wit, my contenance,
My hert, my will, my nature, and my mynd,
315 Was changit clene ryght in anothir kynd. — *completely changed into another form*

46

Of hir array the form gif I sall write — *appearance; if*
Toward, hir goldin hair and rich atyre — *write / Toward (describe)*
In fret wise couchit with perllis quhite — *In a netted style [was] inlaid*
And grete balas lemyng as the fyre, — *balls gleaming*
320 With mony ane emeraut and fair saphire; — *many an emerald*
And on hir hede a chaplet fresch of hewe,
Of plumys partit rede and quhite and blewe. — *plumes; white*

47

Full of quaking spangis bryght as golde, — *spangles*
Forgit of schap like to the amorettis, — *Made in [a] shape similar; love-knots*

325	So new, so fresch, so plesant to beholde,	
	The plumys eke like to the flour jonettis,	*jonette flower*
	And othir of schap like to the flour burnettis,	*burnette flower*
	And above all this there was, wele I wote,	*I know well*
	Beautee eneuch to mak a world to dote.	*enough*

48

330	About hir nek, quhite as the fyne amaille,	*enamel*
	A gudely cheyne of smale orfeverye	*delicate gold work*
	Quhareby there hang a ruby, without faille,	*From which there hung*
	Lyke to ane hert schapin verily,	*shaped*
	That, as a sperk of lowe, so wantonly	*spark of love; extravagantly*
335	Semyt birnyng upon hir quhyte throte.	*burning; white*
	Now gif there was gud partye, God it wote![1]	

49

	And for to walk that fresche Mayes morowe	
	An huke sche had upon hir, tissew quhite,	*cape; [of] white fabric*
	That gudeliar had noght bene sene toforowe,	*better; before*
340	As I suppose, and girt sche was alyte,	*lightly fastened*
	Thus halflyng louse for haste. Lo suich delyte	*half flying loose*
	It was to see hir youth in gudelihede	*goodness*
	That for rudenes to speke therof I drede.	

50

	In hir was youth, beautee with humble aport,	*bearing*
345	Bountee, richesse, and wommanly facture —	*Virtue; feminine form*
	God better wote than my pen can report;	*knows*
	Wisedome, largesse, estate, and connyng sure	*generosity, class; cleverness*
	In every poynt so guydit hir mesure	*guided her in balanced behavior*
	In word, in dede, in schap, in contenance,	
350	That Nature myght no more hir childe avance.	*improve*

51

	Throw quhich anon I knew and understude	*immediately*
	Wele that sche was a warldly creature	*earthly*

---

[1] *Now if there was a good contract [between the red and white], God [alone] knows it!*

On quhom to rest myn eye, so mich gude — *much*
It did my wofull hert, I yow assure,
355 That it was to me joye without mesure.
And, at the last, my luke unto the hevin
I threwe furthwith and said thir versis sevin: — *these seven lines of verse*

52

"O Venus clere, of goddis stellifyit, — *stellified*
To quhom I yelde homage and sacrifise; — *yield*
360 Fro this day forth your grace be magnifyit,
That me ressavit have in suich wise, — *rescued; such a way*
To lyve under your law and do servise.
Now help me furth, and for your merci lede — *lead*
My hert to rest, that deis nere for drede." — *nearly dies*

53

365 Quhen I with gude entent this orisoun — *prayer*
Thus endit had, I stynt a lytill stound. — *was still a little while*
And eft myn eye full pitously adoun — *afterward; down*
I kest, behalding unto hir lytill hound — *cast*
That with his bellis playit on the ground: — *bells*
370 Than wold I say and sigh therwith a lyte,
"A, wele were him that now were in thy plyte!" — *well would he be; place*

54

Anothir quhile the lytill nyghtingale — *A while later*
That sat apon the twiggis wold I chide,
And say ryght thus: "Quhare ar thy notis smale — *gentle (soft)*
375 That thou of love has song this morowe tyde? — *this morning*
Seis thou noght hir that sittis thee besyde? — *Do you not see*
For Venus sake, the blisfull goddesse clere,
Sing on agane and mak my lady chere. — *gladden my lady*

55

"And eke I pray, for all the paynes grete — *great pains*
380 That for the love of Proigne, thy sister dere, — *Procne*
Thou sufferit quhilom, quhen thy brestis wete — *once, when*
Were, with the teres of thyne eyen clere
All bludy ronne, that pitee was to here — *run all bloody, that it was*

The crueltee of that unknyghtly dede
385 Quhare was fro thee bereft thy maidenhede, *By which*

56

"Lift up thyne hert and sing with gude entent,
And in thy notis suete the tresoun telle
That to thy sister trewe and innocent
Was kythit by hir husband false and fell; *committed; cruel*
390 For quhois gilt, as it is worthy wel, *whose guilt*
Chide thir husbandis that ar false, I say, *those*
And bid thame mend, in the twenti devil way. *(i.e., immediately)*

57

"O lytill wrecch, allace, maist thou noght se *alas*
Quho commyth yond? Is it now tyme to wring? *droop*
395 Quhat sory thoght is fallin upon thee? *sad*
Opyn thy throte; hastow no lest to sing? *have you no desire*
Allace, sen thou of resoun had felyng, *since; rightfully (reasonably)*
Now, suete bird, say ones to me 'pepe.' *once; peep*
I dee for wo, me think thou gynnis slepe. *die; it seems to me; begin*

58

400 "Hastow no mynde of lufe? Quhare is thy make? *Have you; mate*
Or artow seke, or smyt with jelousye? *smitten*
Or is he dede, or hath he thee forsake?
Quhat is the cause of thy malancolye
That thou no more list maken melodye? *wish to make*
405 Sluggart, for schame! Lo here thy goldin hour *Sluggard*
That worth were hale all thy lyvis laboure! *completely*

59

"Gyf thou suld sing wele ever in thy lyve, *If; should; well*
Here is, in fay, the tyme and eke the space. *in faith (truly)*
Quhat wostow than? Sum bird may cum and stryve *What do you know then?*
410 In song with thee the maistry to purchace. *to win the prize*
Suld thou than cesse, it were grete schame, allace! *Should; would be*
And here, to wyn gree happily forever, *favor*
Here is the tyme to syng or ellis never." *else*

60

I thoght eke thus: gif I my handis clap
415 Or gif I cast, than will sche flee away.
And gif I hald me pes, than will sche nap,[1]
And gif I crye, sche wate noght quhat I say:
Thus quhat is best wate I noght, be this day,[2]
Bot, "Blawe wynd, blawe, and do the levis schake, *Only, Blow*
420 That sum twig may wag and mak hir to wake." *twig may wave [in the wind]*

61

With that anon ryght sche toke up a sang, *immediately she (the nightingale)*
Quhare com anon mo birdis and alight. *To which*
Bot than, to here the mirth was tham amang! *hear; [that] was among them*
Over that, to, to see the suete sicht *Beyond that, too; sweet sight*
425 Of hyr ymage, my spirit was so light
Me thoght I flawe for joye without arest, *It seemed to me I flew; stop*
So were my wittis boundin all to fest. *bound all to celebration*

62

And to the notis of the philomene *nightingale*
Quhilkis sche sang, the ditee there I maid *Which; lyrics; wrote*
430 Direct to hir that was my hertis quene, *heart's queen*
Withoutin quhom no songis may me glade. *whom; gladden*
And to that sanct, walking in the schade, *saint (his beloved)*
My bedis thus with humble hert entere *prayers*
Devotly I said on this manere: *in this manner*

63

435 "Quhen sall your merci rew upon your man *take pity on*
Quhois service is yit uncouth unto yow? *Whose; yet unknown*
Sen quhen ye go, there is noght ellis than. *Since when; nothing else*
Bot hert, quhere as the body may noght throu, *where the body may not go*
Folow thy hevin: quho suld be glad bot thou *who*

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[1] Lines 414–16: *I also thought this: if I clap my hands / Or if I throw [something], then she (the nightingale) will fly away. / And if I hold my peace, then she will drowse [or continue to be idle]*

[2] Lines 417–18: *And if I call out, she will not know what I say, / Thus I did not know what is the best [thing to do], [swearing] by this day*

440 That suich a gyde to folow has undertake?
Were it throu Hell, the way thou noght forsake!" *do not forsake the way*

64

And efter this the birdis everichone *each one*
Tuke up anothir sang full loud and clere, *a second (another) song*
And with a voce said, "Wele is us begone *one voice; We are well begun*
445 That with oure makis ar togider here. *mates*
We proyne and play without dout and dangere, *preen [our feathers]; fear*
All clothit in a soyte full fresche and newe, *suit (of livery)*
In lufis service besy, glad and trewe.

65

"And ye, fresche May, ay mercifull to bridis, *ever*
450 Now welcum be ye, flour of monethis all; *flower of all months*
For noght onely your grace upon us bydis *Not only does; call upon us*
Bot all the warld to witnes this we call,
That strowit hath so playnly over all *That [grace] has strewn*
With new, fresche, suete, and tender grene,
455 Oure lyf, oure luste, oure governoure, oure quene." *our desire*

66

This was thair song, as semyt me, full heye, *it seemed to me, [sung] very loud*
With full mony uncouth suete note and schill, *unknown, sweet; shrill*
And therwithall that fair upward hir eye *that fair [one] (the lady)*
Wold cast amang, as it was Goddis will,
460 Quhare I myght se, standing allane full still, *Where; alone*
The fair facture that Nature for maistrye *feature; with great skill*
In hir visage wroght had full lufingly. *face had made so lovingly*

67

And quhen sche walkit had a lytill thrawe *a little while*
Under the suete grene bewis bent, *boughs*
465 Hir fair fresche face, as quhite as ony snawe, *any snow*
Scho turnyt has and furth hir wayis went. *She has turned [away]*
Bot tho began myn axis and turment: *lovesickness*
To sene hir part and folowe I na myght. *see her depart; might not*
Me thoght the day was turnyt into nyght. *It seemed to me*

68

470 Than said I thus: "Quhareto lyve I langer? *Why do I live still*
Wofullest wicht and subject unto peyne — *creature*
Of peyne? No — God wote, ya! For thay no stranger *God knows, yea; stronger*
May wirken ony wight, I dar wele seyne. *May torment any man; say*
How may this be, that deth and lyf, bothe tueyne, *both two (together)*
475 Sall bothe atonis in a creature *Shall; at once*
Togidder duell and turment thus nature?

69

"I may noght ellis done bot wepe and waile
Within thir cald wallis thus ilokin. *these cold; locked*
From hensfurth my rest is my travaile, *labor*
480 My drye thrist with teris sall I slokin, *thirst; tears; slake*
And on myself bene all my harmys wrokin. *wreaked (inflicted)*
Thus bute is none, bot Venus of hir grace *help (reward); unless*
Will schape remedé or do my spirit pace. *remedy; make my; pass [from life]*

70

"As Tantalus I travaile ay butles *work always without benefit*
485 That ever ylike hailith at the well *ever the same stands*
Water to draw with buket botemles
And may noght spede, quhois penance is an hell. *may not succeed, whose*
So by myself this tale I may wele telle, *well*
For unto hir that herith noght I pleyne, *who hears not I complain*
490 Thus like to him my travaile is in veyne." *vain*

71

So sore thus sighit I with myself allone *sadly; sighed*
That turnyt is my strenth in febilnesse, *turned*
My wele in wo, my frendis all in fone, *welfare; foes*
My lyf in deth, my lyght into dirknesse,
495 My hope in feere, in dout my sekirnesse, *safety (stability)*
Sen sche is gone; and God mote hir convoye *Since; convey*
That me may gyde to turment and to joye.

72

The long day thus gan I prye and pour *peer and look out*
Till Phebus endit had his bemes bryght,

500 And bad go farewele every lef and flour,
This is to say, approchen gan the nyght,
And Esperus his lampis gan to light,
Quhen in the wyndow, still as any stone,
I bade at lenth and kneling maid my mone, *remained a long time*

73

505 So lang till evin for lak of myght and mynd,
Forwepit and forpleynit pitously,[1]
Ovrset so sorow had bothe hert and mynd, *Sorrow had so overcome*
That to the cold stone my hede on wrye *at an angle*
I laid, and lent amaisit verily, *leaned, truly stunned*
510 Half sleping and half suoun in suich a wise; *and half in a swoon*
And quhat I met I will you now devise: *what I dreamed*

74

Me thoght that thus all sodeynly a lyght *It seemed to me that*
In at the wyndow come quhare that I lent, *where I leaned*
Of quhich the chamber wyndow schone full bryght,
515 And all my body so it hath overwent
That of my sicht the vertew hale iblent;[2]
And that withall a voce unto me saide, *with that*
"I bring thee confort and hele, be noght affrayde." *healing*

75

And furth anon it passit sodeynly *immediately passed on*
520 Quhere it come in, the ryght way ageyne; *where it had come in*
And sone, me thoght, furth at the dure in hye *it seemed; door in haste*
I went my weye, nas nothing me ageyne, *there was nothing hindered*
And hastily by bothe the armes tueyne *two*
I was araisit up into the air, *raised*
525 Clippit in a cloude of cristall clere and fair, *Held tightly*

---

[1] *Pitifully [worn out] with too much weeping and complaining*

[2] Line 515–16: *And it so passed over all my body / That it completely blinded the property of my sight*

76

	Ascending upward ay fro spere to spere	*sphere to sphere*
	Through air and water and the hote fyre	
	Till that I come unto the circle clere	*shining*
	Of Signifer, quhare fair, bryght, and schire	*beautiful*
530	The signis schone; and in the glade empire	*signs of the Zodiac*
	Of blisfull Venus ane caryit now	*alone carried now*
	So sudaynly, almost I wist noght how.	*I knew not how*

77

	Of quhich the place quhen I com there nye	*when I got closer*
	Was all, me thoght, of cristall stonis wroght.	*made*
535	And to the port I liftit was in hye,	*door (portal); quickly*
	Quhare sodaynly — as quho sais, "at a thoght" —[1]	
	It opnyt and I was anon in broght	*opened; brought in*
	Within a chamber large, rowm, and fair,	*roomy*
	And there I fand of peple grete repair.	*found; large number*

78

540	This is to seyne, that present in that place	*to say*
	Me thoght I sawe of every nacioun	*It seemed to me*
	Loveris that endit thair lyfis space	
	In lovis service, mony a mylioun.	
	Of quhois chancis maid is mencioun	*fates mention is made*
545	In diverse bukis, quho thame list to se,	*for whoever wishes to see them*
	And therfore here thair namys lat I be.	*I pass over*

79

	The quhois aventure and grete labour	*[Each of] whose adventure*
	Above thair hedis writin there I fand:	*heads; found*
	This is to seyne, martris and confessour	*martyrs*
550	Ech in his stage, and his make in his hand,	*level (platform); mate*
	And therwithall, thir peple sawe I stand	*these*
	With mony a solempt contenance,	*solemn expression*
	After as lufe thame lykit to avance.	*Accordingly as love them chose*

[1] *When suddenly — as one says, "at a thought"*

80

Of gude folkis that fair in lufe befill — *for whom love turned out well*
555 There saw I sitt in order by thame one — *one by one*
With hedis hore, and with thame stude Gude Will — *With hoary-white heads*
To talk and play; and after that anon — *soon*
Besyde thame and next there saw I gone
Curage amang the fresche folkis yong, — *Courage*
560 And with thame playit full merily and song.

81

And in ane othir stage endlong the wall — *alongside*
There saw I stand in capis wyde and lang — *copes*
A full grete nowmer, bot thair hudis all — — *very great number, but their hoods*
Wist I noght quhy — atour thair eyen hang, — *I knew not why — over; eyes hung*
565 And ay to thame come Repentance amang — *ever; came; among*
And maid thame chere, degysit in his wede; — *encouraged them, disguised*
And dounward efter that yit I tuke hede.

82

Ryght overthwert the chamber was there drawe — *across*
A trevesse thin and quhite, all of plesance, — *curtain; pleasure*
570 The quhich behynd, standing there I sawe
A warld of folk, and by thair contenance
Thair hertis semyt full of displesance, — *hearts seemed*
With billis in thair handis, of one assent, — *pleas; asking the same thing*
Unto the juge thair playntis to present. — *judge; complaints*

83

575 And therwithall apperit unto me — *became apparent*
A voce, and said, "Tak hede, man, and behold, — *voice*
Yonder there thou seis the hiest stage and gree — *level and degree*
Of agit folk with hedis hore and olde; — *aged people*
Yone were the folk that never change wold — *These*
580 In lufe, bot trewly servit him alway — *him (Love)*
In every age unto thair ending day.

84

"For fro the tyme that thai coud understand
The exercise of lufis craft, the cure, — *love's; cares*

Was non on lyve that toke so moch on hand — *There was no one alive*
585 For lufis sake, nor langer did endure
In lufis service, for, man, I thee assure,
Quhen thay of youth ressavit had the fill, — *received*
Yit in thair age tham lakkit no gude will. — *there was lacking in them*

85

"Here bene also of suich as in counsailis — *Here are also such persons*
590 And all thare dedis were to Venus trewe. — *And [in] all their deeds*
Here bene the princis faucht the grete batailis, — *[who] fought*
In mynd of quhom ar maid the bukis newe.
Here ben the poetis that the sciencis knewe, — *knowledgeable skills [of love]*
Throwout the warld, of lufe in thair suete layes, — *in their sweet poems*
595 Suich as Ovide and Omer in thair dayes. — *Ovid and Homer*

86

"And efter thame, down in the next stage,
There as thou seis the yong folkis pleye, — *There where you see*
Lo, thise were they that in thair myddill age
Servandis were to lufe in mony weye,
600 And diversely happinnit for to deye, — *happened*
Sum soroufully for wanting of thare makis — *mates*
And sum in armes for thair ladyes sakis.

87

"And othir eke by othir diverse chance, — *others [dying] also*
As happin folk all day, as ye may se: — *As happen to folk*
605 Sum for dispair without recoverance, — *recovery*
Sum for desyre surmounting thair degree, — *desiring above their station*
Sum for dispite and othir inmytee, — *enmity*
Sum for unkyndenes without a quhy, — *without explanation*
Sum for to moch, and sum for jelousye. — *too much [unkindness]*

88

610 "And efter this upon yone stage doun — *the next stage (step down)*
Tho that thou seis stond in capis wyde, — *Those whom you see*
Yone were quhilum folk of religioun — *once; religion [of love]*
That from the warld thair governance did hide,
And frely servit lufe on every syde

615 In secrete, with thair bodyis and thair gudis.
And lo, quhy so thai hingen doun thair hudis, *which is why they hang*

89

"For though that thai were hardy at assay *when tested*
And did him service quhilum prively, *sometimes secretly*
Yit to the warldis eye it semyt nay
620 So was thair service half cowardy,
And for thay first forsuke him opynly
And efter that therof had repenting,
For schame thair hudis ovr thair eyne thay hyng. *their hoods over; eyes*

90

"And seis thou now yone multitude on rawe *in a row*
625 Standing behynd yone traverse of delyte? *curtain*
Sum bene of tham that haldin were full lawe *were held (kept) very low*
And take by frendis, nothing thay to wyte,[1]
In youth from lufe into the cloister quite, *right into the cloister*
And for that cause ar cummyn recounsilit, *reconciled [with Love]*
630 On thame to pleyne that so tham had begilit. *To complain against those*

91

"And othir bene amongis thame also
That cummyn ar to court on Lufe to pleyne,
For he thair bodyes had bestowit so,
Quhare bothe thair hertes gruchen there ageyne,[2]
635 For quhich in all thair dayes, soth to seyne, *truth to tell*
Quhen othir lyvit in joye and plesance *While others lived*
Thair lyf was noght bot care and repentance. *nothing but*

92

"And quhare thair hertis gevin were and set
Were coplit with othir that coud noght accord.[3]

---

[1] *And taken by [their] friends (relations), without their knowing anything about it*

[2] *In [a situation that] both their hearts grudged against*

[3] Lines 638–39: *And [in the cases] where their hearts were given away and set [upon another] / [They] were coupled (forced into marriage) with another with whom they could not accord*

640 Thus were thai wrangit that did no forfet, *wronged; wrong*
Departing thame that never wold discord. *Separating*
Of yong ladies fair and mony lord,
That thus by maistry were fro thair chose dryve, *by force; chosen [loves] driven*
Full redy were thair playntis there to gyve." *complaints*

93

645 And othir also I sawe compleynyng there
Upon Fortune and hir grete variance
That, quhere in love so wele they coplit were, *where (when)*
With thair suete makis coplit in plesance, *mates*
So sodeynly maid thair disseverance *[Fortune] so; separated them*
650 And tuke thame of this warldis companye *world's*
Withoutin cause, there was non othir quhy. *there was no reason why*

94

And in a chiere of estate besyde *chair of state*
With wingis bright, all plumyt bot his face, *covered with feathers except*
There sawe I sitt the blynd god Cupide
655 With bow in hand that bent full redy was.
And by him hang thre arowis in a cas *quiver*
Of quhich the hedis grundyn were full ryght *arrowheads were sharpened*
Of diverse metals forgit fair and bryght. *forged*

95

And with the first that hedit is of gold
660 He smytis soft and that has esy cure;
The secund was of silver, mony fold *many times*
Wers than the first and harder aventure; *Worse*
The thrid of stele is schot without recure. *third; steel; shot; recovery*
And on his long yalow lokkis schene *beautiful*
665 A chaplet had he all of levis grene.

96

And in a retrete lytill of compas, *small recess*
Depeyntit all with sighis wonder sad — *Adorned; very grave sighs*
Noght suich sighis as hertis doith manace *as do trouble hearts*
Bot suich as dooth lufaris to be glad — *cause lovers*
670 Fond I Venus upon hir bed, that had

A mantill cast over hir schuldris quhite: *white*
Thus clothit was the goddesse of delyte.

97

Stude at the dure Fair Calling, hir uschere, *door; usher*
That coude his office doon in connyng wise, *in a clever way*
675 And Secretee, hir thrifty chamberere, *Secrecy; skillful*
That besy was in tyme to do servise,
And othir mo that I can noght on avise. *cannot speak of*
And on hir hede, of rede rosis full suete,
A chapellet sche had, fair, fresch, and mete. *appropriate*

98

680 With quaking hert astonate of that sight, *astonished by*
Unnethis wist I quhat that I suld seyne; *I hardly knew what I*
Bot at the last, febily as I myght,
With my handis on bothe my kneis tueyne, *two*
There I begouth my caris to compleyne. *began*
685 With ane humble and lamentable chere, *demeanor*
Thus salute I that goddesse bryght and clere: *greeted*

99

"Hye quene of lufe, sterr of benevolence, *High; love, star*
Pitouse princes, and planet merciable, *princess*
Appesar of malice and violence, *Appeaser*
690 By vertew pure of your aspectis hable, *able characteristics*
Unto your grace lat now ben acceptable *let now be*
My pure request, that can no forthir gone *[I] who can no further go*
To seken help, bot unto yow allone.

100

"As ye that bene the socour and suete well *wellspring*
695 Of remedye, of carefull hertes cure, *of hearts full of care the cure*
And in the huge weltering wawis fell *rolling cruel waves*
Of lufis rage, blisfull havin and sure, *[a] blissful and safe haven*
O anker and keye of oure gude aventure, *anchor; good luck*
Ye have your man with his gude will conquest. *conquered*
700 Merci, therfore, and bring his hert to rest!

101

"Ye knaw the cause of all my peynes smert — *sharp pains*
Bet than myself, and all myn aventure — *Better; situation (experience)*
Ye may convoye, and, as yow list, convert — *guide; as you please*
The hardest hert that formyt hath Nature. — *that Nature has formed*
705 Sen in your handis all hale lyith my cure, — *Since; whole*
Have pitee now, o bryght blisfull goddesse,
Of your pure man, and rew on his distresse. — *On your loyal; rue*

102

"And though I was unto your lawis strange — *aloof*
By ignorance and noght by felonye, — *not by willful misdoing*
710 And that your grace now likit hath to change — *has now chosen to*
My hert to serven yow perpetualye,
Forgeve all this and schapith remedye — *craft [a] remedy*
To saven me, of your benigne grace,
Or do me sterven furthwith in this place. — *cause me to die*

103

715 "And with the stremes of your percyng lyght
Convoy my hert that is so wo begone — *Carry*
Ageyne unto that suete, hevinly sight
That I within the wallis cald as stone
So suetly saw on morow walk and gone, — *in the morning walk and leave*
720 Law in the gardyn ryght tofore myn eye. — *Low; before*
Now merci, quene, and do me noght to deye!" — *cause me not*

104

Thir wordis said, my spirit in dispair, — *These*
A quhile I stynt, abiding efter grace. — *I stopped a while*
And therwithall hir cristall eyen fair
725 Me kest asyde, and efter that a space — *She cast aside from me; while*
Benignely sche turnyt has hir face
Towardis me full plesantly conveide,
And unto me ryght in this wise sche seide: — *in just this manner*

105

"Yong man, the cause of all thyne inward sorowe
730 Is noght unknawin to my deité; — *unknown; deity*

And thy request, bothe now and eke toforowe, *also before*
Quhen thou first maid professioun to me,
Sen of my grace I have inspirit thee *inspired*
To knawe my lawe, contynew furth; for oft *continue*
735 There as I mynt full sore, I smyte bot soft. *Where I aim*

106

"Paciently thou tak thyne aventure,
This will my son Cupide and so will I:
He can the stroke, to me langis the cure, *has power of; belongs*
Quhen I se tyme. And therfore humily *humbly*
740 Abyde and serve and lat Gude Hope thee gye. *guide*
Bot, for I have thy forehede here present, *But, since; reason (forehead)*
I will thee schewe the more of myn entent.

107

"This is to say, though it to me pertene *pertains*
In lufis lawe the septre to governe — *love's; scepter*
745 That the effectis of my bemes schene *bright*
Has thair aspectis by ordynance eterne *eternal*
With otheris to bynd and meynes to discerne — *[the] means to find [to do this]*
Quhilum in thingis bothe to cum and gone
That langis noght to me to writh allone.[1]

108

750 "As in thyne awin case now may thou se, *own*
Forquhy, lo, that otheris influence *Because; [through] others'*
Thy persone standis noght in libertee.
Quharfore, though I geve thee benevolence, *Wherefore; give*
It standis noght yit in myn advertence *It is not yet in my power*
755 Till certeyne courses endit be and ronne, *Until; run*
Quhill of trew servis thow have hir iwone.[2]

---

[1] Lines 748–49: *Occasionally on things both [yet] to come and [that have already] gone / It falls not to me alone to control*

[2] *During which [events] through true service [to Love] you [will] have her (your lady) won*

109

"And yit, considering the nakitnesse — *bareness (inadequacy)*
Bothe of thy wit, thy persone, and thy myght,
It is no mach of thyne unworthynesse — *match*
760 To hir hie birth, estate, and beautee bryght:
Als like ye bene as day is to the nyght,
Or sek cloth is unto fyne cremesye, — *sack cloth*
Or foule doken onto the fresche dayesye. — *foul dockweed; daisy*

110

Unlike the mone is to the sonne schene, — *moon*
765 Eke Januarye is like unto May, — *similarly [unlike]*
Unlike the cukkow to the phylomene, — *nightingale*
Thair tavartis ar noght bothe maid of one array, — *coats of arms*
Unlike the crow is to the papejay, — *parrot*
Unlike in goldsmythis werk a fischis eye — *fish-eye gemstone*
770 To preese with perll or maked be so heye. — *[be] praised alike with pearl; valuable*

111

"As I have said, unto me belangith
Specialy the cure of thy seknesse;
Bot now thy mater so in balance hangith — *case (situation)*
That it requerith to thy sekernesse — *security*
775 The help of othir mo that bene goddes, — *others besides those*
And have in thame the menes and the lore — *means*
In this mater to schorten with thy sore. — *with [which] to; suffering*

112

And for thou sall se wele that I entend — *so that you shall see clearly*
Unto thy help, thy welefare to preserve,
780 The streight weye thy spirit will I send
To the goddesse that clepit is Mynerve; — *who is called*
And se that thou hir hestis wele conserve, — *biddings; keep*
For in this case sche may be thy supplye
And put thy hert in rest als wele as I. — *as well as*

113

785 "Bot for the way is uncouth unto thee — *because; unknown*
There as hir duelling is and hir sojurne, — *Where her; place*

I will that Gud Hope servand to thee be, *servant*
Your alleris frend, to letten thee to murn,[1]
Be thy condyt and gyde till thou returne, *conductor*
790 And hir besech that sche will in thy nede *[I will] ask her that*
Hir counsele geve to thy welefare and spede. *progress*

114

"And that sche will, as langith hir office, *belongs [to]*
Be thy gude lady, help, and counseilour,
And to thee schew hir rype and gude avise, *mature (ready); advice*
795 Throw quhich thou may, be processe and labour, *by*
Atteyne unto that glad and goldyn flour
That thou wald have so fayn with all thy hart.
And forthirmore, sen thou hir servand art,

115

"Quhen thou descendis doun to ground ageyne,
800 Say to the men that there bene resident
How long think thay to stand in my disdeyne *to remain in disdain of me*
That in my lawis bene so negligent
From day to day, and list tham noght repent *[who] do not wish [to] repent*
Bot breken louse and walken at thair large? *But to break loose*
805 Is ther none that therof gevis charge? *takes charge (heed)*

116

"And for," quod sche, "the angir and the smert *And because; pain*
Of thair unkyndenesse dooth me constreyne, *Of their; constrain*
My femynyne and wofull tender hert,
That than I wepe, and to a token pleyne, *then; complain*
810 As of my teris cummyth all this reyne *rain*
That ye se on the ground so fast ybete
Fro day to day, my turment is so grete!

117

"And quhen I wepe and stynten othir quhile *at other times*
For pacience that is in womanhede, *Out of patience*

---

[1] *Friend of all of you, to keep you from mourning*

815 Than all my wrath and rancour I exile; *Then*
And of my cristall teris that bene schede
The hony flouris growen up and sprede *fragrant*
That preyen men, in thair flouris wise, *in their flowers' way*
Be trewe of lufe and worschip my servise.

118

820 "And eke in takin of this pitouse tale, *token*
Quhen so my teris dropen on the ground,
In thair nature the lytill birdis smale
Styntith thair song and murnyth for that stound; *Stop; for that time*
And all the lightis in the hevin round
825 Of my grevance have suich compacience *compassion*
That from the ground they hiden thair presence. *hide*

119

"And yit in tokenyng forthir of this thing,
Quhen flouris springis and freschest bene of hewe,
And that the birdis on the twistis sing, *branches*
830 At thilke tyme ay gynnen folk to renewe *that same; begin*
That servis unto love, as ay is dewe, *That service; due*
Most commonly has ay his observance, *always*
And of thair sleuth tofore have repentance. *their neglect beforehand*

120

"Thus maist thou seyne that myn effectis grete, *say*
835 Unto the quhich ye aught and maist weye, *must weigh [the importance of]*
No lyte offense to sleuth is or forget. *It is no little; neglect (sloth)*
And therfore in this wise to tham seye *in this manner*
As I thee here have bidden, and conveye
The mater all the better tofore said: *[which I have] before said*
840 Thus sall on thee my charge bene ilaid. *my command be laid*

121

"Say on than, quhare is becummyn for schame *then, what has for shame become of*
The songis new, the fresch carolis and dance,
The lusty lyf, the mony change of game, *many changes*
The fresche array, the lusty contenance, *appearance; countenance*
845 The besy awayte, the hertly observance *attention; heartfelt*

That quhilum was amongis thame so ryf? *once; among them so habitual*
Bid tham repent in tyme and mend thair lyf.

122

"Or I sall, with my fader old Saturne *shall*
And with al hale oure hevinly alliance, *all our whole*
850 Oure glad aspectis from thame writh and turne, *bend away*
That all the warld sall waile thair governance. *bewail; conduct*
Bid thame be tyme that thai have repentance, *in time (immediately)*
And thair hertis hale renew my lawe, *wholly*
And I my hand fro beting sall withdrawe. *beating [them]*

123

855 "This is to say, contynew in my servise,
Worschip my law and my name magnifye
That am your hevin and your paradise,
And I your confort here sall multiplye,
And for your meryt here, perpetualye
860 Ressave I sall your saulis, of my grace, *Receive I shall; souls*
To lyve with me as goddis in this place."

124

With humble thank and all the reverence *gratitude*
That feble wit and connyng may atteyne, *cunning*
I tuke my leve; and from hir presence
865 Gude Hope and I togider, bothe tueyne,
Departit ar; and, schortly for to seyne, *to put it briefly*
He hath me led redy wayis ryght *[by] direct, straight ways*
Unto Minervis palace fair and bryght.

125

Quhare as I fand, full redy at the gate,
870 The maister portar callit Pacience,
That frely lete us in unquestionate. *unquestioned*
And there we sawe the perfyte excellence,
The said renown, the state, the reverence, *stately; class (estate)*
The strenth, the beautee, and the ordour digne *due order*
875 Of hir court riall, noble, and benigne. *royal court*

126

And straught unto the presence sodeynly — *straight*
Of Dame Minerve, the pacient goddesse,
Gude Hope my gyde led me redily;
To quhom anon with dredefull humylnesse, — *quaking humility*
880 Of my cummyng the cause I gan expresse, — *began to express*
And all the processe hole unto the end — *whole*
Of Venus charge, as likit hir to send. — *Venus'; as it pleased*

127

Of quhich ryght thus hir ansuer was in bref: — *About which*
"My son, I have wele herd and understond, — *well*
885 Be thy reherse, the mater of thy gref, — *By your rehearsal; grief*
And thy request to procure and to fond — *find (receive)*
Of thy pennance sum confort at my hond, — *For*
Be counsele of thy lady Venus clere, — *By*
To be, with hir, thyne help in this matere. — *[That I should] be, with her*

128

890 "Bot in this case thou sall wele knawe and witt — *know and understand [that though]*
Thou may thy hert ground on suich a wise, — *base on such a manner*
That thy labour will be bot lytill quit. — *rewarded*
And thou may set it in othir wise — *ways*
That wil be to thee grete worschip and prise; — *reward*
895 And gif thou durst unto that way enclyne
I will thee geve my lore and disciplyne.

129

"Lo, my gude sone, this is als mich to seyne — *as much to say*
As, gif thy lufe be sett all uterly — *if; is grounded entirely*
Of nyce lust, thy travail is in veyne. — *On foolish*
900 And so the end sall turne of thy folye — *out [because] of*
To payne and repentance: lo, wate thou quhy? — *do you know why?*
Gif thee ne list on lufe thy vertew set, — *If you do not choose; [to] set*
Vertu sal be the cause of thy forfet. — *loss (forfeit)*

130

"Tak Him before in all thy governance, — *first in*
905 That in His hand the stere has of you all, — *Who; steering*

And pray unto His hye purveyance
Thy lufe to gye, and on Him traist and call — *guide; trust*
That cornerstone and ground is of the wall — *Who; foundation*
That failis noght; and trust, withoutin drede,
910 Unto thy purpose sone He sall thee lede. — *soon; lead*

131

"For lo, the werk that first is foundit sure — *work (building)*
May better bere a pace and hyar be — *bear a weight; higher*
Than othirwise, and langer sall endure
Be monyfald, this may thy resoun see, — *manifold*
915 And stronger to defend adversitee. — *defend [against] adversity*
Ground thy werk therfore upon the stone
And thy desire sall forthward with thee gone.

132

"Be trewe and meke, and stedfast in thy thoght, — *meek*
And diligent hir merci to procure: — *her (i.e., the beloved's)*
920 Noght onely in thy word (for word is noght) — *nothing*
Bot gif thy werk and all thy besy cure — *Unless; assiduous diligence*
Accord therto, and utrid be mesure,
The place, the hour, the maner, and the wise,[1]
Gif mercy sall admitten thy servise.

133

925 "'All thing has tyme,' thus sais Ecclesiaste,
And wele is him that his tyme wil abit. — *abide*
Abyde thy tyme, for he that can bot haste — *who knows only haste*
Can noght of hap, the wise man it writ; — *Knows nothing of good luck*
And oft gud fortune flourith with gude wit: — *wisdom*
930 Quharefore, gif thou will be wele fortunyt,
Lat wisedom ay to thy will be iunyt. — *always; united*

---

[1] Lines 922–23: *Accord thereto, and uttered with discretion, / The [choice of] place, hour, manner, and means*

134

"Bot there be mony of so brukill sort — *are many; so frail [a] sort*
That feynis treuth in lufe for a quhile, — *That [they] feign; while*
And setten all thair wittis and disport — *conduct*
935 The sely innocent woman to begyle, — *helpless*
And so to wynne thair lustis with a wile. — *with a wile (trick)*
Suich feynit treuth is all bot trechorye — *nothing but treachery*
Under the umbre of heid ypocrisye. — *shadow of hidden*

135

"For as the fouler quhistlith in his throte — *bird-catcher whistles*
940 Diversely to counterfete the brid, — *In diverse ways to trick; bird*
And feynis mony a suete and strange note,
That in the busk for his desate is hid, — *bush; deceit*
Till sche be fast lok in his net amyd, — *caught in the middle of his net*
Ryght so the fatour, the false theif I say, — *deceiver*
945 With suete tresoun oft wynnith thus his pray. — *prey*

136

"Fy on all suich! Fy on thair doubilnesse!
Fy on thair lust and bestly appetite,
Thair wolfis hertis in lambis liknesse,
Thair thoughtis blak hid under wordis quhite!
950 Fy on thair labour! Fy on thair delyte,
That feynen outward all to hir honour — *Who*
And in thair hert hir worschip wold devour! — *her reputation*

137

"So hard it is to trusten now on dayes
The warld, it is so double and inconstant,
955 Of quhich the suth is kid be mony assayes. — *truth is revealed; trials*
More pitee is, for quhich the remanant — *remnant*
That menen wele and ar noght variant, — *Who mean well*
For otheris gilt ar suspect of untreuth — *others' guilt*
And hyndrit oft; and treuely that is reuth. — *hindered often; pity*

138

960 "Bot gif the hert be groundit ferm and stable
In Goddis law, thy purpose to atteyne,

Thy labour is to me agreable,
And my full help, with counsele trew and pleyne,
I will thee schewe, and this is thee certeyne. *certain to you*
965 Opyn thy hert, therfore, and lat me se
Gif thy remede be pertynent to me." *remedy is*

139

"Madame," quod I, "sen it is your plesance *since; pleasure*
That I declare the kynd of my loving, *nature of*
Treuely and gude withoutin variance,
970 I lufe that flour abufe all othir thing;
And wold bene he that to hir worschipping *And [I] wish to be*
Myght ought availe, be Him that starf on Rude, *by Him who died on the Cross*
And nouthir spare for travaile, lyf, nor gude. *neither; goods (expense)*

140

"And, forthirmore, as touching the nature
975 Of my lufing, to worschip or to blame,
I darr wele say and therein me assure, *I dare well say*
For ony gold that ony wight can name *For any; any person*
Nald I be he that suld of hir gude fame *I would not be*
Be blamischer in ony point or wyse, *blemisher; way*
980 For wele nor wo, quhill my lyf may suffise. *For good fortune or bad*

141

"This is th'effect, trewly, of myn entent, *the end, truly*
Touching the suete that smertis me so sore. *With respect to the sweet one*
Giff this be faynt, I can it noght repent *weak*
Allthough my lyf suld forfaut be therfore. *should be forfeit*
985 Blisfull princes, I can seye you no more, *princess*
Bot so desire my wittis dooth compace, *contain*
More joy in erth kepe I noght bot your grace." *without (but for)*

142

"Desire?" quod sche. "I nyl it noght deny *I will not deny it*
So thou it ground and set in Cristin wise,
990 And therfor, son, opyn thy hert playnly."
"Madame," quod I, "trew, withoutin fantise, *truly, without falsehood*
That day sall I never up-rise *May I never get up that day*

For my delyte to covate the plesance — *[When]; covet the pleasure*
That may hir worschip putten in balance. — *honor put in the balance (jeopardy)*

143

995 "For ovr all thing, lo, this were my gladnesse: — *above all things; would be*
To sene the fresche beautee of hir face. — *To see*
And gif it myght deserve, be processe, — *by process (in time)*
For my grete lufe and treuth to stond in grace,
Hir worschip sauf, lo, here the blisful cace — *Saving her reputation*
1000 That I wold ask, and therto attend,
For my most joye unto my lyfis end." — *life's*

144

"Now wele!" quod sche. "And sen that it is so, — *since it is so*
That in vertew thy lufe is set with treuth,
To helpen thee I will be one of tho — *I will be one of those to help you*
1005 From hensforth, and hertly without sleuth, — *without neglect (slowness)*
Of thy distresse and excesse to have reuth
That has thy hert I will pray full fair
That Fortune be no more therto contrair.[1]

145

"For suth it is that all ye creaturis — *truth it is*
1010 Quhich under us beneth have your duellyng,
Ressaven diversely your aventuris, — *Receive; experiences*
Of quhich the cure and principall melling — *care; mixing [of good and ill]*
Appertenit is, withoutin repellyng, — *Is appropriate*
Onely to hir that has the cuttis two — *two lots*
1015 In hand, bothe of your wele and of your wo. — *good fortune; woe*

146

"And how so be that sum clerkis trete — *And even if it is that; explain*
That all your chance causit is tofore
Heigh in the hevin, by quhois effectis grete — *heavens; whose*
Ye movit ar to wrething, lesse or more, — *vexation*

---

[1] Lines 1006–08: *So that she who has thy heart should have pity on thy distress and anguish, I will pray most fervently / That Fortune be no more contrary thereto*

1020 Quhare in the warld, thus calling that therfore
'Fortune,' and so that the diversitee
Of thair wirking suld cause necessitee. *working (movements)*

147

"Bot othir clerkis halden that the man *hold*
Has in himself the chose and libertee *choice*
1025 To cause his awin fortune, how or quhan
That him best lest, and no necessitee *best pleases him*
Was in the hevin at his nativitee,
Bot yit the thingis happin in commune *together*
Efter purpose, so cleping thame 'Fortune.' *According [to a] purpose*

148

1030 "And quhare a persone has tofore-knawing *foreknowledge*
Of it that is to fall purposely, *befall (happen)*
Lo, Fortune is bot wayke in suich a thing, *weak*
Thou may wele wit, and here ensample quhy: *well know*
To God, it is the First Cause onely *who is*
1035 Of everything, there may no fortune fall;
And quhy? For He foreknawing is of all.

149

"And therfore thus I say to this sentence:
Fortune is most and strangest evermore *strongest*
Quhare leste foreknawing or intelligence *[the] least*
1040 Is in the man; and, sone, of wit or lore *son*
Sen thou art wayke and feble, lo, therfore, *Since; weak*
The more thou art in dangere and commune *fellowship*
With hir that clerkis clepen so 'Fortune.'

150

"Bot for the sake and at the reverence
1045 Of Venus clere, as I thee said tofore,
I have of thy distresse compacience. *compassion*
And in confort and relesche of thy sore *comfort and release*
Thee schewit here myn avise therfore: *showed; advice*
Pray Fortune help, for mich unlikly thing *many unlikely things*
1050 Full oft about sche sodeynly dooth bring. *Very often; bring about*

151

"Now go thy way and have gude mynd upon — *think well upon*
Quhat I have said in way of thy doctryne."
"I sall, madame," quod I. And ryght anon
I tuke my leve als straught as ony lyne: — *as straight as any line*
1055 Within a beme that fro the contree dyvine
Sche, percyng throw the firmament, extendit, — *[Which] she, piercing*
To ground ageyne my spirit is descendit

152

Quhare, in a lusty plane, tuke I my way — *on a joyous plain*
Endlang a ryver plesant to behold, — *Along*
1060 Enbroudin all with fresche flouris gay, — *Embroidered*
Quhare throu the gravel bryght as ony gold
The cristall water ran so clere and cold
That in myn ere maid contynualy — *ear made*
A maner soun, mellit with armony, — *A sort of sound, blended*

153

1065 That full of lytill fischis by the brym — *bank*
Now here, now there, with bakkis blewe as lede, — *blue as lead*
Lap and playit, and in a rout can swym — *Leaped; group did*
So prattily and dressit tham to sprede — *prettily; took care to spread*
Thair curall fynnis as the ruby rede — *coral*
1070 That in the sonne on thair scalis bryght
As gesserant ay glitterit in my sight. — *Like scale armor*

154

And by this ilke ryver syde alawe — *along this same river side*
Ane hye-way fand I like to bene, — *A highway*
On quhich on every syde a long rawe — *row*
1075 Of treis saw I, full of levis grene,
That full of fruyte delitable were to sene.
And also, as it come unto my mynd,
Of bestis sawe I mony diverse kynd:

155

The lyoun king and his fere lyonesse, — *mate*
1080 The pantere like unto the smaragdyne, — *panther; emerald*

The lytill squerell full of besynesse,
The slawe ase (the druggar beste of pyne), *slow; drudging; burden*
The nyce ape, the werely porpapyne, *foolish; warlike porcupine*
The percyng lynx, the łufare unicorne *keen-eyed; loving*
1085 That voidis venym with his evour horne. *clears; ivory*

156

There sawe I dresse him new out of haunt *emerge; habitat*
The fery tiger full of felonye, *fiery; treachery*
The dromydare, the standar oliphant, *camel; standing*
The wyly fox (the wedowis inemye), *widow's enemy*
1090 The clymbare gayte, the elk for alblastrye, *climber goat*
The herknere bore, the holsum grey for hortis, *listening boar; badger; wounds*
The hair also that oft gooth to the wortis, *hare; vegetables*

157

The bugill drawar by his hornis grete, *wild ox*
The martrik sable, the foynyee, and mony mo: *marten; beech marten*
1095 The chalk quhite ermyn tippit as the jete, *with black tips*
The riall hert, the conyng, and the ro, *royal hart; rabbit; roe deer*
The wolf that of the murthir noght say "ho," *murder; "stop"*
The łesty bever and the ravin bare, *vigorous; hungry bear*
For chamelot the camel full of hare, *camelhair cloth; hair*

158

1100 With mony anothir beste diverse and strange
That cummyth noght as now unto my mynd.
Bot now to purpose: straucht furth the range *straight*
I held a way, ovrhailing in my mynd *reviewing*
From quhens I come and quhare that I suld fynd
1105 Fortune the goddesse — unto quhom in hye *haste*
Gude Hope, my gyde, has led me sodeynly.

159

And at the last, behalding thus asyde, *looking around*
A round place wallit have I found, *walled*
In myddis quhare, eftsone, I have spide *of which, pretty soon; spied*
1110 Fortune the goddesse, hufing on the ground. *hovering*
And ryght before hir fete, of compas round, *round in shape*

A quhele, on quhich clevering I sye — *wheel; clambering I saw*
A multitude of folk before myn eye.

160

And ane surcote sche werit long that tyde, — *a long surcoat she wore at that time*
1115 That semyt to me of diverse hewis. — *hues*
Quhilum thus, quhen sche wald turn asyde, — *Sometimes; when*
Stude this goddesse of fortune and renewis: — *changes*
A chapellet with mony fresche anewis — *ringlets*
Sche had upon hir hed, and with this hong
1120 A mantill on hir schuldris large and long

161

That furrit was with ermyn full quhite, — *completely white*
Degoutit with the self in spottis blake.[1]
And quhilum, in hir chier thus a lyte — *sometimes; facial expression*
Louring sche was, and thus sone it wold slake — *Glowering; diminish*
1125 And sodeynly a maner smylyng make
And sche were glad; at one contenance — *As if; expression*
Sche held noght, bot ay in variance. — *but always*

162

And underneth the quhele sawe I there — *beneath; wheel*
Ane ugly pit, depe as ony helle,
1130 That to behald thereon I quoke for fere. — *quaked for fear*
Bot o thing herd I, that quho therein fell — *one thing*
Com no more up agane, tidingis to telle;
Of quhich, astonait of that ferefull syght, — *stunned by*
I ne wist quhat to done, so was I fricht. — *what to do; frightened*

163

1135 Bot for to se the sudayn weltering — *tossing*
Of that ilk quhele that sloppar was to hold, — *same wheel; slippery*
It semyt unto my wit a strong thing, — *strong (dangerous/violent)*
So mony I sawe that than clymben wold — *then would climb on*
And failit foting and to ground were rold, — *[whose] footing failed; rolled*

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[1] *Spotted with the same [black tips of the ermine] in black spots*

1140 And othir eke that sat above on hye — *others also*
Were overthrawe in twinklyng of an eye. — *overthrown (tossed down)*

164

And on the quhele was lytill void space, — *empty*
Wele nere ourstraught fro lawe to hye, — *covered over; low to high*
And they were war that long sat in place: — *aware*
1145 So tolter quhilum did sche it to wrye — *unsteadily sometimes; turn*
There was bot "Clymbe," and ryght dounward "Hye!" — *"Yeow!"*
And sum were eke that, fallyng, had sore; — *in falling, were hurt*
Therefor, to clymbe thair corage was no more.

165

I sawe also that, quhere sum were slungin — *slung*
1150 Be quhirlyng of the quhele unto the ground, — *By [the] whirling of the wheel*
Full sudaynly sche hath up ythrungin — *thrust*
And set thame on agane full sauf and sound. — *safe*
And ever I sawe a new swarm abound
That thoght to clymbe upward upon the quhele
1155 In stede of thame that myght no langer rele. — *In place; spin*

166

And at the last, in presence of thame all
That stude about, sche clepit me be name, — *called me by*
And therwith apon kneis gan I fall — *my knees I fell*
Full sodaynly hailsing, abaist for schame. — *making obeisance, abashed*
1160 And, smylyng, thus sche said to me in game, — *in teasing manner*
"Quhat dois thou here? Quho has thee hider sent?
Say on anon and tell me thyn entent. — *quickly*

167

"I se wele by thy chere and contenance — *expression and countenance*
There is sum thing that lyis thee on hert: — *lies on your heart*
1165 It stant noght with thee as thou wald, perchance?" — *as thou would wish, perhaps*
"Madame," quod I, "for lufe is all the smert — *pain*
That ever I fele, endlang and overthwert; — *throughout my whole being*
Help of your grace me, wofull, wrechit wight, — *[a] woeful, wretched one*
Sen me to cure ye powere have and myght." — *Since*

168

1170 "Quhat help," quod sche, "wold thou that I ordeyne
To bringen thee unto thy hertis desire?"
"Madame," quod I, "bot that your grace dedeyne — *deign*
Of your grete myght my wittis to enspire — *inspire*
To win the well that slokin may the fyre — *wellspring that may put out*
1175 In quhich I birn; a, goddesse fortunate, — *burn*
Help now my game that is in poynt to mate." — *[chess] game; in danger of checkmate*

169

"Of mate?" quod sche. "O verray sely wreche, — *checkmate; helpless wretch*
I se wele by thy dedely colour pale — *I see well*
Thou art to feble of thyself to streche — *too feeble to stretch yourself*
1180 Upon my quhele, to clymben or to hale — *wheel; haul [yourself on]*
Withoutin help; for thou has fundin stale — *come to stalemate*
This mony day, withoutin werdis wele, — *For many a day; good words*
And wantis now thy veray hertis hele. — *healing*

170

"Wele maistow be a wrechit man callit — *Well may you; called*
1185 That wantis the confort that suld thy hert glade, — *Who is lacking; gladden*
And has all thing within thy hert stallit — *shut inside*
That may thy youth oppressen or defade.
Though thy begynnyng hath bene retrograde,
Be froward, opposyt quhare till aspert;
1190 Now sall thai turn and luken on the dert."[1]

171

And therwithall unto the quhele in hye — *wheel in haste*
Sche hath me led, and bad me lere to clymbe, — *learn*
Upon the quhich I steppit sudaynly. — *Upon which*
"Now hald thy grippis," quod sche, "for thy tyme,
1195 An hour and more it rynnis over prime, — *past prime*

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[1] Lines 1188–90: *Though your beginning has followed a backward course, / Be aggressive, directly opposite to that [backward movement]; / Now shall they turn and look at the dart (i.e., they shall be caught off guard)*

To count the hole the half is nere away: *whole [of your time]*
Spend wele, therfore, the remanant of the day.

172

"Ensample," quod sche, "tak of this tofore *As an example; these before*
That fro my quhele be rollit as a ball; *Who*
1200 For the nature of it is evermore,
After ane hicht, to vale and geve a fall: *height; fall and descend*
Thus, quhen me likith, up or doun to fall. *when it pleases me*
Fare wele," quod sche, and by the ere me toke *ear*
So ernestly that therwithall I woke.

173

1205 O besy goste ay flikering to and fro, *spirit*
That never art in quiet nor in rest
Till thou cum to that place that thou cam fro,
Quhich is thy first and verray proper nest:
From day to day so sore here artow drest *so badly are you oppressed here*
1210 That with thy flesche ay waking art in trouble, *always waking up are*
And sleping eke; of pyne so has thou double. *also; pain*

174

Covert myself, all this mene I to loke; *Hidden [like] myself; lock*
Though that my spirit vexit was tofore
In suevenyng, alssone as ever I woke, *dreaming, as soon*
1215 By twenti-fold it was in trouble more,
Bethinking me with sighing hert and sore *Since I thought to myself*
That nan othir thingis bot dremes had, *I had nothing besides dreams*
Nor sekernes, my spirit with to glad. *Nor [did I have any] stability; gladden*

175

And therwith sone I dressit me to ryse, *prepared to rise*
1220 Fulfild of thoght, pyne, and adversitee. *Filled with; pain*
And to myself I said in this wise: *in this way (manner)*
"A, merci lord, quhat will ye do with me?
Quhat lyf is this? Quhare hath my spirit be?
Is this of my forethoght impressioun
1225 Or is it from the hevin a visioun? *heavens*

176

"And gif ye goddis, of your purviance, — *providence*
Have schewit this for my reconforting, — *shown; comforting*
In relesche of my furiouse pennance, — *release*
I yow beseke full humily of this thing — *humbly*
1230 That of your grace I myght have more takenyng — *portents*
Gif it sal be, as in my slepe before
Ye schewit have." And forth withoutin more — *without delay*

177

In hye unto the wyndow gan I walk, — *haste; I walked*
Moving within my spirit of this sight, — *My spirit moved by this vision*
1235 Quhare, sodeynly, a turtur quhite as calk — *turtledove white as chalk*
So evinly upon my hand gan lyght, — *smoothly; alighted*
And unto me sche turnyt hir full ryght, — *turned herself directly*
Of quham the chere in hir birdis aport — *whom; expression; manner*
Gave me in hert kalendis of confort. — *the beginnings*

178

1240 This fair bird ryght in hir bill gan hold — *did hold*
Of red jorofflis with thair stalkis grene — *gillyflowers (carnations)*
A fair branche, quhare writtin was with gold
On every list, with branchis bryght and schene, — *On every edge*
In compas fair, full plesandly to sene, — *In circular fashion; see*
1245 A plane sentence, quhich as I can devise — *describe*
And have in mynd, said ryght on this wise: — *exactly this*

179

"Awak, awake! I bring, lufar, I bring — *lover*
The newis glad that blisfull ben and sure
Of thy confort. Now lauch and play and syng, — *laugh*
1250 That art besid so glad ane aventure, — *beside (near)*
For in the hevyn decretit is the cure." — *heavens decreed*
And unto me the flouris fair present, — *having presented*
With wyngis spred hir wayis furth sche went.

180

Quhilk up anon I tuke and, as I gesse, — *Which (i.e., the flowers)*
1255 Ane hundreth tymes or I forthir went — *before I went further*

	I have it red with hertfull glaidnese.	*I read it*
	And, half with hope and half with dred it hent,	*carried*
	And at my beddis hed with gud entent	*the head of my bed*
	I have it fair pynnit up; and this	*pinned*
1260	First takyn was of all my help and blisse.	*token*

181

	The quhich, treuly efter, day be day,	*by*
	That all my wittis maistrit had tofore,	*Which; had mastered*
	Quhich hensferth the paynis did away,	
	And schortly, so wele Fortune has hir bore	*well; borne*
1265	To quikin treuly day by day my lore,	*enliven (increase)*
	To my larges that I am cumin agayne	*prosperity*
	To blisse with hir that is my sovirane.	

182

	Bot for als moche as sum micht think or seyne,	*might; say*
	"Quhat nedis me apoun so litill evyn	*even upon so little [a thing]*
1270	To writt all this?" I ansuere thus ageyne:	*back (in return)*
	"Quho that from Hell war croppin onys in Hevin	
	Wald, efter o thank, for joy mak six or sevin![1]	
	And every wicht his awin suete or sore	*man; own delights or woes*
	Has maist in mynde; I can say you no more.	*most*

183

1275	"Eke quho may in this lyfe have more plesaunce	*pleasure*
	Than cum to largesse from thraldom and peyne?	*prosperity; imprisonment*
	And by the mene of luffis ordinaunce,	*means*
	That has so mony in his goldin cheyne,	
	Quhich thus to wyn his hertis sovereyne	*Whoever; heart's*
1280	Quho suld me wite to write tharof, lat se!"	*teach me to write thereof*
	Now sufficiaunce is my felicitee.	*sufficient*

[1] Lines 1271–72: *Whoever from Hell has crept [but] once into Heaven / Would, after one expression of thanks, for [sheer] joy make six or seven*

184

	Beseching unto fair Venus abufe	*above*
	For all my brethir that ben in this place —	*For each of my brothers*
	This is to seyne, that servandis ar to lufe	*servants*
1285	And of his lady can no thank purchase —	*receive*
	His pane relesch and sone to stand in grace,	*Release him of his pain*
	Boith to his worschip and to his first ese,	*for his honor; ease*
	So that it hir and resoun noght displese.	*Provided*

185

	And eke for tham that ar noght entrit inne	*not [yet] entered into*
1290	The dance of lufe bot thidder-wart on way,	*[are] thither-ward*
	In gude tyme and sely to begynne	*good and happy time*
	Thair prentissehed, and forthirmore I pray	*apprenticeship*
	For thame that passit ben the mony affray	*the many tribulations*
	In lufe and cunnyng ar to full plesance,	*knowledgeable about*
1295	To graunt tham all, lo, gude perseverance.	

186

	And eke I pray for all the hertis dull	
	That lyven here in sleuth and ignorance,	*sloth*
	And has no curage at the rose to pull,	*pluck*
	Thair lif to mend and thair saulis avance	*Their; souls' advance*
1300	With thair suete lore and bring thame to gude chance;	*their sweet*
	And quho that will noght for this prayer turn	*whoever*
	Quhen thai wald faynest speid that thai may spurn.[1]	

187

	To rekyn of every thing the circumstance	*To relate all the things*
	As hapnit me quhen lessen gan my sore	*That happened to me when*
1305	Of my rancoure and wofull chance	
	It war to long; I lat it be tharefor.	*would be too*
	And thus this flour — I can seye no more —	*flower*
	So hertly has unto my help attendit	*wholeheartedly*
	That from the deth hir man sche has defendit.	*she has saved me from death*

[1] *When they would most readily advance with what they may spurn*

188

1310 And eke the goddis mercifull uirking, *working*
For my long pane and trewe service in lufe,
That has me gevin halely myn asking, *wholly what I asked*
Quhich has my hert forevir sett abufe *Which; above*
In perfyte joy, that nevir may remufe *remove (cause to move)*
1315 Bot onely deth, of quhome in laud and prise *whom; praise*
With thankfull hert I say richt in this wise:

189

"Blissit mot be the goddis all, *may (must)*
So fair that glateren in the firmament! *glitter*
And blissit be thare myght celestiall *their*
1320 That have convoyit hale with one assent *conveyed whole*
My lufe, and to so glade a consequent! *happy an ending*
And thankit be Fortunys exiltree *axle*
And quhele, that thus so wele has quhirlit me! *wheel; well has whirled*

190

"Thankit mot be — and fair in lufe befall — *may (must)*
1325 The nychtingale that with so gud entent
Sang thare of lufe the notis suete and small, *gentle (high-pitched)*
Quhair my fair hertis lady was present, *heart's*
Hir with to glad or that sche forthir went. *gladden before*
And thou, gerafloure, mot ithankit be *gillyflower*
1330 All othir flouris for the lufe of thee!

191

"And thankit be the fair castell wall
Quhare as I quhilom lukit furth and lent. *once looked and leaned forth*
Thankit mot be the sanctis marciall *martial saints*
That me first causit hath this accident.
1335 Thankit mot be the grene bewis bent *green boughs*
Throu quhom and under first fortunyt me *Through and under which [it]*
My hertis hele and my confort to be." *healing*

192

For to the presence suete and delitable *sweet and delightful*
Rycht of this floure that full is of plesance,

1340 By processe and by menys favorable, *favorable means*
First of the blisfull goddis purveyance,
And syne throu long and trew contynuance *then through*
Of veray faith in lufe and trew service *true faith*
I cum am, and forthir in this wise, *I am come*

193

1345 Unworthy, lo, bot onely of hir grace, *except only by her*
In lufis yok that esy is and sure, *Into love's yoke*
In guerdoun of all my lufis space, *reward for*
Sche hath me tak, hir humble creature. *accepted me*
And thus befell my blisfull aventure
1350 In youth of lufe that now frome day to day
Flourith ay newe; and yit forthir I say:

194

[Envoy] Go litill tretise nakit of eloquence, *bare of*
Causing simplese and povertee to wit, *simplicity*
And pray the reder to have pacience
1355 Of thy defaute and to supporten it, *fault*
Of his gudnese thy brukilnese to knytt, *brittleness to repair*
And his tong for to reule and to stere, *tongue; rule and guide*
That thy defautis helit may ben here. *healed*

195

Allace, and gif thou cummyst in the presence *Alas; if*
1360 Quhare as of blame faynest thou wald be quite,[1]
To here thy rude and crukit eloquens, *hear; crooked*
Quho sal be thare to pray for thy remyt? *Who shall be there; release*
No wicht, bot gif hir merci will admytt *No one, unless*
Thee for gud will, that is thy gyd and stere, *guide and steerer*
1365 To quhame for me thou pitousely requere. *To whom; pray (request)*

196

And thus endith the fatall influence *fateful*
Causit from Hevyn quhare powar is commytt *where power is given*

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[1] *Where you would most wish to be released of blame*

Of govirnance, by the magnificence — *for governing [things]*
Of Him that hiest in the hevine sitt. — *heavens sits*
1370 To quham we thank that all oure lif hath writt, — *To whom*
Quho couth it red agone syne mony a yere: — *could [have] read (known) it ago*
"Hich in the hevynnis figure circulere." — *High (see line 1)*

197

Unto the impnis of my maisteris dere, — *poems (lit., hymns)*
Gowere and Chaucere, that on the steppis satt
1375 Of rethorike quhill thai were lyvand here, — *rhetoric while; living*
Superlative as poetis laureate
In moralitee and eloquence ornate,
I recommend my buk in lynis sevin, — *book in seven-line stanzas*
And eke thair saulis unto the blisse of Hevin. Amen. — *souls*

Explicit etc. etc.
Quod Jacobus primus scotorum rex Illustrissimus.[1]

[1] Colophon: *"Here ends etc. etc. / Said James the First, most Illustrious king of the Scots"*

Explanatory Notes to The Kingis Quair

Abbreviations: **B**: Julia Boffey (2003); **L**: Alexander Lawson (1910); **Mac**: W. Mackay MacKenzie (1939); **McD**: Matthew P. McDiarmid (1973); **Mor**: Robert Morison (1786); **MS**: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Selden. B. 24, fols. 192–211; **NS**: John Norton-Smith (1971); **R**: Rev. Charles Rogers (1873); **S**: Jean Robert Simon (1967); **Sk**: Walter W. Skeat (1911); **Tyt**: W. Tytler (1783). For other common abbreviations, see p. 16.

Heading. This heading, attributing authorship to James, was added by a later hand to blank space on folio 191v.

1 *Heigh in the hevynnis figure circulere.* The line is repeated at the end ("Hich in the hevynnis figure circulere," line 1372) to complete the poem's frame, thus, through its allusion to the epilogue to *TC* (viewed from the eighth sphere and with its dedication to Gower), setting up the poem's tribute to Chaucer and Gower in the final stanza.

1–14 *hevynnis figure circulere.* During much of the Middle Ages, the universe was envisioned as a series of crystalline spheres with the earth at the center, each sphere with a planet embedded in its surface, the innermost being our moon. These spheres were nested within a larger sphere, that of the fixed stars (planets were thus thought to be "wandering stars"). Beyond this sphere was the eighth sphere, the *primum mobile* or "First Mover," a sphere turned by the hand of God, which in turn caused the motion of all within it (except for earth, which was stationary). Chaucer provides the poetic model for this view in the last twelve stanzas of *TC.*

The Kingis Quair's speaker sets his story in the context of the movement of the heavens: the *figure circulere* (line 1) is the vaulted heavens of the fixed stars, which were thought to influence life on earth (the extreme version of which is astrology). This cosmic perspective indicates that the theme of his poem, like that of Chaucer's *TC*, will be broader than simply a love story, or even a release from prison. Like Boethius, the poet is addressing the huge mystery of life: Why are things constantly changing? Why is there injustice in the world? Who is in charge of it all, anyway?

Compare the opening of Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*, where the poet contemplates Venus, then retires to his bedchamber to reflect upon Chaucer, Boethius, and "The fatall destenie / Of fair Cresseid" (lines 62–63).

3 *Aquary*. Norton-Smith, p. 51, compares Gower, *CA* 7.1185–1214, and Hyginus, *Poeticon Astronomicon* l.viii, 2.xxx, 3.xxviii, noting that the direct source seems to be *TG* 4–9. This astrological dating would fall between 21 January and 18 February.

Citherea. Venus. Some editors emend to "Cinthia" (the moon) because of the reference in line 6 to "hir hornis bright." See Skeat, p. 58, who compares *TC* 3. 624–65 and 5.652, a position followed by Lawson (see explanatory note to line 6, below), and MacKenzie, p. 103. See also the explanatory note to line 4. Carretta (p. 16) argues that this misattribution of "horns" to Venus "casts doubt on the narrator-persona's reliability as a spiritual guide by emphasizing how limited his classical knowledge is."

clere. See lines 358, 377, 696, 888, 1045, where the epithet celebrates Venus' brightness.

4 *Rynsid hir tressis*. The phrase builds on the allegorical representation of Venus, who might wash her golden hair when in the sign of Aquarius, the Waterbearer. That she appeared "late tofore, in fair and fresche atyre" (line 5) perhaps alludes to her being recently the evening star in Capricorn (early January). See Norton-Smith, p. 52: "Between 10 and 18 Frebuary 1424 . . . Venus was a morning star near the boundary between Aquarius and Capricornus. Having been an evening star through the later half of 1423, the planet passed through inferior conjunction on about 30 January and appeared as a morning star a few days later. For five weeks after conjunction it moved only slowly with respect to the stars and so remained in the Aquarius/Capricornus area during the whole of February."

6 *hir hornis bright*. Lawson, following Skeat (see note to *Citherea*, line 3), discusses this phrase in terms of Cinthia, the moon. The whole opening passage is "modelled on *Temple of Glas*, and the meaning is that the poet had this experience in the month of January when the moon was full, which shortly before in the month of December had, as a new moon, shewn herself in crescent form" (p. 129). Henryson, *The Testament of Cresseid*, presents "Lady Cynthia" (the moon) as "buskit with hornis twa" (lines 253–55). But Norton-Smith's suggestion (p. 52) that *hornis* refers to "the elaborate dressing of women's hair in a horn shape, popular at this time (cf. Lydgate, *Hornes Away?*)" has merit and maintains the

extensive allusions to Venus elsewhere in the poem. She is fashionably horned and a great horn maker, as well.

7 *North northward approchit the mydnyght.* The phrase has caused much editorial discussion. Skeat (p. 58) hyphenates *myd-nyght* and observes: "the meridian. A part of the meridian, as marked on an astrolabe, was called 'the north lyne, or elles the lyne of midnight'; Chaucer, *On the Astrolable*, pt. i. § 4." Following Skeat, Norton-Smith suggests that *mydnyght* is thus antithetical to midday, when the sun is at its highest point in the sky and goes on to note that astronomical midday was called "south" (Latin *meridies* for "south"), so midnight would be "north" (p. 52). This astronomical setting, like so much of *The Kingis Quair*'s beginning, imitates *TG*.

8–14 In *BD* (lines 44–59), Chaucer provides similar motivation for the actions of the narrator to follow:

> So whan I saw I might not slepe
> Til now late this other night
> Upon my bed I sat upright
> And bad oon reche me a book,
> A romaunce, and he it me tok
> To rede and drive the night away.

Compare Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*, lines 39–40, where the narrator "tuik ane quair" to read in order "[t]o cut the winter nicht and mak it schort." In the course of the fifteenth century this opening gambit becomes commonplace.

16 *Boece.* Boethius, or Anicius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boethius (A.D. 480–524), Roman statesman and philosopher whose *De consolatione philosophiae* (*The Consolation of Philosophy*) is intended here. Transferring the author's name to the work itself has the sanction of Chaucer in *Adam Scriveyn*, The Nun's Priest's Tale, The Wife of Bath's Tale, The Parson's Tale, *HF*, *LGW*, and *Rom.*, as well as in several glosses that he adds to his own translation of *The Consolation of Philosophy* (*Boece*). McDiarmid suggests that James is probably using Walton's Boethius, the 1410 version, on the basis of references to Rome and senatorship (lines 18–19) which are not so emphatically spelled out in Chaucer (p. 118); given the prominence of Chaucer references in *KQ*, however, he may well have known Chaucer's translation, as well. Walton draws heavily on Chaucer's translation at any rate. See also the note to line 23, below.

16–18 *compiloure . . . Compilit.* On poetry as "compilation" and the poet as "compilator," see Alastair J. Minnis, "Late-Medieval Discussions of *Compilatio* and the Role of

the *Compilator*," in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 101 (1979), 385–421.

21 *Forjugit was to povert in exile.* Like James, Boethius wrote his *Consolation* in exile as a man condemned to prison.

23 *His metir suete.* This phrase supports the view that James is using Walton's translation, which is entirely in verse, rather than Chaucer's, which is in prose. The original alternates prose and verse in the manner of Menippean satire. See F. Anne Payne, *Chaucer and Menippean Satire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981).

24 *flourit pen.* The pen is "ornate" (Latin *floridus*) because employed in the writing of rhetorically ornate verse.

35 *And in tham set.* "Them" here refers to the things recovered (fortune, wealth, happiness) within himself through the teachings of Philosophy.

42 *suffisance.* Sufficiency (*sufficientia*) is a key virtue in Boethian therapy, linked to happiness (*laetitia*), reverence (*reverentia*), and strength (*potentia*), which, though they have different names, are one in substance. "'Than is it,' quod sche, 'consequent *and* pleyn / Þat noble[ne]sse haþ no difference / ffro suffisaunce, pouer *and* reuerence / Wiche þat we han assembled into one'" (*CP* 3.pr9.440.3–6). The concept is central in Chaucer's representation of mental health, anxiety, and the search for steadfastness.

46 *my scole.* Skeat glosses: "my skull, my head" (p. 60). We follow Tytler's gloss: "my learning."

54 *rolling.* A Boethian notion of contemplation in the language of Chaucer's translation; for example: "Whoso that seketh sooth by a deep thought, and coveyteth not to ben disseyvid by no mysweyes, lat hym *rollen* and trenden withynne hymself the lyght of his ynwarde sighte" (*Boece* 3.m.11.1–4; emphasis ours). In Walton the verb is "reuolue" (3.m11.536.4).

55–61 Compare these lines from Chaucer's Knight's Tale: "Now be we caytyves, as it is wel seene, / Thanked by Fortune and hire false wheel, / That noon estaat assureth to be weel" (*CT* I[A]924–26).

70 *so were my wittis wrest.* At this point, he is in the same mental state that Boethius found himself in when Lady Philosophy appeared to him. This is a crisis of emotion and understanding that often precedes revelation in the literatures of dream vision.

91 *maid a cross.* Medieval scribes sometimes began a work by making a sign of the cross at the head of the text, or, sometimes, by writing a brief prayer to Mary, to ask divine assistance with the writing.

93 The association of *windis variable* (line 93) with youth (*unrypit fruyte*, line 93) and the passage that follows, with its rudderless boat on a stormy sea, evoke Boethius' realm of Fortune's wheel where "wawis of this warld" (line 111) are ever-changing and unpredictable. The image of the dangerous rocks against which the boat might be dashed (line 102) is an especially rich one, for, as he explains, he is using the sea both as a metaphor for his writing, and as a comment on his youthful lack of comprehension of the nature of the world, as well.

101–33 This common *topos* of Fortune's victim being likened to a rudderless ship in a storm is prominent in Boethius, though James may have been influenced more directly by Chaucer, who uses it to describe his inability to express the situation in which Troilus found himself at the beginning of Book 2 of *TC*. See also Curtius, pp. 128–30, Spearing (2000), pp. 126–28, and Scheps, pp. 145–49.

113–21 *the rokkis blake . . . doith my wittis pall.* The protagonist's lament against the *rokkis blake* (line 113) that with their *prolixitee / Of doubilnesse* (lines 120–21) threaten the security of his feeble boat echoes Dorigen's lament in Chaucer's Franklin's Tale, where the "grisly rokkes blake" (*CT* V[F]857; see also lines 868–91 and 1158) seem to threaten Dorigen as she cries out against God's creation, her wit impaired by the possibilities of disaster.

119 *Calyope.* The muse of epic poetry and lofty verse, invoked in the Proem to Book 3 of Chaucer's *TC*. See note to lines 128–33, below.

120 *prolixitee.* For use of *prolixitee* as a term of rhetoric, compare Chaucer's usage in The Squire's Tale (*CT* V[F]405), *HF* 2.348, or *TC* 2.1564.

Skeat points out that stanzas 18 and part of 19 imitate the Proem to Book Two of Chaucer's *TC* (lines 1–10):

> 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 steer.
This see clepe I the tempestous matere
Of disespeir that Troilus was inne;
But now of hope the kalendes bygynne.

O lady myn, that called art Cleo,
Thow be my speed fro this forth, and my Muse,
To ryme wel this book til I have do.

But see also Chaucer's Franklin's Tale and the note to lines 113–21, above.

128–33 *To yow, Cleo . . . my joye. Cleo, Polymye*, and *Thesiphone* appear (because of the reference to nine sisters, line 130) to be an allusion to the Muses, daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (Memory). Clio was muse of history, Polyhymnia the muse of hymns to the gods. Thesiphone was not a muse but rather one of the furies. Clair James (pp. 96–97) argues that the narrator's error here — calling a fury a muse — is further evidence of his unreliability. It is also possible that this is a genuine mistake on the part of poet or scribe: conceivably, James (the poet) intended Terpsichore, muse of choral dancing and song, or Thalia, muse of comedy and bucolic poetry. But the narrator does speak of his torment (line 133), so more likely James is following Chaucer in thinking of Thesiphone as "goddesse of torment" (*TC* 1.8) and, like Chaucer, includes her with other muses like Cleo (*TC* 2.8) and Caliope (*TC* 3.45), upon whom he calls in the happier books of his poem. That is, James is looking for inspiration for both *my turment and my joye* (line 133). For Polymye, see Chaucer's *Anelida and Arcite*, lines 15–16.

134–54 *In Ver . . . myn aventure.* James is imitating time-telling flourishes as introduced by Chaucer. Compare *TC* 1.155–57: "whan comen was the tyme / Of Aperil, whan clothed is the mede / With newe grene, of lusty Veer the pryme." See also the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* and the Introduction to The Man of Law's Tale. *Synthius* (line 138) is another name for Apollo, the sun, from Mt. Cynthus, where he and Diana were born. As in Chaucer's work, it is spring when Apollo, the sun, is rising in Aries, that is, March–April.

140 *Ariete.* The sign of Aries. Compare *TC* 4.1592 and 5.1190. See Wood, pp. 233–35.

154 *tuke I myn aventure.* Here the frame ends and story begins, almost seamlessly, from the metaphor for the insecurities of life as a ship sailing without rudder (lines 101–26) to the actual sailing passage he begins to describe here.

159 *Sanct Johne to borowe.* A favorite phrase of valediction in Chaucer and Gower. Compare *Complaint of Mars*, line 9 ("Taketh your leve, and with Seint John to borowe"), and The Squire's Tale (*CT* V[F]596): "And took hym by the hond, Seint John to borwe." See also *CA* 5.3415–16: "And thus he ros up be the morwe / And tok himself, Seint John to borwe." Lydgate uses the phrase in *Troy Book* 1.3082 and *Complaint of the Black Knight*, line 12.

162 The association of the "to and fro" of the ocean's waves with vagaries of (ill) fortune is a commonplace in the fifteenth century, but James is doing more here than repeating clichés. The speaker has told us that he lay in bed with his thoughts "rolling to and fro" (line 64), which caused him to think of "fortune and ure [destiny]" (line 65). Then he has created the picture of the boat "Amang the wawis of this warld" (line 111), using the image of the boat with empty sails (an image familiar from the poetry of Chaucer and that of many other medieval poets) to explain his inability at the time to deal with the experiences because he lacked reason. Here he is describing a (supposedly) real life experience; he describes himself as having been "infortunate," and concludes the stanza with "Fortune it schupe [destined] non othir wayis to be" (line 168). James could hardly have drawn a closer parallel between the physical circumstances of his capture and the philosophical problem at hand.

170–72 *So ferforth . . . secund sister.* The three Fates, or Parcae, were represented as old women spinning. The second sister, Lachesis, was believed to unwind the thread of life for each person. The lines here would mean, "So forward the second sister has chosen to unwind the sad thread of my life, without comfort, abandoned in sorrow, for nearly the period of eighteen years."

183–85 *The bird, the beste . . . lyve in fredome . . . I a man, and lakkith libertee!* A Boethian commonplace based on *CP* 1.pr4. Compare the lyric "Fowles in the frith, / The fisshes in the flood, / And I mon waxe wood" (*IMEV* 864).

187 *Fortune.* The first explicit mention of Fortune in the poem, which, in the context of prison, strongly evokes the first two books of Boethius' *CP*.

188 *My folk.* The attendants on James, not only the guards but his personal attendants.

194 *figuris nyne.* The Arabic numerals one through nine (excluding zero, which is no number). He implies that he himself is the zero, or "Cipher," standing alone surrounded by others of more consequence. Compare Charles d'Orléans: "Me thynk-

ith right as a sypher now I serve / That nombre makith [as zero makes 1 into 10] and is himself noon" (*FS*, lines 2042–43). Compare also *Richard the Redeless* 4.53–54: "Than satte summe as sipre doth in awgrym [Arabic numerals], / That noteth a place and no thing availith" (*Richard the Redeless and Mum and the Sothsegger*, ed. James M. Dean [Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000], p. 47).

204 *Bewailing in my chamber thus allone.* Compare *TC* 1.547: "Bywayling in his chambre thus allone." For a list of parallels between this scene and Chaucer's Knight's Tale, see Scheps, p. 160.

204 ff. The viewing of the lady through a window as she "Full secretly new cummyn hir to pleyne" (line 276) in her garden "fast by the touris wall" (line 211) imitates Chaucer's Knight's Tale, where Palamon and Arcite are smitten with love as they look from their prison windows and see Emelye near the "gardyn wal" where she "hadde hir pleyynge" (*CT* I[A]1060–61).

211–13 *Now was there maid . . . / Ane herber grene.* The description of the "gardyn fair" (lines 212–31) resonates with imagery from several of Chaucer's poems: e.g., *TC* 2.820–26, with its "blosmy bowes grene, / And benched newe" (i.e., with newly refurbished benches topped with fine grass); or *PF*, lines 183–210, with its birds, greenery and flowers.

The placement of the garden *by the touris wall* (lines 211) recalls The Knight's Tale, line 1056–60: "The grete tour, that was so thikke and stroong, . . . / Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal." The garden in *RR* casts a long shadow over such descriptions; see Chaucer's *Rom.*, lines 1349–1444; and compare the description of the garden in *The Floure and the Leafe*, lines 27–70.

225–38 On the loudness of the bird song, compare Lydgate, *Complaint of the Black Knight*, lines 42–46: "the briddes song, / . . . So loude songe, that al the wode rong / Lyke as it shulde shiver in peces smale," and Charles d'Orléans, *FS*, lines 1694–95: "Ther shall we here the birdis synge and pley / Right as the wood therwith shulde forshyuere." For the fact that there were words to their song (i.e., that they sing a song with an understandable text), see the ending of *PF*, where the birds sing, "Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe" (lines 685 ff).

232 *Cantus* is written in the left margin of the beginning of the hymn to May.

234–35 *Away, winter, away! / Cum, somer, cum.* See *PF*, lines 685–86, 690–93, the birds' joyous song welcoming summer after winter.

293–308 So also Palamon in Chaucer's Knight's Tale (*CT* I[A]1101–11) wonders if Emelye is a goddess when he first sees her walking in the garden outside his prison tower: "I noot wher she be womman or goddesse, / But Venus is it soothly, as I gesse" (lines 1101–02).

312 For the idea of falling into Love's dance, see Chaucer's *TC* 2.1106 and the Wife of Bath in Chaucer's General Prologue, *CT* I[A]475–76: "Of remedies of love she knew per chaunce, / For she koude ["knew," "understood"] of that art the olde daunce."

316–43 Wood suggests parallels with the late medieval *Court of Love,* but much closer parallels (in time and in specificity) are to be found in Charles d'Orléans' description of the figure of Fortune (*FS*, lines 4974–5050); see note to lines 1107–55, below.

317 *atyre. Atyre* means headdress, that which decorated the hair and held it in shape. Here, it is a kind of netting adorned with pearls, golden balls, emeralds, and sapphires.

324 *amorettis.* The word has been translated "love knot," a knotted ribbon tied in a particular way and supposed to be a token of love, but the word derives from French, where, in the fifteenth century, it still meant some kind of field flower (as do "jonette" and "burnette"; see Greimas and Keane, *Dictionnaire du moyen français*).

326–27 *flour jonettis . . . flour burnettis.* In both instances the manuscript reads *flour jonettis*, repeated, no doubt, through scribal error. Various interpretations have been given for *flour jonette*, including the flower St. John's wort, the French "jaulnet d'eau" or yellow marsh lily, and the flower of the jonette pear tree, all white or yellow. Another possibility is yellow loosestrife, *Lysimachia*, called "herbe jaunnez" in a list of *Synonyma* (see Hunt, p. 114). The second instance of the phrase, an example of scribal dittography, is here altered (as a possible restoration) to *flour burnettis* or burnet flower, a flower of dark blue color.

332–33 *a ruby . . . / Lyke to ane hert schapin.* Compare the brooch Criseyde gives to Troilus, made of "gold and asure, / In which a ruby set was lik an herte" (*TC* 3.1370–71).

336 *gudpartye.* Various interpretations have been offered for this phrase, including (as here) a sixteenth-century Scottish meaning "of a good contest," that is between the white of her throat and red of her necklace, and "a good portion," or "fair prize," referring to the lady herself.

344–50 The description of his lady's beauty and virtues resonates with the pleasures of convention. Compare the Black Knight's account of his first looking upon the "goode faire White" in Chaucer's *BD*, lines 817–1041.

348 *mesure.* "Measure" is both an Aristotelian and a Christian virtue — Aristotelian in terms of the mean, and Christian in terms of God's creation of the universe according to "measure, and number, and weight" (Wisdom 11:21). James' lady's behavior, *In every poynt so guydit hir mesure*, recalls perhaps the good fair White's behavior, as she does all things by "mesure" (*BD*, line 881), even opening and closing her eyes "by mesure" (*BD*, line 872), as Dame Nature has taught her to do.

352 *a warldly creature.* The lover's uncertainty as to whether the lady is a goddess or a real woman echoes the amusing debate between Palamon and Arcite in Chaucer's Knight's Tale, in which Palamon, thinking Emilye, the woman in the garden, might be divine, praises her as a goddess, perhaps a transformation of Venus (*CT* I[A]1104–11), to which Arcite replies that his kinsman may love her that way, but he will love her as a "creature" (lines 1156–59). See explanatory note to lines 293–308, above. James' lover incorporates both sides of the debate, talking instead to his lady's "lytill hound" (line 368).

368 *hir lytill hound.* The idea of the little hound as love mediator perhaps originates in Chaucer's *BD*, lines 387–99, where the "whelp" leads the dreamer to the Black Knight in his love torment.

379–92 Though the story of Philomela and Procne is a common one (e.g., Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6.424–605; Gower, *CA* 5.5551–6052; Chaucer, *LGW* 7.2228–2393, *TC* 2.64–70), James seems to be following Gower's version of the story. According to this sequence, the two women were sisters, daughters of the king of Athens. Procne was married to Tereus, king of Thrace. He desired and raped her

sister Philomela, then cut out her tongue so that she could not tell of the deed. Nevertheless, she managed to report it to her sister by weaving the story into a tapestry; the sisters conspired to avenge the rape by killing Itys, Tereus' son and heir, and serving up his body to Tereus. When he realized what they had done, he sought to kill them, but he was changed to a hoopoe, they to a nightingale and a swallow. James asks Philomela to sing about all the pains she felt when she was raped, and what her sister Procne felt when betrayed by her husband. Her song is to chide false husbands and *bid thame mend* (line 392) their ways. It is also to cheer James' newfound beloved.

392 *the twenti devil way*. An expression of impatience, an intensification of "right away." Compare Chaucer's Miller's Tale, *CT* I[A]3713; Reeve's Tale, *CT* I[A] 4257; *LGW*, line 2177; or Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*, line 162. On twenty as an unlucky number or, with devils, an oath or curse, see Russell A. Peck, "Numbers as Cosmic Language," in *Essays in the Numerical Criticism of Medieval Literature*, ed. Caroline D. Eckhardt (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1980), p. 59.

402 *he . . . he*. See textual note on Edwards' emendation.

414–20 The narrator's sense of utter helplessness and indecision is reminiscent of that of Troilus in Book Four of *TC* (lines 148–75) when he hears that Criseyde is to be traded to the enemy for Antenor.

428 *philomene*. *MED* cites this line and line 766 as instances where the name of the mythological maiden has become the word for nightingale. *The Kingis Quair* is the only authority the *MED* cites for such a usage, however. Similarly, the *OED* cites, apart from these two references in *The Kingis Quair*, only the proper names of the maiden who is transformed into the bird. See explanatory note to line 766.

484 *Tantalus*. The son of Zeus and the titaness Pluto. Because of some offence to the gods (various offences are named in various myths), he was punished by being placed in or below fruit trees whose branches blew aside whenever he reached to pluck the fruit and near a pool of water which receded whenever he tried to drink from it. Like Tantalus, James says he tries to draw water from a well using a bottomless bucket: he is thirsty for some positive response from his lady, but his attempts to get it are hopeless. The parallel between James' plight and that of Tantalus is not exact, and it is possible, as Claire James points out (p. 96), that this discrepancy underscores a lack on the part of the narrator.

491–95 From *RR*; compare *BD*, lines 599–617, and Charles d'Orléans, *FS*, lines 5846–51:

But all my wele, . . .
In his aumferse me turnyth in disese. *turns for me into its opposite*

For all my joy is turnyd to hevynes,
Myn ese in harme, my wele in woo,
Mi hope in drede, in dowt my sikirnes, *certitude*
And my delite in sorrow, loo, . . .

499 *Phebus*. This is another name for the sun: at the end of day, Phebus ceased casting forth his bright beams.

501–02 This kind of elaborate description of day and night was considered elegant. Compare Chaucer's description in *TC* 2.904–09:

The dayes honour, and the hevenes yë, *eye (the sun)*
The nyghtes foo — al this clepe I the sonne — *call*
Gan westren faste, and downward for to wrye, *go*
As he that hadde his dayes cours yronne,
And white thynges wexen dymme and donne *dun (grey-brown)*
For lak of lyght, and sterres for t'apere . . .

Esperus (line 502), or Hesperus, is another name for Venus as the evening star, which appears in the western sky after sunset.

523–32 Compare the ascent of the narrator in the claws of a huge eagle in Chaucer's *HF* (lines 541–53):

And with hys grymme pawes stronge,
Withyn hys sharpe nayles longe,
Me, fleynge, in a swap he hente, *at a stroke; grabbed*
And with hys sours ayen up wente, *flight*
Me caryinge in his clawes starke
As lyghtly as I were a larke. . .

526 *spere to spere*. James' ascent upward "from sphere to sphere" follows the Ptolemaic model of the universe in which earth is at the center, encircled by crystalline spheres bearing the moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and the fixed stars (including the band of the zodiac, see note to line 529). He first passes through the rings of air, water, and fire (the other three elements besides earth) before reaching the first sphere, that of the moon. Such ascents (which derive directly or indirectly from Macrobius) are fairly commonplace in medieval dream

vision literature; Dante, Chaucer, and later Charles d'Orléans employ versions of them.

529 *Signifer*. The "sign-bearer" is the band of sky in which the signs of the zodiac appear. It is also referred to as the sphere of the fixed stars.

536 *at a thoght*. "Swift as thought." Compare Geoffrey's flight "as swyft as thought" as he approaches the House of Rumor in *HF*, line 1924.

538–74 In *HF* (lines 1214–84) the narrator likewise sees hoards of people, all seeking fame.

540–43 The speaker's flight on high to a residence from which he can look down on lovers of every nation in "love's service" is perhaps reminiscent of *TC* 5.1807 ff., where Troilus looks down on the little spot of earth to observe humankind.

549 *martris and confessour*. From the hierarchies of saints: a martyr is one who dies for his/her faith; a confessor is one who continues to affirm faith under torture but does not ultimately die for that faith.

575–651 This list of lovers, their stories and their complaints, is reminiscent of Lydgate's *TG*, lines 44–246.

592 *bukis newe*. In the first half of the fifteenth century there was a great vogue for narratives about great battles, among them *The Siege of Jerusalem* and Lydgate's *Troy Book*, complementing the recent stories of Henry V's triumphs in France.

595 *Ovide and Omer*. Ovid, or Publius Ovidius Naso, any number of whose works, *Ars Amatoria*, *Heroides*, *Amores*, or *Metamorphoses*, may be referred to here. Homer, not known directly but cited in Statius' *Achilleid* and the Troy books of Dares, Dictys, and Lydgate, may be referred to in this context because of his description of the faithful Penelope, wife of Ulysses.

612 *folk of religioun*. Although the allusion may be mainly to those of the "religion of love," the reference could well be to prelates, given their "capis wyde" (line 611) and the sneakiness of their worldly behavior (lines 613–16). Compare Lydgate's *TG*, lines 196–208.

666–79 Chaucer makes a similar distinction between kinds of sighs. Troilus sighs "Naught swiche sorwfull sikes as men make / For wo, or elles when that folk ben sike, / But esy sykes, swiche as ben to like, / That shewed his affeccioun withinne" (*TC* 3.1361–64).

James' description of Venus "upon her bed" (line 670) is less provocative than Chaucer's in *PF*, lines 246–50, 260–73:

Withinne the temple, of sykes hoote as fyr	*sighs*
I herde a swogh that gan aboute renne,	*sigh*
Whiche sikes were engendered with desyr,	
That maden every auter for to brenne	*altar*
Of newe flaume . . .	
And in a prive corner in disport	
Fond I Venus and hire porter Richesse,	
That was ful noble and hautayn of hyre port —	
Derk was that place, but afterward lightnesse	
I saw a lyte, unnethe it myghte be lesse —	
And on a bed of gold she lay to reste,	
Til that the hote sonne gan to weste.	
Hyre gilte heres with a golden thred	*hair*
Ibounden were, untressed as she lay,	
And naked from the brest unto the hed	
Men myghte hire sen; and, sothly for to say,	
The remenaunt was wel kevered to my pay,	*i.e., her lower body; pleasure*
Ryght with a subtyl coverchef of Valence —	*sheer*
Ther was no thikkere cloth of no defense.	*offering protection*

673 *Fair Calling*. A variant on Fair Welcome (*Bel Acueil*), from *RR*, whose blessing is necessary for any happy progress in love.

689–90 Venus is addressed in both her forms as planet and as goddess, in both of which capacities she was thought able to appease the wrath and malevolence of Mars. See, for example, Chaucer's *Complaint of Mars*. As god of war, Mars is responsible for James' imprisonment. *Aspectis* in line 690 refers to the astronomical positions of the planet, that is, the angles of its relationships to other planets or houses.

762 *cremesye*. A fine crimson cloth. In other words, James is as unworthy in comparison with the lady he loves as rough sackcloth is to expensive crimson cloth.

763 *doken*. Dock is a common weed. James here compares his unworthy state to that of dock-weed in comparison with daisies, or other fine, delicate flowers one would grow in a garden.

764–65 *Unlike . . . Januarye is . . . unto May*. The dissimilarity is perhaps an allusion to Chaucer's Merchant's Tale.

766 *phylomene*. Philomela, the nightingale. See explanatory note to line 428. James here continues his comparisons of unworthy varieties of things with noble varieties to express his sense of his unworthiness in comparison with his lady's nobility and beauty: moonlight is as unworthy in comparison with sunlight, as January is to May, as the cuckoo is to the nightingale, as the crow to the popinjay, as (in goldsmith's work) the fish's eye (or beading) is to the pearl. Medieval writers loved these kinds of oppositions, as we see in debate poems between sun and moon, cuckoo and nightingale, soul and body, heart and eye, etc.

767 *of one array*. "Of one appearance" (having the same arms or rank): the outer clothing of the cuckoo and the nightingale, signifying their family and breeding, is not the same.

768 *papejay*. The poppinjay, or parrot. The parrot is here contrasted with the crow's blackness not only because of its bright plumage but because it figuratively symbolized a lady or the Virgin Mary, qualities not associated with the lowly crow.

769 *a fischis eye*. The fish-eye stone has a semi-opaque gray-white appearance, like the eye of a cooked fish; this stone is clearly inferior to the pearl.

781 *Mynerve*. Minerva appears here in her capacity as goddess of wisdom, since Venus sends the dreamer James to her so that she can give him "counsele" (line 791) and be his "gude lady, help, and counseilour" (line 793), giving him her "gude avise" (line 794). She is reminiscent of Boethius' Lady Philosophy.

806–12 In mock admonition to his friend Scogan, Chaucer describes Venus' tears: "now so wepith Venus in hir spere [sphere] / That with hir teeres she wol drenche [drown] us here. / Allas! Scogan, this is for thyn offence [i.e., failing to love]; / Thow causest this diluge of pestilence" ("Lenvoy de Chaucer a Scogan," lines 11–14).

848–51 On the association of Venus and Saturn, compare Gower, *CA* 8.2273–76.

925 Ecclesiastes 3:1: "All things have their season, and in their times all things pass under heaven."

953–59 On the decline of virtue to the present day, compare Chaucer's Clerk's Tale (*CT* IV[E]1163–69), and Boethius 2.m5. The idea is originally Ovidian.

1014 *hir that has the cuttis two*. A reference to Fortune, this time not with wheel but with "two lots" (two straws cut to different lengths, as in "to draw lots") in her hand that will decide one's fate for good or ill.

1060–71 Compare the scene in Chaucer's *PF* (lines 183–89):

A gardyn saw I ful of blosmy bowes	*boughs*
Upon a ryver, in a grene mede,	*meadow*
There as swetnesse everemore inow is,	*enough*
With floures white, blewe, yelwe, and rede,	
And colde welle-stremes, nothyng dede,	*not sluggish*
That swymmen ful of smale fishes lighte,	
With fynnes rede and skales sylver bryghte.	

The garden that underlies many such descriptions is that of Guillaume de Lorris at the opening of *RR*.

1074–1101 James refers briefly to *a long rawe / Of treis* (lines 1074–75) followed by a long catalogue of animals. Chaucer before him had described the animals in the garden of *PF* briefly (lines 190–96), but names the trees of the garden in a similar, though more compressed, catalogue: "The byldere ok, and ek the hardy asshe; / The piler elm, the cofre unto carayne [coffin for corpses]; / The boxtre pipere [for making pipes]" (lines 176 ff.). Lydgate, in his own extensive garden description in *The Complaint of the Black Knight*, lines 36–84, follows Chaucer in cataloguing the trees in the garden (lines 64–74), and includes a stream lined with "gravel gold, the water pure as glas" (line 78).

1080 *smaragdyne*. The panther here is said to be like an emerald: the color of panthers in medieval bestiaries varies, and they are sometimes said to be multi-colored, as are also emeralds. See Hassig, pp. 156–66 (n.b. figures 161–74). As noted by MacKenzie, McDiarmid, Norton-Smith, and other editors, Apocalypse 4:3 describes the rainbow around God's throne as "like unto an emerald." Bain drew attention to symbolic traditions associated with both the panther and emerald and

concluded that they were here compared "because both, by symbolic association with the highest truths of the faith of that day, were emblems of a sovereign virtue which offered comfort and healing to mankind" (p. 422). Another aspect of the panther as described in medieval bestiaries was that it exuded a wonderful odor in its breath which attracted all other creatures except the dragon; likewise, the emerald's green color was said to be attractive to human sight (see Bain and Hassig).

1083 *werely porpapyne*. The porcupine is here called "warlike" because of its quills. This practice of identifying animals, birds, or trees by a characteristic adjective is a favorite rhetorical practice. Compare Chaucer's *PF*, lines 176–82 and 337–64.

1084 *lufare unicorne*. The unicorn was attracted to virgins (and could only be tamed by one), and its horn was thought to have many wondrous properties, one of which was clearing water of "venym" (line 1085) or harmful impurities, poisons, etc.

1088 *standar oliphant*. Medieval bestiaries describe the elephant as having jointless legs, such that it always had to stand; such a misconception may have originally grown out of observation of elephants sleeping while standing and leaning against a tree.

1089 *wedowis inemye*. A reference to fables of the cock and the fox. Compare Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale

1090 *elk for alblastrye*. *Alblastrye* is crossbowmanship; Skeat cites a reference to elk skins being used to cover shields; Kinghorn suggests that "elk's hide [was] used to cover targets at shooting-butts" (p. 55); Norton-Smith cites John Trevisa's translation of Bartholomeus, *De Proprietatibus Rerum*, for use of ox-horn (though not elk-horn) for tipping and notching the bolts of crossbows.

1091 *herknere bore*. Wild boar are known for keen hearing.

holsum grey for hortis. I.e., "wholesome gray [badger] for wounds (hurts)." McDiarmid cites *Jamieson's Dictionary* for a reference to the grease of the badger being mixed with other ingredients in a plaster to be placed on wounds.

1093 *drawar by his hornis grete*. Presumably this refers to attaching hauling lines to the horns of the ox.

1107–55 It is interesting that this figure of Fortune is described so elaborately, but not as elaborately as that of Charles d'Orléans, whose Fortune appears above the earth, wearing a "surcot" of diverse hues and a cloak trimmed with ermine. Like James' Fortune, her countenance is changeable, and like her she carries a wheel on which are many people, some climbing, some falling (*FS*, lines 4964–5049).

1175–76 Compare *BD*, lines 659–61; *FS*, lines 2110–14.

1188 *retrograde*. In the Ptolemaic model of the universe, some planets, in relation to others, appear to move backward in their otherwise regular movement across the sky.

1195 *prime*. Time of day equivalent to about 6:00 a.m. in modern reckoning, or sometimes to the period from 6:00 to 9:00 a.m. Since Fortune tells James that an hour and more have passed since Prime, and that therefore almost half the time has gone so he should spend the rest of the day well, it seems that James is referring to the three-hour period of prime, an hour and more after which would bring the time to past 10:00 a.m., nearing midday. He is figuratively referring to his life, of course, and at the age of twenty-nine he had already spent between a third and a half of his expected life span. He could not know that he was to be murdered in 1437, so he had, in fact, already lived two-thirds of his life at age twenty-nine.

1205 *O besy goste*. Skeat compares *TC* 4.302 ff., from which it "is directly copied" (p. 91).

1224 *of my forethoght impressioun*. This harks back to the passage in which Minerva explains foreknowledge versus free will (lines 1009–43); James wonders whether his dream was created by what he had been thinking before he went to sleep or by a heavenly vision sent by the gods (see lines 1226 ff.) or God Himself.

1240–53 The dove presents a branch of gillyflowers, or a scroll on which gillyflowers have been painted, or both. Editors have differed in their interpretations, but since there is clearly some form of writing in gold letters, which he then hangs at his bed's head, some form of scroll must be intended, whether wrapped around a branch of live flowers (as is suggested more clearly by lines 1252–53) or some depiction of them. Lines 1243–44 suggest that either the lettering (said to be on the edges, perhaps as a border) or the depiction of stalks of gillyflowers have been arranged in a circle on the scroll.

1241 *jorofflis*. The gillyflower, "giroflower," "gylofre," or "Gariofilus," the carnation, had been recently introduced into northern Europe and so was a rare plant. See Hunt, pp. 120, 125, etc. See also line 1329, where it is spelled "gerafloure."

1278 *his goldin cheyne*. Speaking of God (though he was, of course, a pagan), Chaucer's Theseus, in The Knight's Tale, says:

> The Firste Moevere of the cause above,
> Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,
> Greet was th'effect, and heigh was his entente.
> Wel wiste he why, and what thereof he mente,
> For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
> The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond *(i.e., the four elements)*
> In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee. (*CT* I[A]2987–93)

The idea that the world would "fall apart" without the continuing hand of God upon it derives from Boethius, *De cons.* 2.m8 (compare Troilus' reference to God's "bond" of love in *TC* 3.1744–71).

1333 *sanctis marciall*. The martial saints included such figures as St. Martin of Tours, Longinus (who pierced Christ's side with his spear), Marcellus the centurian, and of course St. George. Alternatively, the phrase could refer to the saints of the month of March.

after 1351 *[Envoy]*. Not in MS, but we have followed other editors in making the link to Chaucer more clear. An envoy is an addition to the end of a poem (or prose work) by which the author "sends on" or directs the poem to its destination. In the manner of Chaucer's envoy to *TC*, it offers the author an opportunity to praise the patron of the work and to confess humbly his own unworthiness to write a poem addressed to such a person. Here James speaks as if sending his *litill tretise* to his beloved ("in the presence / Quhare as of blame faynest thou wald be quite," lines 1359–60) and to a more general audience ("the reder," line 1354). He admits to the shortcomings of the treatise (lines 1352–58, 1361), but hopes that general readers will be tolerant of its faults and that his mistress will still have mercy on him. Compare Lydgate's envoy to *The Complaint of the Black Knight* (lines 675–81) and Chaucer's lengthy envoy to *TC* (5.1786–1869).

1372 *Hich in the hevynnis figure circulere*. I.e., God, having written or created all of our lives, could have read James' poem at any time through His foreknowledge. By repeating the first line of this poem (as does the *Pearl*-poet in both *The Pearl* and in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*), the poet frames his account with the largest

of all settings, God's arching firmament. This also indicates that what follows is to be seen as a coda or envoy to the poem proper.

1374 *on the steppis satt.* James echoes Chaucer as he sends his verses to sit "on the steps" of greater poets. See *TC* 5.1791–92: "kis the steppes, where as thow seest pace / Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace."

1378 *my buk in lynis sevin.* Schep relates the number seven here to the figure of Minerva (p. 159n39), through Macrobius, and explains how the number symbolism was considered to work. James is specifically calling attention to his seven-line stanzaic pattern, *ababbcc*, which, as noted in the Introduction above, was named "rhyme royal" for its use here by him, though used extensively by others before him, first in English by Chaucer. He may be drawing attention to it because of its use by Chaucer, thereby making a comparison between his work and Chaucer's. See note to line 357 above.

after 1379 This colophon is written by the scribe who copied lines 1240–1375 of the poem, and is therefore contemporary with the writing of the manuscript, though this may have been as long as seventy-five years after the composition of the poem.

Textual Notes to The Kingis Quair

Abbreviations: See Explanatory Notes.

Headnote *majestee*. MS: *ma*.

17 *the*. MS omits. R's emendation, followed by Sk, NS, McD. Tyt retains manuscript reading, as does Mor, Mac, S, B. L: *gude counsele*.

20 *Fortunes quhile*. MS: *Fortune a quhile*. This phrase has caused some editorial difficulty, and seems to involve a scribal miscopying. Most editors have read *quhile* as modern "while" interpreting the phrase to mean "by Fortune for awhile" or "after a time"; but in line 1323, the scribe spells "wheel," as in "Fortune's wheel" in the same way. We have therefore emended the manuscript *a* to *s*: "by Fortune's wheel." Tyt, R, Mor, Mac, S, NS, B: *fortune a quhile*. L: *fortune so a quhile*. Sk, McD: *fortune for a quhile*.

22 *And thereto here this worthy lord and clerk*. "And thereto [in reference to his fall from Fortune] here [in this place in the poem, *Boece*], this worthy clerk set to work his rhetorically eloquent pen, his verses sweetly rendered, full of moral teaching." In this reading of the difficult lines 1–28 we follow most nearly NS, who argued for "here" as referring to "in this place in the poem." This reading differs considerably from Sk's, who read "here" as a verb, "hear," referring to line 14 "But took up a book to read for a while" with all of stanza 3 being treated as an apostrophe. Thus Sk's reading, "And there (I seemed) to hear, etc." or the alternative reading, "And there! (what a joy it was) to hear, etc." (p. 59). Sk agrees with L 's first rendering (p. 130) but notes that Wischmann agreed more nearly with Sk's second, "And what joy it gives to hear there (i.e., in his banishment) this worthy lord and clerk." McD follows L. The reading we have adopted simplifies the syntax somewhat by making stanza 3 an integral part of the sentence, but such iterative syntax, imitating the syntax of Latin rhetorical writings, is nevertheless difficult to interpret: it does not work as well in an uninflected language like English.

29 *thogh*. MS: *thoght*. Sk's emendation, followed by Mac, NS, B. S follows the MS. Tyt, Mor: *thot*. R: *thought*. L, McD: *though*.

39 *quit is*. Sk, Mac, NS and B read as two words, *quit is*, followed by *Of* in the next line, the idiom being "is finished with." Tyt, Mor, R, S, and McD read as one

word; McD argues that breaking *quitis* into two words spoils the rhyme, and that *quitis / Off* means literally "quits in respect of," i.e., "abandons" (p. 119).

40 *their*. Tyt, followed by Mor, R, L: *theire*. Sk, NS, McD, emends to *thir*. Mac, S, B: *their*. Clearly the sense is "these," but *MED* lists *their* as a variant of *thir*, hence no emendation is necessary. NS notes the verbal parallel of *unsekir warldis appetites* with Chaucer's *TC* 5.1581: "thire wrecched worldes appetites" (p. 55).

48 *my*. McD, L: *the*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *my*.

51 *Myn*. NS: *My*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, McD, B: *Myn*.

eyne. So MS. L, Sk, NS, McD, B: *eyen*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S follow MS.

54 *new*. Sk, followed by NS, reads *new* as an adverb and emends to *newe*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, McD, B: *new*.

56 *thame will*. L, McD: *thame sche*. NS: *will ay*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, B: *thame will*.

61 *prynce*. NS: *prince*; L: *prynce noght*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, McD, B: *prynce*.

than. NS: *than is*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, McD, B: *than*.

91 *cross*. Rendered by symbol in MS.

92 *Thou sely*. MS: *Though*. The line is short one foot. Tyt's emendation, followed by Mor, Sk, Mac, NS, and McD. R, S omit *sely*. L: *Thou tendir*. B: *Thou youth*.

102 *rok*. L: *rokkis*, an emendation followed by Sk, Mac, NS and McD. Tyt, R, Mor, S, B follow the MS.

108 *lakit*. MS: *lak*. Sk's emendation, followed by NS and McD. Tyt, Mor, R, S follow the MS. L, Mac, B: *lakkit*.

114 *to*. Added above line.

138 *Synthius*. R, L: *Cynthius*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *Synthius*.

gynneth. Tyt, Mor, R: *gyneth*. L, McD: *begynneth*. Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *gynneth*.

aryse. Mac: *arys*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, S, NS, McD, B: *aryse*.

141 *bot mydday four*. Mor, R, B: *foure*; L, McD: *mydday bot foure*. Tyt, Sk, Mac, S, NS: *bot mydday four*.

144 *confort*. Originally *freschenesse* but this is deleted and a caret inserted to point to *confort*, which is written by the scribe in the right margin.

159 *Johne*. MS: *Iohnen*. Tyt's emendation, followed by Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, NS, McD, B. S: *Johnn*.

162 *wawis*. Tyt, Mor, R: *wevis*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD: *wawis*. B: *wavis*.

163 *us*. Tyt, Mor, R: *we*; McD omits. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *us*.

170 *ferforth*. Tyt, Mor, R: *fere forth*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *ferforth*.

171 *abandoun*. Tyt, Mor, R, L: *abandoune*; McD: *and bandoune*. Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *abandoun*.

192 *me*. Editorial addition for sense: *comprisit* requires an object. So emended by Mor, R, L, Sk, S, NS, McD, B. Mac omits. Tyt: *he more me*.

196 *help hath*. MS: *help ~~in drede~~ hath*. I.e., *in drede* deleted.

207 *And to*. L, Mac, McD: *unto*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, S, NS, B: *And to*.

212 *fair*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, McD, B: *faire*. Sk, Mac, S, NS: *fair*.
corneris. McD: *cornere*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *corneris*.

230 *of*$_2$. MS: *on*. R's emendation, so too in Sk, NS, McD. Tyt, Mor, Mac, S, B follow the MS. L: *in*.

232 *Cantus*, or "Song" is written in the left margin as a heading.

277 *yong*. L emends to *yonge*, to clarify the adjective and improve the meter. Followed by Sk and NS. Mac, S, McD, B: *yong*. Tyt, Mor, R: *zoung*.

292 *Than gan*. MS: *Than ~~gam~~ gan*. I.e., *gam* deleted, then written correctly.

293 *A*. Tyt, Mor, R: *Ah*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *A*.
suete. B: *swete*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD: *suete*.
ye. Tyt, Mor, R: *ze*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *ye*.

311 *Unknawing*. MS: *unknawin*. Sk's emendation, followed by NS. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, McD, B: *Unknawin*

312 *ferr*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, McD, B: *ferre*. Sk, Mac, S, NS: *ferr*.
fallyng. L: *fallyng was*. Sk: *fallen was*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *fallyng*.
into. McD: *was in*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *into*.

318 *wise*. Mac: *wis*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, S, NS, McD, B: *wise*.
couchit. L: *couchit was*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *couchit*.
perllis. Tyt, Mor, R: *perlis*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *perllis*.

323 *Full*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *Full*. L: *And full*. McD: *All full*.
bryght. Tyt, Mor: *bryt*; R: *brycht*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *bryght*.
golde. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *gold*.

327 *flour burnettis*. MS: *flour jonettis*. I.e., repeats end of preceding line. First adjusted by Sk to *round crokettis*. Mac and NS change to *flour burnettis*, as do we. McD changes to *floure margarettis*, thus avoiding the repetition. L changes to *floure-violettis*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, B follow the MS.

330 *fyne*. MS: *fyre*. Perhaps *fyre* refers to the enameling process, in which case emendation is unnecessary. Tyt, Mor, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *fyre amaille*. R: *fayre enamel*. McD: *fyne amaille*.

333 *Lyke*. Mor, R: *Like*. Tyt, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *Lyke*.
hert. Sk, NS, and McD emend for meter to *herte*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, B: *hert*.
schapin. L: *y-schapin*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *schapin*.

341 *Lo*. MS: *to*. L's emendation, followed by NS and B. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, McD follow the MS.

361 *suich wise*. So L, followed by Mac, S. Sk, NS, and McD emend to *suich a wise*, for meter. Tyt, Mor, R: *such wise*. B: *swich wise*.

387 *thy notis*. MS: *thy ~~nt~~ notis*. I.e., *nt* deleted.

391 *Chide*. L: *chideth*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *Chide*.
ar. L, Mac, McD: *are*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, S, NS, B: *ar*.

402 *he . . . he*. MS: *sche . . . sche*. The nightingale is female, thus presumably requiring a male lover. See A. S. G. Edwards and Elizabeth Robertson, "*The Kingis Quair*, 402," *N&Q* n.s. 41 (1994), 307.

421 *sche*. MS: *he*. Tyt's emendation, followed by Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, NS, McD, B. S follows the MS.

432 *sanct, walking*. Sk emends to *sanct there walking*, followed by McD. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS, B: *sanct walking*.

434 *Devotly*. L: *Devotely*. McD: *Devotly than*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *Devotly*.

454 *new*. L emends for meter: *newe*; followed by Sk and NS. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, McD, B: *new*.

456 *song*. Tyt, Mor, R: *sang*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *song*.

460 *myght*. Mor, R: *might*. Tyt, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *myght*.
allane. Tyt, Mor, R, B: *alone*; McD: *allone*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS: *allane*.

470 *Quhareto*. Tyt, Mor, R: *Quharto*; L, Sk: *Quhare-unto*. Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *Quhareto*.

477 *noght*. Tyt, Mor, R: *not*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *noght*.

478 *cald*. L, Sk, NS, McD emend to *calde*, for meter. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, B: *cald*.

479 *hensfurth*. So Tyt, Mor, R. L, NS, McD: *hennesfurth*. Sk, Mac, S, B: *hennsfurth*.

484 *butles*. MS: *but les*. Tyt, Mor, R: *buteles*. L, Sk, mac, NS, McD, B: *butles*. S follows the MS.

495 *feere*. MS: *seere*. Tyt's emendation, followed by Mor, R, L, Sk, S, McD, NS, B. Mac: *feer*.

498 *long day*. Sk and NS emend to *longe day* for adjective and meter. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, McD, B: *long day*.

500 *every lef*. MS: *euery ~~ly~~ lef*. I.e., *ly* deleted.

501 *approchen*. MS: *approch* with mark of abbreviation: as emended by L, Sk, NS, McD. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, B follow the MS.

508 *cold stone*. Sk, NS, and McD emend to *colde stone*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, B: *cold stone*.

531 *caryit*. MS: *cryit*. Sk adds *quhar* before *cryit*, as does McD. NS's emendation, followed by B. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, McD: *cryit*.

533 *Of*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, McD, B: *Off*. L, NS: *Of*.
quhich. McD: *quhiche*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *quhich*.

place. Mor: *n place*. L: *palace*. Tyt, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *place*.
quhen. Sk, McD: *quhen as*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS, B: *quhen*.
nye. L: *a-nye*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *nye*.
542 *that*. S: *yat*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, NS, McD, B: *that*.
endit. L, Sk, McD: *endit had*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *endit*.
thair. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, McD: *thaire*. Mac, S, NS, B: *thair*.
552 *mony a solempt*. L reads *solempnit*, followed by Sk. NS: *solempit*. McD emends to *mony a sad and solempt*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, B: *mony a solempt*.
553 *lykit to*. MS: *lykit ~~had~~ to*. I.e., *had* marked for deletion.
554 *Of*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, McD: *Off*.
fair. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, McD, B: *faire*.
555 *order*. McD: *ordour*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *order*.
577 *Yonder*. Tyt, Mor, R: *Zonder*. L: *Yond there*. McD: *Yond*. Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *Yonder*.
593 *ben*. Mor, R, L, McD: *bene*. Tyt, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *ben*.
that. S: *yat*; McD: omitted. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, NS, B: *that*.
597 *yong*. Tyt, Mor, R: *zong*; L, Sk, NS, McD: *yonge*. Mac, S, B: *yong*.
610 *yone*. Tyt: *zone*. Mor, R: *zong*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *yone*.
doun. L, Sk: *adoun*. McD: *doune*.Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *doun*.
620 *half*. L and McD emend to *halflynge*. Sk emends to *halfdel*. NS emends to *halfe*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, B: *half*.
629 *ar*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, McD, B: *are*. S, NS: *ar*.
cummyn. McD: *cum vnreconsilit*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *cummyn*.
634 *gruchen*. MS: *gruch*. Sk's emendation, followed by NS. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, B: *gruch*. McD: *gruche*. L: *gruchit*.
636 *othir*. Tyt, Mor, R: *other*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *othir*.
and. L, Sk, McD: *and in*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *and*.
645 *othir*. Tyt, Mor, R: *other*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *othir*.
649 *So*. Sk: *Sche*. McD: *Scho*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS, B: *So*.
thair. L, Sk, McD: *thaire*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *thair*.
682 *last*. Sk and NS emend to *laste*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, McD, B: *last*.
683 *my kneis*. MS: *my ~~han~~ kneis*. I.e., *han* deleted.
690 *pure*. McD: *sure*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *pure*.
your. Tyt, R: *zour*. Mor: *youre*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *your*.
725 *Me*. Tyt, Mor, R: *She*; L, Sk, McD: *Sche*. Mac, S, NS, B: *Me*.
735 *I smyte bot*. MS: *I smyte ~~full~~ bot*. I.e., *full* deleted.
739 *humily*. McD observes: "MS, as elsewhere in MS, has its sign for *m* above *i*" (p. 129). Michael Livingston, MA Thesis, Western Michigan University, 2001, reads the MS as *hinely*, which would be an otherwise unattested adjectival form of the

common ME *hine* (see *MED hine*, n.2), a term James would have come across many times in Chaucer, meaning "servant." Thus *hinely* would be "servant-like." *DOST hyne* (n.) notes that the word's modern Scots descendant hynd means "a married and skilled farm workman . . . [who] ranks above the farm servants and labourers." Tyt, Mor, R: *truely*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *humily*.

747 *to bynd*. MS: *bynd*; as emended by NS. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S: *bynd*. L, Sk, McD, B: *byndand*.

meynes. MS: *mynes*; as emended by NS. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, McD, B: *mynes*. L: *menys*. Sk: *menes*.

755 *courses*. MS: *course*; as emended by NS. L, Sk, Mac, McD, B read *coursis*. Tyt, Mor, R, S: *course*.

756 *hir iwone*. Originally ended *hir grace* but scribe or someone else marked the failed rhyme and added *iwone* after *grace*, perhaps intending that *grace* be deleted for the sake of meter, and, in fact, it is so marked. Tyt, Mor, R, L: *hir I-wonne*. NS: *hir iwone*. Sk, Mac, S, B: *hir graice I-wone*. McD: *hir graice wonne*.

763 *foule doken*. MS: *foule* added above line. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, S, McD omit *foule*. L, Mac, McD, B: *doken foule*.

onto. MS: *on* added above line. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, S and NS omit *on*. L, Mac, B: *onto*. McD: *vnto*.

765 *like unto*. L: *unlike unto*, followed by McD; Sk, Mac: *unlike to*. These emendations fail to account for the fact that the "unlike" at the head of the stanza (line 764) controls the sense; thus, no emendation is necessary. The *like* here refers to the unlikeness of the moon and the sun, not the likeness of May and January. Tyt, Mor, R, S, NS, B: *like unto*.

767 *bothe maid of one array*. MS: *bothe maid of array*. *One* needed for sense, and probably *bothe* could be omitted for the meter. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, B follow MS. NS emends to *bothe maid of a ray*. McD inserts *one* and deletes *bothe*.

770 *preese*. MS: *pererese*. Tyt, Mor, R read *purcress*. L, McD, B: *prese*. Mac: *peres*. S: *pure rese*. NS: *preese*. Sk: *preisse*.

771 *unto*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *unto*. L: *yit unto*. Sk: *now unto*.

775 *that*. MS: *than*. Sk's emendation, followed by L, Mac, S, NS, McD, B. Tyt, S follow the MS. Mor: *than one*. R: *the*.

788 *letten*. MS: *let*. NS's emendation. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, B follow the MS. L: *lat*. Sk: *lette*. McD: *lete*.

804 *breken*. Originally *bresten* but that deleted and *breken* written above line.

805 *Is ther none*. MS: *Is ~~non eft~~ none*. I.e., *non eft* deleted. NS adds *ther*, as do I. Tyt, Mac: *Is none*. Mor, R, S: *Is none that*. L, Sk: *nocht eft*. McD: *nought left*. B: *now left*.

806 MS: *nota* in margin, written by an undated hand.

811 *ye*. Tyt, Mor, R: *ze*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *ye*.
fast. McD: *faste*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *fast*.
ybete. Tyt, Mor, R: *yvete*; L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *ybete*. McD: *bete*.

813 *stynten*. L: *stynt*. NS: *stynting*. B: *stynt in*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, McD: *stynten*.
othir. L: *anothir*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *othir*.

818 *men*. Tyt, Mor, R: *me*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *men*.
in. L: *into*. Sk: *as in*. McD, B: *ryght in*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS: *in*.
thair. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, McD, B: *thaire*. S, NS: *thair*.

830 *folk to renewe*. L, Sk, S, NS, and McD omit *to*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, B: *folke to renewe*.

836 *or*. MS omits. NS's emendation, followed by B. Tyt, Mor, R, S follow the MS. L emends to *al forget*, followed by Sk. Mac: *is and forget*. McD: *is all forget*.

838 *bidden*. MS: *bid*. L's emendation, followed by Sk, NS, McD. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, and B follow the MS.

864 *hir*. Sk: *hir hy*. McD: *hir hie*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS, B: *hir*.

867 *redy*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS: *redy*. L, Sk: *the redy*. McD, B: *by redy*.
ryght. Tyt, Mor: *ryt*. R: *rycht*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *ryght*.

873 *renown*. MS: *renewe*. L's emendation, followed by NS. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, B follow the MS. McD: *renowne*.

875 *and*. The scribe originally wrote *am*, then crossed out these two letters and wrote *and* after them.

891 *hert*. Sk, NS, McD: *herte*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, B: *hert*.
ground. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *ground*. L: *grounden*.
suich. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD: *suich*. B: *swich*.

893 *othir*. Tyt, Mor, R: *other*. L: *another*. Sk, McD: *anothir*. Mac, S, NS, B: *othir*.

902 *on lufe thy*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *on lufe thy*. L, McD: *thy lufe on*.

903 *sal*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac: *sall*. S, NS, McD, B: *sal*.

916 *Ground*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *Ground*. L: *Groundith*. Sk, McD: *Ground thou*.
therfore. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, McD: *therefore*. Mac, S, NS, B: *therfore*.

926 *wil*. Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, and B emend to *wel(e)*. Tyt: *will*.

930 *wele*. Tyt, Mor, R: *well*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *wele*.

931 *wisedome*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk: *wisedom*. L, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *wisedome*.
to. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, McD, B: *to*. Sk, NS: *unto*.

938 *heid*. Added above line in MS. Tyt, Mor, R, McD omit. L, Sk: *hid*. Mac, S, NS, B: *heid*.

941 *a*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, McD, B: *a*. NS: *and*.
suete. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD: *suete*. B: *swete*.

958 *ar*. MS: *and*. L's emendation, followed by Sk, NS, and McD, B. Tyt, Mor, R: *are*. Mac: *and*.S follows the MS.

962 *labour*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *labour*. L, Sk, McD: *laboure*.

me. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *me*. L: *me wel*. Sk: *me ful*. McD: *me than*.

978 *Nald*. MS: *Wald*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S follow the MS. L: *Nold*. NS, McD, B: *Nald*.

983 *faynt*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS: *faynt*. McD: *faute*. B: *faynte*.

noght. Tyt, Mor, R: *not*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *noght*. McD: *nought*.

991 *quod*. Tyt, Mor, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *quod*. R: *quoth*.

trew. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *trew*. L: *trewly*. McD omits.

withoutin. M Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *withoutin*. L: *without*. McD: *withoutin any*.

fantise. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, S, NS, McD, B: *fantise*. Mac: *fantis*.

992 Another short line. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, B: *sall I never uprise*. L: *sall I neuer desire vp-rise*. Sk: *sall neuer be I sall vp-rise*. NS: to *sall I neuer [se] vp-rise*; McD: *sall I, trewly, neuer vprise*.

997 *it*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS, B: *it*. Sk, McD: *I*.

myght. Tyt, Mor: *myt*. R: *mycht*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS: *myght*. McD, B: *might*.

processe. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *processe*. Mac: *process*.

1000 *and therto*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S: *and therto*. L, Sk: *therevnto*. NS: *and eke thereto*. McD: *and therto wolde*. B: *and thereto*.

1005 *hensforth*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, B: *hensforth*. L, Sk, NS, McD: *hennesforth*.

1007 *hert*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, McD, B: *hert*. NS: *herte*.

will. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *will*. L, Sk, McD: *will hir*.

fair. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, McD: *faire*. Mac, S, NS, B: *fair*.

1009 *ye*. MS: *the* written first, then deleted and *ye* written above line. Tyt, Mor: *ze*. R omits. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *ye*.

1013 *Appertenit*. MS: *Apperit*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B follow the MS. McD: *Afferand*.

1016 *be*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *be*. L, Sk, McD: *be it*.

that. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, NS, McD, B: *that*. S: *yat*.

1020 *Quhare*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *Quhare*. L: *Thar*.

that. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, NS, McD, B: *that*. S: *yat*.

therfore. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, McD, B: *therefore*. Mac, S, NS: *therfore*.

1026 *necessitee*. The scribe originally wrote *ec*, then crossed out these two letters and wrote *necessitee* after them.

1031 *Of*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, McD, B: *Off*. NS: *Of*.

that. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, NS, McD, B: *that*. S: *yat*.

fall. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *fall*. McD: *falle*. L, Sk: *fallen*.

purposely. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, S, NS, McD, B: *purposely*. Mac: *purposly*.

1034 *it*. Tyt, Mor, R, S, NS: *it*. L, Sk, Mac, McD, B: *that*.

1036 *foreknawing*. MS: *foreknawin*. NS's emendation. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, McD, B follow the MS.

1048 *schewit here*. L: *schewit I here*. Sk, McD: *schewit have here*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *schewit here*.

myn avise. NS emends to *myn gud avise*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, McD, B: *myn avise*.

therfore. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, S, McD: *therefore*. Mac, NS, B: *therfore*.

1053 *I*. MS: *he*. Tyt's emendation, followed by Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, NS, McD, B. S follows the MS.

1068 *and dressit*. After *and*, the scribe originally began to repeat part of the preceding line, *in a rout can*, but then deleted these four words.

1073 *fand*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *fand*. L, Sk: *thar fand*.

I. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *I*. McD: *I ever*.

like. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, B: *like*. NS: *like for*. McD: *ylike*.

1076 *That full of fruyte*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *That full of fruyte*. McD: *And fruyte that*.

1077 *come*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *come*. McD: *cummys*.

1086 *sawe*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, McD, B: *sawe*. NS: *saw*.

new. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, McD, B: *new*. NS: *newe*.

of. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *of*. L, Sk, McD: *of his*.

haunt. Tyt, Mor, R, McD, B: *hant*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS: *haunt*.

1097 *that*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, Mcd, B: *that*. S: *yat*.

noght. Tyt, Mor, R: *not*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS: *noght*. B, McD: *nought*.

say. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *say*. L, Sk: *sayis*. McD: *says*.

1108 *round*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, McD, B: *round*. Sk, NS: *rounde*.

place. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *place*. McD: *place and a*.

wallit. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *wallit*. L, Sk: *y-wallit*.

1109 *eftsone*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *eftsone*. L, McD: *eftsones*.

1112 *on*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *on*. L: *onto*.

quhich. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS, B: *quhich*. Sk: *quhich than*. McD: *quhich there*.

1115 *to*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS, B: *to*. Sk, McD: *unto*.

diverse. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, S, NS, McD, B: *diverse*. Mac: *divers*.

1116 *Quhilum thus*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *Quhilum thus*. L: *And quhilum thus*. McD: *Thus quhilum*.

wald. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS, B: *wald*. Sk, McD: *wald hir*.

turn. So Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, and NS. L, S, McD, B: *turne*.

1117 *renewis*. Blank space in MS. Tyt, Mor, S leave blank. R: *askewis*. L:*of lewis*. Sk emends: *of glewis*, i.e., "of destiny," citing Barbour 6.658, where "glew" means "fortune of war" (p. 103), followed by Mac, McD. NS, B: *remewis*.

1126 *And*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *And*. McD: *As*.
at. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *at*. L, Sk, McD: *for at*.

1127 *noght*. Tyt, Mor: *not*. R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *noght*. L: *hir noght*. McD: *nought*.
bot. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS, B: *bot*. Sk, McD: *bot was*.

1129 *Ane*. Tyt, R, L, S, NS, B: *An*. Mor: *And*. Sk, Mac, McD: *Ane*.
depe. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *depe*. L: *as depe*. Sk: *was depe*. McD: *als depe*.

1132 *Com*. So Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, NS, B. L, Mac, S, McD: *Come*.

1137 *strong*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, McD, B: *strong*. L, NS: *stronge*. Sk: *strange*.

1138 *sawe*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS: *sawe*. McD, B: *saw*.
that. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, NS, McD, B: *that*. S: *yat*.
than. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *than*. L: *thareon*.
clymben. Tyt, Mor: *clumben*. R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *clymben*. McD: *up clymben*.

1143 *ourstraught*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, B: *ourestraught*. L: *overstraught*. Mac, S, NS: *ourstraught*. McD: *ourestraught it was*.

1146 *Clymbe*. So NS, McD, and B. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S: *clymb*. L, Sk: *clymben*.
ryght. Tyt, Mor: *ryt*. R, L, Sk, Mac: *ryght*. S: *rycht*. NS, McD, B: *right*.
dounward. Tyt, Mor, R: *downward*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *dounward*.

1147 *had*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, B: *had*. Sk, McD: *had so*. NS: *hadde*.
sore. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *sore*. L: *tofore*. Sk, McD: *so sore*.

1149 *sawe*. Tyt, Mor, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *sawe*. R: *saw*.
that. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, NS, McD, B: *that*. S: *yat*.
quhere. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS: *quhere*. Sk: *quhere as*. McD, B: *quhare*.
slungin. Tyt, Mor, Sk, Mac, S, NS: *slungin*. R: *flungin*. L, McD: *yslungin*.

1151 *hath*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *hath*. McD: *hath thame*. L: *hath it*. Sk: *hath thaim*.

1154 *thoght*. MS omits; added for sense. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S omit. L: *socht*. Sk's emendation, followed by NS, B. McD: *thought*.

1156 *presence*. MS: *presene*. Tyt's emendation, followed by Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, NS, McD, B. S follows the MS.

1159 *hailsing*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *hailsing*. L: *halflyng*.

1165 *It*. MS: *As* written first (McD misreads *Are*), then deleted.

1171 *bringen*. MS: *bring*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, B follow the MS. McD: *bringe*. Sk's emendation, followed by L, NS.

1180 *clymben*. MS: *clymb*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, McD, B: *clymbe*. Sk's emendation, followed by L, NS.

1182 *werdis*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *werdis*. McD: *warldis*.

1184 *wrechit*. Tyt, Mor, R: *wretchit*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *wrechit*.
callit. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, B: *callit*. L, Sk, McD: *ycallit*. NS: *icallit*.

1185 *that*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, NS, McD, B: *that*. S: *yat*. L, Sk: omitted.
thy hert. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS, B: *thy hert*. Sk: *thy herte*. McD: *the*.

1189 *quhare till*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *quhare till*. L: *thare-till*. McD: *quhirlit*.

1190 *thai*. McD: *thou*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *thai*.
turn. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS: *turn*. L, McD, B: *turne*.
luken on. MS: *luke on*. L's emendation, followed by Sk, NS. Tyt, Mor, Mac, S: *luke on*. R, McD, B: *luke upon*.

1199 *That fro*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *That fro*. McD: *Fro that*.

1210 *waking*. MS: *walking*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S follow the MS. NS's emendation, followed by McD, B.

1212 *Covert*. So MS, followed by Tyt, Mor, R, L, S, NS. Sk emends to *Touert*, followed by Mac, McD. B: *Towert*.

1214 *suevenyng*. MS: *suevyng*. L's emendation, followed by Sk, NS. Tyt, Mor, R: *suenyng*. Mac, S follow the MS. B: *swevyng*.

1222–23 Reversed in MS, with inversion marked *b* and *a* in the margin. See also lines 1292–93. NS ignores the correction.

1235 *turtur*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, McD, B: *turture*. Mac, S, NS: *turtur*.

1240 The second scribe begins copying here.
fair. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS, B: *fair*. Sk, McD: *faire*.
ryght. Tyt, Mor: *ryt*. R: *rycht*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *ryght*.

1243 *with*. MS: *witht*, followed by Mac, S, McD. Tyt, Mor, R: *wicht*. L's emendation, followed by Sk, NS, B.

1246 *ryght*. Tyt, Mor, R: *ryt*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *ryght*.
on. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *on*. McD: *apon*; L, Sk: *upon*.
wise. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, S, NS, McD, B: *wise*. Mac: *wis*.

1256 *hertfull*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS: *hertfull*. L, McD, B: *hert full of*. Sk: *hertefull*.
glaidnese. Tyt, Mor, R, McD: *glaidnesse*. L, Sk, S, NS, B: *glaidnese*. Mac: *glaidnes*.

1263 *Quhich*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS: *Quhich*. L, McD, B: *From*. Sk: *Quhiche*.
hensferth. Tyt, Mor, R: *he offerth*; McD, NS: *hennesferth*. L, Sk, Mac, S, B: *hensferth*.

1271 *croppin*. MS: *r* inserted above the line.

1279 *thus*. MS: *this*. NS's emendation, followed by B. Tyt, Mor, R, S follow the MS. L emends to *thinkis*, followed by Sk, Mac, McD.

1281 *sufficiaunce*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, McD: *sufficiance*. Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *sufficiante*.

1292–93 These lines are transposed in MS, but marked *b* and *a* in margin for reversal.

1294 *cunnyng*. So S. Tyt, Mor, R: *cumyng*. McD, B: *cummyng*. L, Sk, Mac: *cummyn*.

1299 *lif*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *lyf*. Sk: *lif*.

mend. Tyt, Mor, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *mend*. R: *mynd*; L: *menden*.

1305 *wofull*. L, Sk: *al my wofull*; NS, McD: *my wofull*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, B: *wofull*.

1306 *long*. Scribe 2 underscores the term with a flourish unique to this single occasion. It is possible that this is merely a decorative act, but it may also be the scribe showing his resentment of the length of the king's imprisonment or even of the length of the poem itself.

1307 *flour*. MS: *flouris*, followed by S, L. Sk's emendation, followed by Mac, NS, B. Tyt, Mor, R, McD: *floure*.

seye. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS, B: *seye*. Sk, McD: *seye you*.

1308 *attendit*. MS: *actendit*. L's emendation, followed by Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B. Tyt, Mor, R follow the MS.

1312 *halely*. McD: *hale*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *halely*.

myn. Tyt, Mor, R: *myne*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *myn*.

1315 *quhome*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, McD: *quhom*. Sk, NS, B: *quhome*.

laud. Tyt, Mor, R: *land*. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *laud*.

prise. Mac: *pris*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, S, NS, McD, B: *prise*.

1317 *mot*. NS emends *mot* to *moten*, also for reasons of meter. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, McD, B: *mot*.

the goddis. L, McD: *the blisfull goddis*. Sk emends to: *the heyë goddis*, thus preserving the meter. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *the goddis*.

1318 *glateren*. L, Sk, McD, B: *glitteren*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS: *glateren*.

the. S: *ye*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, NS, McD, B: *the*.

1321 *so*. MS omits. L's emendation, added for sense, followed by Sk, S, NS, McD, B. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac follow the MS.

1322 *exiltree*. MS: *exilkee*. Tyt's emendation, followed by Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD. B: *exilte*.

1323 *quhele*. MS: *quhile*. Tyt's emendation, followed by mor, R, L, Sk, NS, McD, B. Mac, S follow the MS.

1324 *in*. MS: *and*. NS's emendation, followed by McD, B. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S follow the MS.

1335 *the*. McD: *the suete*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, B: *the*.

1336 *fortunyt me*. MS: *fortunyt one*. Tyt's emendation, followed by Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B.

1344 *cum*. L: *cumin*. Tyt, Mor, R, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *cum*.

and. Sk, McD: *and yit*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, NS, B: *and*.

wise. Mac: *wis*. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, S, NS, McD, B: *wise*.

1347 *guerdoun*. L: *guerdoun fair*. Sk: *guerdoun eke*. McD: *guerdoun dere*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S, NS, B: *guerdoun*.

1357 *reule*. Tyt, R, Mac, S, NS, McD, B: *reule*. Mor: *ruele*. L, Sk: *reulen*.

1359 *cummyst*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac: *cumyst*. L, Sk, S, NS, B: *cummyst*. McD: *cum*.

the. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Sk, Mac, NS, McD, B: *the*. S: *ye*.

1363 *gif*. MS: *geve*. Tyt's emendation, followed by mor, R. L, Sk, Mac, S, NS, McD, B follow the MS.

1366 *fatall*. MS: *fotall*. Tyt's emendation, followed by Mor, R, L, Sk, NS, McD, B. Mac, S follow the MS.

1370 *thank*. MS: *think*. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S follow the MS. L's emendation, followed by Sk, NS, McD, B.

oure. MS might be read *onre* ("honor"), in which case the emendation adding *lif* (which spoils the meter) would be unnecessary.

lif. MS omits. Tyt, Mor, R, Mac, S follow the MS. L: *lyf*, followed by McD. Sk: *lif*, followed by NS, B.

1371 *couth*. MS: *coutht*. Sk's emendation, followed by NS. Tyt, Mor, R, L, Mac, S, McD, B follow the MS.

1373 *the impnis*. So Sk. MS: *inpnis*. Tyt, Mor, R, McD: *impnis*; L: *the ympis*; NS: *th'inpnis*. NS, B follow the MS.

Charles d'Orleans, *Fortunes Stabilnes*

Introduction

Charles was the son of Louis d'Orléans and the grandson of Charles V of France. His uncle was Charles VI. He was thus a member of the royal family — a prince as well as a poet — and the father of Louis XII. By his twenty-first birthday, his parents were dead — his father murdered by the Burgundian faction — and his first wife, Isabel,[1] had died in childbirth. In that same year he was captured by the English at the battle of Agincourt[2] and spent the next quarter of a century as a captive, moved from one nobleman's castle to another and traveling regularly in the company of one or other of his "hosts" to London to conduct business or attempt to further peace negotiations between France and England.

Why was he held for so long? Even the English admitted near the end of his captivity that his "sentence" was excessive, but these were dangerous times. In the first place, as a member of the royal house of France, he "owed" an enormous ransom to his captors.[3] Then there was the matter of the English occupation of northern France at a time that the English were claiming sovereignty over France. The return of the duke of Orléans might well mean a reconciliation of the warring factions in France, the king on one side, the duke of Burgundy on the other. In the face of the periodic bouts of insanity in the royal blood, Charles sat too uncomfortably close to the French throne to please the English — nor were the English the only people to see this

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[1] Isabel was born to Charles VI and Isabeau in 1389. She married Richard II of England in 1396 at age seven (they probably never lived together). After Richard's death in 1399, she married her cousin Charles in 1406. (She is said to have wept throughout the wedding ceremony because of her reduced status from queen to duchess and because her new husband was only eleven.) She died in 1409. So Charles was both widowed and orphaned before his fifteenth birthday (Champion, 1911, pp. 32–38).

[2] Agincourt was one of the great battles of the Hundred Years War that raged between France and England for much of the fourteenth century and the early fifteenth century. It was recounted in chronicles, both English and French, and has been discussed frequently in modern scholarship. For an English account in modern English, see Elizabeth M. Hallam, ed., *The Chronicles of the Wars of the Roses* (London: Wiedenfield and Nicolson, 1988), pp. 128–36. See also Anne Curry, *The Battle of Agincourt: Sources and Interpretations* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2000).

[3] See Michael K. Jones, "'Gardez mon corps, sauvez ma terre' — Immunity from War and the Lands of a Captive Knight: The Siege of Orléans (1428–29) Revisited," in Arn, 2000, pp. 9–26.

possibility. One of the prime reasons for Joan of Arc's mission to "sweet France" was to free the duke from captivity. And finally there was the child-king Henry VI, who inherited the throne of England at the age of nine months in 1422. The period of regency turned frequently into a tug-of-war between two of his uncles, Humphrey, duke of Gloucester,[4] and John, duke of Bedford, and his great-uncle, Cardinal Beaufort. All were trying to do what was best for England, but their ideas of "best" were profoundly different. The last thing they needed was a "loose cannon" in the form of the duke of Orléans making the political picture of northern Europe even more complicated than it already was.

During those long years the duke was never kept in a prison; we must imagine him, rather, as a "guest under house arrest" (he moved, on average, every four years) in castles owned by a sequence of important noblemen: Sir John Cornwall, Lord Fanhope, William de la Pole (earl of Suffolk, later duke, who was married to Alice Chaucer, granddaughter of the poet Geoffrey), Sir Reginald Cobham, and Sir John Stourton, among others.[5] He certainly interacted with members of all classes in the households where he lived, from grooms for his horses and household servants to the families and friends of his captors.[6] He learned English and at some point began translating poems he had written in French into English (probably as much for fun or as a test of his own language abilities as anything else).[7] Finding that he enjoyed the challenge of writing in the language of his captors, he continued to write not only versions of

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[4] Gloucester held to the implicit promise made to Henry V that the duke not be released until Henry VI came of age.

[5] For a brief overview, see *Fortunes Stabilnes*, ed. Arn, pp. 15–26; for a more detailed discussion, see Askins, in Arn, 2000, pp. 27–45.

[6] In 1426, the king issued a letter patent permitting the duke to receive six hundred pipes (large casks) of wine from the Loire valley, more than he could possibly have consumed (Rymer, *Foedera* 10.350; a medieval "pipe" or cask contained 126 gallons). See also Champion, 1911, p. 185, for other necessaries provided by his servants from France. He must have been on cordial terms with his first keeper, Robert Waterton (who, among many other things, was constable of Pontefract Castle, where the duke was housed), for in 1417 he ordered two silver *colliers* (necklaces) for Waterton's children and a golden goblet for Waterton's wife (Le Comte de Laborde, *Les ducs de Bourgogne: Etudes sur les lettres, les arts et l'industrie pendant le XVe siècle* [Paris: Plon Frères, 1852], vol. 3, part 2, items #6259 and 6260, p. 272). See also Champion, 1911, pp. 171–72, and John Fox, *The Lyric Poetry of Charles d'Orléans* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 10–12.

[7] Charles had read and heard poetry all his life. In 1414 he paid the sum of 276 pounds 7 shillings 6 pence *tournois* (an enormous amount of money) for a *robe* on the sleeves of which he had had embroidered in pearls a lyric (and the music to which it was set) he had composed, beginning "Madame je suis plus joyeulx." It took 960 pearls, 568 of which formed the musical notes, four pearls per note (Laborde, #6241, p. 267). He had also exchanged poems with Jean de Garencières, who died at Agincourt. On the poets and writers he encountered in his parents' household, see Champion, 1911, pp. 236–37.

French lyrics already composed (many are not close enough to the French to be called translations), but also new lyrics and eventually new narratives as well. As his ideas developed and as he read the work of English poets like Chaucer and Gower, he conceived the idea of incorporating this early work in English into a more or less coherent story, more elaborate than anything he had composed in French.

1. The opening narrative of falling in love, followed by the first ballade sequence (seventy-four ballades plus lyrics in various forms)

The story, which begins the same way the French does, recounts the speaker's falling in love: on Valentine's Day, a figure named Youth announces to the speaker, "Charles, duc d'Orlians," that he must go to meet Cupid, the God of Love.[8] Though he begs to be allowed to put off his service to Love, Youth insists. They make their way to Love's castle, where he is brought before Love (the "Roy souverain"). Cupid calls Beauty and asks her to assail the speaker, and she proceeds (as in the *Roman de la Rose*) to send an arrow through his eyes to his heart. He suffers so much he almost dies of the wound, but Beauty, taking his head in her lap, advises him to surrender, which he does, asking for pity. She teaches him the ten commandments of love (serve Love loyally, put your heart in only one place, never boast of Love's favors, be courteous and gracious, etc.). He accedes to her every wish, upon which the chief secretary of the court draws up a letter patent[9] that sets out the feudal arrangement between the lord (Love) and retainer (the lover). We learn about the course of his love affair as if we were eavesdropping, for this is followed by a long series of epistolary ballades, most addressed to the lady. We simply "overhear" his recounting of his joys and woes. However, in Ballade 55 we hear of the lady's illness and then death. This is followed by a series of mourning poems which are among the finest of the collection.

2. The dream of Age and the return of the lover's heart, followed by the roundel sequence (ninety-six roundels plus lyrics in various forms)

The speaker falls asleep and dreams that he is approached by a figure called Age, who counsels him to leave Love's service, for nothing is more foolish than an old man in love. He also counsels the lover not to trust Fortune (for she will flatter him to bring him once again the

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[8] Cupid, the son of Venus, presides over a dream vision that opens the third collection of lyrics.

[9] Both his English and his French poems contain a number of pseudo-documents: a challenge to a dual, a petition to a king, etc. A letter patent ("lying open") is a document from the king to a subject granting some kind of right or privilege, open to all to see; this is opposed to a letter "close," whose contents are intended for the eyes of the recipient alone.

pains of love), but to withdraw into the castle of No Care — and with that he awakes. Resolving to leave love, he journeys to Love's court and, in a assembly in the great hall filled with Love's subjects, petitions the God of Love for the return of his heart. Love tries to convince him that he should take a new lady, but he refuses and retires to the Castle of No Care, where he announces that he will hold a banquet for all his friends (who are other lovers). The food served will be the short lyrics called roundels (in French, *chansons*). He indulges in composing nearly one hundred of them, most of them on the theme of love — a sure sign that he is not entirely "cured" of love.

3. The dream of Venus and Fortune and the new lady, followed by the second ballade sequence (forty-seven ballades)

Up to this point, the French poetry runs largely parallel, but then the poet elaborates this construction in English for which there is no French version. In a long narrative which contains a dream vision of Venus and Fortune and clearly owes a debt to Chaucer, Venus tries to convince the speaker to fall in love again. He resists until he is shown a vision of Fortune, descending from the sky; on her wheel he sees a lady so beautiful that he falls immediately in love. Venus offers to take him up to the wheel in the sky, but in doing so he awakes. Wandering away, musing on the vision, he encounters a group of young noble men and women playing a chasing game in a woodland clearing, among whom he spies the lady he has just seen on Fortune's wheel. He joins the game (another metaphor for stepping onto Fortune's wheel) and declares his love for the lady. As before, we learn about the course of the love affair through a series of ballades he addresses to her. But his new lady is much less kind than his first had been, and he spends much of his time complaining about her coldness. The final ballade begins, "As for farewel! farewel! farewel! farewel!" and seems to signal not the decisive end of a relationship as much as the exhaustion of a perpetually unsuccessful lover.

One of the interesting things about the English œuvre is its balance between lyric and narrative. *Fortunes Stabilnes* tells a story in a shadowy sort of way, with the narrative sections providing a clear framework for the lyrics, which can be puzzling, suggestive, indirect, moving, funny, or baffling. What is unique is the sheer number of lyrics, grouped in series, connected with relatively brief sections of narrative. The lyrics take up well more than half of the whole. Instead of lyrics sprinkled through a narrative poem, it is the narrative that works hard to pull together a story around three substantial lyric sequences. The work can thus be looked at in two quite different ways: as a single work that tells a story or as a collection (actually three collections) of lyrics written at various times on various occasions for various reasons and brought together in a single manuscript and provided with a narrative rationale.

The presence of lyric and narrative poetry in a single work is not unusual in the Middle Ages. Such mixed-form works were in fact popular all over Europe. That most widely read of

moral/philosophical works, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, from the sixth century, is written in alternating sections of prose (narrative, or at least discursive) and poetry (lyric). In the late thirteenth century, Dante embedded lyrics in *La Vita Nuova*, the story of his love for Beatrice, and in the early fourteenth, Guillaume de Machaut embedded lyrics in a number of his *dits* (stories), as did his followers in France (and many other poets in other lands). Chaucer did the same in his poem *Troilus and Criseyde* and elsewhere, though he was a poet much more interested in narrative than in lyric.[10]

The relation of these poems to the author's life has been a matter of dispute for over a century. An early French critic, Pierre Champion, thought of the whole of *Fortunes Stabilnes* as a *roman sentimental* (sentimental story/romance/novel) that revealed the inner emotions and the personal relationships of the author. More recently it has been treated as a poetic fiction written by a highly self-aware poet, with a rhetoric calculated to create a particular impression on readers or listeners.[11] Clear evidence of this is found, for instance, in the foolishness of the speaker, who has a poor memory and lacks courtly skills, neither of which can be attributed to Charles, duke of Orléans, who was known to his English enemies as an intelligent and clever (even dangerous) noble adversary.[12]

Early critics of his poetry imagined an idle, rather effete, and dim-witted prince whiling away the hours of every day writing love lyrics for twenty-five long years.[13] The narrative image of the duke in the White Tower[14] in a manuscript made after his death (see Figure 3, p. 112) has

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[10] See Petrarch's sonnet 88 in *TC* 1.400–20; the adaptation of Boethius' 28-line meter in *Boece* 3.m9 (with some borrowings from *Boece* 2.m8) in *TC* 3.1744–71; *BD*, lines 481–86 and 1175–80; *PF*, lines 680–92; the amusingly interrupted lyric from *Boece* 4.m1 in *HF*, lines 973–78; and Geoffrey's spontaneous balade "Hyd, Absolon" in the prologue to *LGW*. See also Anne Payne, *Chaucer and Menippean Satire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), ch. 3: "The Consolation of Philosophy as Menippean Satire," pp. 55–85.

[11] See especially A. E. B. Coldiron, 2000.

[12] The duke read and wrote French, English, Latin, and Italian. His library was enormous by the standards of his day and included a large proportion of what we would call "serious" reading: theology, philosophy, history, and the classics.

[13] For this completely unsupported notion see, among others, Robert Louis Stevenson, *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896, and reprinted frequently), pp. 229–74; Champion, 1911; and Enid McLeod, *Charles of Orleans, Prince and Poet* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1969).

[14] In British Library MS Royal 16 F.ii. This illumination, which depicts the Tower of London and behind it London Bridge, with its houses and shops, and the old Custom House to the right of it and the skyline of the city behind it, has been called the first English cityscape. In the foreground is the "watergate" that allowed prisoners to be brought by boat into the Tower. The manuscript contains, in addition to 116 of Charles' lyrics (those written during his captivity), fictitious letters of the Abbess

been used to support this view. Read from right to left, this narrative image shows the duke writing at a table in a well-appointed room in the White Tower within the precincts of the Tower of London (guarded by men-at-arms accompanied by a group of other people looking on); then leaning out a high window of the Tower, gazing on the scene below; and finally greeting someone in the forecourt below, while horsemen ride out of the Tower. This manuscript was made for Edward IV near the end of his reign (he died in 1483), long after the duke's return to France. It was never intended to represent historical reality (Charles spent very little time in the Tower during his long captivity). It was an emblematic image of the royal prisoner which, as Janet Backhouse observes, "would not have been without appeal to the eyes of the English king during the final years of his reign!"[15]

It was to the duke's advantage to appear harmless to his captors while he both worked incessantly to raise money for his own ransom and for that of his brother Jean d'Angoulême (who was also a prisoner of the English) and attempted to negotiate some sort of peace between France and England. One tool in this charade was his self-representation in his poetry as a man consumed with love longing or grief (i.e., without a political bone in his body), a man ruled by his emotions rather than his reason. The poems were almost certainly circulated or read aloud in the households of his "keepers,"[16] English noblemen who were themselves cultured and in some cases even bookish.[17] What better way to reinforce his image as an innocent than by creating a voice (named in the work itself as Charles, duke of Orléans) which is that of a helpless and inept lover?

Heloise on the theme of love, a work called "Les demandes damours," and a treatise for the instruction of a prince (see Janet Backhouse, "Charles of Orléans Illuminated," in Arn, 2000, p. 157).

[15] See Janet Backhouse, "Founders of the Royal Library: Edward IV and Henry VII as Collectors of Illuminated Manuscripts," in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Daniel Williams (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 1987), pp. 36–39. The manuscript was unfinished at Edward's death. It was Henry VII who had it completed, adding four more illuminations. The duke is pictured in an ermine-trimmed robe, not because we are to imagine that he dressed like this every day, but because the clothing identifies the poet as a prince. It is only a hypothesis that we are to imagine him writing poetry and (when looking out the window) composing lyrics mentally; he might just as well have been writing a legal document and "wishing" that he could administer his lands and run his household in person. See also Backhouse, in Arn, 2000, pp. 157–63.

[16] Some of the roundels are clearly "gift poems" (the "gift" often being a kiss), for example Roundel 20, which begins "As for the gift ye have unto me given, / I thank you . . . ," or Roundel 35, which begins "Take, take this cosse [kiss] atonys, atonys [at once], my hert, / That thee presented is of [by] thy maystres." See also roundels 41and 47.

[17] Several were owners of manuscripts containing works of Chaucer, Gower, or Lydgate (see Askins).

What *can* we learn about the duke's years in England from reading his poetry? We may not be able to identify poems written to one of Charles' wives[18] or establish that he did or did not engage in love affairs with any English ladies,[19] but we can discover that Charles was a clever and insightful man and that he had a playful mind and a good sense of humor.[20] Much has been made of Charles d'Orléans' life as a prisoner, but in fact he uses the concept of prison in his poetry much less explicitly than do other poets whose work is included in this volume. It has been left to scholars to infer his ideas about and attitude toward his imprisonment from his repeated mention of such things as melancholy, fortune, care, absence, and love longing. The best among them have resisted the attempt to read a detailed biography out of his poetry.

Sources and Influences

It is easy to identify Charles as a Chaucerian and leave it at that, but in fact French influences were much more deeply ingrained in his poetic psyche than were the works of Chaucer. It thus makes more sense to see him as parallel to Chaucer than to call him a "Chaucerian," i.e., a poet whose work is derivative. Charles is not a "Chaucerian" poet; that is to say, Chaucer did not provide the historical, literary context and primary source material for his poetry. This is not to say that he did not read Chaucer's poetry with great interest and make some obvious borrowings in some of his narrative links (less often in his lyrics). He evidently read with care Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, *House of Fame*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*. One thing that makes it difficult to put your finger on Chaucer's influence is that Chaucer himself borrowed extensively from the French poets whose work Charles knew well. Both English and French poets of the courtly style of literature look back ultimately to the *Roman de la Rose*, written in two parts, the first by Guillaume de Lorris, the second (many years later) by Jean de Meun. It was these two thirteenth-century poets who made so wildly popular the dream vision on the

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[18] Charles had three wives: his cousin Isabel, daughter of Charles VI, who died in childbirth (see note 1, above); Bonne of Armagnac, whom he married before his capture at Agincourt (the marriage was a confirmation of the political alliance of the Orléanist party with the Gascons to help counter the forces of the duke of Burgundy, whatever the tenor of the couple's relationship might have been), by whom he had no children; and Marie of Clèves, niece of the duchess of Burgundy (another marriage with strong political overtones, cementing the alliance of the houses of Orléans and Burgundy), whom he married immediately upon his release from captivity and by whom he had two daughters and a son, who was crowned King Louis XII in 1498.

[19] Both suppositions that have been made repeatedly by both French and English scholars.

[20] For instance, one of his French lyrics includes baby talk, another employs a forest of grammatical terms, others include ripostes directed at other poets.

theme of love, the allegorical treatment of elements of the experience of love (such as Disdain, Idleness, Wealth, Fear, Beauty, the tumultuous lover's heart, etc.), the association of love with gardens, the opposition of erotic/courtly/unmarried love and Reason, a world governed by Cupid, the God of Love and the son of Venus, and so on. Chaucer is thought to have translated the work early in his career (referred to here as the *Romaunt*), but the work was so popular and so available in a variety of languages that it is impossible to say when a later writer is borrowing directly from Chaucer, from some other poet who borrowed from the *Rose*, or directly from the *Rose* itself.[21]

Charles also probably read John Gower's long poem *Confessio Amantis* ("Confession of a Lover") and his *Cinkante Ballades* ("Fifty Ballades" — actually containing fifty-one). He seems to have been thinking of the *Confessio* as he wrote about the lover's withdrawal from love because of age, and his petition before the God of Love for the return of his heart.[22] From the *Cinkante Ballades* he may have conceived the idea (not very clearly expressed by Gower) of the very odd concept of Fortune's stableness (see note to lines 4680–4735).

To see the duke only through the prism of English poetry, however, is to limit his literary context unnecessarily. Charles' father was a patron of poets as well as of artists in other media. The French poet Christine de Pizan (whose father had brought her from Italy when he entered the service of the French king, Charles V, as physician-astrologer) wrote Charles' mother Valentina into her work *The City of Ladies*, and a miniature survives of the poet presenting her work, *The Letter of Othea*, to his father Louis.[23] Louis employed the poet Eustache Deschamps, who was "conseiller et maître de son Hôtel."[24] The duke was exchanging lyrics with a poet named Jean de Garencières[25] before Agincourt, when he was in his late teens. So poetry (French poetry) was a household event for Charles, and when he had exhausted his father's contacts, he had before him the wonderful books of poetry collected by both his parents.[26] The *Rose* also came to him filtered through the work of the finest French poet of the fourteenth century, Guillaume de Machaut (who was also a primary inspiration for Chaucer, especially in his early works). Machaut is thought of today primarily as a musician and as a narrative poet, though he also wrote lyrics, many of them set to music. Charles' debt to Machaut lies not just in his use of the courtly machinery but in the very construction of the speaking voice of the lover. Readers

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[21] See the General Bibliography for translations and editions.

[22] See Burrow, 1983.

[23] London, British Library MS Harley 4431, fol. 95r.

[24] Elizabeth Gonzalez, *Un prince en son Hôtel: Les serviteurs des ducs d'Orléans au XVe siècle*, Histoire Ancienne et Médiévale 74 (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2004), pp. 109, 170–71.

[25] Son of Louis' chamberlain (of the same name). He was killed in 1415 in the battle of Agincourt.

[26] For an account of the books owned by Charles' father Louis and his mother Valentina, see Pierre Champion, *La Librairie de Charles d'Orléans* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1910).

who find Chaucer's a remarkably early example of a self-reflexive, sometimes ironic, sometimes obtuse voice should look back to Chaucer and Gower's use of Machaut's lover as speaker.[27]

Despite all these strands of influence, however, none runs deeper (especially for the purposes of this volume) than Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. The duke was thoroughly steeped in the work, and his poetry is shot through with explicit and implicit references to it. From the figures of Lady Philosophy and Fortune, to the idea of the injustice of imprisonment to the speaking voice of the poet, to the alternating forms of verse, Charles d'Orléans' work is saturated with its serious philosophy and its literary sparkle.

Ballade 27, the first selection included here, presents the heart of the lover/speaker as a nobleman presiding over a ducal court. He calls his retainers and allies together to ask for their good counsel. His enemies, Thought (a state of anxiety or distress) and Woo (the woeful response to such anxiety), are allied, and they have seized some of the retainers of "Duke Heart," exiling one named Pleasure to the wilderness and imprisoning another, Joy, to whom the heart is only allowed limited access. We find out in the following stanza that it is Despair who is keeping Joy from the heart. Comfort, however, arrives at the court and promises the heart to banish these two lawless types. The heart then calls on the God of Love, envisaged here as the king, to issue safe conducts for his retainers, Pleasure and Joy. The envoy begins in a way that seems to make no sense (why does Absence keep the speaker from the God of Love?), but we see with a bit of a jolt that the context has changed entirely. Suddenly it is the lover speaking to his lady and explaining that his heart has written a complaint (a formal petition), to which the speaker hopes the lady will listen. In other words, on another level, *she* becomes the head of the ducal court, replacing the lover's heart, and she also becomes the source of his unhappiness (Thought and Woo), which she could banish with a wave of her hand.

Charles is a subtle poet, and his lyrics profit from repeated readings. In particular, the logic of his poetry often seems to work against itself, which leads the speaker into an impasse. The feeling of stasis that results is a perfect reflection of imprisonment, where a man full of longing is by some power or other kept from that which he longs for and unable to effect changes that would ameliorate his suffering. To animate the lyric situation, the poet divides the lover into parts, so that he can argue with his heart or rebuke his eyes for leading him into temptation. The heart is perhaps the most important character in this work, sometimes seemingly more important

[27] For an excellent analysis of Machaut's creation of a dream-vision voice, see Margaret Jean Ehrhart, "Chaucer's Contemporary, Guillaume de Machaut: A Critical Study of Four Dits Amoureux," Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Illinois, 1974 (DAI 35 [1975], p. 7299A). The reader will not find much of Chaucer's influence evidenced in the poems chosen here. The most transparent borrowings are to be found in the poet's dream of Venus and Fortune (lines 4638–5351), for which there is no French counterpart.

than the lady (who, after all, never speaks in the lyrics, since most of them are addressed to her or about her). The eyes, too, are difficult to govern and get the lover into trouble frequently, but the heart (which is a real, physical part of the lover) is on some occasions treated as his worst enemy. The bickering of the lover and his heart sometimes gives rise to comedy, but at other times reflects the deep inner division that threatens the very life of the speaker.

Ballade 43 is a good example of this divided consciousness. The speaker's heart has become not a duke but a hermit, not, apparently, through his own volition, but because Fortune (allied with Anguish and Woe) has forced him into the religious life. In his hermitage (located in a Woeful Forest) the heart is content to live out his life, but the speaker is clearly without contentment, calling the heart's willingness to settle for a life of isolation and absence from that for which he longs "foly." Like many people, the heart seems always to have a reason why he cannot act freely, an approach to problem-solving of which the speaker staunchly disapproves. But the heart rarely listens to the good advice of the speaker (bearing in mind that the poet controls and animates both voices). The relationship between the two is interesting because it mirrors that between Boethius and Lady Philosophy (or the lover and Reason in the *Roman de la Rose*) but, in doing so, switches the roles. Philosophy/Reason is not something outside the speaking voice that advises him (to no avail); rather, the speaker *is* Philosophy/Reason, attempting to deal with a deluded, rash, and overly emotional heart. In the third stanza, we see the speaker acting as a go-between from the heart to the lady, a thinly veiled pretense to plead for a letter from the lady. The envoy summarizes the problem. The lover is stuck because the heart is stubborn. The lover is unwilling to renounce love and unable to win the lady. This is indeed a kind of prison, real to the lover despite its lack of physical walls.

The lover (or ex-lover, when his first lady dies) is frequently in a prison of his own making.[28] This is perhaps clearest in the **double ballade**, written by the ex-lover/poet, who is in mourning for the death of his lady. The duke of Orléans was intimately aware of all the ramifications of Boethius' ideas in his *Consolation* (at one point in his life, the duke owned seven copies of the work) and no idea could be more outrageous in this context than a complaint about the stability of fortune. In fact this concept is unique in all of medieval literature (and later literature, too, as far as we know). As Boethius puts it, "Why, you are the biggest fool alive — if it once stop, it ceases to be the wheel of fortune" (*De cons.*, p. 179); later, with almost exactly the same wording, Chaucer applies this to the lover's situation in *Troilus and Criseyde* 1.848–49: "For if hire whiel stynte [stopped] any thyng to torne, / Than cessed she Fortune anon to be." This

[28] One of Lady Philosophy's goals in *The Consolation of Philosophy* (see General Introduction, pp. 4–6) is to make Boethius (the speaker) realize that he, too, inhabits a "prison without walls," a prison more significant than the physical walls of his incarceration.

illusion of helplessness in the face of trials is precisely what the *Consolation* was intended to relieve, and the speaker's inability to grasp this set of ideas is intended to reveal him as unreflective and perhaps even slightly ridiculous. In spite of his denunciation of Fortune throughout the poem, the speaker claims in the envoy that she ought not to hold it against him, for he has only told the truth, and he asks once again for her pity on him — though he gives us no reason to think that his piteous appeal will have any effect on her.

The speaker's attitude of defiance of Fortune in **Ballade 118** is one Lady Philosophy would approve of. If he follows through, the speaker will escape from both Fortune and love longing. Yet there are suggestions here that he will not ultimately be successful. In the second stanza he claims that he knows Fortune well — too well to be fooled, but he admits that she has often deceived him ("full yvil ware [poor-quality goods] of thee oft have y bought"). Now, he says to her, you'll have to work hard to deceive me with the deceitful turns of your trouble/tricks (implicitly, your wheel), yet he follows this by telling us that he has *often* told Fortune that she will not be able to deceive him — a statement that cannot be true, since he has clearly been deceived before. The only question is whether this defiant attitude marks a real shift in the speaker's outlook, a realization of the illusory nature of Fortune, or whether it is merely a passing fit of petulance, a display of brave words that will evaporate when he next encounters the object (or even the thought of the object) of his desire.

Form

We have chosen here only lyrics in ballade form because they happen to relate to the theme of this volume. Ballades 27 and 43 come from the first sequence and show us a lover perpetually unhappy (and perhaps unsuccessful). The double ballade is from the narrative of the speaker's encounter with Venus and Fortune in a dream. The speaker's composition of this complaint against Fortune is the act that triggers the dream.[29] Ballade 118 is taken from the second sequence of ballades and shows the lover still defying Fortune — an activity we (and the poet) know to be futile.

The ballade is a form borrowed from medieval French writers that was largely superseded in the early modern period by the sonnet (borrowed from Italian poetry). Three stanzas of equal length (which may vary from poem to poem) are often, but not always, followed by a short

[29] See A. C. Spearing, pp. 123–44. The speaker "Charlis" claims that he writes the lyric not to express his own complaints (since his lady has died and he is therefore hypothetically not a lover at all) but because a friend who is a less-talented poet and an unsuccessful lover has asked him to compose a ballade for him.

envoy, in which the poet may address the poem itself, appeal to an important person (often the lady), or simply comment on the issues raised in the poem. Ballades 27 and 43 are examples of the French form of the lyric, which allows only three rhymes in the entire poem. The double ballade (with six stanzas and an envoy) and Ballade 118 employ the easier English form, which allows three new rhymes in each stanza.[30]

Manuscript context

The collection (or work) exists in one manuscript (London, British Library MS Harley 682) and two fragments of a copy made from it (Cambridge University Library MS Additional 2585 [1], and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hearne's Diaries 38, fols. 261–64). The numbering of the poems edited here corresponds to that of *Fortunes Stabilnes* (see Arn, under Editions, below).

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[30] This relaxation of the demands of rules of rhyme in the French ballade is due to what Chaucer called the "skarsete" of "rym in Englissh" ("The Complaint of Venus," line 80). Romance languages like French, Italian, or Spanish retain a large number of inflectional endings that rhyme with one another, making rhymed poetry a great deal easier to construct. English is a Germanic language with a large body of loanwords from French, and through the ages it has replaced inflectional endings with prepositions or indicated the function of words in a sentence by word order, rather than by grammatically marked suffixes. As a result, the game of rhyming on as few different sounds as possible is much more difficult to play in English than it would be in, say, French (hence the jokes about attempts to find words to rhyme with "orange" or "purple").

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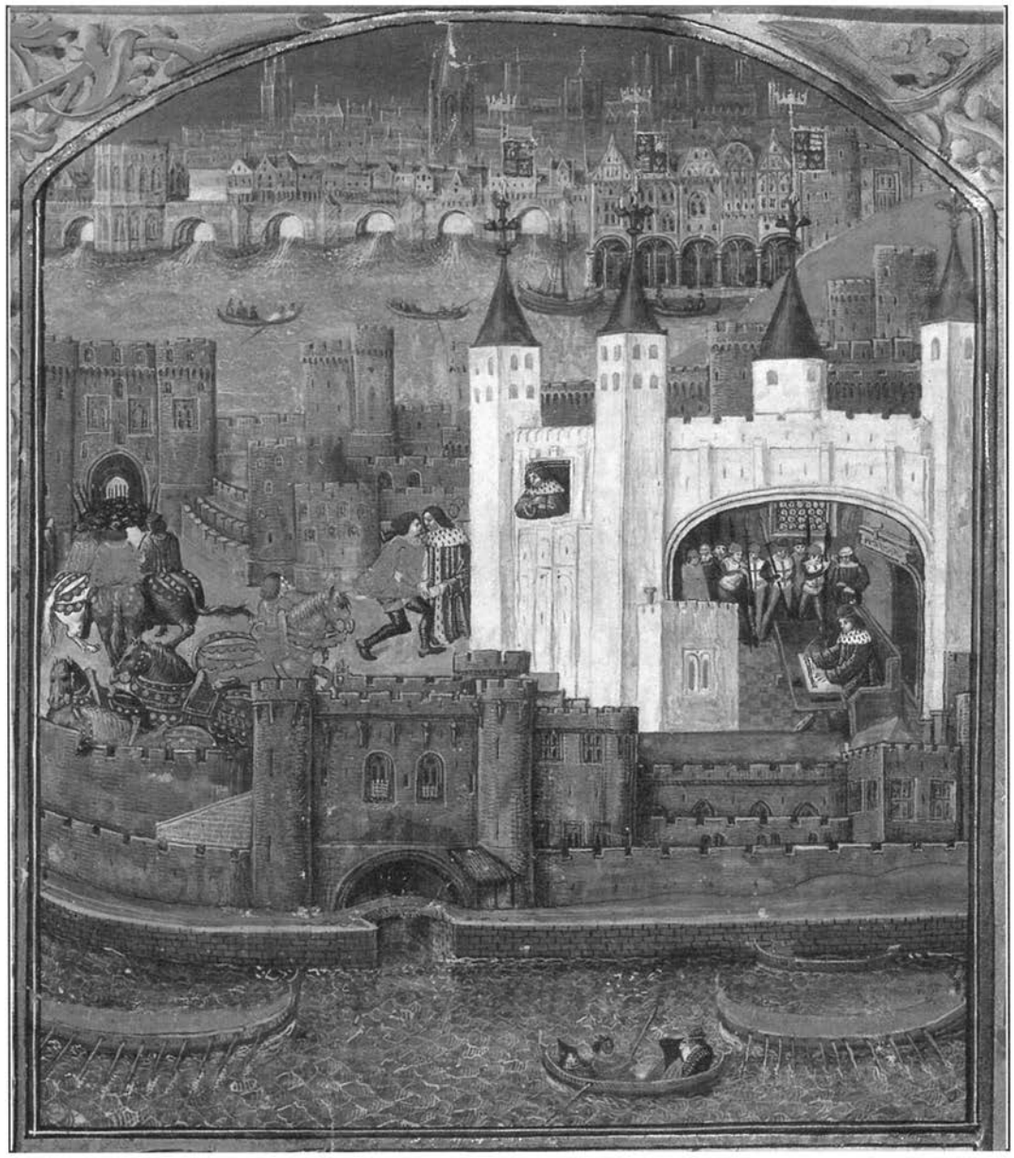

Figure 3: Charles d'Orléans in the Tower of London (c. 1485).
British Library MS Royal 16 F.ii, fol. 73r.
By permission of The British Library.

Charles d'Orleans, from *Fortunes Stabilnes*

Ballade 27 [addressed to his lady] — fols. 19v–20v

	Myn hert hath sent abowt, ye, fer and nere,	*yea*
1005	For his welwilleris, frendis, and allyes,	*well-wishers; allies*
	As wherefor? Whi, ther advise to here,	*Why? Why, their advice to hear*
	To have counsell of grete thingis which that lyes	*lie*
	On him, as this: how he may his enemyes,	*such as*
	As Thought and Woo with ther cursid allyaunce,	*Such as Worry and Woe*
1010	Best discomfit (that moyan wold he lere),	*defeat; means would he learn*
	Which willith to distroy his joyful chere	*Who want; frame of mind*
	As in the Prison of Grevous Displesaunce.	*Dire Misery*
	For in desert they putt have his Plesere,	*in the wilderness; Happiness*
	And Joye he holt of them but in patise	*he holds; by a limited contract*
1015	Save Comfort cometh to se him in a gere[1]	
	And makith him a maner of promysse	*a kind*
	Them to banysshe. Lo, in this maner wise	*in this way*
	Hope hath him oft achasid Disperaunce	*[from] him often chased away Despair*
	Which kepith Joy fro me as a straungere,	
1020	That causith this: my hertis rage martere[2]	
	As in the Prison of Grevous Displesaunce.	
	O Myghti God, Y humbly thee requere	*ask*
	That Y may se the tyme sone to arise	*soon to come*
	That every man may, to his desere,	*desire*
1025	Without safcondit seche ther entirprise,	*pursue their [own] business*
	And then may Love, if so he werken wise,	*wisely*
	Of Daungere take but right a small doutaunce;	*fear very little*
	Then wold myn hert and Y bothe laughe in fere	*together*

[1] *Except for Comfort [who] comes to see him [when he is] in a bad state*

[2] *That [this whole situation] causes this: my heart's violent martyrdom*

	Which now in sighis doth himsilf atere	*Who; wears himself out*
1030	As in the Prison of Grevous Displesaunce.	
[Envoy]	Syn Absence thus me holt and from yow tise,	*holds and keeps me from you*
	My hert complayneth that ye myght agrise	*be afraid*
	Hem for to here, myn owen soul suffisaunce,	*Of listening to him, my only*
	Me praiyng this to write yow, lady dere;	
1035	That he hath not all that he wolde desere,	
	As in the Prison of Grevous Displesaunce.	

Ballade 43 — fols. 29v–30r

1511	My poore hert bicomen is hermyte	*has become [a] hermit*
	In hermytage of Thoughtfull Fantasé.	*Melancholy Longing*
	For false Fortune, so full of gret dispite,	*anger*
	That many yere hath hatid him and me,	*hated*
1515	Hath newe allyed hir (this may Y se),	*see*
	To his gret hurt, with Payne and Hevynes,	*Woe*
	And hath him banysshid out of all gladnes,	*from all pleasure*
	That where to dwelle nath he o bidyng place	*[So] that he has no place to dwell*
	Save in the Carfull Wode in payne to ly,	*Except; Woeful Forest; lie*
1520	Where he contentith bide his lyvis space,[1]	
	And yet Y say him how it is foly.	*tell him that*
	Moche have Y spent of speche to his profite	
	But that to harke, Y trowe, he is not he;	*to listen, I believe, he will not*
	My wordis alle nar worth to him a myte;	*are not; a little*
1525	His will is sett in suche perplexité	*[a state of] confusion*
	That lightly, loo, hit kan not chaungid be.	*easily*
	So is he governyd al as bi Distres,	*he is ruled entirely by Anguish*
	Which ganyst his profit doth nevyr cesse[2]	
	Him to avise (such counsell is't he hase!),	*advise; is it [that]*
1530	That nyght and day him holdith company,	*Who; keeps*

[1] *Where he is content to remain for the rest of his life*

[2] *Who against his (the heart's) interests never ceases*

That he may not eschewe his wrecchid case, *[So] that; avoid (escape); situation*
And yet Y say him how it is foly.

This as for me, y cast to leve him quyt, *Thus; plan; entirely*
Mi bestbilovyd, myn hertis soul ladé, *only lady*
1535 Without so be ye lust to him write *Unless you wish*
Sum praty word of yowre benygne bounté *pleasant; gracious generosity*
For to alesse his gret adversité, *In order to alleviate*
Ellis hath he made a feithfull trewe promys *Otherwise*
For to renounce the joy and gret ricches
1540 Of gladsom thought or plesere in him was —
And aftir that unto that howre he dey *dies*
The Abite of Discomfort on him lace, *Garment of Sorrow*
And yet Y say him how it is foly.

[Envoy] O fayre sance per, lo this without yowre grace *O fair one sans peer; thus*
1545 For anything that Y kan do trewly *In spite of*
Mi dullid hert wol not comfort, allas, *be comforted*
And yet Y say him how it is foly.

Double Ballade — fols. 112r–113r

4680 O thou Fortune, that causist pepill playne *who causes; [to] complain*
Upon thi chaunge and mutabilité, *changeableness*
Did Y thee so, Y blamyd wrong, certayne, *If I did so*
For stabill yet herto as fynde Y thee *stable so far*
Withouten chaunge for to prevaylen me, *Without; to benefit*
4685 But whereas first thou fond me in symplesse,[1]
Thou holdist me in myn adversité *[So] you [continue to] hold me*
So that Y may biwayle thi stabilnes. *lament*

And yet full many holde opynyoun *many people*
As that thou shulde now hurt, and now amende,[2]
4690 And gladly, als, of thi condicioun *also [they believe]; by your nature*

---

[1] *But just as you first found me in a state of innocence [and did not help]*

[2] *That you should sometimes hurt, and sometimes help*

A sympill wight in honure to ascende, *[Cause] a lowly person*
And most in weele as don him downe descende, *And cause the happiest one*
But Y may well contrary lo witnes, *bear witness to the contrary*
For of my wrecchid liif Y fynde noon ende, *life*
4695 So that Y may biwayle thi stabilnes.

For well Y se how Ricches ascendith *very well*
And all folke bisy him to plese and yeve, *everyone busies himself; give*
Whereas the sympill wight descendith
Of alle lothid, and noon him lust releve, *loathed; wishes [to]*
4700 Among whiche on am Y in suche myschef *I am one in such misfortune*
Ordaynyd Love, but to moche bisynes *Ordained [by]; too; difficulty*
Thou hast me geve my ladi to acheve, *You [Fortune]; to win*
So that Y may biwayle thi stabilnes,

Thorugh which Y wynne more maugre oft then love
4705 Bi my to bisy demenyng, *too eager efforts*
And yet, God wot that sitt above, *knows, who sits*
I most desire of any erthely thing
To doon all that as were to hir plesyng, *would please her*
But of rewdenes thou gevist me such larges *uncouthness; abundance*
4710 That thank to pike me wantith the konnyng,[1]
So that Y may biwayle thi stabilnes.

Alas! Fortune, now were me wondir wise, *help me*
Sett me in wey my lady for to plese, *put me on the right path*
And if that Y have tane to high emprise, *taken on too high an undertaking*
4715 I pardoun axe and that thou not displese, *ask; be displeased*
But turne thi whele my langour to apese *to appease my suffering*
And of my smert to shape me sum redresse, *pain; give; relief*
For yet thou baytist me in noyous lese,[2]
So that Y may biwayle thi stabilnes.

4720 For my dull rewdenes hath no governaunce *self discipline*
Thorugh my demenyng hir to doon plesere *efforts to give*

---

[1] *That I do not have the skills to gain [her] favor*

[2] *For still you [continue to] harass me with painful deceits*

And yet, God wot, as that Y have pusshaunce, *with all the power I have*
I sett myn hert, my will, and my desere
Hir for to serve, but all to gret an hire *too great a reward*
4725 I willid have thorugh fonnyd wilfulnes, *I have desired; unwise*
But me prevaylith werryng nor prayere, *avails neither fighting [against you]*
So that Y may biwayle thi stabilnes.

[Envoy] Now farewell, Fortune, with thi stedfast face,
For, as Y fynde, right so Y write of thee *the way I see you*
4730 And yn my refrait, though Y thee manace, *song/lyric poem; threaten*
Thou oughtist not, me thenke, displesid be *it seems to me*
Though Y say trouthe as that thou dost to me, *tell; about what you do*
But evir truse and rewe on my distres *declare a truce and have pity*
That Y endure in suche adversité,
4735 So that Y may biwayle thi stedfastnes. *Which makes me*

Ballade 118 — fols. 145v–146r

6420 O fy, Fortune! Fy thi dissayt and skorne! *Fie [on] thy deceit*
For all thi fraude, retorne yet wilfully, *From; deception; turn*
That woldist ay eche wele were sone forlorne.[1]
Iwis, scoffer, yet art thou no thing ny *Certainly, mocker; not even close*
Me to disseyve, for clene Y thee defy! *completely*
6425 To wel therto parseyve Y, lo, thi thought, *Too well*
Nor yet thou get me not, for all thi spie, *Too; perceive*
Nor yet, Y trust, heraftir shalt thou not! *Capture; spying*

To wel knowen have y thee toforne *Too; in the past*
To be bigilid with thi mokkery.
6430 I am to ware of thee to were an horne, *too aware; to be fooled*
Wherfore that this Y pray thee hertily:
Thi mokkis selle to them that lust it by! *Tricks; wish to buy*
Full yvil ware of thee oft have Y bought,[2]

---

[1] *[You] who wish always every good thing were quickly lost*

[2] *I have often [gotten] very ill wares/goods from you*

So yet thou get me not, for all thi spie,
6435 Nor yet, Y trust, heraftir shalt thou not.

Now wolde Y say thou haddist thee wel borne[1]
Me to deseyve bi sleight or trechery,
Which do revolve at eve or morne
The dowbill turnys of thi juparty.[2]
6440 So were Y foole to trusten thee trewly, *I would be a*
Wherfore, as I have seid unto thee oft,
That yet thou get me not, for all thi spy,
Nor yet, Y trust, heraftir shalt thou not.

[Envoy] So fy on Fortune! Fy on Jelowsy!
6445 And all the awayte ye have unto me wrought,[3]
For yet ye get me not, for all yowre spy,
Nor yet, Y trust, heraftir shalt thou not.

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[1] *Now would I say you would have to conduct yourself well*

[2] Lines 6438–39: *[You] who roll around [in your mind] the whole day the double (i.e., false) reversals of your jeopardy*

[3] *And all the schemes you have set in motion against me*

Explanatory Notes to Fortunes Stabilnes

Abbreviations: **MS**: London, British Library MS Harley 682.

1005 *welwilleris, frendis, and allyes.* The scene that this lyric suggests is to be imagined as a royal or ducal court. As in much of the late medieval English and French love poetry, all lovers are taken to constitute a company of companions and sympathizers to the speaking lover. In the dream vision of Age and Love (lines 2540–3045), which has a counterpart in Charles' French poetry, the bereaved lover travels to Love's court and asks for the return of his heart, since the only lady he will ever love has died. In this instance, the lovers are presented as courtiers to the king, Cupid. When the speaker presents his petition for his heart's return, they all cry, "Ye, ye, ye! We woll therto consent / To doon withall what that a [he] will trewly!" (lines 2900–01). The "opposing force" to this company is made up of evil characters like "Thought" [Care] and "Woo" [Woe] (line 1009), who will capture the lover and cast him into prison (line 1012). This is obviously a prison of the mind.

1014 I.e., "he is permitted to have Joy by them by a limited contract." Steele and Day find *patise* ("tribute, treaty," *OED*, c. 1500) unsatisfactory because "joy is not [the lover's] on terms, it is a stranger to him altogether" (note to their line 1014). The *MED* glosses *in patise,* "according to the terms of a bargain or covenant," but cites only this unique occurrence of the word (related to Modern English "pact"). We are not told what the terms of the bargain are.

1016–17 The repetition of *maner* implies that, though it raises hopes in him, the promise of Comfort is worthless. The word *banysshe* brings us back to the legal metaphor of a king or duke's power to exile troublemakers or criminals from his realm. The poet often situates his characters in this kind of frame of court behavior and power struggles, with which he was intimately familiar, both in England and in France.

1020 *my hertis rage martere.* Here the poet switches to religious language, representing the heart not as a prisoner, but as a martyr to love. The metaphor continues into the following stanza, a prayer that opens with the religious apostrophe: "O Myghti God" (though the god so addressed is Cupid).

1025 *safcondit*. The official records of the English government are full of safe-conducts issued to members of the duke's household and other compatriots who visited him on business. Many of them were involved in helping him to raise money for his ransom and to manage his domains on the Loire. In this case, the country will be purged of bad elements like Thought and Woo, making travel for all lovers easy and safe.

1027 *Daungere*. A traditional enemy of the lover, Daunger usually represents the lady's reserve or disdain. He functioned in that role in *RR* and in countless other love poems. In Chaucer's translation, the beautiful figure of Idleness "was nought unmeke [proud], / Ne of hir answer daungerous, / But faire [sweetly] answerde" (*Rom*. [A]590–92); and in *TC*, Pandarus counsels Criseyde to let her "daunger sucred a lite" (be sugared a little), so that she will not have his death on her conscience (2.384–85). At one point, Charles calls on Hope to help him release the heart, which is in the "prison of Daunger, his cursid foo" (line 4610; for other prison references, see *FS*, lines 251, 737, 949, 1442, and 6279.)

1031–36 *tise*. "Ties"; a clever inversion of the usual meaning of the verb ("to join") which nevertheless retains the sense of constraint or fixedness that the word connotes. The switch from third to first person is standard in the movement from the first three stanzas to the envoy, which the poet frequently directs to the lady, presumably the recipient of the "letter." A number of the ballades contain the unmistakable rhetoric of epistolary prose in their closing lines, even when the poems are not structured formally as letters.

1035 *he hath not all that he wolde desere*. A polite way of saying he has nothing in the way of his lady's favor. For Charles' French version of this lyric, see Champion, *Poésies*, vol. 1, Ballade XXVII.

1511 *hermyte*. A religious person who removes himself from the world, wears a habit or religious garment (line 1542), and lives in a hermitage (which might be a cave or hut, or perhaps something more comfortable) in the woods or in some barren place (line 1519). Though it is not usual, in this case someone (Fortune) has banished the heart from (court) company and *forced* him to become a hermit, so in fact the hermitage is simply another metaphor, like prison, for the lack of control the lover's heart has over his own life — though the refrain suggests that the supposed banishment is really voluntary (and pointless). Charles often, though not always, represents the heart as foolish and willful and the speaker as more rational, whereas his contemporaries generally make the speaker the foolish one.

1518 *where.* Charles may have intended "wherein" or some such word but omitted the second syllable for metrical reasons. "Where" often replaces "place"; when used together (the place where), the relative is usually followed not by the infinitive but by a clause.

1522 *Moche have Y spent.* The heart may live in some fantasy woods, but the speaker has his feet firmly planted on the ground, counting his good advice as money, which unfortunately has no value (not a mite) to his heart (line 1524).

1529 Bad counsel is frequently cited as the source of bad governance in the late Middle Ages.

1533–36 Here the speaker threatens his lady in a tone unusual, though not unique, in late medieval court poetry. He will abandon his heart *unless* she writes to him. Thus negotiating between heart and lady, he pretends to be only an impartial go-between who predicts for the heart, in the absence of comfort from the lady, a state of lifelong pain followed by death.

1540–42 *in him was . . . on him lace.* Both rhyme words have been altered in the manuscript (*was/lace*), but it is not possible to read the original rhymes. For Charles' French version of this lyric, see Champion, *Poésies*, vol. 1, Ballade XLIII.

4680–4735 The fictional occasion for this poem is explained in the foregoing narrative verse: the speaker, whose lady has died, has been asked by a friend to compose a complaint for him on the theme of Fortune's stableness, presumably because, though he is a devoted though unsuccessful lover, he is not much of a poet. One wonders if the real duke was ever asked to write poetry for the use of others.

The unique and startling premise of this poem is that Fortune is not fickle but *too* stable. The speaker, whom the reader would expect to lament her wheel's constant turning, here wishes that she would change, i.e., bring him some success in love. Such a presentation is unique in all of English literature. Guillaume de Machaut includes a long complaint in his *Remède de Fortune* that presents the more usual picture of Fortune, who

> . . . does all this harm
> as she turns her wheel,
> and she doesn't wait for daybreak
> to turn it; she doesn't stop,
> but turns it, turns it some more, and turns it upside down,

until she brings to the top
him who was lying flat in the gutter;
him who was exalted she brings down low,
and makes the happiest man sad and gloomy
in no time at all. (trans. Wimsatt and Kibler, lines 911–20)

The idea of a stable Fortune may have been dimly foreshadowed by John Gower (whose work Charles evidently read), in *CA*. His lover, Amans, pleads with Cupid and Venus in these words:

I se the world stonde evere upon eschange,
Nou wyndes loude, and nou the weder [weather] softe; . . .
The dredfull werres into pes ful ofte
Thei torne; *and evere is Danger in o place,*
Which wol noght change his will to do me grace. (8.2259–65; emphasis added)

The contrast of Danger with the fortunes of this world might have given Charles the idea of conflating the two, but the idea is perhaps more readily to hand in Gower's *Cinkante Ballades*, Ballade 20, where the poet complains that his luck never changes:

Fortune, om dist, de sa Roe vie ades;
A mon avis mais il n'est pas ensi,
Car as toutz jours la troeve d'un reles,
Qe jeo sai nulle variance en li
Ainz est en mes deseases establi,
En bass me tient, q'a lever ne me lesse:
De mes amours est tout ceo qe jeo di,
Ma dolour monte et ma joie descresce.

Apres la guerre om voit venir la pes,
Apres l'ivern est l'estée beal flori,
Mais mon estat ne voi changer jammes,
Qe jeo d'amour porrai troever merci.
He, noble dame, pour quoi est il ensi?

[Fortune, they say, never stops her wheel,
But to my mind it is not so,
For every day I find it at the same spot
And so come to know no change in it at all.
Instead, it is stuck to my disadvantage,
Keeping me low, not letting me mount high.

In my love affair it is all just as I say,
  My pain increases and my joy grows less.

After war we see that peace comes,
  After the winter spring's adorned with flowers,
But my condition never alters,
  So that I might find mercy.
Alas, noble lady, why is it so? (trans. R. Barton Palmer)]

(John Gower, *The Complete Works of John Gower: The French Works*, ed. G. C. Macaulay [Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1899], Ballade 20, lines 1–14). Gower, however, blunts the effect of Fortune's stability by introducing a refrain that implies the idea of alternation ("My suffering increases and my happiness decreases"), while Charles' speaker is single-mindedly consistent (see Arn, 1995, pp. 43–45). Charles also hints at this idea in his French Rondeau 213, where he describes Fortune as "tousjours une" (always the same) (Cecily Clark, "Charles d'Orléans: Some English Perspectives," *Medium Aevum* 40 [1971], p. 258).

The ballade functions here as a *mise en abyme* of *FS*: "a literary or artistic structure contained within a larger narrative whole which reflects, repeats, glosses, and/or anticipates the thematic concerns or esthetic processes of the whole" (William Calin, "Medieval Intertextuality: Lyrical Inserts and Narrative in Guillaume de Machaut," in *French Review* 62 [1988], p. 3). It is for this reason that the work is titled *Fortunes Stabilnes.*

This complaint recalls the state of mind of the speaker, Boethius, in *De cons.*, who, before Philosophy appears to help him regain his mental and emotional balance, chases the idea of the injustice of this world (ruled by Fortune) round and round in his head without being able to step aside from the conundrum to see that it is largely illusory. Chaucer's Troilus does something similar in Book Four, when he tries unsuccessfully to reason out the Boethian problem of predestination and free will, because he feels so hedged in by ill fortune (*TC* 4.946–1085). It is his earlier agonized address to Fortune, however, that sounds more like this poet's mindset, though Charles' lines are much more deliberate and less emotional than Chaucer's (*TC* 4.260–336).

Although it is difficult to pin down sources for such generally available and much-used ideas, Charles may well have known Guillaume de Machaut's *Remède de Fortune* (which has itself been called a rewriting of *De cons.*). It contains a long complaint about Fortune that embodies many of the well-known ideas about Fortune, some with their roots in Boethius' work, others harking back to the role of Reason in *RR*. Machaut's work is pivotal, looking forward as well as back: Chaucer reworked some of its ideas in *BD* and *TC*. Wimsatt and Kibler detail those

borrowings in their facing-page French/English edition of the *Remède,* which also includes some of the manuscript illuminations that were made to accompany the poetry, painted during Machaut's lifetime, including one in which the figure of the poet writing his complaint is placed above a representation of Fortune turning her wheel (Wimsatt and Kibler, color frontispiece and Miniatures 5–23).

There is, however, one profound difference between Machaut's complaint and Charles': Machaut's speaker interacts with Hope, a figure indebted both to Boethius' Philosophy and the *RR*-poets' Reason. Through that dialogue, Machaut aims both to teach the reader and to heal the speaker's deranged mind. Charles' speaker, though, not only has no one to counsel and heal him, he even uses this poem to further the involvement in love of another character, the unliterary lover who has asked him to express what he himself is incapable of composing to relieve his grief. The *FS* lover, as a result, finds no way out of his predicament and continues suffering to the very end of the work.

4685 *in symplesse.* This is a reference to the speaker's state of ignorance in his youth when he first became acquainted with Love. *Whereas* cannot introduce a statement of fact in contrast to that of the main clause; the poet says that Fortune is unchanging: she has always been hostile to the narrator.

4689 *As that.* Charles frequently uses the phrase to mean simply "that."

4691 *A sympill wight.* From the following line we can see that *don* is to be understood before this phrase: "[you] cause the lowly man to ascend in honor and the most well-off to descend." The wording is chosen to be inclusive: the poor/low-class/unsuccessful/unhappy person is set against the rich/aristocratic/successful/happy one.

4693 *witnes.* The speaker opposes experience to authority (in the form of traditional wisdom), just as Chaucer's Wife of Bath does in her prologue (*CT* III[D]1–2), and the result intended by each poet is more or less the same: experience cannot provide the full answer; authority must be respected, too.

4696 *Ricches ascendith.* Fortune's wheel is often pictured with a king at the top, dressed in rich robes and carrying a scepter. *Richesse* (Wealth), the companion and protector of Beauty, is presented as the grandest in the company of revelers in the Garden of Deduit (Delight) of Guillaume de Lorris in *RR* (lines 1017–1126).

4701 The word *by* seems to have been omitted after *Ordaynyd.* This is the first mention in the poem of Love, the nature of which presents the speaker with an insoluble conundrum. In Machaut's much longer *complainte,* the case against Fortune morphs into one against Love and finally into one against Desire — three "problems" that are in fact one (see Wimsatt and Kibler, pp. 218–49). Although the word *bisynes* can mean "activity," "work," or "diligence," here it means "vexation," "trouble," "difficulty." Compare *Boece* 1.m.2.1–6: "Allas! How the thought of this man [Boethius], dreynt [drowned] in overthrowynge depness, dulleth and forleteth his propre clerness, myntynge [intending] to gon into foreyne [foreign] dirknesses as ofte as his anoyos bysynes waxeth withoute mesure, that is dryven with [by] werldly wyndes."

4704 *more maugre. Maugre* is usually encountered as a preposition meaning "in spite of," but here it is a noun meaning "blame" or "ill-will."

4705–06 These two lines are octosyllabic (for no apparent reason). The image of Charles, duke of Orléans, complaining, in the person of his foolish narrator, that Fortune has given him an unpolished simplicity ("rewdenes," line 4709) coupled with a "to bisy demenying" (line 4705) is comic (see also line 4720). Like Chaucer and other late medieval love poets, Charles occasionally throws in phrases that are commonly used of the Christian God ("God . . . that sitt above"), which causes an abrupt but momentary recalibration of our idea of the shape of the poet's literary world, as it echoes the position of Ricches in the previous stanza. These are not mistakes, but witty reminders that we are here, not in a real world where Almighty God rules, but in a make-believe world of love, where Cupid, the God of Love, reigns supreme. We are thus expected to take the reference to apply to Cupid.

4712 *now were me wondir wise.* Steele and Day gloss "(?) defend me wondrously" (note to their line 4712). The poet is attempting to flatter Fortune by attributing wisdom or prudence to her and suggesting that her best course of action is to give him what he wants.

4718 *in noyous lese.* MS: *in noyouslesse.* A scribe may have picked up the wrong spelling of the ending from *redresse* in the previous line and consequently joined the two words. (The three rhymes in this stanza, *-ise, -ese, -esse,* do require scribal care.)

Steele and Day gloss "you feed me in evil pasture" (note to their line 4718), which makes little sense in the context of the poem. A charge that suits Fortune better is "you harrass me with painful deceits or lies."

4728 *Now farewell, Fortune.* For a moment it seems as if the speaker has discovered that the only power one has over Fortune is to abandon her and place that faith in God, but it lasts for only five lines, and he ends the ballade in the same mental state in which he began. He never learns the lesson learned by the speakers in the works of Boethius, James I, George Ashby, and a host of others: turn your back on Fortune, live in patience and sufficiency, and you will gain true happiness and contentment. Machaut's speaker ticks off the good effect of taking the teachings of Hope (elsewhere Philosophy, Reason, or some other wise figures) to heart: "I felt myself much more confident, stronger, calmer, maturer" (*Remède,* lines 2969–70).

4733 *truse.* I.e., "cease hostilities," "give me some respite." The word was apparently not commonly used as a verb (see *MED treu[e*, n[1]). This lyic has no French counterpart.

6420–47 In this ballade, placed near the end of the work (only three lyrics follow), we once again are led to expect that the lover has finally realized the true nature of Fortune and will turn away from her to follow some more rational path. As in Ballade 44, where he challenges Daunger to a mortal combat ("A, Daunger, here y cast to thee my gloue / And thee appele, O traytoure, of tresoun." [lines 1548–49]), the lover here bravely defies Fortune, but his "recovery" is as brief as the lyric, and by the closing of the ballade that follows he is pleading with his lady to be kind to him, asking if she is made of flesh and blood (line 6474). His indignation and bravado are all bluster. Note that he never mentions love or the lady in this lyric. It is from the context of the entire work that we know without asking that both are the speaker's obsession.

6421 *For all thi fraude, retorne yet wilfully.* The lover is asking Fortune to turn her wheel and show him her better "side." The emphasis shifts in this lyric from the changeability (or not) of Fortune to her deceitful nature, and the poet stuffs into the lyric as many synonyms as he can for deceit and related words.

6423 *scoffer.* MS: *coffer.* Though citing only this line as an example, *MED* lists *coffer* as a variant spelling of *scoffer.*

6426–27 This ballade has a two-line refrain.

6430 *were an horne.* If the meaning "be mocked" is correct, the expression repeats the sense of the previous line. Notice that the speaker mounts no rational argument

against Fortune. He promulgates no more sensible worldview; he simply says he will resist (just say no), a strategy that is doomed to fail.

6432 *it.* Singular for plural; the referent is *mokkis.*

6439 *juparty.* In lyrics found earlier in the collection, the speaker plays tables (backgammon) with Love (Ballade 46) and chess with Fortune (Ballade 61), and we know that the duke was deeply interested in chess (see *FS*, pp. 57–60, and Pierre Champion, *Charles d'Orléans: Joueur d'échecs* [Paris: H. Champion, 1908]). "Jeopardy" or "danger" is a likely meaning for "juparty," but the word also means a trick or stratagem in a game of chess (hence, tricks), and the word here may have those overtones.

6445 *ye have.* In the envoy, the speaker switches from the familiar form (thou/thee, used in conversing with intimates, but also with god[s], and certainly with his lady), which he has used throughout the poem, to the polite form (you/ye, used in conversing with superiors, but not with god[s]). He expresses his contempt for Fortune by addressing her with a term applicable only to certain mortals. This lyric has no French counterpart.

Textual Notes to Fortunes Stabilnes

Abbreviations: **MS**: London, British Library MS Harley 682.

1031	*tise.* MS: *tiise.*
1519	*Wode.* MS: caret followed by *end*, crossed out; *wode* in outer margin above caret.
1524	*worth.* MS: *worthi.*
1527	*al.* MS: interlined above caret.
1540	*was.* MS: *as* written over longer (?4-letter) erasure.
1540–42	See explanatory note to these lines.
4704	*oft then love.* MS: *oft þen* written beyond bounding line, *loue* written beneath *þen* for lack of space.
4718	See explanatory note to this line.
4724	*an hire.* MS: *am hir.*
6423	See explanatory note to this line.

George Ashby, *Complaint of a Prisoner in the Fleet 1463*

Introduction

To anyone who has read the poetry of Chaucer, or indeed of any number of other late-medieval English poets, George Ashby's poem will provide the repeated delight of recognition of images and *topoi* that were the common property of all poets: the opening seasonal description, the Boethian prison, his former good fortune, the usefulness of adversity, the transitoriness of this world, the pilgrimage of life, Fortune's wheel, and so on. Modern readers may object to reading the same idea twice, but medieval writers gloried in their borrowings, or, more accurately, their new presentations of old material. Each new piece was appreciated as a new setting. The stones were of great value; the ring the jeweler made showed them off to best advantage. So it was with concepts, images, verse forms, and all kinds of rhetorical modes and techniques. Ashby (who names Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate as his models, the "primier poetes of this nacion," see below) is a good example of this approach to reading and writing medieval poetry because, half a century after his poetic mentors, he is still in possession of the same hoard of poetic jewels they set in their own works.

George Ashby (c. 1390–1475) is commonly thought of as a writer of political verse, or at least as a writer involved in the politics of his day, an involvement that shows through the ostensible purpose of his work (lament on being imprisoned, general advice to accept such vicissitudes with patience). He tells us pointedly of his long tenure as clerk of the Signet Office under Henry VI and his queen, Margaret of Anjou (lines 64–65). Ashby seems to have been Lancastrian enough in his sympathies to arouse the concern of the Yorkists under Edward IV, who had him imprisoned.[1] But, in fact, in spite of its apparent historical circumstance, Ashby's poem is more thoroughly "literary," in the sense of calling up literary models and tropes, than it is political.

The poem is divided into five parts:[2]

1. The *Prohemium Unius Prisonarij*, or Introduction (lines 1–35): A seasonal scene-setting followed by a short statement of the poet's predicament: he, George Ashby, has

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[1] Meyer-Lee summarizes Ashby's career and the probable circumstances of his imprisonment, pp. 699–700.

[2] Meyer-Lee defines only three parts: *Prohemium*, *Ad sustinendum pacienciam in adversis*, and *Envoy* (p. 701).

been thrown into prison and deprived of his goods and estates, which misery he will endure with patience, God willing.

2. The *Lamentacio prisonarij* and *spoliacio*, or Complaint (lines 36–119): Here he expands on his sufferings, including his abandonment by his friends and his utter impoverishment. He enlarges on his only hope, God Himself. He is not yet reconciled to his fate, however, and starts over, recounting the events that led up to his predicament from his early youth, protesting repeatedly his innocence of any wrongdoing. His interim conclusion is that he will learn to suffer patiently in order to profit his soul. He determines to write about this, in spite of his lack of rhetorical skills.

3. The Body, or Lesson (lines 120–308): He begins with an apostrophe to mankind, evoking the opening of Boethius' *Consolation* in the first stanza. His primary lesson, that suffering purifies the soul and makes it more pleasing to God, is more Christian than Boethian, as is evidenced by his calling up the names of Jesus, Mary, John the disciple, John the Baptist, and finally Job (this last, the only Old Testament figure, is by implication the present model of his own suffering). He concludes this section (lines 281–308) by "proving" that riches come, "nat by labour / Oonly, but to hym that God lyst shew [decides to show] favour" (lines 293–94), and he ends with a prayer.

4. *L'envoy*, or Leave-taking (lines 309–43): The end is not the end, however, as Ashby adds an envoy (literally a "sending off"), which, as is usual, begins with an address to the work ("Go . . . ," as in the ending to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*). This provides the opportunity for the author to display once again his humility ("I am no clerk" [i.e., not educated, line 316]) and to request correction by future readers, and their prayers. The fact that this section closes with the sort of valediction common to medieval letters (a kind of literary "signature"), including the date, suggests that the poem was written as a supplication for mercy from the powerful lord (or king?) who had imprisoned him.

5. The *Explicit*, or Closing (lines 344–50): The *explicit* is a tacked-on proverbial coda from which his lesson of patience is surprisingly absent.

Other works Ashby is known to have composed include *Active Policy of a Prince* and *Dicta et opiniones diversorum philosophorum* (Dicts and Sayings of Various Philosophers), which may be two parts of one work. The former (918 lines written in rhyme royal stanzas) offers advice intended, according to the Latin preface to the poem, for the eldest son of Henry VI (Edward, prince of Wales). Though not a great one, Ashby clearly considered himself a poet of some talent. In the prologue to *Policy*, he names John Gower, Geoffrey Chaucer, and John Lydgate as the

> Primier poetes of this nacion,
> Embelysshing oure englisshe tendure algate,
> Firste finders to our consolacion

Off Fresshe, douce englisshe and formacion *[sweet; composition]*
Of newe balades, not vsed before *[poems]*
By whome we all may haue lernyng and lore.[3]

He laments their deaths and prays for their souls. All this is a way of introducing himself, aged eighty, and repeating the *topos* of the unworthy poetic follower of former greatness. (He does not mention the poet Thomas Hoccleve, though he may well have known his poetry.)[4] However, when he claims that his English is poor ("thaugh all thyng*es* be nat made perfyte / Nor swetely englisshed to youre pleasance, / I byseche you hertely to excuse it," *Policy*, lines 36–38), that he is not much of a poet ("I have no termes of eloquence," *Complaint*, line 116), that he has no experience in writing poetry ("I haue of makynge [composing] none assurance, / Nor of balades haue experience," *Policy*, lines 40–41), and that he has not read much ("I haue not seien scripture [writing] / Of many book*es* right sentenciall [serious], / In especial of the gloses [commentaries] sure," *Policy*, lines 50–52), we can be quite sure that he is showing off his skills at these *topoi,* not expressing his humility.

The idea of poetry in the fifteenth century was inseparable from that of translation. Chaucer was lauded as much for his reputation as a great translator as for that as a great poet. Ashby in his turn undertakes to translate a Latin text, the *Dicta et opiniones diversorum philosophorum*, a collection of versified proverbial material in Latin translated into 1263 lines of rhyme royal verse. (Short paragraphs of Latin prose alternate with single stanzas of English, yet another example of the medieval love of works in mixed forms, all, perhaps, intended to follow his *Policy* and be part of it.) Nor was he the only translator of this text, which, like Boethius' *Consolation*, was translated repeatedly. It is worth noting that in all his surviving work he wrote in the same form: rhyme royal.

Manuscript Context

The *Complaint of a Prisoner in the Fleet 1463* (*IMEV* 437) survives in only one manuscript, Trinity College, Cambridge MS R.3.19, an anthology of vernacular poetry from the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, primarily written by a scribe who worked with the "Hammond Scribe" and thus datable approximately to the reign of Edward IV (1461–83).[5] Ashby's poem

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[3] From *Active Policy of a Prince*, lines 2–7, ed. Bateson.

[4] See Meyer-Lee, pp. 702–05.

[5] For the "Hammond Scribe," see most recently (summarizing earlier scholarship) Linne R. Mooney, "A New Manuscript by the Hammond Scribe Discovered by Jeremy Griffiths," in *The English Medieval Book: Studies in Memory of Jeremy Griffiths*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards, Vincent Gillespie, and Ralph Hanna

(fols. 41r–45v) follows an English version in rhyme royal of the tale of Guiscardo and Ghismonda, taken from Boccaccio's *Decameron* (day 4, tale 1) and is followed by a series of blanks (46r–48v), suggesting that the copyist felt that these two items belonged together. The Boccaccio story involves the imprisonment and death of a lady's lover by a cruel father, her own ensuing suicide, and the father's death (presumably because of his evil actions). John Scattergood places the poem in the "Chaucerian and Lydgatian tradition of English high-style writing." He suggests that the "wrongful imprisonment" of Ashby fits well with this tale of innocence wronged and was placed next to it intentionally.

Our editorial procedure for Ashby's poem differs slightly from that used in the other poems in this volume (see p. 12, above). While we transcribed *on̄* as *oun* in other instances, here we have regarded this mark as otiose and ignored it on the basis of internal spelling practices and the very convincing final stanza where expansion of such marks would affect the rhyme (*thereon* in line 345 has no macron over the *n*, while the rhyme words *castigacion* and *probacion* in lines 347–48 do). More problematic has been the treatment of curled *r*, which we have expanded to *re* in all instances but two: *modyr* (line 14) and *other* (line 36).

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George Ashby, *Complaint of a Prisoner in the Fleet 1463*

Prohemium Unius Prisonarij

At the ende of somere, when wynter began,
And trees, herbes, and flowres dyd fade,
Blosteryng and blowyng, the gret wyndes than
Threw doune the frutes with whyche they were lade, *loaded*
5 Levyng theym sone bare of that whyche they hade, *soon*
Afore Myghelmas, that tyme of season, *Michaelmas (29 September)*
I was commyttyd geynst ryght and reason, *against*

Into a pryson, whos name the Flete hight, *is called*
By a gret commaundment of a lord
10 To whom I must obey for hys gret myght
Though I cannat therto sadly acord; *seriously agree*
Yet I must hyt for a lesson record,
Theryn abydyng without help singlere *without any help*
Sauf of God and Hys blessyd modyr there. *Except*

15 But oth or other declaracion[1]
Coude at no season be herd ne takyn,
By no prayer ne exhortacion, *neither . . . nor*
But of all pité and grace forsakyn,
Myne enemyes on me awakyn, *awakened against me*
20 Takyng awey hors, money, and goodes,
Pullyng myn houses downe and gret woodes.

Because of my draught and my bryngyng up *training; upbringing*
I have suffryd thys and other spoylyng, *ruin*
Nat levyng me worth a dyssh neyther cup *leaving; nor a cup*

---

[1] Lines 15–16: *But [except for them] no oath or declaration [of my worth to the king or the state] / Could be heard or taken down [in written form from such a supporter or reference] at any time*

25	Of as moche as myght com to theyre handlyng,	
	Puttyng on me many fals lesyng	*lies*
	Whyche I must suffyr and bere on my ruge	*bear on my back*
	Tyll the trouth discussyd hath God or the juge.	*Until the truth; judge*
	George Asshby ys my name, that ys greved	
30	By emprysonment a hoole yere and more,	*whole year*
	Knowyng no meane there to be releved,	*means from which*
	Whyche grevyth myn hert hevyly and sore,	
	Takyng hyt for my chastysement and lore,	*and teaching*
	Besechyng God I may take my dysease	*discomfort*
35	In dew pacience oure lord God to please.	*due*
	Oon thyng among other greveth me sore,	*One*
	That myn old acqueintaunce disdeyned me	*friends*
	To vysyte — though I have doon to theym more	*visit [in prison]*
	Kyndnes — forgetyng me, and let me be,	
40	Ne yevyng me comfort, ne wold me se,	*giving; nor would see me*
	Ne the werkes of mercy remembryng,	
	Ne my kyndnes to theym before shewyng.[1]	
	The grettest peyne that I suffyr of all	
	Ys that I am put to unpayable det,	*debt*
45	Lykly to be therfore a wrechyd thrall	*slave (servant)*
	For the enprisonment that I am in set	
	Without Goddes grace, woll hyt sonner let!	*end*
	Whereopon to God I clepe, call, and cry	*appeal, call [out]*
	To help me out of det or I dy.	*debt ere (before)*
50	What may I do? To whom shall I compleyn	
	Or shew my trouble or myne hevynes,	
	Beyng in pryson wrongfully, certeyn?	
	But with dylygence and gret besynes	*activity (endeavor)*
	I beseche God of Hys gret worthynes	
55	Me to guyde and rewle to Hys most plesaunce	*greatest pleasure*
	And of my wrong to have humble suffraunce.	*tolerance*

[1] *Nor [remembering] my showing kindness to them before*

I gan remembre and revolve in mynde
My bryngyng up from chyldhod hedyrto — *hitherto*
In the hyghest court that I coude fynd
60 With the kyng, quene, and theyre uncle also,
The duk of Gloucetre, God hem rest do! — *(i.e., Duke Humphrey)*
With whom I have be cherysshed ryght well — *By whom; been valued*
In all that was to me nedefull every dell, — *in everything*

Wrytyng to theyre sygnet full fourty yere — *Signet*
65 As well beyond the see as on thys syde, — *(i.e., in France)*
Doyng my servyce as well there as here,
Nat sparyng for to go ne for to ryde, — *to walk [to them] nor*
Havyng pen and inke evyr at my syde,
As truly as I coude to theyre entent — *purpose*
70 Redy to acomplysshe theyre commandment.

And in theyr servyce I spendyd all my youth,
And now in pryson throwen in myn age
Havyng of me no pyté ne routh, — *pity nor ruth*
Revylyng me with unfyttyng langage — *Reviling*
75 As thaugh I were neyther wytty ne sage — *clever nor wise*
Whyche grevyd me sore and was gretly sad — *and [I] was very sad*
To be in povert and of goodes bad — *poverty; poor in goods*

That before was well in goodes and rest
And no man was ayenst me dysplesyd, — *against*
80 And all my dayes was among the best.
And so no creature me dyseasyd — *discomforted*
But at all tymes with me were pleasyd,
Thaugh Fortune lyst make me ryght sory, — *very unhappy*
Shewyng that thys welth ys transytory. — *happiness*

85 Yef I had in youth suffred any payne — *If*
By lake of goodes or takyng hardnes, — *enduring difficulty*
I myght the better from tene me refreyne — *grief*
And take my fall the better in swetnes. — *with sweet disposition*
God for Hys hyghe grace and gret worthynes
90 Counseyll me in my trobyll for the best,
That I may leve hens in quyet and rest. — *live henceforth*

	Now me thynketh well, yef I had ben evyr	*if I had always been*
	In prosperyté and in worldly joy	
	And theryn to have abydyn levyr	*to have preferred to stay*
95	Then to have tastyd of thys peynfull noy —	*suffering (annoyance)*
	I cast me nat to be neyther styll ne coy,	*intend*
	But say as me thynketh in verray soth —	*very truth*
	To have chaungyd my lyf I had be loth,	
	And my wrechydnes nat to know evyn	
100	So well as by Goddes grace I shall,	
	And the best lyfe take and the wors levyn	*worst leave*
	In consyderall that I am mortall,	*consideration*
	And so to obey Hym that ys eternall	
	And to chaung my lyf to God greable	*pleasing*
105	Both in pacyence and in feyth stable.	
	Knowyng in serteyn that my punysshyng	*for certain*
	Ys other whyle for my soule profytable,	*sometimes*
	For a soth in Goddes vengeance ceasyng	*For truly*
	Unto Goddes plesure ryght acceptable,	
110	By meke pacyence to vertu able,	*able to be virtuous*
	Wherfore punysshment ys other whyle good	
	As well to low degré as to hygh blode.	
	I thynke to wryte of trouble rehersall,	*[an] account*
	How hyt may be takyn in pacyence,	*borne*
115	Procedyng theryn for myn acquytall,	*acquittal*
	Though I have no termes of eloquence	
	With that I may conclude perfyte sentence,	*With which*
	Wherfore I counseyll aftyrwordes thyse	
	Every man to be lernyd on thys wyse:	*in this way*
120	O thow creature, of nature ryght noght,	*by your nature worth nothing*
	Remembre thysylf, thy lyf, thy demert,	*lack of merit*
	Yef thow to pryson or trouble be broght,	
	Haply by gret wrong, and nat of desert,[1]	

[1] *By chance by great wrong, and not because [you] deserve [it]*

Suffryng injury and ryght peynfull smert.
125 Kepe pacience and wyte hyt thyne offence — *impute it [to] your*
Nat for that sylf thyng but of just sentence.[1]

Or peraventure thow mayst ryghtfully — *perhaps*
Come to trouble or tribulacion;
Yet I counseyll thee suffyr hyt wylfully, — *gladly*
130 Without fenyng or simulacion, — *feigning or playing a part*
Nat thee exaltyng by elacion. — *raising yourself up in arrogance*
And thus pacience may thee well preserve
From gostly sorow, yef thow thys observe. — *spiritual; if*

And so, by proces of suffraunce long, — *long suffering*
135 Thow mayst atteyne to verrey knowlege — *true*
Of thy demeryt, and vengeance prolong — *sin, and delay [God's] vengeance*
By thy lamentyng and prayer mekeleche, — *meek*
And so at last comfort have trewleche — *truly*
As well here as hense, by Goddes hyghe grace, — *hereafter*
140 And peraventure within lytyll space. — *perhaps; time*

And as precyous gold ys thorough puryd — *purified throughout*
By foull metall, led, and claryfyed, — *lead*
Ryght so ys the sowle by trowbyll curyd — *cured (cleansed)*
And by humble prose hygh gloryfyed,
145 As in the scrypture ys specyfyed.
So for soules helth hyt ys a gret grace
To have here trouble rather then solace. — *than*

What ys trouble or trybulacyon,
Vexed wrongfully, or worldly disease,
150 Lyvyng here without consolacion,
But callyng of God hymself for to please?
Wherfore hyt ys best, for thy soules ease,
Rather of trouble be mery and glad
Than therof be grogyng, hevy, and sad. — *grudging, sorrowful*

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[1] *Not for the same thing (i.e., the offence) but [out] of a just sentence [for your sins generally]*

155 Who may have more hevynes and sorow
Then to be welthy and aftyr nedefull? *Than; afterwards*
Furst to be ryche, aftyr redy to borow?
Furst prosperous and aftyr carefull? *full of care*
Who ys more comfortable and joyfull?
160 Then take the world in pacyence and worth,
Suffryng hit to com and goo playnly forth. *Allowing; steadily*

Set thee nevyr thy full wyll here
In worldly joy and in felycyté,
For all dayes, thow mayst both see and here *every day; hear*
165 In all thy lyfe there ys contraryté:
Yef thow be ryche, thow hast adversyté.
Yef thow have a feyre wyfe and gret plenté, *beautiful*
Moche sorow peraventure ys sent thee. *by chance*

Yef thow lak a wyfe, to thy freelté *mortality (subject to sinfulness)*
170 Ryght thoutfull thow art, carfull and pensyf. *Very solicitous*
Yef thow lyve aftyr censualyté, *sensuality*
That ys acursyd and unthryfty lyf. *unvirtuous*
Yef thow be weddyd without any stryf, *contention*
Thow lakkest chyldren to be thyne heyres, *heirs*
175 Lesyng thy name in market and feyres. *Losing; fairs*

Yef thow have chyldren ryght plenteuously,
Haply suche may be theyre governaunce
That they woll dysplese ryght grevously.
Yef thow be set in holy observaunce, *(a career in the Church)*
180 Peraventure thow hast no temperaunce. *self-restraint*
Yef thow be set in temporalyté, *a temporal career [outside the Church]*
Thy lust ys in spyrytualyté.

Yef thow be wele, haply thow lackest good. *in good health; wealth*
Yef thow have good, thow suffrest gret sekenes. *sickness*
185 Thus welth ebbeth and floweth as the flood:
Never welthy but som maner dystres,
Nevyr so mery but som hevynes. *sadness*
Oon thyng lakkyng aftyr thyne apetyte, *desire*
Nat all thynges beyng in plesaunt plite. *condition [at once]*

190 Yef thow be forth at large out of pryson,
Thow mayst have sorow ynowgh and gret wrong. *enough*
Yef thow be ryght welthy for the seson, *very*
Many pluckers-at thow mayst have and strong. *sycophants*
Prosperyté here shall never endure long;
195 So evyr whyle thow art on erth lyvyng,
Som maner thyng lakketh to thy plesyng.

Wenest thow to have here perfeccion *Do you expect*
Of worldly joy, comfort, and delyces? *delights*
Nay, bettyr ys sharp persecucion
200 For thy synnes, offenses, and vyces,
Kepyng pacience without malyces,
Puttyng thy wyll to Goddes volunté, *God's will*
So thy spyryt may best in quyet be. *at peace*

Thynke that thy lyfe here ys but pilgremage
205 Towardes the Hygh Place celestiall;
Wherfore for any trouble or damage
Preve nat thysylf lewde and eke bestiall, *Do not show yourself [to be]*
Syth thow mayst be in Hevyn menyall *[a] menial*
Servaunt thorough thy tryumphall victory
210 By mekenes and werkes merytory. *meritorious works*

Thow canst nat be so pryvé ne secret *private (concealed)*
But God ys there present and knoweth all thyng;
Therfore be evyr wytty and dyscret, *always prudent*
Nat for to do ne say Hym dysplesyng, *[anything] displeasing [to] Him*
215 But as thow woldest before Hym beyng.[1]
So by mekenes take all thyng for the best
What that God sendeth, trouble or unrest. *Whatever*

Thynke that worldes welth and felycyté
Ys nat evermore in oon abydyng, *continuance*
220 But transitory ys prosperyté,
And no certeynté whyle thow art lyvyng, *And [there is]*

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[1] *But [act] as you would [if you] were before Him*

But evyr as a whele turnyng and mevyng, *wheel*
Knowyng for certayn that thow art mortall
And never in thys world verray rest have shall. *true*

225 Wytnes of oure Lord all-myghty Jhesu,
Suffryng reproves and vexacion *dishonors*
Thowgh He were clennest in lyf and vertu, *purest*
Yet no man suffred suche trybulacion;
And all was for oure alther salvacion, *universal*
230 Yevyng us example for to take trouble *Giving; to consider*
In worth, syth He hath suffred the double. *As having merit*

What suffred Mary, the quene of Hevyn,
Most pure, most clennyst, without any syn,
Claryfyed from the synnys sevyn? *seven [deadly] sins*
235 Ever to plese Jhesu she wold nat blyn, *cease*
How be hyt that feare and tene she was in, *However much; suffering*
Mornyng, sorowyng, evyr in drede *Mourning; fear*
To opteyne the love of Jhesu and hyr mede. *obtain; reward*

What sey ye of Seynt John the Evangelist,
240 Of many martyrs and eke confessours, *also*
Of holy vyrgyns and Seynt John Baptist,
That here in thys lyfe suffred many shours, *conflicts*
Nat desyryng therof worldly succours, *assistance*
Refusyng all worldly joy and plesaunce,
245 And all trowble for God take in sufferaunce?

Of Job to suffyr take thow example,
Whyche pacyently suffred hys gret smert. *Who; pain*
Who had in thys world of losse more ample?
Yet for Goddes sake he plesyd in hert *he [was] pleased*
250 With hys trowbelous hurt, put out in desert
As fowle, vyle, abhomynable, and wreche, *and wretched*
Takyng hyt in gre, and therof nold reche. *with good will; would not mind it*

And so to procede in the pacience
Of seyntes and make therof rehersall, *give an account*
255 That suffred trowbyll without resystence,

They be infynyte to be wretyn all: *limitless*
Hyt suffyseth to touche the principall *main examples*
To thy lernyng and informacion *For your*
To be of pacyent condicion. *disposition*

Ryght so kyng, quene, duke, prynce, and emperoures,
Erle, baron, lord, knyght, and many squyers
Bysshop, abbot, pryour, and conquerours,
And many gret estates and rewlours, *rulers*
Clerkes, marchauntes, and eke counseylours
Have be put in trouble and gret grevaunce
For theyre soules helth by humble sufferaunce.

Was there ever lord so gret and so sure,
Or any gret clerk lernyd in the law
That may nat fall in the snare and in the lure
Of trouble, maugré hys hed and hys maw? *in spite of; face*
Wherfore hyt may be a lawdabyll saw, *saying*
Every man worshyp God in hys season, *in his time*
Accordyng to hys law, trouth, and reason.

Every man may take example and hede *heed*
By suche men of good disposicion,
And by lernyd men that can teche and rede, *advise*
To conforme hym to lyk affeccion, *maintain himself in similar desire*
To have of pacience perfeccion, *perfect patience*
To take trouble in worth and in gre *worthily and willingly*
As other men have do in liberté. *freely*

In conclusion, of the verrey trouth,
Every man other favoure and socoure *offers support and assistance*
And of hys trouble have pyté and routh, *commiseration*
And the blessyd men helpe and eke honoure, *worthy*
Doyng youre dylygence and peynfull laboure *hard work*
The vertuous pepyll for to cherysshe,
Suffryng the wykkyd rather to perysshe.

That all pacience, riches, and science *wealth, and knowledge*
Com oonly of God and noon othere

290 Hyt may be provyd by experience,
As oon ryche, another pore hys brothere:
The ryche slepeth, the pore laboreth undere, *under [the rich]*
So that ryches cometh nat by labour
Oonly, but to hym that God lyst shew favour. *chooses [to] show*

295 And syth all thynges com of Jhesu
And nothyng without Hym may avayle, *may be done*
I beseche Hym, so full of vertu,
To guyde me, rule me, and counsayle,
That by pacience I may wyn batayle
300 Of my troubles and have the vyctory,
Thorough my symple werkes merytory. *humble; meritorious*

And with humylyté and soburnes, *earnestness*
With fervent love and feythfull reverence,
I beseche Thee God, of Thy worthynes,
305 Yeve me grace, comfort, and assistence, *Give*
Good wyll, good werkes, good thought, and eloquence,
With love, charyté, and feyth, Thee to please,
That I may dwell in Hevyn at myn ease. Amen.

L'envoy Goo forth, lytyll boke, mekely, without rous, *boasting*
310 To folk troubelyd and vexed grevously,
Steryng theym by thy counseil vertuous *Guiding*
To kepe pacience thereyn joyously,
Redyng thys tretyse forth seryously,
By the whyche they shall fynde grace as I suppose
315 To comfortable entent and purpose. *consoling intent*

Besechyng all folk, though I am no clerk,
For to undyrstand that I nat presume
To take opon me labour of thys werk
For worldly glory and thank to assume, *to look for thanks*
320 But vertu to encrese and lewdnes consume, *ignorance destroy*
And namely to take trowble in suffraunce, *with forbearance*
Paciently for deservyd penaunce.

Also undyr protestacion
That I wyll nat kepe presumptuosly — *hold*
325 Any erroure or feynyd opinion, — *false*
But me to theym conforme graciously — *will be obedient to those*
That of hygh connyng have plenteuously, — *wisdom have abundance*
Besechyng theym my defaut to correct — *mistakes*
Yef any be, and nat to me hyt to arect. — *blame me for it*

330 But my dylygence and good wyll to accept
Into theyre favour, support, and goodnesse,
And in no maner me therof except, — *exclude*
Though I have offendyd in my lewdnesse, — *ignorance*
Unadvised and nat of wylfulnesse, — *on purpose*
335 Kepyng evermore vertuous entent
With discrecion that God hath me sent.

Wretyn in pryson in oure Lordes date
A thowsand, foure hundryd, syxty and thre, — *(i.e., 1463)*
Thus occupying me thys was my fate,
340 Besechyng Thee, oure Lord God in Trynyté,
To take my makyng in plesure and gre, — *poem*
And therto have mannys benyvolence — *good will*
To Thyne owne preysyng, laude, and reverence. Amen.

Explicit Pryson propurly ys a sepulture — *actually; tomb*
345 Of lyvyng men with strong lokkes thereon, — *locks*
Fortyfyed without any rupture, — *breach*
Of synners a gret castigacion,
Of feythfull frendes a probacion, — *testing*
Of fre liberté a sharp abstinence,
350 Lackyng volunté for theyre dew penaunce. — *[the] will; due*

Explanatory Notes to Complaint of a Prisoner in the Fleet 1463

1–119 The opening two sections of the poem seem to be modeled on the first few sections of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy,* in which he complains to Lady Philosophy about the particulars of his situation.

1–14 The poem opens, as many late medieval English poems do, with a description of nature that has a direct relationship to the situation in which the speaker finds himself; the opening to Chaucer's *CT* is the most famous of such prologues, but, unlike Chaucer, Ashby chooses not a spring song, but a scene of blustery early autumn, when the natural world appears to be dying, an appropriate metaphor for a year-long imprisonment. So also Lydgate's *TG*, whose introduction sets the scene in mid-December, and later, Henryson's introduction to the *Testament of Cresseid.*

9 *a gret commaundment of a lord.* We have no way of knowing who sent Ashby to prison. It may even have been the king himself, who was, of course, the greatest of all earthly lords.

15–16 Ashby's point is that no one has come forward to help him in his need; Christ and the Virgin Mary (line 14) are his only consolation.

21–22 *houses . . . woodes. / Because of my draught and my bryngyng up.* The mention of houses in the plural and large trees suggests that Ashby was a well-off man; that his training and upbringing caused his misfortune suggests that a motive of his enemies might have been not just his political allegiance but perhaps jealousy or greed.

22 The word *draught* here means upbringing, too, perhaps in these instances meaning the political climate in which he was raised, favoring and serving the Lancastrian over the Yorkist faction in the Wars of the Roses.

35 *pacience.* This is the first mention of a concept that will become a recurrent theme, tolling like a bell throughout the later lines of the poem. John Scattergood points out that the autobiographical and the devotional/homiletic modes meet and mingle

in this part of the poem, pointing to the "four types of assaults on a man" against which Chaucer's Parson arrays "foure manere of paciences" ("The Virtue of Patience," pp. 271–72).

36–42 David Lawton quotes these lines, commenting on their similarity to Hoccleve's description of being shunned by fellow clerks of the Privy Seal after his illness: "It is all but a direct quotation from Hoccleve's account of his nervous breakdown in his *Complaint*. We can scarcely conclude that Ashby's disappointment in his friends is merely conventional, not autobiographical. We may feel compelled to acknowledge that both Hoccleve's lament and Ashby's are in some sense paradigmatic, an appropriate Boethian suffering relayed through the *Moralia in Job*; but we have no cause to doubt its authenticity" (p. 773).

41 *werkes of mercy*. The seven (corporal) works of mercy are feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, harboring the stranger, visiting the sick, ministering to prisoners, and burying the dead. See Jeffrey, pp. 498–500.

44 *unpayable det*. Note that the debt is, at least in part, a result of the imprisonment, not the cause of it, since prisoners in the Fleet were often made to pay for their own maintenance.

50 At this point the speaker has reached the logical end of his train of thought. Now he must figure out who is ultimately to blame if he is to resolve the pain of the injustice he is suffering. He begins this exploration of his situation in the next stanza, beginning, as we so often do, with his childhood.

57–70 Ashby had been a clerk of the Office of the Signet, as he says here, for forty years; that is, the whole of the reign of Henry VI (from infancy) and his wife Margaret of Anjou. Here he points out that he had been one of the clerks who travelled with the king and queen even when they were abroad (when they took only a few of their most trusted clerks with them).

61 *The duk of Gloucetre*. Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, was the brother of Henry V and the uncle of Henry VI, who became king at the age of only nine months when his father succumbed to dysentery on the battlefield in France. Gloucester shared the running of the kingdom during Henry's minority with his brother John, duke of Bedford, who was largely responsible for the conduct of the war in France, so it was natural that, as a clerk in the Signet Office, Ashby would have worked for him until Henry VI was old enough to be crowned king of England. A number of

writers addressed works to Gloucester, including John Lydgate and Thomas Hoccleve.

68 The image of Ashby "having pen and ink ever at his side" is very similar to the image of Chaucer with pencase (or "penner") hung around his neck (as in British Library MS Harley 4866) or held in his hand (the Harvard University, Houghton Library, portrait, used as the frontispiece for *The Riverside Chaucer*; or the Sloane portrait, National Portrait Gallery no. 532, among others) to signal his profession. For reproductions see Derek Pearsall's "Appendix I: The Chaucer Portraits," in his *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), esp. pp. 286, 298–302.

83 *Fortune*. This is the only mention of Fortune in the poem. Ashby actually removes Fortune as the agent that stands between God and man, seeming to act capriciously but actually carrying out God's will. Instead he deals directly with the relationship between God and man and man's responsibility to accept God's will without hesitation if he is to find peace in this world.

84 *welth*. The modern reader might be excused for thinking that the author was obsessed with wealth, but *welth* means not only monetary possession but happiness, good fortune, and prosperity in the broadest sense.

85–91 *Yef I had in youth suffred any payne . . . I may leve hens in quyet and rest.* Boethius makes this argument to Lady Philosophy: if I had not had it so good, I would not be suffering so much now that I have lost everything. We are meant to see the flaw in this argument immediately.

106–07 One of Lady Philosophy's final lessons is that ill fortune is really good fortune, for it teaches endurance. See here lines 134–35 and 153. Of course all fortune is ultimately illusory in this scheme of things, as we see in lines 160–61.

120–26 With this opening apostrophe (*O thow creature*, line 120), the speaker takes on the role of Lady Philosophy, who tells Boethius that he has forgotten who he is (1.pr2 and pr6), that is, a creature (creation) of God.

145 *As in the scrypture ys specyfyed.* Bateson (p. 5) suggests Zacharias 13:9 and Jeremias 6:30 as the passages to which Ashby probably refers. With his rhymes on *gloryfyed/specyfyed*, Ashby is showing off his ability to write Latinate verse (see also lines 224–29, 275–78, etc.).

155–203 One measure of Ashby's skill as a poet is his ability to handle the rhyme-royal stanza. In these seven stanzas he balances a series of oppositions and contrasts in an everchanging pattern that maintains the reader's interest through their varying rhythms and rhymes. (This kind of discourse is common in late medieval verse but is more usually arranged in couplets.) The odd number of lines in a rhyme-royal stanza lends itself to the kind of complicated patterns Ashby creates. First he states the overall problem in the first two (unrhymed) lines of the stanza: who suffers more than the privileged who are brought low? Then he restates the problem in a pair of 1-line rhetorical questions (lines 157–60, balanced in the next stanza [lines 166–67] by two lines beginning "Yef . . ."). He then follows two 2-line problems with a 3-line problem (lines 169–75). In the next stanza, he reverses the disposition of the matter over the verse-lines, beginning with a 3-line problem that matches the closing problem of the previous stanza, following it with two 2-line pairs (lines 176–82). Finally, he opens a stanza (lines 183–89) with a pair of "Yef . . ." lines, then concludes with a generalization (*Thus welth ebbeth and floweth as the flood*, line 185), which introduces the medieval version of the old rhyme "As a rule a man's a fool / When it's hot he wants it cool" (lines 186–96). Nor is he yet done, for he adds one more stanza (lines 197–203) that divides 2/3/2—a new pattern.

173 *weddyd without any stryf.* This line and the following simply name another inexplicable juxtaposition of contrasts, the happiness of a peaceful marriage with the sorrow of childlessness, without suggesting that there is a cause-effect relation between them.

175 If you are childless, you will be talked about widely (mocked) behind your back (i.e., at markets and fairs). Fairs, which are markets, brought people together who exchanged gossip as well as money and goods. That said, the poet's choice of the word *feyres* might have arisen from his need for a rhyme.

204 *lyfe here ys but pilgremage.* A reference to the common idea, borrowed ultimately from St. Augustine's *City of God,* that life on this earth is a journey toward one of two cities, the City of God, which is Heaven, or the city of the devil, Hell. Guillaume de Deguilleville wrote three long works based on this idea: *The Pilgrimage of the Soul*, *The Pilgrimage of Human Life* (or Man's Life), and *The Pilgrimage of Jesus Christ*. The first of these was hugely influential in the later Middle Ages all over Europe. Lydgate's translation of it may have been known to Ashby. Egeus in Chaucer's Knight's Tale also expresses this idea: "This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo, / And we been pilgrymes, passynge to and fro" (*CT* I[A]2848–49).

222 *a whele turnyng and mevyng*. Fortune returns here briefly and indirectly in the form of her wheel.

239 *Seynt John the Evangelist*. The writer of the Gospel of John, often supposed to be Jesus' beloved disciple (see John 19:26). He is also traditionally identified with the writer of 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Apocalypse.

241 *Seynt John Baptist*. John the Baptist was the son of Mary's cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:5–80). He preached to the people concerning the coming of Jesus, and later baptized Him (Luke 3:1–38).

246 *Job*. The subject of the Old Testament book of Job, he was "tempted by God" at the suggestion of Satan. In order to prove that he would not renounce Him, God sent a series of calamities to Job, culminating in sores on his body and a group of friends who mocked him for his steadfastness in the face of suffering. We still speak of someone who has "the patience of Job."

270 *maugré hys hed and hys maw*. A proverbial expression that took many forms: maugre his visage, maugre his cheeks, etc. See Whiting M421.

271–73 This proverb (related to Whiting E169) derives ultimately from Ecclesiastes 3:1–15.

281–87 Here again Ashby shows his mastery of the rhyme-royal stanza. He balances *blessyd* (line 284) against *wykkyd* (line 287), while devoting the five middle lines to the good, alloting only one (the last) to the evil, and contrasting the two nicely in the closing couplet.

293 *ryches cometh nat by labour*. Here Ashby presents the flip side of his argument about injustice (and one not always heard): just as the poor and the weak are unjustly served, so are the wealthy and the powerful.

299–300 *by pacience I may wyn batayle / Of my troubles and have the vyctory*. The idea of patience as a weapon is foreign to modern thought, but it was a living idea for Milton in the seventeenth century and to writers in the fourteenth (e.g., William Langland) and in the fifteenth.

309 ff. Envoys are common in late medieval French and English poetry. An envoy might conclude a short poem such as a ballade, where it might be addressed to the lady

to whom the lyric is addressed or to the lord of the *puy* or poetry contest in which it was presented. Longer poems also closed frequently with envoys, the best known probably being Chaucer's *TC* 5.1786: "Go, litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye." One of the closing rhetorical moves was often to ask the reader to correct what was defective in the work, as Ashby does in lines 328–29.

337–38 It is fairly unusual to find medieval poems that are signed and dated, though Charles d'Orléans did so, and John Gower, too, albeit by riddles. On the other hand, it is very common to end with a prayer. Scattergood suggests that the dating is a way of "seeking to ensure that he was not forgotten" (1993, p. 274).

344–50 The Explicit is remarkable in that it seems to depart from the message of the poem. If learning patience provides the way to overcome Fortune and reconcile oneself with God, it is difficult to see how prison can then be called a *sepulture* (line 344). It would appear that the lesson Ashby intends us to learn he has not yet completely internalized himself.

344 *propurly*. In this context it may mean simply "correctly" or "actually," but it may also have the further meaning "as I have experienced first hand" (see *MED propreli*[*e*, 1. [c]).

Textual Notes to Complaint of a Prisoner in the Fleet 1463

Abbreviations: **MS**: Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.19, fols. 41r–45v.

N.b.: Ferdinand Holthausen emended the text liberally to render the text more readable to his contemporaries. These emendations have not been listed in the textual notes.

Heading	*Prohemium Unius Prisonarij*. Rubricated in MS.
1	MS: In right margin, written in a later hand: *Written by George Asshby prisoner in the Fleet A.D. 1463*.
	At. MS: key letter but no initial.
8	MS: In right margin, rubricated: *Nomen prisone*.
21	*woodes*. *wordes*. Emended by Holthausen, with probable error marked in the notes by Bateson and Förster.
22	MS: In right margin, rubricated: *Spoliacio Prisonarij*.
25	MS: In right margin, rubricated: *Nomen Prisonarij*.
36	MS: In left margin, rubricated: *Lamentacio prisonarij*.
47	*Without Goddes grace*. We here agree with Förster's punctuation of this line, for logical reading's sake: the imprisonment itself occurred without God's grace (punctuating first half of the line to go with preceding line 47); its sooner ending will occur *with* God's grace, not without it (as would be the meaning without medial punctuation).
57	MS: In left margin, rubricated: *Servicium prisonarij*.
70	MS: This line appears at the beginning of the thirteenth stanza, just prior to line 85 on fol. 42r. Below and to the left of line 69 on fol. 41v is written a minuscule *a* to indicate the insertion point for the missing line, corresponding to a minuscule *b* to the left of the line on fol. 42r. That is, this stanza as written in the MS has only six lines and the thirteenth has eight lines. On possible explanations for this error, which are probably due to the change of copyists between folios, see Livingston.
85	See textual note to line 70, above.
92	*thynketh*. MS: *thyg thynketh*, with *thyg* marked for deletion.
95	*noy*. MS: *nay*.
99	*nat*. MS: *na*.
108	*a soth*. Förster and Holthausen read *aseth*, Bateman *a feth*.

120 MS: In left margin, rubricated in a frame, *Ad sustinendum pacienciam in adversis.*
183 *be wele*. MS: *beseke* (so emended as "be well" by all previous editors, for sense).
277 *conforme*. MS: the *m* has an extra minim.

Complaint of a Prisoner against Fortune

Introduction

Following on from the writings of three named poets, the reader might feel a bit at sea in confronting a poem about whose author we know nothing — or do we? The speaker claims to be in prison as he writes, a man whose good name has been sullied (lines 64–70). In spite of the many friends he once had (lines 71–79), he is now entirely without friends; all have abandoned him (line 85). All this sounds much like George Ashby's complaints, and they may well be literally true, but we have no way of knowing whether we can trust these "biographical details" or whether a clever poet has created an air of verisimilitude to drive home his point that Fortune is fickle.

Still, because readers always have a strong preference for works attached to authors' names, scholars have suggested a variety of names for possible authors of this work: John Lydgate, Thomas Usk, George Ashby, Sir Richard Roos, or William de la Pole, the duke of Suffolk. None of their arguments has been considered conclusive enough to be generally accepted, so the work remains anonymous. We can learn a bit about the author's mind, however, by attending carefully to the poem. The author was educated enough to know some Latin (lines 35 and 42), something about the classical gods (Saturn and Mars, line 24), and the three Fates, Antropos, Cloto, and Lachesis (lines 47–58). He knew the ideas of the Boethian tradition, and he had probably read Chaucer. This all points to a literate and fairly well educated person. He was devout, concluding his arguments with a final plea to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

This poem may be divided into several parts. The first portion of the poem (lines 1–28) initiates a dialogue between Fortune and the prisoner, the prisoner complaining against Fortune and her three sisters, the Fates (or Parcae). Fortune answers his complaints in lines 29–42. Although the speaker opens with the address to Fortune, it is not until line 29 that we realize that this is something more than a metaphorical way of speaking. The writer creates the scenario of Boethian-style dialogue, but in a way without any real dialogue taking place. Fortune does not pick up the prisoner's appeal to the ill will of Saturn or Mars (clearly a fictional solution to the speaker's problems, since they were not "real" gods); instead, she appeals immediately to God, equating misfortune with punishment for sin (an idea that never arises in Boethius' discussion with Philosophy). Having given the prisoner this bracing (almost cruel) lesson, she now leaves it to him to work out his own solution to the Boethian problem. In the second portion (lines 43–118), the prisoner abandons his complaint, turns away from Fortune and the Fates, and accepts his unjust punishment as an affliction from God, which he must suffer in

order to pay for his sins and buy himself a shortened stay in Purgatory. The poet ends with a prayer to God and the Church to aid all who are unjustly punished and who repent of their sins (lines 119–40).

Despite first creating and then abandoning the dialogue, this anonymous poet comes the closest of all those represented in this volume to presenting the proper Boethian attitude toward Fortune, as taught by Lady Philosophy: "Farewele, Fortune, and do right as thee list [whatever you please]!" (line 43), he says, commending his soul to the protection of "God and Seynt Marie" (line 61). Admittedly, he follows this with a complaint about his loss of good name and friends, and his despair at being left entirely alone except for the echo of his own voice is heart-wrenching. He even indulges is a short vindictive fantasy (lines 92–99), but his rehearsal of his woes brings him back to his main point: "Fy on this world; it is but fantasie!" (line 99), which leads him into the same solution as that adopted by George Ashby: it is best to "suffre al adversité" (line 107), putting faith and fate in the hands of God.

Form

Though not a great poem, this is certainly a good one. The poet had a better sense of meter than many of his fellow poets and makes good use of the couplet that closes each stanza of rhyme royal. (It is worth comparing these conclusions to his stanzas to the couplets that close English sonnets in the following century.) There are interesting comparisons of theme and expression to be made between this complaint and Chaucer's ending to his *Troilus and Criseyde*, a work the poet surely knew.

Manuscript Context

The "Complaint of a Prisoner against Fortune" (*IMEV* 860) survives in a number of manuscripts derived from John Shirley, a London scribe of the middle of the fifteenth century who is responsible for preserving unique copies of minor works of Chaucer and his contemporaries and followers. Two of these manuscripts were written by the so-called Hammond Scribe who worked in London in the reign of Edward IV (1461–83) and had access to John Shirley's manuscripts after Shirley's death: British Library MSS Additional 34360 (fols. 19r–21v) and Harley 2251 (fols. 271r–273r); and the third is derived from another manuscript by Shirley: British Library MS Harley 7333 (fols. 30va–31ra). This poem was previously attributed to Chaucer as an extension to his short "Complaint to his Purse" (*IMEV* 3787) because it so appears in both of the manuscripts copied by the Hammond Scribe; that is, the "Complaint of a Prisoner against Fortune" follows the end of "Complaint to his Purse" without

a break, heading, or any indication of separation except "Amen" added to the end of the last line of the earlier poem.

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Complaint of a Prisoner against Fortune

[Prisoner]	Allas, Fortune, alas, what have I gilt	*done wrong*
	In prison thus to lye here desolate?	
	Artow the better thus to have me spilt?	*Are you; killed*
	Nay, nay, God wote, but for thow wilt debate	*knows, except*
5	With every wight, either erly or late,	*person*
	And art chaungeable eke as the mone:	*also; moon*
	From wele to woo thow bryngest a man ful soone.	*good fortune; in short time*
	For like a whele that tournyth ay aboute	*wheel; turns always*
	Now up, now downe, now est, west, north, and sowth,	
10	So farestow in oone; thow dryvest in and oute	*So do you all at once*
	As don these weders out of the wyndes mowth!	*weathers*
	In thee no trust is, thow art so selcowth	*uncanny (various)*
	And canst never stille there abide.	*unmoving*
	Whan men wene siker to be, thow makest hem to slyde.[1]	
15	I wote ful wele that lordis, princis, and kyng	
	Thow hast in his weele worse i-overthrowe.[2]	
	Thy condicioun is ever so varyeng	
	That now thow laughest and now thow makest a mowe.	*grimace*
	Allas, Fortune, who may thee trust and trowe?	*believe in*
20	But yit I thee pray, in som maner wise,	
	So torne thy whele that I may ones arise.[3]	
	But whom along it wore, now wolde I wite,	*whose fault it is; I wish I knew*
	That wrongfully I ly thus in prisoun:	*lie*

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[1] *When men believe [themselves] to be safe, you make them fall*

[2] Lines 15–16: *I know full well that you have taken lords, princes, and kings in their good fortune and overthrown them more severely [than me]*

[3] Lines 20–21: *But yet I pray to you, in some way, / So [that you might] turn your wheel that I might once arise*

Saturnus or Mars, I trowe I may it wite,[1]
25 Or som infortunate constellacioun.
But this I wote, as for a conclusioun, *know*
Be it by destyné or fortunate chaunce, *destiny*
In prison here I suffre moche myschaunce. *misfortune (affliction)*

[Fortune] Peas of thy wordis, that are both lewde and nyce! *Cease; ignorant and foolish*
30 Wenistow that God chastisith thee for nought? *Do you think; nothing*
Though thow be giltles, I graunt wele, in this wise, *guiltless; well, in this matter*
It is for synnes that thow hast afore wrought, *done before*
That now perauntre ful litel are in thi thought. *perhaps*
Thee for to gladde it is iwreten thus: *cheer; written*
35 *Maxima etenim morum semper paciencia virtus.*[2]

Thow wotist wele God chastiseth whom He lovith, *You know well*
That of His grace He graunte thee to be oon of tho *those*
Who that wilbe saved, hym behovith
To suffre in this world adversité or he go:[3]
40 Thus fortune grace wynne for present woo. *may earn grace*
The best conceyt that I can gyve thee, *advice*
Esto forti animo cum sis dampnatus inique.[4]

[Prisoner] Farwele, Fortune, and do right as thee list! *just as you wish*
Compleyne now wil I as to thi sustres thre *three sisters*
45 That whan I crept out of my moders chist, *chest (womb)*
Forthwith anon they shoope my destyné. *Immediately; shaped*
Cloto, com forth; what seystow? Late se. *do you say? Let's see*
Wiltow no lenger the state of my lif holde *Will you*
Or be my yeeris comen up that I die shuld?

50 If it be so the nombre of my dayes
Be comen up, that I may nat hem passe, *surpass*

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[1] *Saturn or Mars, I think I may know it [is one of them]*

[2] *"For truly the greatest virtue of character is always patience"*

[3] Lines 38–39: *It is necessary for him who would be saved / To suffer adversity in this world before he dies*

[4] *"Be strong in spirit since you will be condemned unjustly"*

Why ne had I than by other maner wayes — *then by any other ways*
Ordeyned me to dye in som other place, — *Brought it about that I should die*
And nat in prison? Is there non other grace? — *help*
55 Wil Lachesis my threde no lengger twyne? — *unwind*
Bestire thee, than, and al my sorwis fyne. — *Stir yourself; sorrows end*

And Antropos, that makith an end of al,
Cutte of the threde — wherto wiltow tarye? — — *off; why will you tarry*
And help me hens, sith I nedis shal, — *hence, since I must [apparently die here]*
60 That men to chirche my corps myght carye;
And my soule to God and Seynt Marie
I now betake, and pray hem to yeve me space — *hand over; enough time*
My rightes al to receyve or I hens passe. — *[Last] rights; before I hence*

The worst of al, that grevith me so sore, — *grieves*
65 Is that my fame is lost, and eke goode loos, — *good name; good reputation*
And spredith wide, ever lenger the more, — *more and more with time*
As wele among my friendis as my foos; — *well; foes*
For wykked sclaundre will in no wise be close, — *slander; no way be kept secret*
But with the wynges of envy fleeth aloft — *[slander] flies on high*
70 Thereas goode loos slepith and lith ful soft. — *Whereas; lies quiet*

Whan I was fre and in bounchief at ease, — *free and in prosperity*
In company over al where that I went, — *wherever I went*
No man sayde that I did hym displease,
Ne worthy was nothyng to be shent; — *Nor was at all worthy; punished*
75 And thus with faire wordes was I blent; — *blinded*
And he that sayde he wold me never faile,
I myght for hym chese to synke or saile. — *for all he cared choose*

They wold me nat oones yeve a draught of drynk, — *once give*
Ne say, "Friend, wiltow ought with me?" — *do you wish anything from me*
80 The soth is saide, suche frendship soone doth synk
That from his friend fleeth in adversité
And wil nat abide but in prosperité.
Suche feyned friendis, Lord, ther be ful many. — *feigned*
Fy on theyr flateryng! They are nat worth a peny!

85 I have no friende that wil me now visite
In prison here, to comfort of my care.
Of sorow inowgh, of joye I have but lite. *enough; little*
Farewele my blisse, farewele my welfare!
To telle my sorwe my wittes bien al bare.
90 There is no man can telle myn hevynesse *count (measure)*
Save only Ekko, that can bere me witnesse. *Echo*

Now and oure Lord, the kyng of blisse, Jhesus, *Now if our Lord*
Shuld with His fynger here on erth write
Amonges hem that me accusen thus,
95 I trowe they wold on me have litel dispite, *disdain*
And with theyr mowthis say right lite; *little*
No more than diden the men that soughten wreche *vengeance*
Upon the womman that taken was in spouse-breche. *adultery*

Fy on this world; it is but fantasie!
100 Swerte is none, in no degré ne state: *Surety (security)*
As wele a kyng as a knave shal dye,
Nat witeng where nor whan, erly nor late! *knowing*
Whan men beth myrriest, al day Deth sayth, "Chekmate!" *always*
There is no man shal alwey here abide: *always*
105 The richest man eke from his goode shal slyde. *goods shall fall*

Than best is this world to sette at nought *Then [it] is best*
And mekely suffre al adversité
That may us availe of synnes that we have wrought, *committed*
In mede encresyng or relesyng, pardé, *As a reward; truly*
110 Of peynes whiche in Purgatory be. *Of [the] pains*
And so I wil be glad, so God me save,
To soeffre men me wrongly to deprave. *suffer; condemn*

There is no more, I se now at ie; *nothing else; now clearly*
These feyned goddis and goddessis availe right nought. *feigned*
115 Fortune and eke thi sustres I defye, *thy sisters (Parcae)*
For I wil go to Hym that me hath wrought, *created*
To whom I pray and hath besowght *besought*
My synnes al that he wil reles; *will release (forgive)*
And furthermore I pray or I cease *ere (before)*

120	Al Holy Chirche, that is His verray spowse,	*true spouse*
	Benyngne Lord, kepe from al damage;	*Benign; harm*
	And make thy people for to be vertuous	
	Thee for to serve in every maner of age	
	With fervent love and hertis hole corage;	*heart's whole desire*
125	And al that erre, Lord, in any side,	*err, Lord, anywhere*
	Or Thow do right, late mercy be theyr guyde.	*Ere; let*
	And stidefastly Thow make us to persevere	
	In verray feyth, and Holi Chirche beleve,	
	And us to blisse brynge that lasstyth evere,	
130	And Marie us helpe, both morwe and eve,	
	And of this world whan we take oure leve,	
	Or that the Fiende oure soulis than be-trappe,	*Ere; then entrap*
	Help, blisful qwene, and kovere us with thy lappe.	*cover us with your skirt*
	Late nat be spilt that thy Sone dere hath bought	*killed those whom*
135	Upon the Crosse with deth and woundes smert;	*painful*
	And namly hym that his synnes hath forthought	*especially; repented*
	Here in this lif with meke and contrite hert,	
	And thee of grace to aske, ay thow up-stert.	*move quickly [to help]*
	Now, lady swete, I can no more now sey,	
140	But rewe on me and help me whan I dey. Amen.	*have pity on me; die*

Explanatory Notes to Complaint of a Prisoner against Fortune

11 In classical mythology, weather originated with the winds, principally Boreas and Zephirus, that came out of a cavern in Thrace (here called "the winds' mouth"). According to some authors these winds were ruled over or set loose by the god Aeolus.

36 *God chastiseth whom He lovith.* Hebrews 12:6.

44 *thi sustres thre.* The Fates or Parcae, the daughters of Night: Clotho spins the thread of life, Lachesis measures it out, and Atropos cuts it. (See individual notes at lines 47, 55, and 57 below). James I refers to the second, Lachesis, in *The Kingis Quair*, lines 170–73, perhaps drawing from the complaint of Chaucer's Troilus in a similar circumstance (*TC* 3.733–34). In Ballade 74 (*Fortunes Stabilnes*, lines 2534–39), Charles d'Orléans laments his fate thus:

. . . Antropos, <at> ones thy dewte fecche	*once; do your duty*
And with the deth almes me, poor wrecche.	*give me the gift*
Thus ay diyng y lyue and neuyr deed —	*ever; dead*
O lacchesse, to longe thou makist thred!	
Als flex to moche doth Cloto to <hir> recche.	*you make the string too long*
O onys with deth almes me, poore wrecche!	*once*

Charles ends there, but this poet uses his complaint against fate to express his desire to put his soul into the hands of God.

71–74 Compare Ashby's complaint at lines 78–84.

91 The story of Narcissus and Echo is told by the French poet Guillaume de Lorris in his extremely influential work, *RR*. In Chaucer's translation, it occupies lines 1469–1538 (A fragment). Narcissus was a beautiful youth who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool and pined away and died because his love could not be fulfilled (the flower, which often grows near water, is named after him). Echo loved him and was so stricken with grief at his rejection of her that she, too, pined away until there was nothing left of her but her voice, which always repeats the last words spoken by others. (In another version of the story, it was the god Pan

who rejected her.) In *BD*, Chaucer writes that "Ecquo died for Narcisus / Nolde nat love hir" ("Echo died because Narcissus would not love her," lines 735–36), using this as a reply in an argument with Fortune, which involves an elaborate chess metaphor (see line 103, below). The speaker in this work says only that Echo knows of his sadness, can understand it, and can bear witness to it: that is, he complains alone so that only Echo hears (and responds).

92–98 The story of the woman taken in adultery is told in John 8:3–11. In an unusual rhetorical move, the prisoner claims to be as innocent as she, for the purpose of casting blame on his accusers before God.

103 *Deth sayth "Chekmate!"* Chess was popular among the wealthy and educated all over Europe in the late Middle Ages, perhaps another indication that the author traveled in fairly sophisticated circles. The image of playing a game of chess with Death was not uncommon, either in literature or in art. Charles d'Orléans' lover plays chess with both Death (Ballade 60) and Daunger [the lady's restraint] (Ballade 61).

114 *feyned goddis and goddessis*. Compare *TC* 5.1849–53.

115 The only way to "defy" fortune and fate (i.e., this "unstable" world) is to put your faith in God.

120 In interpreting Canticle of Canticles (Song of Songs), a biblical text that seems to tell an erotic love story, early medieval interpreters identified the "bride" (or spouse) of the text with the Church (i.e., the entire body of Christians) and the bridegroom or lover with Christ.

133 The Virgin Mary, who offers protection by covering the sinner with a loose fold of her clothing. The image frequently appears in medieval art, as if Mary's robe were a protective aegis for Christians who invoke her aid.

Textual Notes to Complaint of a Prisoner against Fortune

Abbreviations: **H**: British Library MS Harley 2251 (fols. 271r–273r) [base text]; **A**: British Library MS Additional 34360 (fols. 19r–21v); **R**: British Library MS Harley 7333 (fols. 30va–31ra).

1 *Allas, Fortune*. R: *FOrtune alas*.
3 *thus to have me spilt*. R: *to have thus yspylt*.
5 This line missing in both H and A; supplied from R.
6 *as the*. R: *as is the*.
9 *west*. H, A omit; supplied from R.
10 *in oone*. R: *now*.
12 *is*. R: *is sechen*.
13 *there*. R: *where*.
14 *to slyde*. R: *slide*.
15 *that*. A, R: *both*.
princis. A, R: *prince*. R's reading "or this" requires the other meaning of *wele* as "well" to modify *worse*.
16 *in his*. R: *or this*.
18 *laughest*. H: *l* written over *h*.
20 *I thee pray, in*. R: *I pray that in*.
21 *thy*. A: *the*.
21–22 Between lines 21 and 22, R inserts another stanza, not found in the other two MSS:

Why nad I rather died an Innocent
Or seke in bed ful ofte whan I have layn
Than had my name be paired not ne shent
Better hit had be so . than thus to have me slayn
But what to stryve with thee it may not geyn
And yit thou wotest I suffre and shame [*sic*]
ffor that / that I god wote am not to blame

22 *now*. R omits.
24 *Saturnus . . . Mars*. These proper names are underscored in H, along with other "key" figures in the poem: *Cloto* (line 47), *Lachesis* (line 55), *Antropos* (line 57), and *Ekko* (line 91).

26 *a*. R omits.
29 *Fortune*. H, A omit; supplied from R.
31 *in this wise*. R: *of this vyce*.
32 *afore wrought*. R: *forwrought*.
34 *Thee for to gladde*. R: *Therfore be glad for*.
36 *wele*. R: *wele eke*.
37 *He graunte thee to be*. R: *the graunt be*.
38 *Who*. R: *Eke who*.
39 *To suffre*. R: *Suffre*.
43 *Prisoner*. Omitted in all MSS. Inserted to indicate change of speaker.
43 *Fortune*. R: *fortune than*.
44 *now wil I as to*. R: *will I now to*.
49 *that I die*. R: *dey I*.
53 *som other*. R: *othir*.
55, 57 *Lachesis*, *Antropos*. See note to line 24.
62 *to yeve*. R: *yeve*.
63 *I hens passe*. R: *I pace*.
65 *eke*. R: *all my*.
68 This line missing in both H and A; supplied from R.
70 *goode*. A omits.
and lith ful. R: *full still &*.
72 *where that*. R: *where*.
73 *sayde that*. R: *seid than that*.
hym. R: *hem*.
76 *sayde he wold*. R: *seid wold*.
77 *chese to*. R omits.
78 *nat oones*. R: *onys not*.
86 *of my care*. R: *me of care*.
87 *of joye I have*. R: *I have of joy*.
88 *blisse, farewele*. A: *blisse farawel*; R: *blys & al*.
91 *me*. So R. H, A: *no*. The variant *no* in H and A may reflect the sense that Echo cannot bear witness since it is only repeating a sound. See line 24 on underscoring of *Echo* in H.
103 *al day*. H omits.
Deth sayth. A: *saith deth*.
104 *alwey here*. R: *here alway*.
106 *this*. R: *thus the*.
108 *that*. R omits.
111 *I wil*. R: *wille I*.

112 *wrongly*. R: *wrongfully*.
116 *wrought*. A, R: *bought*.
117 *hath*. R: *ever have*.
118 *wil reles*. A: *wil ~~Relève~~ Reles*; R: *wold relesse*.
119 *I pray*. R: *yit pray I*.
120 *His*. R: *thi*.
122 *for to be*. A, R: *to be*.
123 *of*. A, R omit.
125 *Lord*. R: *oo lord*.
127 *to*. H omits.
131 *whan*. A: *whan that*.
132 *that*. H: *than*.
136 *hath*. R omits.
138 *ay thow*. R: *at*.

The Lufaris Complaynt

Introduction

"The Lufaris Complaynt" (*IMEV* 564) differs from the other poetry in this book in that the word "prison" does not appear in it. What makes it appropriate as a companion piece to the other poems in this anthology is that it shares richly in their themes, images, and topoi. It provides evidence, if evidence were needed, that "prison poetry," in the sense in which these works fit the label, is not simply fictional autobiography, but a mode of expression, a literary *topos* for the expression of ideas about loneliness and abandonment, as well as feelings of frustration and helplessness. In this case, the poet employs many of the ideas and expressions of prison poetry to frame a complaint against Love (with a capital *L*). His complaint thus parallels the love complaints of those who were prisoners in more than one sense of the word, like Palamon and Arcite in Chaucer's Knight's Tale and James I in *The Kingis Quair*. Like the other authors in this collection, this poet must express his grief (and his humility), explain the reality of his suffering, profess some worthwhile goal (in this case to help other lovers), identify his enemy, complain about Fortune, cite his masters (Chaucer, Boethius), plead for mercy, and so on. What this tells us is not that all late medieval poetry is alike, but that the same devices can be used by different poets, with different levels of skills, for very different ends. It also tells us that "prison" is a poetic concept, even when it is a physical reality.

The poetic complaint had its origins in imitation of legal complaints, otherwise known as petitions or bills of complaint. Some medieval poems described a Court of Love presided over by Venus or Cupid to which distressed lovers brought complaints and petitions in the form of bills. In *The Kingis Quair*, James I describes in the Palace of Venus

> A warld of folk, and by their contenance
> Thair hertis semyt full of displesance,
> With billis in thair handis, of one assent,
> Unto the juge thair playntis to present. (lines 571–74)

In the anonymous *Assembly of Ladies*, written in the late fifteenth century (and said by Derek Pearsall to owe something to the work of Charles d'Orléans), women present bills in the court of Lady Loyalty to complain of mistreatment in love. In his edition of *The Assembly of Ladies,* Pearsall quotes from *A Treatise of Equitie* (printed 1594) to explain the function of a legal bill of complaint before the King's Council: "'A Bill of complaint is a declaration in writing,

shewing the plaintifes griefe, and the wrong which he supposeth to be done unto him by the defendaunt, and what damages he susteineth by occasion thereof, praying processe [legal action] against him [the defendant] for redresse of the same.'" Such a bill was, he explains, "the initiatory action and distinguishing feature of all procedure in equity." Pearsall points out some similarities between such legal forms and the bills the ladies present to Lady Loyalty, which could all apply to this complaint poem as well: "it tends to be vague in point of fact but vehement in presenting the enormity of the offence" and in style it also mimics legal documents in use of "the same semi-legal parlance, with its profusion of loosely related participles . . . [and] the same choked and circuitous movement and convoluted syntax."[1] In our poem, some wording reminiscent of legal claims includes "compleyne" (lines 64 and 71), "distresse / Without comfort, or punysing giltles" (lines 90–91), "no remede nor reskewe to me brocht" (line 105), "to serve thee myn entent was trewe" (line 111), "to long I all this wrong sustene / Agains rycht" (lines 124–25), "I cry on every . . . / Me to restore unto" (lines 139–40), "non that may will remede to me bring" (line 158), and "I sall endure / And hald forth aye in treuth contynuaunce" (lines 161–62).

The prologue sets forth the reasons for writing, and the complaint proper calls on various gods and lovers from literature and classical myth to redress the wrongs done to the writer, ending in the final stanza with a declaration of the writer's suit, that is, that he be granted death as a release from suffering. It is meant to be read by "every noble, stedfast hert and trew / That has ressavit [received] of Fortune the disdeyne" (lines 15–16), but the poet seems at a loss to whom to deliver his complaint: "Quham sall I wyte of all this fremmyt chance" (line 81)? Its content is similar to James' *Kingis Quair* when James complains of the torments of unrequited love, but it derives rather from Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. There are no echos of James' *Quair* and it would seem very unlikely that the poet had had access to that poem.

Kenneth Wilson comments on this poem's conventional treatment of the theme of unrequited love, saying that not only its theme but its diction, figures, and apostrophes are typical of conventional fifteenth-century poetry. But, as he concludes, it differs from ordinary or conventional poems of this genre in two respects: "First, it is far more allusive than most. The lover is distinctly conscious — and keeps the reader conscious of it too — that he is writing a poem"; the second difference lies in the poet's "attempts at realistic description of emotional upheaval" (p. 713). The anonymous poet's attempts to achieve realism in the description of human emotion, while also foregrounding the allusive and literary quality of his work, make this an apt poem for comparison with James I's *Kingis Quair*, which probably preceded it in composition,

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[1] *The Floure and the Leafe and The Assembly of Ladies*, ed. D. A. Pearsall (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), pp. 161–62, note to line 325.

was probably not known to this anonymous author, and was more successful at both incorporating allusions to other writings and portraying emotions realistically.

Form

"The Lufaris Complaynt" is a complaint in the tradition of such poems, whose matter originated in the forms of legal complaint. These poems became so common that the term "Complaint" came to be used for a lyric or verse form practiced in both France and England in the Middle Ages; the term, however, applied more to the content, vocabulary, and overall structure rather than to verse form, which in the complaint was always somewhat flexible. This one is composed of a prologue of nine stanzas of rhyme royal and a main text of twelve or thirteen stanzas, generally 9-lined (an unusual form in this period), rhyming generally *aabaabbab*. It contains what may be one 16-line stanza (lines 108–23), rhyming *aaabaaab bbbabbba*, but it may rather be two 8-line stanzas with "mirrored" rhymes, as edited below. This group of lines is also marked by having octosyllabic rather than decasyllabic meter. If the final stanza (lines 169–77) is taken as an envoy, these lines would also stand at the very center of the main text of the poem, five stanzas preceding and five stanzas following it. The poem's title comes from the colophon on fol. 221v, "Here Endis the lufaris complaynt."

Manuscript Context

"The Lufaris Complaint" survives in only one copy, in the same manuscript as James I's *Kingis Quair* and in the same portion of the manuscript, written by the second scribe of *The Kingis Quair*. The theme running through this portion of the manuscript is, in fact, lovers' complaints, possibly including *The Kingis Quair* in this general category. The contents of this portion of Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Selden. B.24 are as follows:

Fols. 192r–211r	James I, *The Kingis Quair*
Fols. 211v–217r	Thomas Hoccleve, *The Letter of Cupid* (*IMEV* 666)
Fols. 217r–219r	Anonymous, "The Lay of Sorrow" (*IMEV* 482)
Fols. 219r–221v	Anonymous, "The Lufaris Complaynt" (*IMEV* 564)
Fols. 221v–224r	Anonymous, "The Quare of Jealousy" (*IMEV* 3627.5)

These poems fill three quires of the manuscript, 15 to 17, fols. 190–224, with *The Kingis Quair* taking up most of the first two. As Kenneth Wilson points out in his edition of two of the poems, "The Lay of Sorrow" and "The Lufaris Complaynt," their collocation with *The Kingis Quair* "afford[s] no basis for new conjecture about the origins of either *The Kingis Quair* or *The*

Quare of Jelusy" since they simply appear together in this manuscript, which is "obviously a fairly heterogeneous secular collection" (p. 709). As he also points out, however, there may be a closer relationship between "The Lufaris Complaynt" and the poem that precedes it, "The Lay of Sorrow," since both employ similar 9- and 8-line stanzas.

Select Bibliography

Previous Editions

Wilson, Kenneth George. "*The Lay of Sorrow* and *The Lufaris Complaynt*: An Edition." *Speculum* 29 (1954), 708–26. [The edition of "The Lufaris Complaynt" is on pp. 719–23; the notes on pp. 723–26.]

Literary Influences

Ovid (P. Ovidius Naso). *Ovid.* Vol. 3: *Metamorphoses*, Books 1–8. Ed. and trans. Frank Justus Miller. Third ed., rev. G. P. Goold. Loeb Classical Library 42. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977; rpt. 1984, 1994. [Latin text with facing-page English translation.]

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The Lufaris Complaynt

	Because that teres, weymenting, and playnte	*lamenting, and complaint*
	Scloknis the fyre that langour doith encresse	*Extinguishes*
	In wofull, cald, disparit hertis faynte	*cold, despairing, faint hearts*
	And suagis oft the furiouse, wood distresse,	*assuages; mad distress*
5	I am determyte, the wofull tyme to lesse,	*determined; decrease*
	Sum thing to writt, that every wycht may knawe	*every man*
	How Fortune has my joy and blisse ourethrawe.	*overthrown*
	And thocht I be nocht in endite expert	*though; writing*
	Nor eloquent, my simpilnese excuse	
10	And have compacioun of my trublit hert,	*compassion for; troubled*
	Wappit in dred, of all the warld refuse.	*Stunned (struck down); rejected*
	I will non othiris dolouris feyne nor use,	*no others' sadnesses*
	Nor borow teris in my pen to rayne,	*tears; rain*
	Bot sic as fallis fro myn eyne twayn.	*But such; two eyes*
15	And every noble, stedfast hert and trew	
	That has ressavit of Fortune the disdeyne	*received*
	Suld on my bittir rage and sorow rewe.	*Should; take pity*
	Suppose I can nocht counterfete nor feyne,	*Given that I cannot*
	Yitt every noble wicht that mycht acteyne	*man that might be able*
20	Sulde help a lovere and his wo redrese;	*relieve*
	And gife thai mycht nocht, pleyne his hevynes.	*if they; not, commiserate*
	The blak, cloudy thochtis of dispaire	*thoughts*
	Ar enterit in myn hert, cald and wod,	*cold and [inducing] madness*
	And it opprest so cruelly and sare	*sorely*
25	That of the awin verray propir blud	*its very own blood*
	Is went to every eye a diverse flud,	*flood*
	Quhilk beris witnese of my discomfort	*Which bears*
	Thocht it my bitter woo no wise support.	*Though; [can] endure*

	And gif that worthy Chaucere wer on lyve,	*if; alive*
30	Quhilk was of poetis the honour and the glore,	*Who; glory*
	Myn unresty turment to discrive,	*restless; describe*
	He wald have put it rather in memore	*in writing*
	Than ony othir that he wrate before:	*any; wrote*
	The accident is trew and more pitouse	*occurrence*
35	Than was the double sorou of Troilus.	*sorrow*
	For all my yeris gone of tender age,	*past*
	I levit at ese in quiete and plesance,	*lived at ease*
	Withoutyn drede, doloure, or yit damnage,	*sorrow, or yet harm*
	Wele fortunat under Lufis govirnans,	*Very; Love's governance*
40	Butt traist of change or ony variance;	*Without expectation*
	Bot quhen Fortune semys most trewe and stable	*when; seems*
	Than to begyle a wicht scho is most hable.	*Then to beguile a man she*
	And syne that Fortune unto non estate	*since*
	Can be sure, no wise, in no degree,	*no way, to any degree*
45	Is non suld traist ay to be fortunate	*should trust always*
	For ony hecht or promise, as think me,	*any vow*
	Sen in hir giftis is no propirtee,	*Since; substance*
	Thai ar begilit, sen that hir quhele mon turn,	*They are; since; must*
	That traistis alway in wele for to sojurn.	*Who trust; good fortune; remain*
50	Herefor, as Boece sais, nouthir hie nor lawe,	*Therefore; neither*
	Big nocht thy house bot on a sekir stane,	*Build; except; stable rock*
	Mak thare thy foundment, gif it sall nocht fawe:	*foundation, if; fade*
	Thir hie rochis ar dangerouse ilkane	*These; every one*
	And law valais with fludis ar ourgane;	*low valleys; overflowed*
55	Lyve mediate lyf, quho list lang to endure,	*[a] moderate; whoever wishes long*
	For that is baith most proffitable and sure.	*both*
	Bot syn thare is, as clerkis all diffyne,	*since there*
	Abufe Fortoun a God and Lord eterne,	
	Quhat is the cause or quhat wicht can devyne	*What; what man*
60	He sufferis Fortune trewe folk to disperne?	*[Why] he allows; despair*
	I lat it pas, for I can nocht discern;	*let; not understand*

	Bot furth my letter, as I can it write,	*forth*
	I will proceid thareof to thee endite.	*to write to/for you*
	Explicit Prologus	*"Here ends the Prologue"*
	Quho may compleyne my langoure and distresse	*Who*
65	But help of you that ar in pane endlese,	*Without; pain*
	Edippus, Pluto, buteles Tantalus?	*hopeless*
	Help, Piramus, . . . with thy cruell stedfastnese,	*(see note)*
	Help, Adon and wise Mercurius,	
	Phebus and Jove, with soroufull Troilus,	
70	Help, Mars, and all that felt hath hevynes,	
	Me to compleyne my paynis dolorus!	*[of] my sorrowful pains*
	My pure goste, that quakith evir in drede,	*pure spirit*
	I am so baisit, how I sall proceid	*daunted*
	In this mater, or quhom on for to pleyne?	*matter; [to] whom*
75	Lufe, Fortune, and my lady all, indede,	
	Ar fremmyt, cruell, and list tak no hede	*distant; wish to*
	Unto my pane nor sorow be no meyne.	*by no means*
	For treuth I dee and can no grace atteyne:	*In truth; die*
	Thus confortlese, disparit nevir to spede,	*despairing; succeed*
80	I lyve, and false ar cherist that can feyne.	*cherished; feign*
	Quham sall I wyte of all this fremmyt chance,	*tell; bad fortune*
	This payn, this turment, wo, and grete pennance?	*pain*
	Fortune? My lady? Or thou, god of Lufe?	
	May nane bot Fortune and hir govirnance,	*none but*
85	Quhilk can nocht suffir no wicht in plesance	*Which can not allow any man*
	Long to remane, apoun hir quhele abufe.	*atop her wheel*
	I will non othir chide, nor yit reprufe:	*yet*
	This fals, double ladyis countenance	*lady's [i.e., Fortune's]*
	Is suetast quhen scho will hir grace remufe.	*Sweetest when she; remove*
90	Now gif pane, turment, langoure, and distresse	*if pain*
	Without comfort, or punysing giltles,	*punishment guiltless*
	May cause any lufare to have care,	*lover*
	I have enuch thereof and more, doutlese.	*enough*
	Lak of cherising and all hevynes	
95	That is or may be to my ese contrare,	*contrary to my comfort*

	Dred of deth, manasing of dispare,	*menacing*
	Persing thouchtis with cold and hote seiknese,	*piercing thoughts; sickness*
	Me to consume ay hourly mare and mare.	*more and more*
	The lang nycht without slepe I lye allone,	*long night*
100	With sychis hote as glede full many one,	*sighs; a burning coal*
	Aye cursyng kynd and Nature that me wrocht,	*the natural order and Nature*
	Remembring on my wrechit lyf ygone,	*wretched past life*
	Criand, "Thou Jove, my distany dispone!"	*Crying; dispose*
	Full pitousely and scharp, bot all for nocht:	*loudly; for naught*
105	Is no remede nor reskewe to me brocht!	*remedy or rescue*
	Thus turnyng faynt and making my mone,	
	I ly with turment, and with sorow socht:	*with sorrow sought [as follows]*
	O Lufe, advert, behold and see:	*turn around*
	Tak hede to myne adversitee!	
110	Sen evirmore in all degree	*Since*
	To serve thee myn entent was trewe.	
	Quhat honour may it be to thee	*What*
	To sla thine awin with crueltee,	*slay thine own*
	That will on na wise fro thee flee,	*in no way*
115	Bot humily thy grace persewe?	*humbly; pursue*
	Being Lord of Pitee, rewe,	*have pity*
	Help me the dangere to eschewe	*avoid*
	Of fals Fortune quho has rest of newe	*taken away recently*
	My joy, blis, and prosperitee;	
120	For wele thou wist thyself and knewe	*well you yourself were aware*
	Giltlese this Lady me ovrethrewe,	*(i.e., Fortune)*
	Bot no remede is to argewe	*remedy [it] is to argue*
	Agaynis hir mutabilitee.	*Against*
	Allace, to long I all this wrong sustene	*Alas, too*
125	Agains rycht; was nevir wicht, I wene,	*never was anyone, I believe*
	Punyst so sare with pane and care as I!	*Punished so sorely*
	In vellis tuo ar changit for wo myne eyne.	*Into two wells are; eyes*
	I wepe, I wale, with hew full paile and grene,	*wail; pale and green*
	Strekit on ground almost confound I lye,	*destroyed*
130	And oft on deide this to remed I crye!	*death; as a remedy (relief)*

But Fortune will that I aye still contene: *always still remain (persist)*
No medycyne I can nor fyne aspye. *I know nor end can [I] see*

I cry on Venus to relesch my pane *release [me of]*
For lufe of Adon, that with the bore was slane! *love of Adonis; by a boar*
135 I crye on Mars for lufe of fresch Cipres; *for the sake of his love of*
On Jove for lufe of Eroupe his sovirane; *sovereign*
On Phebus for lufe of hir that hicht Dyane! *is called*
I crye on Mercury for Harisse love, I gesse!
I cry on every god and on goddesse
140 Me to restore unto my blis agane,
But all for nocht: none will my wo redresse. *naught; my woe relieve*

My grete pennance, my hevy chance and wo, *bad luck*
My sad entent, and scharpe turment also, *spirit (state of mind)*
Without comfort, quha may report or tell? *who*
145 My paynis strong sufferit to long ago, *too long*
That be no way can nor may have ho? *by no means; have ending*
My hevynes is nothing lese than hell! *less*
My bittir thocht I may it nocht expell *thought; not*
Quhill that my hert with deth departit atwo, *While; divided in two*
150 Into this pane I aye remane and duell. *Within; pain I always*

Exempt fro joy, blisse, and comforting;
Fulfild of langoure and vommenting; *Filled; wailing (lamenting)*
With harmes, douchtis, in the sad regne, *misfortunes, doubts; rain*
I may go dance in habite of murnyng, *dressed for mourning*
155 To syng the samyn, sory sang thai sing *same sad song they sing*
For lak of comfort and cherising.
My life I feile is evir vanyssing *feel; ever*
And non that may will remede to me bring: *can; remedy (relief)*
Therefor all mirth and gladnese I resing. *resign (give up)*

160 And of my life the dedly aventure *fatal event*
With pacience as I may I sall endure *as [well as] I may I shall*
And hald forth aye in treuth contynuance,[1]

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[1] *And hold [myself] henceforth always continually in truth (or true love)*

Praying the Lord of Fortune and Nature,
Without quhais help is nocht nor may be sure,[1]
165 To gyde or reule all to his hie plesance, *guide; high (true)*
Quhilk ledis the fyn, be just purviance,[2]
Of every wicht, that Lord the Creatoure *Of every man*
Defend my gost ay fro desperance! *spirit; despair*

Lo here the fyne, but feyne, of this endite, *end, without pretense*
170 Nocht said of malice no wicht to dispite *Not; to disparage anyone*
Bot onely Fortune and hir doubilnese, *duplicity*
Quhilk reft has all my plesance and delite *Which has taken away*
And maid me both of hope and comfort quite; *made; deprived*
Under the traist of treuth and sekirnese, *Trusting in truth and security*
175 My deth I sewe with all my besynes *beg for; diligence*
And sa fer as I cunnyng have to writt; *to the extent that I have cunning*
This is my bittir langoure and distresse.

Here endis the Lufaris Complaint, etc.

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[1] *Without whose help nothing exists nor can [anything] be certain*

[2] *Which leads to the end, by just (divine) providence*

Explanatory Notes to The Lufaris Complaynt

Abbreviations: **MS**: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Arch. Selden. B.24, fols. 219r–221v; **W**: Wilson.

1–14 The complaint itself is presented as a therapeutic activity, assuaging the grief of the speaker. Following the usual humility topos, the lover claims that, whatever his shortcomings as a poet, he will at least be recounting true emotional pain. We need not, of course, assume that this is the literal truth, any more than we need believe that the other poets are describing "real" prison experiences.

15–21 It takes a lover to recognize a lover, and both must be "noble." Moreover, it is the duty of the lover to help and comfort other lovers who are less successful than he (the world of late medieval English courtly poetry is largely a man's world).

28 *it*. We take this to refer to "hert" of line 23.

29–35 The poet makes the rather large claim that his pain exceeds that of Troilus, one of the greatest unsuccessful lovers of all time. Perhaps it is consciousness of his own limited talents that causes the poet to claim that Chaucer "would have" written his story, had he known about it.

50–51 The image of the house built on sand that will not stand comes from Matthew 7:26–27, in which Jesus says, "And every one that heareth these my words, and doth them not, shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand, And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof." As Wilson notes, Boethius, from whom our poet took his idea, describes the opposite situation: a house built on rock will not be "leveled by the loud-moaning East Wind"; build on low-lying rock rather than on a hill of sand and you may live without care and anxiety. "Blessed with powerful ramparts" you "will pass a tranquil lifetime" (*De cons.* 2.me4). Wilson points out that this "paraphrase does not resemble either the translation attributed to Chaucer or that by Walton."

52 *gif it sall nocht fawe*. The word *fawe* means not only "fade" but "fall to ruin." The word or cognates in *MED* do not seem to fit the meaning of the line, paraphrased from Scripture, that a house built upon a rock is less likely to fall. One would suppose that the scribe had miscopied "falle" except that this word must rhyme with "lawe" of line 50.

58 It is slightly unusual to find a poet writing about love who acknowledges that God is actually the determiner of all things, although Fortune seems to be governing our lives. He does not, however, dwell on the question of why God allows suffering and may be merely demonstrating that he has, in fact, read the text from which so much love-theory flows, Boethius' *De cons.* (and when he returns to the complaint mode, in line 75, he has apparently forgotten all about his rhetorical question).

66 *buteles Tantalus*. Wilson took *buteles* to be the name of yet another mythical entity (Buceles?), concluding, "I am unable to identify this person"; but it seems more likely to be the adjective, meaning "without remedy, hopeless" (*MED boteles* adj. [1]b.), as some names have adjectival modifiers, e.g., "wise Mercurius" (line 68), "soroufull Troilus" (line 69). Oedipus, Pluto, and Tantalus are invoked here not as unrequited lovers but as others who had been exposed to endless suffering and would therefore understand the narrator's pain. Oedipus suffered a long banishment from Thebes, self-blinded and led by his daughter Antigone, after he had discovered that he was the murderer of his father Laius and husband of his mother Jocasta. Chaucer twice mentions Oedipus in *TC* (2.102 and 4.300), and Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* devotes almost five hundred lines to telling his story (lines 328–822); since Sophocles' works were unknown to medieval England, these poets probably derive their accounts ultimately from Statius' *Thebaid* 1.42–91. Pluto was god of the underworld; he may be included in this list because of his having to inhabit the world of the dead endlessly or because of his suffering when his wife Persephone spent half of each year in the world of the living. Tantalus was the son of Zeus and a titaness also with the name of Pluto. Because of some offence to the gods (various offences are named in various myths), he was punished by being placed in or below fruit trees whose branches blew aside whenever he reached to pluck the fruit and near a pool of water that receded whenever he tried to drink from it. Thus he is "buteless," variously meaning "without profit or reward," "unsuccessful," "without relief." James I compares his own situation with that of Tantalus in *KQ*, line 484 (see note).

67 *Piramus*. This author might know the story of the tragic love of Pyramus for Thisbe from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (3.55–465), Chaucer's *LGW* (lines 724 ff.), or Gower's *CA* (3.1331 ff.); all three are listed by Wilson in his note to this line. There is nothing in his story to connect him with *cruell stedfastnese*, so we conjecture that this phrase applied to another figure named in the lost two half-lines of this stanza that would have come between *Piramus* and *with*. See textual note to this line.

68 *Adon*. Adonis. See note to line 134, below.

Mercurius. Mercury. See note to line 138, below.

69 *Phebus*. See note to line 137, below.

Jove. See note to line 136, below.

Troilus. Undoubtedly known to the author through Chaucer's poem since at line 35 he echoes Chaucer in referring to the "double sorou" of Troilus (see *TC* 1.1).

70 *Mars*. See note to line 135, below.

84 Out of the trio of "enemies" (Love, Fortune, and his lady), the speaker picks Fortune as the real source of all his problems (despite the fact that he has admitted in line 58 that she cannot be).

88 *double ladyis countenance*. Fortune is "double" in that she is two-sided (she can bring good luck or ill luck, joy or pain, etc.), but *double,* when used of persons, can also mean false, deceitful, or treacherous.

89 *Is suetast quhen scho will hir grace remufe*. Fortune is particularly "double," or deceitful, because she smiles on you with her sweetest countenance just before she is about to cause you to fall from health and prosperity.

108–23 If this 16-line stanza (or two 8-line stanzas) is the center of the poem, it calls for our special attention. The poet has cleverly arranged the rhyme-scheme so that it falls into two mirrored halves (*aaabaaab bbbabbba*); the 10-syllable lines shift abruptly to shorter, 8-syllable lines; and the poet turns to address the God of Love directly in the opening apostrophe: *O Lufe* (line 108). The first eight lines he puts in the form of a question; the second (to the God of Love as *Lord of Pitee*, line

116), in the form of a plea for help against the powers of Fortune. This is the fulcrum on which the poem balances.

122 *argewe*. Here in the sense of arguing a case in court, i.e., before the court of Love.

124–26 Notice that, though he argues precisely the same as Charles d'Orléans does in his double ballade, he never comes up with the idea of Fortune's "stabilnes" (see lines 4680–87).

128 *grene*. The color, combined with "pale" for someone who is faint; see Chaucer's *TC* 4.1154: "And thus she lith with hewes pale and grene."

132–41 *I cry on Venus . . . my wo redresse*. Wilson has pointed to the "startling resemblance of this stanza" to Chaucer's *TC* 3.720–35, in which Troilus apostrophizes Venus, asking her for the love she bore to Adonis to inspire him and to intercede on his behalf when he is to meet with Criseyde, and also calling on Jove, Mars, Phebus, and Mercury as the poet does here (p. 726, note to lines 132 ff.). Wilson concludes, "*Troilus* appears to have been fresh in our poet's mind, if it was not actually open before him." The speaker is at this point a very long way from his brief perception of God as ruler of the world, and his catalogue of classical lovers places him firmly in the world of the courtly rather than that of the religious or devotional poet.

133–34 *Venus . . . Adon*. Adonis, the product of the incestuous union between King Cinyras and his daughter Myrrha, was so beautiful that Venus fell in love with him. He was killed while hunting by being gored by a wild boar. The story is told in *RR*, lines 15668–15750, in *Ovide Moralisé* 10.1960–2493, and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 10.519–53, 708–39. It is also alluded to in John Lydgate's *Complaint of the Black Knight*, lines 386–88. This catalogue of lovers echoes the catalogue of those "that ar in pane endlese" in lines 66 ff.

135 *Mars . . . Cipres*. The love between Mars and Venus (Cyprus, another name by which she was known, deriving from the island where she was worshiped) was well known in the Middle Ages. Chaucer also uses the name *Cipres* to refer to Venus in this love affair in the stanza from *TC* (3.725) that Wilson refers to (see note to lines 132–41, above). In Chaucer's Knight's Tale, Arcite also called on Mars to aid him for the love he had had for Venus (*CT* I[A]2373).

136 *Jove . . . Eroupe*. Jove's, or Jupiter's, carnal love for Europa was also well known in the Middle Ages from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 2.843 ff. and 6.103–08. Chaucer refers to it in the stanza from *TC* (3.722–24) that Wilson refers to (see note to lines 132–41, above).

137 *Phebus . . . Dyane*. The story of Diana turned into a laurel tree to escape pursuit by Phebus (Apollo) comes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 1.452–567; Chaucer also referred to it in the stanza from *TC* (3.726–28) that Wilson refers to (see note to lines 132–41, above).

138 *Mercury . . . Harisse*. The story of Mercury's love for Herse comes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 2.708–832. Chaucer also referred to it in the stanza from *TC* (3.729–31) that Wilson refers to (see note to lines 132–41, above).

154–55 The narrator likens himself to mourners who wail and lament, dressed in mourning clothes, in rain or shine; he might sing the same sad song as they and behave as they do, [mourning?] for his own death.

160–68 The speaker returns to the idea that God is superior to Fortune and Nature (see lines 57–58). What is more, he gestures toward an attitude of humility in the face of God's omniscience (*With pacience as I may I sall endure* [line 161] and *gyde or reule all to his hie plesance* [line 165]), words that sound much like those of George Ashby's speaker, and the closing line of the stanza certainly sounds like a prayer (*Defend my gost ay fro desperance!* [line 168]).

160–168 This penultimate stanza, a prayer to God, defines the personal appeal of the poem with solemnity.

> "And as best I can, I shall endure the fatal outcome of my life and hold [myself] henceforth always continually in truth [or true love], praying to the Lord [who is above] Fortune and Nature — without whose help nothing exists nor can be certain — to guide and rule everything according to his true design, which leads by just/divine providence to the end of every man, i.e., that the Lord the Creator defend my spirit from despair!"

169–77 Beginning his final stanza, or envoy, with *Lo here the fyne* (line 169), however, he signals his return to the world of Chaucer, specifically the end of *TC*: ("Swich fyn hath, lo, this Troilus for love!" [5.1828] and "Lo here, of payens corsed olde rites!" [5.1849]), not to pick up his appeal to God's mother, Mary, but to reiterate his denunciation of *Fortune and hir doubilnese* (line 171) and to wish for death.

Textual Notes to The Lufaris Complaynt

Abbreviations: **MS**: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Arch. Selden. B.24, fols. 219r–221v; **W**: Wilson.

1 *Because*. MS: written large in bold script.
playnte. MS: *playntee*, followed by W.

3 *hertis*. MS: *hert is*, with *i* written over an *h*.
faynte. MS: *fayntee*, followed by W.

8 *thocht*. MS: added above line by original scribe.

11 *Wappit*. So MS. W misreads as *waxxit*.

20 *a*. MS: written above the line by original scribe; on the line a *q* has been blacked out.

28 *bitter*. W: *bittir*. The MS appears to be missing a crossing mark to the first *t*, reading *buter* or *biiter*.

48 *that hir*. MS: originally *thair*, but this crossed through and *that hir* added above the line by original scribe.

49 *sojurn*. So W. Another letter has been marked for insertion into the word so that the MS reads an unlikely *sojiurn*.

63 *Explicit Prologus*. Written in an enlarged, bold script in MS.

64 *Quho may compleyne*. MS: written in enlarged bold script, with *ihs* (= "Jhesus") inside the *Q*.

67 *Help, Piramus, . . . with thy cruell stedfastnese*. There is a line missing at this place in the stanza: usually stanzas have nine lines, rhyming *aabaabbab*; but this one has eight, rhyming *aababbab*, so it is missing an "a"-rhyming line between 3–4 or 4–5. We propose, because of the misfit of descriptor with Pyramus in this line, that the missing line is the last half of this and first half of the next; in other words, that the half-line following *Help, Piramus* is missing and that the first half of the next line preceding *with thy cruell stedfastnese* is missing. Line 67 as it survives is there-fore made up of two half-lines.

106 *and making*. MS: *and mate making*; *mate* is not expunged but should be.

111 *serve*. MS: *seve*. W suggests the emendation in his note to the line.

118 *quho*. MS omits, followed by W.