

1976

## A Reading of Robert Henryson's "Testament of Cresseid"

Craig McDonald

*College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

McDonald, Craig, "A Reading of Robert Henryson's "Testament of Cresseid"" (1976). *Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects*. William & Mary. Paper 1539624940.

<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-wb2j-aq14>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@wm.edu](mailto:scholarworks@wm.edu).

A READING OF ROBERT HENRYSON'S TESTAMENT OF CRESSEID

"

---

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English  
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

---

by

John Craig McDonald

1976

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Craig McDonald  
Craig McDonald

Approved, May 1976

John W. Conlee  
John W. Conlee

Charles E. Davidson  
Charles E. Davidson

Frank B. Evans III  
Frank B. Evans, III

645052

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my appreciation to my thesis advisor Dr. John W. Conlee for his suggestions and criticisms in the preparation of this paper.

## ABSTRACT

An interpretation of Robert Henryson's Testament of Cresseid must take into account three aspects of the poem: the role of the narrator, the character of Cresseid, and the nature and function of the planet-gods. The old narrator provides an ironic contrast to Cresseid. He is a static character, whose worship of the goddess of love and foolish belief that his sexual ability will be renewed prevent him from achieving any true understanding about the nature of man's existence. Cresseid's idea of love initially is similar to the narrator's, but her punishment by the planet-gods forces her to realize that she not only has been capricious in her love for Troilus, but also has misunderstood the laws governing her beauty and honor.

The nature of Venus is central to an understanding of the function of the planet-gods. Her description resembles that of the goddess Fortuna, and like Fortuna, she is responsible for bestowing and withdrawing her gifts at will. Because the gifts are not inherent in any man, Cresseid's blasphemy against the goddess of love is therefore not valid. As Duncan Aswell and John MacQueen suggest, the other planets function as forces of generation and corruption in nature. In this respect, the assembly of gods resembles Fate, as discussed in Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy.

In light of Boethius' treatise, Henryson's Venus, as a symbol of Fortune, not only exhibits her fickleness, but also proves to be a good teacher. Under her tutelage, Cresseid comes to a correct self-awareness. The gods act as the arbiters of the laws of nature in much the same way that Fate, as Boethius defines it, governs the temporal realm under the direction of Providence. The punishment of the gods only telescopes in Cresseid's life the ravaging effects of time. Cresseid, however, only progresses to a limited understanding and does not find, as Boethius does under Philosophia's instruction, a resolution to the problem of her mortality. What conclusions Cresseid does reach are nevertheless consistent with Boethius' conception of existence. Thus, Henryson treats poetically (as Boethius does philosophically) the theme of mutability in human life.

A READING OF ROBERT HENRYSON'S TESTAMENT OF CRESSEID

## INTRODUCTION

Most readers of Robert Henryson's Testament of Cresseid are sympathetically attracted to Cresseid, whose life is marked by misfortune. Cast off by Diomedes, who has satiated his desire for her, Cresseid complains to the gods about her unhappiness in love, but they respond to this blasphemy by afflicting her with leprosy. Even the narrator, who is initially compassionate towards Cresseid, finally deserts her by using her story merely as a warning to faithless women. Consequently, as several critics have pointed out, the Testament seems to be the work either of a stern and unrelenting moralist or of a rebel who questions God's justice. I wish to argue, however, that each of these conclusions neglects the careful subtleties and traditional allusions that enrich Henryson's composition. Such conclusions fail to take into account what I believe to be the underlying reality in the poem, the gradual awakening of Cresseid's self-awareness as she begins to discern the transience of life.

Critics agree that a satisfactory interpretation of the poem can be achieved only after coming to an understanding of three crucial aspects: the role of the narrator, the character of Cresseid, and the nature and function of the planet-gods. It is the contention of this paper that each of these aspects is

important not only in itself but also in the way that it contributes to an understanding of Cresseid's growing recognition.



# I

## THE NARRATOR

Debate concerning the function of the narrator centers on the extent of his self-knowledge. Critics such as Duncan Aswell, John MacQueen, and A. C. Spearing believe that Henryson's observer possesses an adequate understanding of his limited sexuality. According to their interpretation, he recognizes that he is an old man who can no longer serve the Queen of Love, and he is content to find other diversions. In this respect, he stands in sharp contrast to the unhappy Cresseid.<sup>1</sup> Denton Fox offers an alternative reading. He suggests that the narrator has a false self-view and resembles Cresseid in two ways: at the beginning of the poem, each is in love with the idea of love, and by the end, each is incapable of physical love. The important difference between the two characters is the narrator's failure to comprehend the wisdom that Cresseid gains.<sup>2</sup>

Fox's interpretation seems to offer the best understanding of Henryson's dramatic ability. As an ironic figure, the narrator provides a background for Cresseid's painful experience; despite her suffering and the lessons she learns from it, he remains ignorant of the true nature of Fortune. Fox (p. 2) comments that a fifteenth-century audience would have recognized the

unreliable observer as a convention of literary artistry and would not have confused the poet with his narrator. Chaucer had used essentially the same device in the Parlement of Foules and in Troilus and Criseyde in order to establish this distance. Chaucer's narrators in those poems claim to be unworthy of love and ignorant of its workings, aside from what they have learned about the subject from books. Their protested innocence suggests that Chaucer views them with some amusement. Thus, their comments may be considered somewhat suspect. For example, the narrator in Troilus and Criseyde tries to give Criseyde the benefit of the doubt for betraying Troilus' love so quickly after their separation, yet the evidence as presented in the story is against her (Book 5, ll. 1093-99). Henryson does much the same thing as he portrays his old man dealing with the rumors about Cresseid's fall from grace.

The opening lines of the Testament indicate that an ironic consideration of the narrator is valid. Despite the cold weather outside the old man desires that Venus once again warm his heart with love:

For I traistit that Venus, luifis Quene,  
 To quhome sum tyme I hecht obedience,  
 My faidit hart of lufe scho wald mak grene;  
 . . . .  
 Thocht lufe be hait, yit in ane man of age  
 It kendillis nocht sa sone as in youtheid.

(ll. 22-24, 29-30)<sup>3</sup>

He believes she will endow him with an ability that he obviously can no longer possess, and the cold only mirrors his declining capacity for sexual love. His desire to serve Venus, however, is not enough to sustain him through the cold in order to praise her

"hie Magnificence," and he goes indoors. The fire he builds there must kindle not only the warmth in his blood but also his prowess. Even his companion for the evening is not a woman but a book. Henryson uses several images to denote the contrast between old age and youth in these opening lines. He poses the "curage doif and deid" of old age against the blood which flows "in ane rage" in youth and describes the narrator's heart as "faidit" in opposition to the "grene" heart of a young lover. The evidence points to the narrator's persistence in deluding himself. Fox (p. 55) compares him in this respect to January in Chaucer's "Merchant's Tale." Both figures are foolish and will gain no wisdom. Under these circumstances, Henryson's observer cannot be trusted.

The first of the narrator's comments on Cresseid's condition occurs in lines 78-91, after he has read of her fall from Diomedes's grace. The old man appears to side with her and attributes her fall to Fortune's turning Wheel, not to her own lechery. He offers his sympathy to the fallen woman:

Yit, neuertheles, quhat euer men deme or say  
 In scornfull langage of thy brukkilnes,  
 I sall excuse, als far furth as I may,  
 Thy womanheid, thy wisdom, and fairness:  
 The quhi [1] k Fortoun hes put to sic distres  
 As hir pleisit, and nathing throw the gilt  
 Of the, throw wickit langage to be spilt.

(11. 85-91).

He states that he refuses to believe what men say about Cresseid, but the previous stanza in the poem belies his tender declarations. Unlike Chaucer's narrator, who handles a similar situation with delicacy, Henryson's narrator vividly describes her "filth," her "fleschelic lust sa maculait," and her "foul plesance," though he

says that she has no responsibility for her condition. Like an old gossip, he claims not to believe the things told about her, but is willing to share what he has heard. He also praises her "wisdom," but the evidence seems to prove that in deserting Troilus for Diomede, she has acted merely for the sake of convenience. One almost suspects that in his imagination he relishes Cresseid's wantonness, for his defense of her is shallow and actually derives from his hating to see her beauty despoiled. For the reader, the effect produced by Cresseid's accusers is reinforced by the narrator's protests, not diminished.

This emphasis on her physical features occurs once again in the narrator's next exclamation (ll. 323-29). As he cries out against Saturn, who is sent to punish Cresseid, he describes her as "sa sweit, gentill, and amorous," characteristics which may recall Absolon's description of Alysoun in the "Miller's Tale": "She was so propre and sweete and likerous" (l. 3345).<sup>4</sup> The opinions of both the narrator and Absolon are based on the external qualities of the two women, not on any moral considerations.

Since he deals only with the external, the narrator is unable to judge correctly what is happening to Cresseid. Initially, he misinterprets the nature of her sin, and his idealization of her beauty has blinded him to the reason for her punishment. Reason's speech in the Romance of the Rose (Section 24, ll. 38-40) shows that Fortune's Wheel

"teaches them the truth  
That none should boast they're Fortune's favorite;  
For no security they have."<sup>5</sup>

Cresseid is soon to learn this truth, but the old man never will. He refuses to see that Fortune has worked her will in his life through time, which has taken away his sexual capacity, if not his desire. He is no more Fortune's favorite than Cresseid. His second failure, which is again the result of his blindness to the true nature of Cresseid's situation, comes at the end of the poem. His comments are brief, for the only conclusion he draws from Cresseid's experience is that which he uses to warn the "worthie Wemen": "Ming not your lufe with fals deceptioun" (1. 613). This statement, viewed within its immediate context and in light of the narrator's character, reveals a shallow comprehension of Cresseid's ordeal. Certainly his conclusion is similar to Cresseid's when she warns against false love. Yet she has realized a great deal more and has gained knowledge at a great price. He passes over her suffering as well as the whole complaint in lines 407-69. While he sees her strictly as a courtly lover and attempts to defend her as such, he must finally admit that she has been false. He himself proves to be fickle and quickly leaves the topic:

Beir in your mynd this schort conclusioun  
Of Fair Cresseid, as I haue said befoir:  
Sen scho is deid, I speik of hir no moir.

(11. 614-16)

Since she is no longer the epitome of love, he deserts her.

## II

### CRESSEID

Cresseid's character has elicited a variety of interpretations. One group of critics views her as the central figure in a Christian allegory. They regard the movement of the work as a process of punishment, enlightenment, repentance, and salvation. Cresseid's blasphemy against the planet-gods symbolizes a questioning of God's purposes and a failure to take responsibility for sin. Through suffering she, as a figure for everyman, is able to recognize her error and find salvation. Denton Fox perhaps expresses this position most clearly when he declares that Cresseid's trial is necessary for her ultimate redemption. Basing his comments on a study of the medieval conception of leprosy, he states that Cresseid's affliction is ambiguous, for it serves both as the consequence of sin and as a means of purification.<sup>6</sup>

Several other critics, finding the Christian interpretation untenable, take the position that Cresseid's punishment far outweighs her sin. Douglas Duncan believes that Henryson uses this character to question the divine order, which at times seems to be excessively cruel. The dilemma posed by this purposeless cruelty is never resolved in the poem, and the doubt about God's goodness, Duncan contends, still lingers in Henryson's mind. Delores Noll and Harvey Wood also find the Christian interpretation unaccept-

able. They assert that Cresseid is a courtly lover in a universe which is ruled in accordance with the courtly code. That universe is a closed system in which the rule of a Christian God is inoperable. Thus, Cresseid does not come to any kind of Christian understanding; she is only brought to see her unfaithfulness as a courtly lover.<sup>7</sup>

Though he does not suggest that the world-view of the poem contradicts the conception of a universe governed by a Christian God, Duncan Aswell maintains that the concern of the story is with the physical world; the consideration of an after-life does not even enter into the discussion. The key to the poem is the role of Fortune, which takes into account both external circumstances and Cresseid's own responsibility for her actions. Cresseid must either adapt to Fortune or continue her fight against it. Her initial failure to adapt derives from the misunderstanding of its rules.<sup>8</sup>

Each of these positions contributes to an adequate understanding of Cresseid's character. A proper recognition of her relationship with the narrator is also necessary. Aside from the narrator's brief retelling of Troilus and Cresseid's separation, Cresseid first appears in lines 71 ff. of the Testament. She has been cast from the presence of Diomedes, and there is the strong implication that she has become a courtesan. Destitute and ashamed of her fall, she secretly leaves the court to go to the home of her father. During a feast day in honor of the goddess Venus, Cresseid goes into a chamber to complain of her mistreatment at the hands of the god and goddess of love. Her charges are quickly answered

by Cupid, who calls an assembly of the planet-gods to bring punishment upon her. Subsequent to their sentence she contracts leprosy, and the beauty she once held so dear is now gone completely.

John MacQueen (pp. 60, 64) suggests that Cresseid does not recognize that the decline of her beauty has begun even before her punishment, though he links this decline with the first seeds of leprosy (p. 81). Duncan Aswell (pp. 480-81) also notes the mutability theme which Henryson establishes in the poem. Although I do not believe that the connection with leprosy is indicated in the story prior to Cresseid's blasphemy, the fact that Cresseid's beauty no longer holds its charm is apparent. Whether by leprosy or advancing age, her powers in love are fading, and the change towards old age is only accelerated by the disease. To the gods Cresseid cries bitterly, "Allace! that euer I maid you Sacrifice" (l. 126). She further charges that they have been unfaithful to her and calls Venus "the blind Goddes" who

causit me alwayis vnderstand and trow  
The seid of lufe was sawin in my face,  
And ay grew grene throw your supplie and grace.

(ll. 136-38)

According to Aswell (pp. 474-75), she is like the narrator who trusts Venus to make his heart always green, something which the goddess will not do. Venus is a fickle goddess who first grants and then withholds her good pleasure. Her love is described as:

Richt vnstabill, and full of variance,  
Mingit with cairfull Ioy and fals plesance,  
Now hait, now cauld, now blyith, now full of wo,  
Now grene as leif, now widderit and ago.

(ll. 235-38)



A variety of images that Henryson has used earlier in the poem to describe the situation of the narrator reappear: "hait," "cauld," "grene," and "widderit" (the narrator used the term "faidit," l. 24). Once more they indicate the extremes of Venus' power with respect to love. She can quickly cool a lover's passion and wither a youthful heart. The oxymorons "cairfull Ioy and fals plesance" recall Reason's same use of the device in his description of Cupid's love in the Romance of the Rose (Section 21):

"A sadness gay, a frolicsomeness sad--

. . . .

A game of hazard, ne'er dependable."

(ll. 62, 68)

Even when Venus grants her joy to a searching lover, anguish and pain are often the accompanying restrictions. Reason well demonstrates that the dieties of love are untrustworthy, and Henryson reiterates this fact by his description of Venus.

Judged and sentenced, Cresseid leaves her father's house to live in the leper colony. There she makes her "Complaint." Most scholars note that her speech is characterized by selfishness and self-pity. But to read the passage in only this sense is to miss its purpose because, as Fox indicates (pp. 43-44), her complaint has characteristics of the ubi sunt poem. Though the main figure in such a poem is usually a person who has just died and who therefore laments the past enjoyments of life, Henryson's character is still alive. However, the reversal of Cresseid's fortunes resembles death; hence, it is a fit motive for an ubi sunt complaint. She calls to mind (ll. 407-35) the life that once was and contrasts it (ll. 436-51) with her now miserable position.

Fox also notes in the same discussion the presence of the memento mori theme in the work. In the stanza beginning at line 452, Cresseid offers herself as an example to the fair ladies of Greece and Troy. She places the blame on both "friuell Fortoun" and her own "Infelicitie" and "Greit mischief." She warns:

Nocht is your fairness bot ane faiding Flour,  
 Nocht is your famous laud and his honour  
 Bot wind Inflat in vther mennis eiris;  
 Your roising reid to rotting sall retour.  
 Exempill mak of me in your Memour,  
 Quhilk of sic thingis wofull witnes beiris:  
 All Welth in Eird, away as Wind it weiris;  
 Be war, thairfoir, approchis neir the hour:  
 Fortoun is fikkil, quhen scho beginnis & steiris.

(11. 461-69)

The flower image appears once more and in the context represents not only beauty but also a capacity for change. I Peter 1: 24, based on Isaiah 40: 6-8, provides a possible analogue:

Quia omnis caro ut foenum: et omnis gloria  
 ejus tamquam flos foeni: exaruit foenum, et  
 flos ejus decidit.<sup>9</sup>

Cresseid, who was the flower of love, has indeed faded.

If one accepts the ubi sunt interpretation of Cresseid's complaint, then her character becomes more complex; a dramatic change is taking place. The complaint is not merely the remembrance of a glorious past. Instead, it is evidence of Cresseid's clearer understanding about the nature of existence and consequently Fortune. Her punishment seems cruel, but a comparison with other ubi sunt literature reveals that the changes brought about by time are irrevocable. Cresseid has begun to see that sooner or later her beauty was doomed, for even were she to escape disease, time would work similar effects on her features and on her honor.

While she recognizes her folly, Cresseid still cannot stop weeping, and the leper lady must help her see the futility of her complaints. They join the leper band and go out to beg just as Troilus' company returns from battle. Henryson then describes an extraordinarily powerful and moving scene. Neither of the former lovers recognizes the other, but Troilus is sadly reminded of his lost love. Cresseid's grief comes later as she discovers the identity of the one who had been so generous to her. The poet once again uses the terms "hot" and "cold" to contrast the response of the couple. Stricken by the resemblance of the leper that stands before him and his beloved Cresseid, Troilus grows hot with passion's fever, but Cresseid falls down "with mony cairfull cry and cald 'ochane!" (l. 541). Because of the change in her nature, the heat of her passion is now gone. Through the meeting with Troilus, Cresseid's understanding of her situation is perfected. She realizes her unfaithfulness and also Troilus' noble qualities. After praising him for his own loyal adherence to the courtly code, she then warns others against fickle women: "Thocht sum be trew, I wait richt few are thay" (l. 572). Following her denouncement of false love, Cresseid composes her testament and dies.

The relationship between the narrator and Cresseid provides an essential contribution to an understanding of the work. At first their characters are parallel; each believes that his ability to love will last forever. For all practical purposes, Cresseid, through her punishment, has reached old age; as Calchas,

her father, knows, "thair was na succour/ To her seiknes" (11. 376-77). The ubi sunt speech reinforces this fact. In the same way, there is no cure for the old narrator's loss of virility. The opening passages reveal the measures to which he must go to remedy this loss, yet one strongly suspects that he does not succeed. The similarities between the two gradually weaken as Cresseid comes to better understand life's transience. The narrator ignores much of what she has learned through her suffering, especially the insight she reveals in the complaint, and concentrates solely on her behavior towards Troilus. However, Cresseid's vision has expanded to encompass the several aspects of her sin, not only her unfaithfulness but also her misplaced trust in worldly fame and glory. The divergence between the narrator and Cresseid is thus complete.

### III

#### THE PLANET-GODS

The planet-gods pose the greatest obstacle for interpreters. Those who view the poem as a Christian allegory (see note 6) suggest that the planet-gods function either as the agents of or the symbol for the Christian God. In this respect, the assembly must punish Cresseid in order to bring her to the recognition of her sin and eventually to salvation. Such a view, however, has come under severe attack from those who think that the nature of Henryson's gods is incompatible with and even antagonistic to the Christian notion of the Divine Being. A. C. Spearing, for example, sees the work as a "closed pattern of facts, which does not point to a significance beyond itself."<sup>10</sup> For Spearing, the planet-gods are motivated by revenge and are not concerned with the justice of their sentence. He believes the poem offers a warning against wickedness and foolishness, but he cannot allow that it posits the idea of Christian redemption. Indeed, Cresseid's situation at the end of the poem is hopeless.<sup>11</sup> Douglas Duncan makes similar observations about the story. In his opinion, it presents a very pessimistic picture of life, and he contends that Henryson questions a Divine Nature whose punishment greatly outweighs the sin of an individual.<sup>12</sup>

The "closed pattern of facts" which Spearing thinks is a

key to the meaning of the poem, is also integral to the interpretation of both Delores Noll and Harvey Wood. They argue that the courtly love universe which Henryson constructs is opposed to Christianity, in light of the sexual relationship between Troilus and Cresseid, which takes place outside of the marriage bonds. Cresseid's punishment, in such a view, arises from the violation of that relationship, not the relationship itself. A Christian God would never have condoned their illicit love initially. The merciless behavior of the planet-gods is also inconsistent with that of the Christian God.<sup>13</sup>

Duncan Aswell does not dismiss the Christian interpretation of the assembly's role. However, he believes that the gods are the arbiters of nature's laws and that their judgment falls on all who breach those laws. Accordingly, Cresseid must be punished.<sup>14</sup> In this respect, he and John MacQueen (see note 6) bear a close resemblance, and their arguments come close to what I believe to be the correct understanding of the planet assembly.

MacQueen and Marshall Stearns present the most thorough discussions of the gods--their nature and derivations. Both critics cite Lydgate's Assembly of the Gods as the likely source for Henryson's portraits. Stearns observes that most of the gods are cosmological rather than mythological in nature, especially Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Phoebus, and Mercury. Henryson describes Venus uniquely, but he does so, as Stearns suggests, for poetic reasons. Cynthia is the only conventional character who retains her mythological features.<sup>15</sup> However, as C. S. Lewis points out

in the Discarded Image, the later medieval concept of the region below the moon shows that Henryson's characterization of Cynthia bears a resemblance to the cosmological view of the goddess. Lewis bases his remarks on the Anticlaudian (IV, V), by Alanus de Insulis, which describes Cynthia's sphere of influence as a prison, from which airish "daemons" may not escape to the spiritual aether.<sup>16</sup> Appropriately, the thief painted on Cynthia's breast (ll. 261-63 of the Testament) may not penetrate the barrier which separates him from heaven.

The first god to be mentioned is Cupid, whom Cresseid blasphemes in her prayer. He is not a cosmological figure, but Cresseid associates him with Venus. H. R. Patch reinforces this association: "Between the two figures, the masculine and feminine deities, I shall not distinguish. They are the same in function, and were confused in the Middle Ages."<sup>17</sup> E. M. W. Tillyard (p. 15) pictures Cupid as the chief god of the assembly because of the references to him as king (ll. 144, 296) and bases his belief on such classical writers as Hesiod, Plato, and Aristotle, all of whom describe Cupid as a creating god and ruler. A simpler explanation of Cupid's kingship is available. Henryson's figure is similar to the god of love as depicted in the Romance of the Rose, neither an infant cherub, nor the chief god, but simply the god of a particular aspect of life--love. In the Allegory of Love, C. S. Lewis discusses the "consistent tendency of medieval love poetry. . . to substitute for Venus and her son a King and Queen of Love. . . . A King and Queen provided a better parallel to real feudal courts of which Love's court was in some degree a copy."<sup>18</sup> The god rings

the silver bell to gather the assembly, not because he is king of the gods, but because it is he whom Cresseid blasphemes.

The planet-figures appear in the order of their significance in the medieval cosmology, from the outermost sphere of the moveable planets (the seventh sphere) to the innermost. The first is Saturn, who is described in gray and frosty images. He is a fearsome creature whose whole demeanor is opposed to love. That he gives "to Cupide litill reuerence" (l. 152) is indicative of this attitude. His description recalls the opening of the poem and the situation which there confronts the old narrator. Such bitter weather would certainly be conducive to a temperament like Saturn's. As MacQueen points out (pp. 78-79), even the language referring to the god is harsh and abrasive. In keeping with his belief that the gods represent naturalistic forces, MacQueen (pp. 71-73) also views Saturn as a corruptive agent, whom Henryson identifies, through words such as "cold" and "gray," with old age. Even the god's weapons are "felloun flanis" which are "Fedderit with Ice, and heidit with hailstanis" (ll. 167-68). One gets the impression that were his arrows to strike the heart, the cold numbing apathy of old age would creep in to replace the restless torment of the god of love's arrows in the Romance of the Rose. A similar characterization of Saturn may be found in Chaucer's "Knight's Tale." While promising success for Venus' champion Palamoun, "pale Saturnus the colde" claims that his are the "maladyes colde" and that his "looking is the fader of pestilence" (ll. 2443, 2467, 2469). As in the Testament of Cresseid, in the "Knight's Tale" Saturn is the executor of judgment: "I do vengeance and pleyne correccioun" (l. 2461).



Opposed to Saturn is Jupiter, "Nureis to all things generabill." As MacQueen points out (p. 79), Jupiter is the god of generation, hence his associations with spring:

Upon his heid ane Garland, wonder gay,  
Of flouris fair, as it had bene in May.

(11. 174-75)

Correspondingly, his demeanor is pleasant and full of life. The relationship between Jupiter and Cresseid is interesting. In Troilus and Criseyde (IV, 1679-84), Criseyde pledges her faithfulness to Troilus and prays for Jupiter's grace:

This made, aboven every creature,  
That I was youre, and shal while I may dure.

And this may lengthe of yeres naught fordo,  
Ne remuvable Fortune deface.  
But Juppiter, that of his myght may do  
The sorwful to be glad, so yeve us grace.

The irony of Criseyde's pledge and her desire for Fortune's constancy is striking in itself, but the prayer to Jupiter, though probably a conventional invocation, provides a good context for the relationship between the god and the woman in Henryson's story. The description of Jupiter is pleasing, and Stearns compares (p. 79) him to Idleness in the Romance of the Rose. The god's face is "burelie" and his "browis bricht and brunt"; his voice is clear and his eyes are as crystal. He also has hair which is as golden wire. Saturn and Cynthia both describe Cresseid's beauty in these same terms. As Cynthia pronounces doom on Cresseid, one may notice the similarity:

Thy Cristall Ene minglit with blude I mak,  
Thy voice sa cleir, vnplesand, hoir, and hace;  
Thy lustie lyre ouirsprede with spottis blak,  
And lumpis haw appeirand in thy face.

(11. 337-40)

The comparison is also clear from Saturn's speech:

Thy greit fairness, and all thy bewtie gay,  
Thy wantoun blude, and eik thy goldin Hair,  
Heir I exclude fra the for euermair.

(11. 313-15)

Even Blood, the humor which medieval astrologers assigned to Jupiter (Aswell, p. 480), is the same as that which Saturn replaces in Cresseid by his Melancholy (1. 418): "Thy Moisture and thy heit in cald and dry."<sup>19</sup>

The other gods, with the exception of Venus, fall into either of the two categories which Jupiter and Saturn represent. Mars, the god of war, is Saturn's man. Stearns (pp. 81-82) notes a similar description of him in Chaucer's "Complaint of Mars" and another possible analogue in the picture of the boar in Ovid's Metamorphoses, VIII. In the scheme of the generation-corruption thesis which MacQueen and Aswell propound, Mars is definitely an agent of corruption, though his temperament is different from Saturn's. He possesses a Choleric humor; therefore, his destructive power lies not in old age but in war.

Cynthia also belongs to the force of corruption. She is not characterized by the icy coldness which one sees in the portrait of Saturn; nevertheless, she is still sinister. Dressed in gray, her features are colorless and her complexion black and leaden. The prisoner painted on her breast further reveals her nature, for the boundary which separates the heavens from the base earth is her orbit, and she is the jailer for those unfit to enter the spiritual realm.

As the description of Cresseid is related to Jupiter's

before her blasphemy, so it is similar to that of Saturn and Cynthia after her punishment. All the youth and freshness of the woman, expressed by the images of spring, disappear with the advent of the leprosy and its winter-like qualities. Saturn's Melancholy humor drives away all joy, and Cynthia disfigures her once beautiful and bright face "with spottis blak."

The gods Phoebus and Mercury are both similar to Jupiter. Henryson describes Phoebus as a

Tender Nureis, and banischer of nicht,  
And of the world causing be his mouing  
And Influence lyfe in all eirdlie thing.

(11. 199-201)

Like Jupiter, his purpose is to restore and preserve life. He too is characterized by the "brichtness of his face." Mercury, in MacQueen's words (p. 77), is described in a more "professional" manner of speech. A. C. Spearing (p. 179) and A. M. Kinghorn (p. 110) both consider this character to be ambiguous. They base their observations chiefly on the reference to him as a doctor, claiming that medieval writers often satirized the medical profession because of the greed of its members. They cite Chaucer's caricature, the Doctor of Physick, as illustrative of this satirical stance. There seems to be no reason, however, to suppose that Henryson had this idea in mind, especially as it would seem to add little to the story. I would prefer to see Mercury as "one of Henryson's happiest creations" (Stearns, p. 94). By his skill as a physician, he joins Jupiter and Phoebus as a "Nureis to all things generabill." He also possesses the ability to write and speak well, and for this reason he is chosen to preside over the assembly.

The only planet-god not to be classified in the outline is Venus, whose nature consists of "unreconciled opposites" (MacQueen, p. 77). In other words, she possesses many of the characteristics of both categories. Even her dress, which is "The ane half grene, the vther half Sabill black" (l. 221) is indicative of her ambivalence. A dissembler, she speaks both truth and lies, and her demeanor changes suddenly, a trait which Henryson notes in describing how she governs love:

In taikning that all fleschellie Paramour  
 Quhilk Venus hes in reull and gouernance,  
 Is sum tyme sweit, sum tyme bitter and sour,  
 Richt vnstabill, and full of variance,  
 Mingit with cairfull Ioy and fals plesance,  
 Now hait, now cauld, now blyith, now full of wo,  
 Now grene as leif, now widderit and ago.

(ll. 232-38)

This passage, which I alluded to earlier in relation to the narrator's condition, is also a key to an overall view of the poem. Saturn uses the words "hot" and "cold" to describe the effects of leprosy, and the terms later express the emotions that Troilus and Cresseid exhibit in their meeting. The color green, as a sign of regeneration and life, is again representative of Jupiter and, by implication, Cresseid. The devastating results of Saturn and Cynthia's punishment, which destroys the youthful greenness of Cresseid's love, are evident in the word "widderit." Henryson draws together in this brief characterization of Venus images which he masterfully weaves throughout the poem.

John MacQueen has compared the figures of the gods in the Testament to those in Henryson's Orpheus and Eurydice (pp. 70-71, 82). He believes that the gods in Orpheus represent the moral

and physical law. By association, he concludes that as Orpheus is told to bring his music more in tune with the harmony of the spheres, so Cresseid is forced to come to a correct understanding of the workings of nature in human existence. Each god, then, represents some aspect of the government of the natural order; they are neither friendly nor malicious, only more or less appealing. MacQueen (pp. 79-80) is careful to define the tension between generation and corruption. In one sense the two forces are equal; Jupiter possesses a spear to protect his creatures from the wrath of Saturn, and Phoebus banishes the darkness by his great light. Yet these helpful acts are spoken of in a general, not individual, sense. Though the human race maintains immortality through procreation, individual beings and personal love must eventually die. Phoebus' rising and setting are governed by time; the power of Jupiter is restricted by his being Saturn's son; and even Mercury's skill is only temporary. Spearing (pp. 177-78) and Aswell (p. 475) conclude that even on the cosmic level, the "friendly" gods are somewhat ambiguous. Jupiter's thunderbolt, in tradition, is a punitive weapon, and Phoebus is unapproachable. The sun-god's horses, who pull the chariot for mankind's benefit, also destroyed Phaeton, who was brash enough to think that he could control them. Therefore, the overriding impression that the assembly imparts is a sense of the inevitable decay which takes place in nature. Such an interpretation seems to be accurate, for it coincides with the description of Fate in the Consolation of Philosophy, as I will show later.

The position of Venus is unique among the planet-gods because she exhibits characteristics of both groups and alternates

unpredictably between the pleasing and unpleasing aspects of her nature. She is similar in this respect to Fortune. In fact, the comparison of the two is crucial to a proper understanding of the poem since they bear such a close resemblance. The resemblance is not accidental, nor is it Henryson's innovation. H. R. Patch (pp. 29, 53, 93, 96, 97) traces the development of this literary confusion from French writers such as Machaut, Froissart, and Deschamps, to the English poets Gower and Lydgate, and to the Scottish composer of the Kingis Quhair, in which love disputes are brought before the court of Fortune for trial. Further references that Patch makes to Fortune's "cult" are very similar to Henryson's description of Venus. From the traditional list of adjectives associated with Fortune (p. 38), Henryson uses or implies the words "blind," "double," "fickle," "inconstans," "instabilis," and "variable." The colors green and black also figure in the tradition as symbols for the various aspects of Fortune's nature (pp. 43,46). Even Cresseid's complaint finds precedent:

The literary type of the tragedy caused by Fortuna was firmly established and well recognized in the Middle Ages. In such a type it is natural that we should have use of the ubi sunt formula.

(p. 72)

Like Fortuna, Venus is a fickle goddess whose sudden changes often cause disappointed lovers to lament their passing happiness. Though critics have linked Henryson's Venus to Chaucer's Fortune in the Book of the Duchess (see MacQueen, p. 78, and Stearns, p. 91), to my knowledge no one has discussed the kinship between Venus and

Boethius' Fortune in the Consolation of Philosophy. Lady Philosophy, explaining the nature of mutability, describes Fortune in this way:

"She is changeable, and so in her relations with you she has merely done what she always does. This is the way she was when she flattered you and led you on with the pleasures of false happiness. You have merely discovered the two-faced nature of this blind goddess."

(Book II, Prose 1)<sup>20</sup>

The similarities between Boethius' goddess and Henryson's character are striking. Though Jupiter and Saturn vie for control over natural existence, Venus, as a representative for Fortune, appears to be the figure central to Cresseid's fate.

#### IV

#### THE CONSOLATION OF PHILOSOPHY

The relationship between Venus and Fortune makes a comparison between the Testament of Cresseid and Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy useful to a critical interpretation of the Scottish poem. Cresseid's problem in understanding her frailty is apparent in her prayer to the gods, especially in lines 136-38:

Ye causit me alwayis vnderstand and trow  
The seid of lufe was sawin in my face,  
And ay grew grene throw your supplie and grace.

Lady Philosophy recounts Fortune's arguments in response to such a complaint:

"'Why do you bother me with your daily complaints?  
What have I taken from you that belonged to you? You  
may argue your case before any judge; and if you can  
prove that riches and honors really belong to any  
mortal man, I will freely concede your ownership of  
the things you ask for.'"

(Book II, Prose 2)

Fortune, in the same passage, questions why she should "'permit man's insatiable cupidity to tie me down to a sameness alien to my habits?'" Likewise, in the Testament, Cupid protests that he has been the giver of the gift to Cresseid and thus reserves the right to take it away. Cresseid has no grounds for complaining.

There appears to be a problem with Cupid's accusing Cresseid of slander. Actually, by calling Venus "blind and variable,"



Cresseid has correctly described the goddess of love; hence, this charge is unfair. However, Cresseid is guilty in another respect, for she has been careless in her dealings with Fortune, and Cupid indicates, if indirectly, two aspects of her infelicity. First, she places too much trust in her own ability to possess beauty and honor. The gift was Venus' to give; it was also hers to take away. Secondly, Cresseid refuses to take responsibility for her own fickleness and attributes to Venus the loss of Troilus' love. Diomedes' rejection of her is only the ironic reflection of her own behavior towards Troilus.

Concerning the former accusation, Cresseid, as Lady Philosophy diagnoses in Boethius' case, has forgotten her mortality (Book I, Prose 6). Like Boethius (Book II, Prose 4), Cresseid is being punished for committing this fatal error in judgment. Lady Philosophy explains:

"You have put yourself in Fortune's power; now you must be content with the ways of your mistress. If you try to stop the force of her turning wheel, you are the most foolish man alive. If it should stop turning, it would cease to be Fortune's wheel."

(Book II, Prose 1)

This passage clarifies Cresseid's fault. She has placed herself into the hands of the variable goddess and has expected her fortune to remain stable. Her experience teaches her that she, as well as the goddess, is responsible for her dilemma, as she confesses in lines 454-55:

My friuoll Fortoun, my Infelicitie,  
My greit mischief, quhilk na man can amend.

Thus, although Cupid exhibits the false characteristics of his mother in accusing Cresseid of blasphemy (the goddess is variable) he still reveals the true nature of Cresseid's sin. Philosophia's words might be adapted by Cupid to fit the situation: "You have put yourself in Love's power; she has promised you beauty and honor for only a time, and you must be content now that her disposition towards you has changed. Is it Love's fault that you misunderstood her promise and you abused your position?" Though Cupid and his mother are false, Cresseid nevertheless has placed herself at their mercy and should expect nothing else but fickle treatment from them.

Even if the question of Cresseid's moral character were not at stake, her blind trust in Fortune and her subsequent fall would be grounds enough for her complaint in lines 407-69, as I have tried to show earlier in connection with the ubi sunt motif. However, one must not overlook the second part of Cupid's accusation, Cresseid's wickedness. Cresseid, in this respect, differs from Boethius, who has been condemned unjustly. Lady Philosophy comments on the role of Fortune in the lives of those who have been wicked. In fact, one of the keys to her argument concerning the difference between transient and actual good is that wicked people are often endowed with Fortune's favors. Since the good and the bad both possess these favors, how, she asks in Book III, Prose 3, can these favors ultimately be considered good? They are only called ultimate goods because of man's error in judgment. In Book II, Prose 6, she states:

"In the end, we reach the same conclusion about all the gifts of Fortune. They are not worth striving for; there is nothing in their natures which is good; they are not always possessed by good men, nor do they make those good who possess them."

In Book III she examines the various kinds of good which men substitute for the true good. She most clearly addresses Cresseid's situation in Prose 7, where she discusses bodily pleasures as a false good:

"What now shall I say about bodily pleasures? The appetite for them is full of worry and the fulfillment full of remorse. What dreadful disease and intolerable sorrow, the fruits of wickedness, they bring to the bodies of those who enjoy them! What pleasure there may be in these appetites I do not know, but they end in misery as anyone knows who is willing to recall his own lust."

The lack of true enjoyment that accompanies lust is punishment in itself, but Lady Philosophy also shows that disease is often the result of licentiousness.

Denton Fox's examination (pp. 26,28) of leprosy, especially the medieval associations of this dread disease with syphilis, a relatively new affliction, becomes important at this point. According to Fox's research, medieval man believed that leprosy stemmed from physical causes, such as food or changes in the weather, astrological occurrences, and immorality. The last two particularly concern our discussion, though the first (a change in the weather) is indicative of the change in Cresseid:

The day passit, and Phebus went to rest,  
The Cloudis blak ourquhelmit all the sky.

(11. 400-01)

Since the causes were thought to be interrelated (Fox, p. 27), Cresseid's breach of the moral code (her promiscuity) works with

the planetary influences to bring about leprosy. Therefore, not only are the false goods transitory, but they are also harmful when set up as ends in themselves. Philosophia concludes her arguments on the nature of false good by saying:

"All these arguments can be summed up in the truth that these limited goods, which cannot achieve what they promise, and are not perfect in embracing all that is good, are not man's path to happiness, nor can they make him happy in themselves."

(Book III, Prose 8)

Had Cresseid escaped the ravages of disease, her fortunes still would have been subject to change, because time and death take away all worldly possessions. In Book II, Prose 2, Philosophia remonstrates with Boethius:

"Surely you do not expect to find stability in human affairs, since the life of man himself is often quickly ended. Although it is true that things which are subject to fortune can hardly be counted on, nevertheless, the last day of a man's life is a kind of death to such fortunes as he still has. What difference does it make, then, whether you desert her by dying, or she you by leaving?"

The passage illustrates the plight of the narrator. His situation is not very different from Cresseid's; time has destroyed his abilities in the way that disease has destroyed hers. He fails to comprehend this fact and still hopes that Venus will give him success in love. Cresseid's punishment, however, telescopes the effects of old age to produce the same results. Whether by old age, which in a sense is death to physical love, or leprosy, which is also death to physical love (and even to society--Fox, p. 39), the allurements of Fortune amount to little.

Though Fortune is a fickle goddess, she can serve a good purpose also: she is a good teacher. Philosophia introduces one of several contraries to illustrate her point about this aspect of Fortune:

"What I am about to say is so strange that I scarcely know how to make my meaning clear. I am convinced that adverse fortune is more beneficial to men than prosperous fortune. When Fortune seems kind, and seems to promise happiness, she lies. On the other hand, when she shows herself unstable and changeable, she is truthful. . . . You will notice that good fortune is proud, insecure, ignorant of her true nature; but bad fortune is sober, self-possessed, and prudent through the experience of adversity. Finally, good fortune seduces weak men away from the true good through flattery; but misfortune often turns them around and forcibly leads them back to the true good."

(Book II, Prose 8)

She goes on in the same passage to show that ill fortune can distinguish between true friends and those who seem to be friends but who leave in the face of adversity. "'Think,'" she concludes, "'how much you would have given for this knowledge when you were still on top and thought yourself fortunate.'"

The instructive aspects of Cresseid's fall from fortune have been implied. She does come to recognize how transient her own life is, as are the material possessions that accompany it. Her warning to the fair ladies of Greece and Troy is reminiscent of Psalm 39:4:

Locutus sum in lingua mea: Notum fac mihi, Domine,  
finem meum. Et numerum dierum meorum quis est:  
ut sciam quid desit mihi.

Cresseid's weak nature, which is exhibited in her rejection of Troilus and her eventual prostitution, becomes strengthened as

she is forcibly led to see her false position. Her fickleness has turned upon her, as she exclaims:

Thy lufe, thy lawtie, and thy gentilnes,  
 I countit small in my prosperitie,  
 Sa eleuait I was in wantones,  
 And clam upon the fickill quhill sa hie;  
 All Faith and Lufe, I promissit to the,  
 Was in the self fickill and friuolous:  
 O, fals Cresseid! and trew Knicht Troilus!

(11. 547-53)

As indicated in this passage, Cresseid fulfills Lady Philosophy's predictions by coming to appreciate Troilus' true love and friendship.

Fox's discussion of leprosy (pp. 40-41) further illuminates the positive nature of Cresseid's suffering. While those in the Middle Ages viewed the disease as a punishment for sin, they also saw it as a special sign that God was spiritually purifying the leper. Furthermore, the sufferer found an identification with the Biblical lepers Lazarus and Job, both of whom were good men. Philosophia's instruction about the perfecting purpose of Fortune's lessons thus found favor from the Church.

Besides providing insight into the similarities between Venus and the goddess Fortune and into the relationship between Cresseid's situation and that described by Lady Philosophy, a comparison of the Testament of Cresseid with the Consolation of Philosophy helps to define the function of the planet-gods in Henryson's moral universe. Their role is related to the medieval conception of Fate as explained in Book IV, Prose 6, of the Consolation:

"Thus Providence is the unfolding of temporal events as this is present to the vision of the divine mind; but this same unfolding of events as it is worked out in time is called Fate. Although the two are different things, one depends upon the other, for the process of Fate derives from the simplicity of Providence."

Providence is the divine reason, the conceptual process which shapes, forms, and governs all things. Fate is the working out of this process in actual events. The relationship is further explicated in the same passage:

"Therefore, the changing course of Fate is to the simple stability of Providence as reasoning is to intellect, as that which is generated is to that which is, as time is to eternity, as a circle is to its center. Fate moves the heavens and the stars, governs the elements in their mixture, and transforms them by mutual change; it renews all things that are born and die by the reproduction of similar offspring and seeds. This same power binds the actions and fortunes of men in an unbreakable chain of causes and, since these causes have their origins in an unchangeable Providence, they too must necessarily be unchangeable. In this way, things are governed perfectly when the simplicity residing in the divine mind produces an unchangeable order of causes. This order, by its own unchanging nature, controls mutable things which otherwise would be disordered and confused."

From a human perspective, then, the government of nature as it works out in time is Fate. It appears to be fickle and at times harsh, but only because man's knowledge is limited. Actually, it governs the temporal world with perfection since it finds its basis in the divine perfection, Providence. In the Testament of Cresseid, the planet-gods are the poetic representations of Fate as it appears to man. They govern the mutable creation, and as a result are characterized by the various properties of generation and corruption. They are not separate deities, but various aspects of the governing force in nature. Thus, critics such as Duncan

Aswell and John MacQueen have seen correctly the necessary function of the planet-gods in the poem. Though the gods themselves seem untrustworthy as judges, they are so because Cresseid is at first unable to discern her position in the creation. However, the reader is able to view the gods' actions as a means for good, for as Philosophia states, "'any fortune which seems difficult either tests virtue or corrects and punishes vice'" (Book IV, Prose 6).

The precise relationship between Venus and the rest of the assembly cannot be determined in the Fortune-Fate dichotomy, because Venus does not have sole power to punish Cresseid in the same way that Fortune causes men to fall by turning her wheel. However, H. R. Patch's analysis of Fortune provides some helpful information on the confusion that often existed in the medieval mind about the distinction between Fortune and Fate. He comments that all the forces believed to be operative in men's lives were often spoken of indiscriminately. Fortune, the stars, and Fate all played a vaguely-defined role in human affairs. Even Boethius does not clearly differentiate between Fortune and Fate, but also portrays Fate as a changeable force (pp. 19, 76-79). Henryson's assembly is constructed in such a manner as to retain this ambiguity; therefore, Venus and the other gods, as the representatives of Fortune and Fate, share in the control of Cresseid's destiny.

Whereas Boethius discusses the problem of man's existence from the point of view of both Providence and Fate, Henryson deals with the subject from a secular perspective only--the operation of Fate. There is no reference to a Christian salvation, nor in fact



is there any mention of a Christian God. The reasons for this seem to be twofold. First, Henryson is dealing with Fortune on a purely theoretical basis. In other words, he tries to demonstrate how one logically comes to an understanding of the nature of existence and Fortune's part in that existence. He takes Cresseid only so far in this understanding and does not allow her to see the true good, about which Philosophia speaks. Cresseid's dilemma is thus mankind's dilemma as the medieval world conceived of it; life is transient and offers little hope of lasting satisfaction. The answer to the problem, however, must be found outside of the work. The poem, then records Cresseid's discovery of the essence of her predicament, not the resolution of it. As the poet would view her situation, this self-discovery is necessary before a person can come to a relationship with God.

Secondly, Henryson treats his subject poetically. As Delores Noll, Harvey Wood, and A. C. Spearing point out, he creates a self-contained universe, but Duncan Aswell is correct in asserting that there is no conflict between the conclusions of the Testament of Cresseid and a Christian world-view. Though the poem is not Biblical in its treatment of sin and Fortune, the understanding that Cresseid reaches is consistent with Christianity. However, the Testament, as I tried to show in the preceding paragraph, offers only a partial manifestation of the Christian message. C. S. Lewis, in the Discarded Image (pp. 77-78), helps to clarify the matter, speaking with respect to the Consolation of Philosophy:

If we had asked Boethius why his book contained philosophical rather than religious consolations,

I do not doubt that he would have answered, "But did you not read my title? I wrote philosophically, not religiously, because I had chosen the consolations of philosophy, not those of religion, as my subject. You might as well ask why a book on arithmetic does not use geometrical methods." . . . He compliments Philosophia on having used "inborn and domestical proofs", not "reasons fetched from without"<sup>2</sup> [2III Pros. XII, p. 292]. That is, he congratulates himself on having reached conclusions acceptable to Christianity from purely philosophical premises--as the rules of art demanded.

H. R. Patch adds further illumination in his discussion of Fortune's function in a Christian world-view. He writes of Dante's figure in the Inferno:

the capricious goddess becomes the ministering angel entirely subservient to the Christian God. She still appears to be arbitrary, she still receives the scorn and reproaches of mankind; but she has her own concealed method in her madness, and to all blame she is serenely indifferent.

(p. 19)

Chaucer uses the same idea in his Troilus, as Patch shows (p. 31): "therefore the plot does not move by chance, but in accordance with an actual if concealed plan that does not exclude human free-will." The narrator, who views Cresseid's story with a secular awareness, cannot see Venus' "concealed method," but Henryson has added this property to her nature in order to give an instructive purpose to his poem.

From such a study of the Testament of Cresseid, several conclusions seem to be apparent. Henryson's ironic use of the narrator provides a context for Cresseid's eventual understanding. She, though not ignorant of Venus' fickle nature, blames the god-

dess for giving transient pleasures. While Cupid's accusations only prove the validity of Cresseid's complaint, they also point to the source of her guilt. Thus, the god and goddess of love, like the "blind goddess" Fortuna in the Consolation of Philosophy not only demonstrate undesirable traits, but also prove to be valuable teachers. They with the other gods, who function as the poetic device for Fate, act to punish Cresseid's blasphemy; and though the punishment seems unjust, especially from the narrator's secular point of view, it does, as Lady Philosophy suggests, serve a purpose in Cresseid's life, for it brings her to a clearer self-awareness. What Boethius accomplishes through a philosophical treatise, Henryson accomplishes through poetry. Each examines the effects of Fortune and her instructive purposes in man's life.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Duncan Aswell, "The Role of Fortune in the Testament of Cresseid," Philological Quarterly, 46 (1967), 484-85; John MacQueen, Robert Henryson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 60, 61; and A. C. Spearing, Criticism and Medieval Poetry (London: Edward Arnold, 1972), pp. 181-83.

<sup>2</sup>Denton Fox, ed., Testament of Cresseid, Nelson's Medieval and Renaissance Library, ed. Geoffrey Sheperd (London: Thomas Nelson, 1968), pp. 53-56.

<sup>3</sup>The text of the Testament of Cresseid quoted here and throughout the paper is taken from the Poems of Robert Henryson, The Scottish Text Society, No. 3, ed. G. Gregory Smith (1908; rpt., New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968).

<sup>4</sup>Quotations from Chaucer here and throughout the paper are taken from Chaucer's Major Poetry, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963).

<sup>5</sup>The text of the Romance of the Rose quoted here and throughout the paper is taken from the translation by Harry W. Robbins, ed. Charles W. Dunn (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1962).

<sup>6</sup>Fox, pp. 2, 40, 41, 156. See also Patrick Cruttwell, "Two Scots Poets: Dunbar and Henryson," in The Age of Chaucer, The Pelican Guide to English Literature, No. 1, ed. Boris Ford (1959; rpt., Middlesex: Penguin, 1972), pp. 183-84; E. M. W. Tillyard, Five Poems: 1470-1870 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948), pp. 17-18; MacQueen, p. 93; Kurt Wittig, The Scottish Tradition in Literature (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), p. 49; and A. M. Kinghorn, ed., The Middle Scots Poets, York Medieval Texts, ed. Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 24-25.

<sup>7</sup>Douglas Duncan, "Henryson's Testament of Cresseid," Essays in Criticism, 11 (1961), 129, 133-35; Harvey Wood, Two Scots Chaucerians, Bibliographical Series of Supplements to "British Book News" on Writers and Their Work, ed. Geoffrey Bullough (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1967), p. 15; and Delores Noll, "The Testament of Cresseid: Are Christian Interpretations Valid?" Studies in Scottish Literature, 9 (1971), 18-19, 21-23.

<sup>8</sup>Aswell, pp. 471-72, 485-87.

<sup>9</sup>This and subsequent quotation from the Bible is taken from the text of the Vulgate.

<sup>10</sup>Spearing, p. 186.

<sup>11</sup>Spearing, pp. 186-87, 189-92.

<sup>12</sup>Duncan, pp. 129, 133-35.

<sup>13</sup>Wood, pp. 14-15; and Noll, pp. 18-19, 21-22.

<sup>14</sup>Aswell, pp. 475-76, 485-87.

<sup>15</sup>Marshall W. Stearns, Robert Henryson (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1949), p. 96.

<sup>16</sup>C. S. Lewis, The Discarded Image (1964; rpt., Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1974), p. 118.

<sup>17</sup>H. R. Patch, The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature (1927; rpt., New York: Octagon, 1967), p. 90.

<sup>18</sup>C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (1936; rpt., London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 120.

<sup>19</sup>See Aswell, pp. 480-81.

<sup>20</sup>This and subsequent quotations from the Consolation of Philosophy are taken from Richard Green's translation (Indianapolis: Liberal Arts Press, 1962).

## WORKS CONSULTED

- Aswell, E. Duncan. "The Role of Fortune in the Testament of Cresseid." Philological Quarterly, 4 (1967), 471-87.
- Boethius, Anicius Manlius Severinus. The Consolation of Philosophy. Trans. Richard Green. Indianapolis: Liberal Arts Press, 1962.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. Chaucer's Major Poetry. Ed. Albert C. Baugh. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1963.
- Cruttwell, Patrick. "Two Scots Poets: Dunbar and Henryson." The Age of Chaucer. The Pelican Guide to English Literature, No. 1. Ed. Boris Ford. 1959; rpt., Middlesex: Penguin, 1972, Pp. 173-85.
- De Lorris, Guillaume, and Jean de Meun. The Romance of the Rose. Trans. Harry W. Robbins. Ed. Charles W. Dunn. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1962.
- Duncan, Douglas. "Henryson's Testament of Cresseid." Essays in Criticism, 11 (1961), 128-35.
- Harth, Sydney. "Henryson Reinterpreted." Essays in Criticism, 11 (1961), 471-80.
- Henryson, Robert. The Poems of Robert Henryson. The Scottish Text Society, No. 3. Ed. G. Gregory Smith. 1908; rpt., New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Robert Henryson: Poems. Ed. Charles Elliott. Clarendon Medieval and Tudor Series. Ed. J. A. W. Bennett. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Testament of Cresseid. Ed. Denton Fox. Nelson's Medieval and Renaissance Library. Ed. Geoffrey Shepherd. London: Thomas Nelson, 1968.
- Kinghorn, A. M., ed. The Middle Scots Poets. York Medieval Texts. Ed. Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970.

- Lewis, C. S. The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature. 1964; rpt., Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition. 1936; rpt., London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968.
- MacQueen, John. Robert Henryson: A Study of the Major Narrative Poems. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.
- Moran, Tatyana. "The Meeting of the Lovers in the Testament of Cresseid." Notes and Queries, N.S. 10 (1963), 11-12.
- Noll, Delores. "The Testament of Cresseid: Are Christian Interpretations Valid?" Studies in Scottish Literature, 9 (1971), 16-25.
- Patch, Howard R. The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature. 1927, rpt., New York: Octagon, 1967.
- Spearing, A. C. Criticism and Medieval Poetry. London: Edward Arnold, 1972.
- Speirs, John. The Scots Literary Tradition: An Essay in Criticism. London: Faber and Faber, 1962.
- Stearns, Marshall W. Robert Henryson. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1949.
- Tillyard, E. M. W. Five Poems: 1470-1870. London: Chatto and Windus, 1948.
- Wittig, Kurt. The Scottish Tradition in Literature. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958.
- Wood, Henry Harvey. Two Scots Chaucerians: Robert Henryson and William Dunbar. Bibliographical Series of Supplements to "British Book News" on Writers and Their Work. Ed. Geoffrey Bullough. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1967.

## VITA

John Craig McDonald

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 31 January 1952.

A graduate of South Mecklenburg High School in Charlotte, North Carolina, June 1970. Attended Davidson College, taking a leave for a semester to study at the University of North Carolina--Chapel Hill, August 1972. A. B. from Davidson, June 1974. Campus Intern for Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship in Williamsburg from 1974 to 1975. Entered the College of William and Mary as a graduate assistant in the Department of English in September 1975.

