WHAT HENRYSON REALLY DOES IN THE
TESTAMENT OF CRESSEID

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TESTAMENT OF CRESSEID

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

There is a kind of sixth book to Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde which the English poet himself did not write and which continues to puzzle readers in terms of purpose and meaning. It can be rightly assumed from the outset of the book that its author, Robert Henryson, knew Chaucer's love poem well and greatly respected it, both these assertions verified by the fact that Henryson's poem, the Testament of Cresseid, is concerned only with the action in the Troilus from the middle of the fifth book on. Furthermore, Henryson's poem, written late in the fifteenth century after the Troilus work, logically follows Chaucer's

1There is no confirmed date for the composition of the Testament, but Denton Fox in his comprehensive edition of The Testament of Cresseid (London and Edinburgh, 1966), p. 17, writes that there is "some evidence which suggests that the Testament was in circulation by 1492." To support this statement, Fox refers to a work in the Aslovn MS, The Spektakle of Luf by G. Myll dated 10 July 1492. In this work is found a "list of notorious women," including Cresseid. There it is said of her that she "abandoned Troilus for Diomeid, 'And thare after went common amang the grekis And syn deid in gret mysere & pane.'" According to Fox (p. 17), "B. J. Whiting, who first noted this passage . . ." from The Spektakle, also noted the similarity of its phrasing with line 83 of the Testament in which "among the Grekis" is used. Whiting, Fox informs us, concludes from this and other similarities that "'the safest, and most satisfactory, solution would seem to be to agree that Master G. Myll had read Henryson's Testament sometime before 10 July 1492.'"
poem except for the character changes Henryson makes. These changes, some of them dramatically reversing the effect Chaucer sought, combine to form a poignant fate for the heroine of his poem—a poem apparently lacking, in Henryson's estimation, any clear response to Criseyde's act of betrayal. To the poem Chaucer wrote, we find in Henryson's tale a continuation, some say a sequel,¹ in which the heroine Cresseid experiences a punishment that includes social alienation and personal disfigurement. Finally, however, in the light of her self-knowledge, Henryson's Cresseid experiences regeneration. This regeneration comes about because, in one critic's words, "she sees what she is and what she has been, and she is now free to die."²

Interesting to me are the circumstances of Cresseid's fate in the Testament—circumstances that combine to conclude more explicitly, if more pathetically, Chaucer's authoritative story of courtly love. And this sizable parent work, Troilus and Criseyde, in no way diminishes the individuality of its natural offspring, the Testament of Cresseid. In

¹There is some discussion about whether, in fact, the Testament is a sequel or a completely original creation. However, several critics use the term "sequel" without hesitation: Arthur Quiller-Couch, Studies in Literature, Second Series (Cambridge, 1919-1929), II, pp. 269-271; Marshall W. Stearns, Robert Henryson (New York, 1949), p. 6; George Lyre-Todd, ed., Medieval Scottish Poetry (London and Edinburgh, n.d.), p. 84.

both works the human condition is emphatically portrayed. In the *Troilus*, it is seen in the action of the characters moving predictably within the framework of the courtly love system, while in Henryson the direst predicament, yet the fullest promise of humanity, is seen in the essentially tragic personality of Cresseid—her self-knowledge—silhouetted against the backdrop of late medieval Scottish morality. Taken with its greatest implication, the *Testament* to some scholars like J. S. P. Tatlock and C. S. Lewis may be the needed denouement, the absence of which is so obviously the final fault in Chaucer's poem.¹

B. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND REVIEW OF SOURCES

The most important aspect within the *Testament* to be considered, however, is that of the seeming severity of Cresseid's punishment compared with the nature of her sin. This paper, therefore, intends to deal at length with the implications of Henryson's punishment for Cresseid and the pronounced tension it causes between his sense of justice, on the one hand, and his sense of compassion, on the other. The critics attendant to this and other questions prompted by Henryson's poem divide into three apparent categories. One

¹Tatlock, for example, speaks of the "incongruous ending" of the *Troilus* in his "The People in Chaucer's Troilus," *PMLA*, LVI (1941), 94. Likewise, Lewis remarks in his volume, *The Allegory of Love* (New York, 1958), p. 196, that the *Troilus* "despite this terrible conclusion, is not a depressing poem."
group, best represented by Tatyana Moran, views the Testament as a harsh moral indictment of Cresseid, while another group, whose ideas are best articulated by Denton Fox, sees an ironic purpose in her punishment. A third set of critics stresses, more or less, the Christian theology underlying the poem, an interpretation first given in detail by E. M. W. Tillyard.¹ This writer's purpose will be to bring together certain tenets of the second and third group of critics, in that some truth from both positions, the irony of the Testament cited by one and the Christian theology of the poem cited by the other, will be seen to bear on the discussion here.

What Henryson is doing in the Testament does appear to function as a result of the sin-punishment syndrome. But

it is the position of this writer that Cresseid's punishment is not only deserved, and therefore not the arbitrary vengeance of a too harsh moralist, but indeed serves to make the Testament a far more compassionate work than the critics mentioned in the first category above would have it. Furthermore, this writer, going beyond the interpretations that see the punishment as vaguely redemptive, will show that Cresseid's leprosy, as a punishment, was the only road toward retribution she could have traveled that would have satisfied the morality of Henryson's age and, at the same time, led her toward her own salvation.\(^1\) The fitness of the atonement viewed in this light suggests a much more human and compassionate—if moral—author than such critics as Moran have allowed.

In order to show convincingly that Henryson's attitude toward his heroine is a mixture of compassion and justice, I will elaborate fully upon the direct connection between Cresseid's sins of the flesh and her leprosy. It is an interesting paradox that the disease she gets from her prostitution serves both the purposes of punishment and

\(^1\) Benton Fox notes in his introduction to the Testament, p. 40, that "the relationship between leprosy and Christianity is particularly important. . . ." Apparently there was a confusion in the Middle Ages between the Biblical Lazarus who lay, full of sores, and the Lazarus (brother to Martha and Mary) whom Christ raised from the dead. The confusion gave way to the "strong implication that leprosy was a disease which preceded a raising to eternal life."
redemption. Also part of my examination will deal with the imagery of the poem's setting, and the diction of the key word, "testament," two elements in the poem which I believe imbue the entire work with the tension of paradox.

C. COMPARISON BETWEEN TROILUS AND CRISEYDE AND THE TESTAMENT OF CRESSEID

It will be helpful to the reader to review at this point, however, the changes Henryson made from Chaucer's Troilus. Indeed, the several character changes found in the Testament contribute skillfully to and play a vital part in the thematic tensions of the poem. Let us turn now, then, to some comparative remarks concerning Troilus and Criseyde and the Testament of Cresseid.

In the necessary narrative particulars such as time and place and even character names, Henryson closely follows the scheme of Chaucer's work. Troilus, though resurrected now in the Testament, is still the betrayed lover; Diomeid is the sudden one, even hungry in the Testament, though quickly satiated; Calchas is Cresseid's father, though greatly changed in manner and in heart; and Cresseid, as she was in Chaucer's story, herself "... the flour and A pear se / Of Troy and Grece" (1.76),1 is the central concern of

1Citations from Henryson in my text are to the Testament of Cresseid, edited by Denton Fox.
Henryson's narrator. The basic plot details that Henryson depends on are those that are familiar to readers of the Troilus, for the events and circumstances in the later poem are prompted by the events described in the earlier one.

And in that great story of love, there can be no question but that Chaucer provided his Middle Scots admirer with the "A per se" of love literature on which to base his own story. One implication of the Testament, however, is obvious—that only the final stages of Chaucer's poem were in need of revision, due to the meager discipline Criseyde receives at Chaucer's hand. In his version, moreover, Henryson makes clear that his only apparent point of significant divergence from Chaucer's pertains to the final status of the heroine. At Chaucer's hands she is abruptly left, conceivably living in uncertain happiness with Diomeid, her reputation forever stained. In effect, Chaucer simply leaves her with a feeling in his own heart of chagrin for her betrayal and expresses a hesitant reprimand for her deed:

\begin{quote}
\begin{align*}
\text{Ne me ne list this sely womman chyde} \\
\text{Forther than the storye wol devyse.}
\end{align*}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\begin{align*}
\text{And if I myghte excuse hire any wise,} \\
\text{For she so sory was for hire untrouthe,} \\
\text{Iwis, I wolde excuse hire yet for routhe.}
\end{align*}
\end{quote}

(V. 1093-99)\(^1\)

\(^1\)Citations from Chaucer in my text are to Chaucer's Major Poetry, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York, 1963).
Chaucer is content to let her be, so to speak: her reputation "... alas, is punysshed so wide" (l. 1095), so as to be sufficient recompense for her deed.

At the hands of the other poet, however, Cresseid is not so easily let off. The deed of betrayal, viewed perhaps by Henryson as the first instance of Cresseid's sin of self-pride, compounds itself in blasphemy, bringing from the gods of love the curse of leprosy and finally death. The reader easily concludes from these quite different endings that the two poets interpret the heroine Cresseid in two entirely different ways. Stated more precisely, one poet is too sympathetic in his concern for Criseyde, freeing her, in effect, from any severe criticism, not letting himself see her fully as the complete person she is. E. T. Donaldson speaks to this point when he writes: "The difficulty with Criseyde ... is that she is not seen from any consistently detached, objective point of view; she is seen almost wholly from the point of view of a narrator ... terribly anxious to have us see only the best in her, and not ... the worst even when it is staring both us and him in the face...."¹

M. W. Stearns, however, puts the blame squarely on Chaucer when he writes that "... although Criseyde is blameworthy by any moral standard, Chaucer hesitates to judge her."² Chaucer apparently is guilty, like the

²Stearns, p. 54.
protective parent, of too completely excusing Criseyde. In Donaldson's words again, Chaucer, through his narrator, "... does his best to maintain his belief that so lovely a woman as Criseyde could do no wrong."¹ As a result, to some readers she is ultimately appealing, rather than blamed for her faithlessness.²

Henryson, however, must have viewed Criseyde as deserving severe reproachment, if also in need of sympathetic understanding. Consequently, in the Testament Cresseid meets both reproachment and understanding as Henryson constructs a moving tale as harshly punitive as it is poignantly redemptive. The figure of Cresseid is vivid in our minds once the Testament is closed. She is not shadowy, ethereal, like Chaucer's distant lady. She is instead near and earthy and real, conspicuously human in her suffering and struggle, her ultimate self-accusation sounding conspicuously humble in its hoarse, rasping tones.

¹Donaldson, p. 68.

²Tatlock, in "The People in Chaucer's Troilus," (p. 101) sees as Chaucer's purpose with Criseyde to show "... how infinitely appealing a woman notoriously to become faithless could be." On the basis of most readers' sympathy with Criseyde, Chaucer's purpose, if Tatlock is correct, would seem to be accomplished.
II. FUNCTION OF THE SETTING

A. TENSION THROUGH JUXTAPOSITION OF OPPOSITES

Though Henryson's poem, next to Chaucer's, is comparatively short, there are in it many curious changes and alterations requiring examination if the full effect of the poem is to be known. To begin with, Henryson tells his story through a narrator, quite like Chaucer's in age and respectability, "a servant of love." It might safely be conjectured that this narrator is as much Henryson himself as Chaucer's narrator is Chaucer, though either contention would meet with loud disapproval in scholarly circles devoted to proving that what a man writes does not always reflect what the man himself really is. At any rate this narrator takes from his bookshelf on a cold, dismal near-winter evening a volume "Written be worthie Chaucer glorious / Of fair Cresseid and worthie Troilus" (11. 41-42). Henryson has occupied himself

1 Chaucer's mammoth work of 8239 lines in 5 books dwarfs Henryson's 615 lines in 86 stanzas.

2 Fox, p. 53.

3 For the sake of clarity throughout this paper, I will use these spellings for the characters in the Testament: Cresseid, Troilus, Diomede, Calchas. For the characters in the Troilus, I will use these spellings: Criseyde, Troilus, Calkas, Diomede.
in the several stanzas preceding this statement with the carefully drawn stage plans that he feels should fit exactly such a tale as *Troilus and Criseyde*. The poem is a sad one, a "cairful dyte" (l. 1), and the season as well as the time of day in which the story can most properly be read ought to be appropriate. In stanza 1 Henryson provides several tension-producing effects that make the "season" correspond to his tale of love:

Ane doolie sessoun to ane cairful dyte
Suld correspond and be equivalent:
Richt sa it wes quhen I began to wryte
This tragedie; the wedder richt fervent,
Quhen Aries, in middis of the Lent,
Schouris of hail (gart) fra the north descend,
That scantlie fra the cauld I micht defend.

(11. 1-7)

We see that the dreary season outside is in marked contrast to the warmth of the narrator's "oratur," or small chapel, to which he turns in the next stanza. And from there, looking out, we see the golden face of Venus reflecting brightly the sun's rays as it descends. It must be noted that a scene of opposites is being described here: "Schouris of baill" (l. 6) coming from the north carry over a chill that cools the warmth suggested by "fair Venus, the sweetie of the night" (l. 11). Also to be noted is the suggestion of conflict caused by the juxtaposition of the two forces, cold and warmth, which appear early in the poem, presumably to foreshadow the chilling effect Cresseid's...
leprosy has on her beauty. This later event has its early counterpart in the setting, where the hail falls in cold contrast to the fair beams of Venus. The opposing forces of love's passions are already being brought into play.

In this light, our narrator sees through his window-pane the full opposition of two contrasting elements, as the northern wind, cold and biting in its freezing strength, blows the warm, moist clouds from the sky. At the same tempestuous moment, Venus' "bemis brast sa fair / That I micht se on euerie syde me by" (11. 15-16), compounding a situation obviously stark in its contrasts; the cold outside is unusually severe for this time of year, which we take to be the Lenten season, that austere and barren period just before Easter, the true harbinger of spring. In fact, we have been told that the season is "in middis of the Lent" (1. 5) a season, the notion of which, is forcibly complemented by the bitter northern blasts and the showers of hail from the arctic pole. It is indeed a season of austerity and deprivation, serving perhaps in this context as the prelude to the deterioration Cresseid will experience. And because of the arctic blasts, the poet-narrator, not so ardent a servant of love as he would have us believe, has been driven into his inner chamber where the glowing fire warms him outside while a drink his "spreitis to comfort" (1. 37) completes this small security. Apparently the narrator is weak in his
obedience to love, as he allows the cold outside to deter his intent to pray to Venus, the high goddess of love. In one sense, then, he, too, works in opposition to love.

But what of Venus? What of this Lenten season so cold and furious, so strangely juxtaposed with the goddess of love? To answer these questions is to perceive that Henryson is doing some early spadework in the opening stanzas, setting, as it were, a climate of tension within and without for the story he will tell. He is about to take his reader through a tragic love story again, and the several conflicts therein seem to be prefaced, or at least symbolically suggested, in the extremes of the seasons he has described. It is a reasonable contention, I think, that Henryson's intent is not to confuse his reader with variable conditions outside, but simply to insist on an awareness of the polar opposites of emotional states at work in a poem about love. Perhaps the idea, as seen in the narrator's need for comfort, is that proper body temperature will be conducive to fullest awareness of love's variations.

At any rate, the scene becomes more pertinently suggestive of love and its several connotations as the poet, apparently older—though not so old he can't remember tasting the ripe fruits of passion (1. 23)—draws our attention to the hot blood of youth and the ardor of young love. Henryson, about to write a poem dealing with the results of love and
love betrayed, is making certain our attitudes are properly receptive to what he is about to say. We learn that Venus, "luifis quene" (l. 22), he at one time had given obedience to, and though he no longer has what it takes to pay her homage: "... in the auld the curage doif and deid" (l. 32), he is expert in the full knowledge of love, for he has experienced both the excited passion of youth and the dulled desire of age. Appropriate to his attitudes, the narrator's fifth stanza of the Testament reads as much like an apology as it does an excuse:

Thocht luife be hait, yit in ane man of age
It kendillis nocht sa sone as in youthaid,
Of quhomo the blude is flowing in ane rage;
And in the auld the curage doif and deid
Of quhild the fyre outward is best remeids.

(11. 29-33)

And though the narrator would have a lover's heart again, he contents himself on this knife-cold night with a fire, book and drink in a tired sort of love ceremony of his own.

Thus various attitudes and symbols concerning love have been brought into play at this juncture in the poem, and it is reasonably clear, I think, that Henryson has been doing something else than just settling his narrator comfortably in his easy chair for an evening's reading. Is it not possible that through his choice of tension-producing details for the initial setting of the Testament he has not only heightened the reader's remembrance of the emotional
seasons of Chaucer's *Troilus* but also foreshadowed some of the variations on the topic of love his tale of *Cresseid* will uncover? It is my impression that he has.

B. VARIATIONS ON THE TOPIC OF LOVE

Looking first at the narrator's brief review of Chaucer's *Troilus* (ll. 41-60), it is apparent from the above discussion that the weather outside can be seen as important because it corresponds in frenzy and rage to important aspects of Chaucer's story. There is frenzy in the sense of *Troilus'* ardent though rejected love for Criseyde, and rage in the sense of the mental anguish through which he goes in her absence; or, as Henryson puts it, how he "... neir out of wit abraid/ And weipit soir with visage paill of hew" (ll. 45-46). *Troilus'* fervor is balanced, on the other hand, by the inner peace the poet is feeling while sitting comfortably before his fire, that scene suggesting a tranquility which lessens *Troilus'* near panic and, at the same time, settles somewhat the chaotic storm outside.

In addition to the balancing effect explained here, Henryson has touched explicitly on the hot and cold of love. He brings both qualities to the reader's mind by recalling the first one through *Troilus'* passion and longing for Criseyde. The second quality is prompted through recollection of Criseyde's coolly maintained distance and unwillingness to return to *Troilus*, this unwillingness seen in her easy
biding of their ten-day separation. Every reader of the
_Troilus_ knows, too, that the ashes of this love turn a cold
and leaden hue when on the tenth day of her absence Criseyde
gives herself to Diomede.\(^1\) As a result, then, of the setting
in the Testament, these aspects of love from the _Troilus_ are
brought clearly to mind.

But there is another purpose served in the early por­
tions of Henryson's poem, a purpose which also brings the
thought of love to mind. In my opinion, the poet has incor­
porated--not in a specific sense, but through a subtle
connecting device--several neat variations on the topic of
love. These variations together form a preview of things
to come. For example, the emphatic title word, "testament,"
itself fosters associations with a type of love in the sense
of one's promise or legacy to others. And in her testament,
Cresseid does, in fact, bequeath her possessions to others,
i.e., promises her belongings to them, clearly in a gesture
of selflessness and love. The notion of "testament" in this
context has quick reinforcement when, in the first few lines
of the poem, the reader's thoughts briefly contemplate the
season of Lent, the promise of Easter's quick approach and
the suffering of the crucifixion. Furthermore, any religious
implication of "testament" and "Lent" is heightened by the

\(^1\)Alain Ménoir ("Criseyde's Two Half Lovers," Orbis
Litterarum, XVI, [1961] 7, 253) notes as a masterstroke of
Chaucerian irony "that Diomede makes his way with Criseyde
on the very day she is to return to Troilus."
very term "tragedie" in line 4.

The sequence is purposeful, I believe, the design subtle. And it appears a safe conjecture from the evidence above that this portion of the poem's setting intentionally recalls for the reader the Christ story, His love, suffering, and promise. Though the recall is brief, it is nevertheless certainly made and the idea, if not the tragedy, of love in the redemptive sense has been suggested.

It is ironic that Venus, the goddess of sensual love, is mentioned in such close proximity to the notion of redemptive love. Yet the mentioning does provide another connotation of love in a strange sequence which includes within its matrix three widely divergent aspects of love: its promise, its selflessness, and its selfishness. Though this sequence may be merely suggestive, Henryson, in quick succession, brings to his reader's mind several connotations which easily attach themselves to the notion of love as shown above: "testament" has the distinct connotation of "promise"; the Lenten season and Easter call to our awareness the Christ story and the selflessness so integral to it; and finally, the inclusion of Venus changes our attention to sensual or selfish love, her fair form being unrivalled in the medieval mind as the goddess of fleshly love.

As a result of this reasoning it is my contention that the order of these three suggestions, "testament" (from the title), "Lent" and therefore Easter (from line 5), and "Venus"
(from line 11) could not have been happenstance and therefore must have been intentional in the poet's plan to show love's contrarities. Henryson is, after all, focusing his reader's attention on a widely popular love story that portrayed moral conflicts readily known to his medieval audience. In my opinion it is wholly possible that the late medieval Scots intended the mention and therewith the tension of these three aspects of love to work subliminally on his audience as he coursed the rest of his story. It is as though a "multi-consciousness," to use Charles Muscatine's phrase, is required of the reader if Henryson's purpose in the Testament is to be known. Denton Fox also notes the subliminal workings of

1The moral conflict aroused by courtly love is noted by Donald R. Howard (The Three Temptations: Medieval Man in Search of the World /New Jersey, 1966) p. 81), who remarks that "from a churchly point of view, courtly love was objectionable for the sensuality and adultery which it seemed to foster; more important still, love in the courtly sense was sensual love of a worldly object and therefore contrary to the love of God." But courtly love was "merely a literary tradition" in Chaucer's day, a thought suggested by A. C. Baugh in his volume on Chaucer's poetry, p. 79. And by Henryson's time the "amour courtois code, which would not admit the possibility of 'love' in the marriage relationship, but only in adultery" was shattered by The Kingis Quair, a poem written in 1423 by James the First. This thought given by Tom Scott (Late Medieval Scots Poetry /New York, 1967) p. 10) has relevance for Henryson's Testament in that James's poem "... is almost the hallmark of Scots poetry" wherein "reality takes over from romance." Henryson appears to pursue the notion of reality in his Testament in his consideration of love's several concealed identities.

Henryson's poetry. Fox writes that "Henryson's characteristic method is to work by indirection and to conceal a considerable amount of complexity underneath an apparently simple surface." With these early suggestions somewhat concealed, Henryson appears, in fact, to be multiplying our levels of conscious awareness in order that the fullest dimensions of Criseyde's altered circumstances and the reasons for them, as depicted in the Testament, will be clearly understood.

And in the lines that are not subtle reminders of love's polarities, other characteristics pertinent to it are accented. Henryson is not subtle, for example, in stanzas 4 and 5. He is bold in his comedy there as he conducts a short, reminiscent discussion of youthful desires and one-time agreements made between the narrator and love's queen:

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

(11. 22-28)

and:

Thocht lufe be bait, yit in ane man of age
It kendiis nocht sa sone as in youthaid,
Of quhome the blude is flowing in ane rage;
And in the auld the curage doif and deid
Of quhilk the fyre outward is best remeid:
To help be phisiike quhair that nature faillit
I am expert, for baith I haue assaillit.

(11. 29-35)

¹Fox, p. 1.
But notwithstanding the comedy of these stanzas—the old man's more pressing need for comfort than for love—our attention is directed to this elusive human emotion. In these stanzas the notion of religious love momentarily is evaded, the narrator's—and our—full attention being turned to that of sexual love. But such a change of attention is fitting, for the Testament concerns itself explicitly with sexual activities in a way that the Troilus never did. Thus we will witness the fall of Cresseid as it is shown affected by a variety of love's expressions: comedy, irony, felicity, and tragedy. But her major role can only be considered after the preliminary suggestions of the first ten stanzas are comprehended.

In stanza 6, for example, first mention of Troilus and Cresseid is made, and with that the reader is neatly brought by Henryson into the realm of courtly love. Once that medieval concept of love is introduced and reflected by the characters who so effectively dramatize its code of humility, courtesy, adultery, and the religion of love,\(^1\) tension between the two love ethics, courtly and Christian (perhaps first shown in the previous remarks on the tension created by the setting) is present in the reader's mind. I do not assert that awareness of the tension is an actively conscious one on the part of

\(^1\)Lewis, p. 12.
Henryson's early readers (though it may have been a conscious intention on his part to suggest the tension). But the late medieval mind, of which Henryson was certainly cognizant, would have most certainly, if not instinctively, made implicit comparison between Christian love and courtly love, based on their particular attitudes toward adultery. Courtly love clearly assumed it; Christian love clearly condemned it.

Speaking to this element of adultery in courtly love, C. S. Lewis, in his considerable discussion of courtly love, offers some thoughts on medieval sexual morality. Lewis writes: "The conjugal act may be not only innocent, but meritorious, if it has the right causes—desire of offspring, payment of the marriage debt, and the like. But if desire comes first . . . it remains a mortal sin." In his discussion, Lewis, interpreting the ideas of Albertus Magnus (1206?-1280), stresses the importance of right intent as it relates to the sex act. In this vein, and as further support for the notion of adultery as it was a consideration in courtly love, Lewis notes: "It will be seen that the medieval theory finds room for innocent sexuality: what it does not find

1Regarding Henryson as a man of his time, John Speirs (The Scots Literary Tradition, London, 1940, p. 24) notes that the poet's "work is that of a serious good man. Nevertheless, . . . the Testament is in its own different way a startling emanation of the medieval mind."

2Lewis, The Allegory of Love.

3Lewis, p. 16.
room for is passion, whether romantic or otherwise.\textsuperscript{1} Courtly love was certainly passionate, and romantic, and, it was just as certainly not innocent. For the medieval mind the whole system of courtly love could undoubtedly have been tolerated with adultery as a part of the accepted pattern of behavior. But along with this tolerance of courtly love, the medieval man would have thought of it, in Lewis' words again, basically as "an evil."\textsuperscript{2}

Seen in this light, the code of courtly love suggested by the poem \textit{Troilus and Criseyde} is bound to have had a different impact on the readers of the \textit{Testament} than it had on readers contemporary with Chaucer. Again Lewis's remarks are pertinent to the ambiguities suggested in a code so complex as that governing courtly love: "The general impression left on the medieval mind by its official teachers was that all love--at least all such passionate and exalted devotion as a courtly poet thought worthy of the name--was more or less wicked."\textsuperscript{3}

From this it is clear that fleshly love was a persistent difficulty within the mind of fourteenth-century medieval man; the concept of courtly love would have fiercely compounded that difficulty. If Donald Howard is correct in his statement

\textsuperscript{1}Lewis, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{2}Lewis, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{3}Lewis, p. 16.
that "... courtly love appears to be one of the great reversals of human sentiment, a re-evaluation in the emotional life of western culture..."\(^1\) then Henryson's probable difficulty in abiding the conclusion of the *Troilus* is understandable. The Testament would come as a natural outgrowth of that difficulty. For if, during Henryson's age, the concept of courtly love found even less acceptance than during Chaucer's, when it had become merely a literary convention,\(^2\) any response to the code in the late fifteenth century might be expected to concentrate on the adulterous aspect thereof. That a different response and, therefore, a different morality from Chaucer's, viewed the courtly love code in the fifteenth century is made clear by A. M. Kinghorn. He writes that the Testament was "written with distinct motives and under different social conditions from those which governed *Troilus and Criseyde*." Also he notes that many of the elements typical of Chaucer "do not blend easily with the 'typically Scots morality' by which human beings are expected to reap what they sow."\(^3\)

It seems a likely possibility, therefore, that Henryson deals with Cresseid in terms of her adultery. She would be shown, then, in part, to be the wanton that Chaucer never

\(^1\)Howard, *Three Temptations*, p. 84.

\(^2\)See above, p. 18, n. 1.

suggested her to be, but which the deteriorating code of courtly love might have caused her to be in the late fifteenth century. She was merely an infidel in the former age, but the latter age would have her as a prostitute and wanton, reaping what she had sown. So she became at Henryson's hand.

So we see that the mention of Troilus and Criseyde in line 41 of Henryson's poem would bring to the reader's mind a vague awareness regarding the dissimilitude of the two love ethics, Christian and courtly. The late medieval reader would continue the Testament with a notion of conflict in mind: the two systems of love, Christian and courtly, could not rightfully co-exist.

I think it is clear that Henryson does not attempt an open discussion of courtly as opposed to Christian love. But I think it just as clear that he brings about a unique juxtaposition of several love attitudes in the beginning stanzas of his poem, courtly and Christian attitudes among them. Once the narrator takes the Chaucer book from the shelf, the reader's attentions are concerned with love's effects and sorrows treated in Chaucer's little tragedy. There will be time later to return to the topic of love's varying attitudes. It needs to be mentioned early on, however, so that the seed of suggestion planted here—as was Henryson's mention of Lent in line 5 of the Testament—might be germinating and growing toward maturity in the rich soil of discussion.
Of interest to us next is the review of the Troilus offered by Henryson in stanzas 7, 8 and 9. It is probably as close as one could be—or needs to be—in so brief a telling, a mere twenty-one lines to cover the events from Book V, line 771 of Chaucer's poem. I do not think Henryson is misleading in his brevity, nor does he foster any misunderstanding about Chaucer's story. Essentially, he tells us, Criseyde fails to return to Troilus at the appointed tenth day and the anxious, love-torn knight suffers such oppression of the heart that he nearly goes out of his mind. Criseyde is cunningly won by that "sodeyn Diomede" and, with that, Henryson ends his summary. Chaucer's book is ended, but the story of Criseyde is not, or so Henryson leads us to believe.

At this point in the Testament, the reader is not sure what book, exactly, he is reading. What Henryson means in line 61, for example, is not clear: "To brek my sleip ane vther quair I tuik." ¹ At any rate lines 64-69 provide the

¹It is in the "ane vther quair," Henryson tells us, that he finds the fatal destiny of Cresseid. But that other book remains mysteriously unnamed. D. Fox in his notes, p. 91, says that "it is reasonably certain this 'vther quair' never existed." Fox also notes that "references to imaginary authorities, such as Chaucer's 'Lollius' and 'Trophee,' are not uncommon in medieval literature." W. W. Skeat (Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1894, p. 53) would agree with Fox's suggestion that Lollius was imaginary. Skeat says that "we should also notice that Lollius was to Chaucer a mere name." But more recently, J. L. Pittredge ("Chaucer's Lollius," Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, XVIII [1917], 47-133) has gone to great pains to show that Lollius did, in fact, exist and was, moreover, known to Chaucer through manuscripts at least. Hans J. Spatein ("The Identity of Chaucer's Lollius," MLQ, III [1942], 391-400) also argues persuasively for an identity for Chaucer's "auctor."
mystery, the suggestion and the ambiguity the poet needs to begin telling the story of (his) Cresseid:

Quha wait gif all that Chauceir wrait was trew?
Nor I wait nocht gif this narratioun
Be authoreisit, or fenyeit of the new
Be sum poeit, throw his inuentioun
Maid to report the lamentatioun
And wofull end of this lustie Cresseid.

(11. 64-69)
III. TROILUS CHARACTERS REDRAWN

A. TROILUS

That Henryson doesn't know the truth of authorship is of little consequence, though. What he did know was Chaucer's conclusion to the Troilus. And when one examines the changes made in the several major characters of the earlier poem, it is apparent that Chaucer's conclusion was not a conclusion at all in the mind of the Scottish poet.

Troilus' laughter, for example, sounding cynically down at the sorrow expressed for him at his death, and Criseyde's puzzling invisibility at the conclusion of the Troilus obviously did not make a fitting ending to that original work on which Henryson based his own. Thus, a conclusion to that "unconcluded" poem, in the form of a poem--in a sense, a sixth book--was provided when Henryson

1In its earliest printings, the Testament was included as the sixth part of the Troilus, without the Scottish author's name affixed to it. Hyder E. Rollins ("The Troilus-Cressida Story from Chaucer to Shakespeare," PMLA, XXXII (1917), 383-429), for example, notes that the Testament was published in Thynne's 1532 edition of Chaucer with the introductory statement that "thus endeth the fift and laste booke of Troylus: and here foloweth the pyteful and dolorous testament of payre Cresseide." A later editor, Rollins adds, Sir Francis Kinaston, finally pointed out in 1635 that "the 'Sixt & Last booke of Troilus and Cressid' was not written by Chaucer, but by Mr. Robert Henderson."
silenced Troilus' out-of-character laughter, and made ugly the once beautiful Crisseyde.

In the course of his short book of eighty-six stanzas, Henryson is swift and thorough in his changes of the few central characters of Chaucer's story. Troilus no longer laughs from the eighth sphere. Troilus, in fact, is not even in the eighth sphere; he is not even dead! But we find him resurrected in the Testament, restored to a fine knightly life doing fine knightly things. And though the once dead knight is now alive, his existence in no way lessens the believability of the Testament. The complete reversal of Troilus' state of being from what it was in Chaucer to what it is in Henryson, however, is creatively unobtrusive for the reader and causes no disorder in the poem. With unusual ease this striking plot change results in a character change that produces one of the more noble figures in all medieval love lore.

Henryson's Troylus, remade, is the gentle, courteous, free and honorable knight described in the code.\(^1\) And in retrospect, Henryson appears well ahead of his time in his recasting of Troilus. A review of the active disagreement\(^2\) over the full meaning of the eighth sphere Troilus flies to after his death in Book V, l. 1806 might force the conclusion


that the wrong partner in the love duo dies. Is it not, after all, Troilus who remains faithful and Criseyde who does not? Further, it seems likely that Henryson might have been plagued, like modern critics, to account for why Chaucer tenderly takes Troilus to that puzzling place in the beyond, showing him there watching the world he has just departed:

And when that he was slayn in this manere,  
His lighte goost ful blissfully is went  
Up to the holughnesse of the eighte spere  
(V. 1807-09)

and

And down from themes faste he gan avyse  
This litel spot of erthe, that with the se  
Embraced is, and fully gan despise  
This wrecched world. . . .  
(V. 1814-17)

and

And in hymself he laugh right at the wo  
Of hem that wepten for his deth so fast.  
(V. 1821-22)

The argument might be offered here that Chaucer is actually condemning Criseyde for her betrayal of Troilus,

1E. T. Donaldson (Speaking of Chaucer, \( \text{[New York, 1970]} \), p. 89), considering a similar point of justice in the case of Arcite and Palamon of the "Knight's Tale," places the blame on Providence for not asserting "the simple triumph of justice when Palamon ends up with Emily, nor the triumph of a malignant anti-justice when Arcite ends up in his cold grave, alone." Just as Providence is not working justly with Arcite in the one case, nor unjustly with Palamon in the other, Troilus' "justice" no more fits his faithfulness than Criseyde's happy end fits her betrayal.
since Troilus seems to be viewing the world with such disgust, and, as a part of it, her too:

And dammed al oure werk that foloweth so
The blynde lust, the which that may nat laste.
(V. 1823-24)

Or possibly Troilus is being made to see his own error in trusting the temporality of the world, and in that particular, the world of the flesh especially. One critic at least, D. W. Robertson, Jr., posits the interpretation that the story is Troilus' tragedy for the sin of "idolatrous lust."¹ Just what Troilus is doing in the eighth sphere, though, assuming it is "heaven" of a sorts, is hard to explain if he was, in fact, the sinner Robertson portrays him to be.² Notwithstanding the severity of Robertson's charges against Troilus, his real flaw is better accounted for in his loving Crisseyde neither wisely nor well. The essence of his tragedy is captured in the words of Charles Muscatine, when he writes of Troilus: "The fact is that as medieval romance goes, as the 'code' goes, Troilus is too perfect a courtly lover."³ But this view is offset by Alfred David in his harsher account of Troilus: "In spite of all that Chaucer did to heighten the martial prowess, the poetic ardor, and the intellectual

²Robertson, p. 499.
³Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, p. 137.
seriousness of his hero, it would seem that the character of Troilus remains, for the modern taste, too much the stereotype of the passive, servile, pusilanimous courtly lover."

We see, then, by several accounts that Troilus' condition at the poem's end is unhappy, certainly unfulfilling for the reader, and though Chaucer would have us from necessity a "vertu" make, there is little justice for either Troilus or us in that effort. Henryson, on the other hand, rejects the Chaucerian principle and instead of making a virtue of necessity, makes a fitting conclusion to a poem intent on depicting love's drama.

The changes apparent in the character of Troilus, for example, show him to have more compassion and feeling than does the Troilus of Chaucer's tale. The knight who returns briefly in the Testament to pass majestically by the leper band is not so lofty that he does not stop to give of his wealth and his compassion to the poor and diseased. Comparatively, Chaucer's Troilus is not fully convincing in either assignment, as knight or lover. Though we are told he is second only to Hector in the first instance, Troilus somehow never fully persuades us that he is in the same league with his brother. He may be, as suggested above by David, "too much the stereotype of the passive, servile, pusilanimous courtly lover," though even in the throes of love, his highest

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appointed task, he is simply not in control. He cannot, at the choicest moment of the affair, consummate that for which he has been whimpering for more than three thousand lines! One wonders, indeed, with what exactly he expected to make his way into Criseyde's widowed vessel! After all, it is essentially as a lover that Troilus must succeed in the poem, and, ultimately, he cannot.

Troilus' sorry impotency is noted by Alain Renoir in a discussion in which he suggests that our impression of Troilus has been so favorably drawn by Chaucer in Book II, lines 619-648 that we expect of him equal finesse in the bed of love as on the field of battle. The two labors are in some respects similar and we rightfully expect that a proper knight would have the desire or the aggressiveness—at least the energy, if not the equipment—to make love to Criseyde. On this count, however, Troilus is a miserable failure. In Renoir's words: "The final disintegration of the dashing picture we had formed of Troilus comes about when we see Pandarus help him do what we may assume any man would want to do on his own; Pandarus gathers his collapsed friend in his arms, dumps him bodily in Criseyde's bed, and quickly undresses him with the telling question, 'is this a manes berte?'" In view of the pathetic, swooning figure of Troilus now unconscious and naked in

1Alain Renoir, "Criseyde's Two Wall Lovers," Orbis Litterarum, XVI (1961), 239-255.

2Renoir, p. 247.
Criseyde's bed (III. 1093-99), limp and passionless for the job at hand, one wonders how Robertson ever interpreted Troilus as consumed by idolatrous lust. The charge prompts a character impression to which Troilus himself might not object, but which is beyond any capacity with which Chaucer endowed him.

Returning now to the Testament of Cressaid, we find there another Troilus designed by Henryson. And though there is not an elaborate description of him such as Chaucer gave of his knight, the Scot leaves no question about the quality of his character. Until Troilus finally does appear in the short poem, however, he is remarked on only infrequently, each remark, though, clearly reinforcing the praise of the earlier ones. When at last the "resurrected" Troilus returns from the battlefield near the conclusion of the poem, he fits perfectly the favorable portrait drawn of him up to this point. To observe the full development of this portrait, it is necessary to look again at the early parts of the poem.

At first mention of Troilus in the Testament, Henryson calls him "worthie" (l. 43). A hundred lines further on, we are reminded of him again--this time in Cressaid's words--as the "nobill Troylus" (l. 133). Much later in line 485 he is referred to again as "worthie Troylus." And so Henryson unquestionably intends him to be. There is nothing anywhere in the Testament that in any way diminishes the fine
qualities of the knight, his worthy state emphatically contrasting with Cresseid's horrible demise, thereby pointing up the irony of their exchanged fates. The greatest irony, however, is yet to come.

When Troylus rides into the Greek city in stanza 68, Henryson is apparently working toward two important objectives. In the first place, Troylus is being presented to the reader for the first time in the flesh, and all that has been said about him will be measured against what he actually is in these few remaining stanzas of the poem. The impression he gives here must match—even surpass—what has been credited to him. And in this vein, the reader is witness to deeds that correspond to the praises spoken of Troylus. We see him now purposely riding the way of the leper band, heeding their "ane steuin" (l. 491) and "hauing pietie" (l. 495) for them. Going amongst lepers was a foolish, if brave, action for anyone to undertake in the Middle Ages, as the disease was thought to be easily communicated—even through the air the lepers breathed. Fear of disease and contagion, however, does not deter the designs of this knight and he freely rides among the distressed, generously giving to them a purse of

1R. M. Clay, The Medieval Hospitals of England, (New York, 1966), p. 53. Clay writes that common belief in the Middle Ages held that lepers could "not only injure people by the contagion of their polluted breath," they would even "strive to contaminate others . . . so . . . they may have the more fellows in suffering."
gold. \(^1\) Troilus' ride among the lepers is full assurance of his knightly courage as well as his knightly humility.

Above, I spoke of two objectives possibly at work in Henryson's mind as he brings the Troylus of the Testament into the city. In order to accomplish the second objective, Henryson requires more moral stature from his Troylus than Chaucer ever did from his. The meeting of Troylus and Cresseid in the Testament works to several ends, and among them is the finished portrait of Troylus. When the recognition scene is over,\(^2\) there is no doubt in the reader's mind as to the essentially good qualities of "schir Troylus" (l. 536). He is in every respect the non pareil. And he comes to such high position, Henryson stresses, through the gentle spirit of pity. When asked what lord had given the lepers such a prize of gold, the leper man replies: "Schir Troylus it is, gentill and fre" (l. 536). And so

\(^1\) Clay notes (p. 145) that the organization of a leper band was such that various duties were assumed by different members of the group, and therefore a communal attitude of sharing governed the distribution of alms.

\(^2\) Marshall W. Stearns (Robert Henryson, pp. 98-105), shows that "the process which Henryson uses (ll. 498-511) may be traced back at least as far as Aristotle." Stearns says that Troylus' recognition of Cresseid can be explained by Aristotle's theory of illusions, which states that "... when under the influence of strong feeling we are easily deceived regarding our sensations, different persons in different ways, as e.g. the coward under the influence of fear and the lover under that of love have such illusions that the former owing to a trifling resemblance thinks he sees an enemy and the latter his beloved."
he is. He is described in truth, there, for all that he is: humble in his first motives, generous in his final gift of gold. So a good deal of what Henryson is doing in the Testament is seen in this redrawn figure of Troylus. This is clearly another knight, greatly different from Chaucer's. But something else of importance to his character happens in that recognition scene of stanza 70.

With reference to this stanza, it contains, I feel, the most finely wrought piece of irony in the poem, a truly exquisite dramatic moment that takes place when Troylus and Cresseid come face to face with each other, though neither realizes fully whom he has seen. The victorious Troylus rides into the defeated Greek town, and we watch a knight of full manly proportion, a chieftain who had "strikken doun / Knightis of Grece in number meruello(u)s" (ll. 486-487), parade royally through the town streets. He is every inch a knight, in his bearing, in his conquest and, we are soon to learn, in his compassion. For Troylus, at that time the garrison's leader, any thoughts of the once-dear Cresseid are buried deep somewhere in the past. His life is now taken up with the business of war and the glory of victory. As a warrior he has been wholly successful. As a knight he is about to be.

In stanzas 70 and 71 Henryson adds to his already finely etched portrait of Troylus the artist's finishing touches as he
depicts in one careful stroke the knight’s full "curteisie" and true "chivalrie." The moving recognition scene is not equalled anywhere else in the poem for its sense of the human; it is not surpassed anywhere in Chaucer for its "gentilesse." ¹

Than vpon him scho kest vp baith hir ene,
And with ane blink it come into his thoht
That he sumtime hir face befoir had sene,
But scho was in sic plye he knew hir nocht;
Yit than hir luik into his mynd it brocht
The sweet visage and amorous blinkling
Of fair Cresseid, sumtyme his awin darling.
(11. 498-504)

Here is Cresseid a blind and deformed leper. Neither can she see him, nor he recognize her, her plight is so horrible. Yet, he is reminded of Cresseid, "sumtyme his awin darling" (1. 504), on another level of consciousness ² and his reaction is sparked by love:

Are spark of lufe than till his hart culd spring
And kendlit all his bodie in ane fyre.
(11. 512-513)

¹Stearns, p. 97, provides an impressive catalog of scholars who have exclaimed on the poetry of the stanzas. However, he fails to notice George Eyre-Todd’s poignant remark in Medieval Scottish Poetry, (London and Edinburgh, n.d.), p. 84. Eyre-Todd writes that "... it must be admitted that in the single instance of the state of mind, the half-recognition, half-ignorance, attributed to Troilus in his last encounter with Cresseide, there is a felicity of conception impossible to be surpassed."

²This other level of consciousness, according to Stearns’ summary of Aristotle’s theory of cognition (Robert Henryson, p. 98) would be imagination which "... has the function of storing ... sense-impressions in the mind. ... Thus the imagination is a storehouse of images. These images may be recalled deliberately or spontaneously through the process of recollection. ..."
For knichtlie pietie and memoriall
Of fair Cresseid, ane cyrdill can he tak,
Ane purs of gold, and mony gay lowall,
And in the skirt of Cresseid doun can swak.

(11. 519-522)

The horrible irony of the meeting is known to Cresseid
later and is more than she can bear:

Quhbn Cresseid vnderstude that it was he,
Stiffer than steill thair stert ane bitter stound
Throwut hir hart, and fell doun to the ground.

(11. 537-539)

The questions and detailed analyses provoked by this
recognition scene have not—in all their multifarious
inquiry—denied the impact of the scene nor reduced the
heartfelt tenderness of Troylus' thought "of fair Cresseid,
sumtyme his awin darling" (1. 504). That Troylus does not
know he has seen Cresseid has been well explained even
though the order of his refired heart surely suggests that
he does know. Nevertheless, the alteration in her countenance
is too drastic, and whatever fleeting recognition took place,
it was not certain enough for him to tarry. And if he had,
the full effect of that gentle moment would be lost. The
knightly courage, the courtesy, the humility are all joined
there in that pause, in that gift, in that remembrance of
his "awin darling." There is no hate, no remorse, no
loathing, no cynicism, no laughter. Only fond and tender
memories fill his mind for that moment before he rides on.
It is in this moment that the sizeable character of Henryson's
Troylus rises to his greatest height. There would have been
time, then, for the words of hate and scorn, the regret of love betrayed, to rebound against Cresseid's "blenk." In not identifying with the Troilus of the eighth sphere at such an instant, however, the Troilus at the town's gate succeeds heroically far and away beyond that other's heavenly cynicism. In what human endeavor does man so liken himself to God but through the act of forgiveness? Therein is Troylus' claim to fullest humanity; that betrayed, he remembers his betrayer and forgives.

Troylus rides away from Cresseid, his knighthood and "greet humanitie" (l. 534) vouchsafed from this time on. Additional praise for him is forthcoming, however, and again from the lips of his betrayer. In a mournful, self-chastising wail, Cresseid bemoans her every disgrace as it was matched by his every courtesy. Like a thrice-rung willows bell sounding her own tragic fall, Cresseid three times juxtaposes her reputation for wantoness and infidelity with the "lufe . . . lawtie, and . . . gentilness" (l. 547) of "trew knicht Troylus" (l. 546). When she was fickle and frivolous, he was "honest and chaist . . . / Of all women protectour and defance" (ll. 555-556). The refrain of line 560, "FY, fals Cresseid; O trew knicht Troylus!" sounds raspily from Cresseid's leprous throat and with each self-condemning "fals Cresseid" the "trew knicht Troylus" is seen more clearly in the light of truth. His character
is totally altered now from the one of the eighth sphere, earthly in the sense of his great humanity, heavenly only in the sense of his divine compassion.

In a final gesture combining that compassion with sorrow and confusion, Troylus has a tomb of marble grey made for Cresseid's grave and himself "laid it on hir grave quhair that scho lay" (1. 605). The epitaph he directs to be inscribed on the stone joins the fullness of his own love for her with the sorrow he knew from her betrayal. She is recalled to all future passers-by as "... Cresseid of Troy (the) toun / Sumtyme countit the flour of womanheid" (ll. 607-608), a remarkably kind regard from one so unkindly treated. But his memory of her is as much a sorrow to him as it is a mystery:

"... I can no moir;
Scho was untrew and wo is me thairfoir."
(ll. 601-602)

and the last words imprinted in gold on the stone above her remark in earnest the dreadful fate she met:

"Ynder this stane, lait lipper, lyis deid."
(1. 609)

Thus we see the love in his heart for her as his own darling of a time long past changed to compassion for her as a leprous beggar, now dead. The two were not, in one sense of the word, the same woman, and he gives each her due remembrance--not with bitterness, not with hatred--but
with the full and gentle spirit that marked him "trew knight Troylus."

Henryson effects, then, in the altered figure of this Troylus, attention of a comparative sort between his Testament and Chaucer's Troilus. And it is possible, I believe, that he provides the bases for such a comparison to be made between his own and Chaucer's work for reasons partly literary, partly moral.

B. CALCHAS

As an independent piece of work, the Testament, with its marked character transfigurations appearing in their various forms, does seem to challenge the final status of Chaucer's meagerly ended poem. As we have just seen, Troilus (as Troylus) returns alive and well to bury the one who has betrayed him. Turning now to another of the men in Cresseid's life, we see in her father, the character Calchas, significant change too. The Calchas of Chaucer's poem is remembered with some disgust as a defector and opportunist. In fact, it is his selfishly belated desire for her company that prompts the exchange of Antenor for Criseyde. The selfish purposes of this Calchas are further magnified in view of Criseyde's reaction to the proposed exchange:

The whiche tale anon-right as Criseyde
Hadde herd, she, which that of hire fader roughte
As in this cas, right nought, ne whan he deyde,
Ful bisyly to Jupiter bisoughte
Yeve hem meschaunce that thIs tretis brouRhte.
(IV. 666-670)

Henryson, to the contrary, neglects any unfavorable mention of Calchas, saying simply that Cressaid's father
"... than amang the Greikis dwelland was" (l. 98). The role of his crafty predecessor is obviated by the Testament Calchas, as we find him a priest in the temple of Venus—a drastically different association than would be thought fitting for him on the basis of his character in Chaucer.

Of further interest is the fact that it is this Calchas to whom the unfortunate Cressaid turns after Diomeid so cruelly turns her out. It is this Calchas who bids her,
"Welcum to me ... full deir ane gest!" (l. 105) shortly after she has changed into filth all her femininity, appearing at his door rejected, desolate, a whore. Unlike his greedy counterpart who relied on cunning and dissembling, this father of Cressaid is invested with saintly wisdom clearly seen in his advice to his now ill-reputed daughter:
"... Doughter, weip thow not thairfoir: / Perauenture all commis for the best" (ll. 103-104). Something is happening here as Calchas speaks to Cressaid. Something in the way of unique irony is being fostered when a priest in the temple of Venus tells his prostitute daughter that from her sorrowful situation the best will come. From this it would seem
to follow that only the best can follow the worst; that from bad will come good; that this dire and reproachful episode will give way to one more secure, more fulfilling, more in keeping with the character of Cressaid. Calchas' advice is, however, as much foreshadowing as it is ironic.

To stay awhile with the character of Calchas, though, is to see that the effect of this changed father figure contributes to the gathering storm of Cressaid's tragedy. As the man—her father—openly, warmly welcomes his daughter, reputed to be a whore, the growing irony of her act of betrayal compounds itself. Here we see the betrayer father welcoming the betrayer daughter. True, Henryson has played down Calchas as a defector, but it was, nevertheless, that event that got both him and Cressaid into the Greek town, and the slight remembrance of Calchas in this earlier role frames Cressaid's return with double irony.

Yet once he speaks in the Testament, the Calchas from the Troilus is no longer apparent before us. Calchas now is gentle and kind, responding to his daughter's plight with earnest concern and an open heart. Thus in the shadow of Venus' temple we now see Calchas dimly outlined. And it is apparent in view of his emerging kindness that, like Troilus, Calchas strikes an emphatic contrast with Cressaid, isolating her in such a way that only her deed, only her sin becomes more and more the central focus of the Testament.
Cresseid, like the few other major characters of the *Troilus*,
is less and less as Chaucer left her, more and more what a
reader of the *Troilus* might expect her to be: in some way
accountable for her betrayal.

Calchas as the kindly father figure contributes to
this end in that he is no longer cantankerous, selfish,
cunning, deserving of our contempt. Calchas takes her in--
in the *Testament* it is she who seeks him—and gives her
succor at the crucial moment in her life:

He luikit on her vgly lipper face,
The quhylk befor was quhite as lillie flour;
Wringand his handis, oftymes said allace
That he had leuit to se that wofull hour;
For he knew weill that thair was no succour
To hir seiknes, and that dowlbit his pane;
Thus was thair cair aneuch betuix thame twane.

(11. 372–378)

Given her awful condition, Calchas does for her what can
be done, though all that can be done is to lead her away
to the leper lodge and leave her there alone, grieving her
foul affliction. However, the important point here is that
Calchas worries for her. He takes her out through the
secret gate so that no one sees her, and safely brings her
to the spittal house at the town’s end. In so doing, he
shows genuine love for her, "uglye lipper" though she is.
His "wringand" hands, "dowlbit pane" and "cair aneuch" for
her condition are proper anxieties to match his eager wel-
come for her when first she came to him. This cannot be
the Calchas who, in Chaucer, ruined his daughter’s
happiness; rather, this one does all he can to insure it, futile though his efforts prove to be.

We see, then, that Cresseid is loved by her father and is correspondingly treated; no matter that she is afflicted with the worst of diseases, no matter that she has walked the court common. The changed character of Calchas in the Testament is emphatic in its contrast with the defector in the Troilus. Final evidence of this change is best noted in Calchas' attention to his daughter's needs for which he daily sends her money: "And daylie sent hir part of his almos." (1. 392). From this line we learn that her father's care was not for the moment's emergency, but generously continued. What he sends her is not merely a token, but a "part" of his own sustenance.

Thus, in the Calchas of the Testament we once again see how the process of character alteration contributes to the complexity of Cresseid's own personal drama. As each character of the first Troilus is redrawn by Henryson, the effect is to further shadow Criseyde's fair countenance as it was left by Chaucer. The full shadowing effect is nowhere better seen than when Cresseid, as a daughter, appears to Calchas in the very way most grievous for any father to see his daughter—as a whore. The reversal of character parts here is full of irony. Whereas in Chaucer, the daughter bewails her return to her father, in Henryson it is
the father who has every reason to bewail the daughter's "gancome." He doesn't, and the further kindnesses he bestows on her as a leper--taking her to the town's hospital, and sending her alms--are good in themselves, even heartrending in the doing. Nevertheless, when viewed in the broadest terms, Calchas' pity on Cresseid completes one more episode in the Testament, now becoming clearer in its design to dramatize Cresseid's fully blown--some might say fully justified--isolation. By retracing our steps it is possible to continue in this vein by looking at the character who, in a sense, is, next to Cresseid herself, most at fault for her distressing situation.

C. DIOMEID

All the men in the Testament, though they build on Cresseid's desolation separately, are not, like Troilus and Calchas, kind and forgiving to her. One, in fact, it would seem, ought to share the blame for her tragic fall. This one, Diomeid, is of great interest for two reasons: the first one, already mentioned, is that he is instrumental from the beginning in her tragedy; for the second reason we note that he is not much changed from the way Chaucer left him. Henryson says little about Diomeid, mentioning him only four times. Indicated in what he does say, however, is full agreement with Chaucer's portrayal of the Greek seducer.
There is one great difference, notably Diomeid's quickly satiated appetite for the so-anxiously-sought Cresseid. Characteristically, Henryson does not elaborate the circumstances leading to Diomeid's rough dismissal of Cresseid, saying simply:

Quhen Diomeid had all his appetyte,
And mair, fulfillit of this fair ladie,
Vpon ane vther he set his haill dalyte,
And send to hir ane lybell of repudie
And hir excludit fra his companie.

(11. 71-75)

What we can conclude from the lines telling us about Diomeid is that he was hungrier than Chaucer's cunning Greek. To win Criseyde's hand, it will be remembered, that first one, the "sodeyn Diomed" planned a strategy that would put a full scale invasion to shame. Chaucer's sudden one is accurate in his intuitions:

Yet seide he to hymself upon a nyght,
"Now am I nat a fool, that woot wel how
Hire wo for love is of another wight,
And hereupon to gon assaye hire now?
I may wel wite, it nyl nat ben my prow.
For wise folk in bookes it expresse,
"Men shall nat wowe a wight in hevynesse."

(V. 785-791)

He is bold in his persistence:

But in effect, and shortly for to seye,
This Diomed al fresshly newe ayayn
Can presen on, and faste hire mercy praye;
And after this, the solthe for to seyn,
Hire glove he took, of which he was ful feyn.

(V. 1069-15)

He is cunning in his patience:
The morwen com, and gostly for to speke,
This Diomed is come unto Crisseyde;
And shortly . . .
So wel he for himselfen spak and seyde,
That alle hire sikes score adown he leyde.
And finaly, the sothe for to seyne,
He refte hire of the grete of al hire peyne.
(V. 1030-36)

And ultimately, he is successful in his invasion:

. . . she hym yaf the faire baye stede,
The which he ones wan of Troilus:
And ek a broche - and that was litel nede-
That Troilus was, she yaf to this Diomed.
And ek, the bet from sorwe hym to relieve,
She made hym were a pencel of hire sleve.
(V. 1038-43)

From this, Chaucer's misnomer is clearly evident. This Diomed is too well planned, too controlled in his finely executed tactics to be at all impetuous.

But in Henryson, Diomeid is the sudden lover Chaucer intended but did not realistically contrive. The sudden and hungry Diomeid of the Testament, once gorged with Cresseid's fair favors, has no more use for her and sends her packing. Unlike the other Diomed who pursues and conquers and, apparently, is content with the prized Crisseyde, Henryson's slightly reconstructed anti-hero in no way fills Cresseid's complex need for security. 1 If anything, he only matches her in sensuality, a quality in her dependent

1In his discussion of Crisseyde, Alain Benoir ("Crisseyde's Two Half Lovers," pp. 239-255) suggests that her final decision to be true to Diomede stems from her basic insecurity, itself a result of her father's treason, her widowhood, and having to beg for Hector's mercy.
on him for satisfaction, but evidently not strong enough to hold him. Diomeid discards Cresseid quickly and impetuously. His preference for another is just as quick, the vulgarity of his "appetyte," unmentioned in Chaucer, highlighted in the combined impact of the other on whom he "set his haill delyte" (l. 73), and the "lybell of repudie" (l. 74) he sends to Cresseid.

There is nothing in Chaucer to suggest that Diomed would for any reason turn Criseyde out—ever. Henryson, however, in this revised characterization, casts doubt on her womanhood by having Diomeid throw her off. Her insecurity, too, is magnified as it is seen in close proximity with Diomeid's rejection of her. Thus he is correctly cast for the part, ugly appetite and cruel exclusion combining to startle the pathetic figure of Cresseid into fateful anomy. The effect on Cresseid is traumatic. She looks on herself "... as abiect odious" (l. 133), wailing her misfortune to her goddess Venus who once promised that she "... suld be the flour of luif in Troy" (l. 128). Thinking herself a vile outcast, she seeks a not unusual form of security in the oldest of trades and

\[ \text{.. \ desolait scho walkit vp and doun,} \\
\text{And sum men sayis, into the court, commoun.} \]

(11. 76-77)

Her earlier words do prove prophetic in that we are to see her shortly as, indeed, the odious outcast she thought herself
to be; in fact she becomes the most odious human outcast known to the medieval world, a leper begging and clapping away her existence at the town's gate.

Diomeid's part in that wretched destiny cannot be underplayed. It was he who turned her out and therefore he must rightly accept the blame—in part—for whatever befalls her. Her father had received her, whore though she was, and Troylus had buried her, deceived though he had been. And so a most pitiable turn of fortune is seen in her exclusion from Diomeid. He for whom she betrayed her promised love has now quickly tired of her and exchanged her—traded her, if you will—for another. There may be a sort of ironic justice in this strangely twisted misfortune of Cresseid, and that justice, whatever its correct form, needs to be thoroughly examined.
IV. TRANSFORMATION OF CRESSEID

A. HER SEXUALITY

In terms of justice, the isolation Cresseid suffers seems harsh. Her separation from the security she might have found with Tercylus or Calchas--Diomeid even--comes as the natural consequence of her wrongdoing. At Henryson's hand she exchanges the grace and elegance she has known as the flower of Troy for the disgrace and spotted skirts of the Greek court. And in the carefully charted downward flight she takes, Henryson clearly voices his objection to the high estate she enjoyed to the end of Chaucer's work. Her "complaint" in stanzas 60-66 vividly contrasts the brilliance of life as a lady of the court with her life among the leper band. Speaking of the first two of the "complaint" stanzas (60 and 61), E. N. W. Tillyard writes: "The delight in life is obvious, in the gaiety and sensuous beauty of the court. There is no more dazzling description in literature than that in the stanzas ... Eshowing] Cresseid walking in her garden in May, to take the dew and hear the birds sing, then going with the other ladies singing, and seeing 'the royal rinks in their array.'"1

There can be no delight, however, in the life of a leper, and as Cresseid bewails her misfortune, the gaiety of the former life dims bleakly in the shadows of the "lipper ludge."

"All is decayit, thy weird is welterit so;
Thy hie estait is turnit in darknes dour;
This lipper ludge tak for they burelie bour,
And for they bed tak now ane bunche of stro,
For waillit wyne and meitis thou had tho
Tak mowlit bried, peirrie and ceder sour;
Bot cop and clapper now is all ago."

(11. 436-442)

With this, the reader of the Testament is left to contemplate the ramifications of Cresseid's changed fortune. Her "justice" is plainly horrible, her fall from "hie estait" complete. And what is to be gotten from it all?

I think it is a realistic claim that Henryson's first purpose is not, as one critic of the poem has suggested, to damn his heroine, as might seem the case. Tatyana Moran writes that Henryson is not "an impartial narrator but a prosecutor, a judge and an executioner, all in one, whose persecution of his victim ends only with her death."¹

But Henryson is in keeping with the morality of his time, and would have been more concerned with Cresseid's soul than with her flesh, sacrificing the latter, if necessary, to redeem the former. That, apparently, is what he intends to do. The full impact of Cresseid's fate, though it be in

¹Moran, p. 22.
the desolation of the leper band, though it be seen through the blood-filled eyes of the leper she becomes, is not known to her, nor to the reader who looks to this punishment exclusively as the consequence for her sins.

Along such lines it is hard to believe the surprising extremes of critical interpretation provoked by Henryson's "poetic justice" for Cressied. Such an interpretation as Moran's, for example, seems to suggest that Henryson holds Cressied much in the manner of an angry God who, like the one that later speaks through the sermons of Jonathan Edwards, holds the helpless sinner spider-like above hell's fire. In Moran's view, Henryson enjoys witnessing Cressied's degradation nearly as much as he enjoys punishing her. Moran writes: "Henryson . . . unlike Chaucer . . . felt no sympathy, not even the slightest compassion for his heroine . . . only contempt and a kind of sadistic pleasure in describing her degradation. One could almost hear, between the lines, the chuckle of the poet gloating over the defeat of an enemy."⁵⁴ Easily Moran reads the poem only superficially, disregarding the finer touches of human concern and kindness that Henryson shows his heroine time and time again. Charles Elliot points out, in contrast to Moran's view, that Henryson's "task of receiving and succouring a lazar permits

⁵⁴Moran, p. 23.
him to articulate situations of greater intimacy and pathos."¹

Furthermore, Moran's assertion that Henryson is far less sympathetic with his heroine than Chaucer was with his has little impact next to Elliot's more accurate remark that "for Cresseid, Henryson shows more than Chaucer's sympathy, indicating Fortune as the cause of her disaster in love."²

There is no evidence I can find for the statement Miss Moran makes. Indeed, in stanza 13, as Elliot suggests, Henryson asserts for his Cresseid more sympathy and understanding than Chaucer spoke for his (V. 1093-99). Henryson's similar stanza from the Testament reads:

```
Yet nevertheless, quhat euer men deme or say
In scornfull langage of thy brukkilnes,
I sall excuse als far furth as I may
Thy womanheild, thy wisdome and fairnes,
The quhi(l)k Fortoun hes put to sic distres
As hir pleisit, and nathiing throw the silt
Of the--throw wickit langage to be split!
```

(stanza 13)

Both Henryson and Chaucer explicitly excuse their heroines ahead of time for what men will say about them, Henryson for the scornful language men will use to describe Cresseid's "brukkilnes," and Chaucer for Crisseyde's widely published (and punished) name. Apparently the point is that a little spice will be added to each retelling of Crisseyde's story. And from such rumor-ridden punishment, Chaucer and Henryson

²Elliot, p. xii.
would both protect their heroines. Both poets use the phrase, "I would excuse her," or a roughly equivalent one, clearly showing earnest sympathy for their ladies. Yet even the explicit statement Henryson uses to excuse Cresseid is not clear enough for the critic Moran, who asserts that this entire stanza is a maverick, thematically out of joint with the rest of the poem. She suggests that the connection this stanza has with others in the poem is ambiguous when one looks carefully at those lines immediately before and after it. Apparently Moran feels that this one stanza, like Chaucer's palinode of V. 1835-48 seeks to retract all of what the rest of the poem attempts to do. She calls the stanza "bewildering because of the harshness he [Henryson] displays throughout the poem." From this it might be assumed that Miss Moran has neglected to read the remainder of the poem with the same intensity with which she has scrutinized one stanza.

There is, however, some substance to part of her claim in that the stanza is "bewildering" if one does look at what comes immediately before it. There (stanza 12) we find the fullcategory of disappointed rage voiced by the narrator at Cresseid's demoralizing fall. But Moran has inverted the order here. It is stanza 12 that is bewildering in view of what comes before and after it! Indeed, stanza 12 is the

1Moran, p. 23.
only one of some eighty-six stanzas wherein the narrator-author shows a lack of compassion for Cresseid. He does, momentarily, lose his composure and revile the fallen lady for the loss of her state and grace. He is, at this point, as Marshall W. Stearns has suggested, reflecting "the poet's orthodox morality [barring] on the characterization and plot of the Testament," the fact being clear that the poem was composed from a recognizably moral point of view. But that moral point of view does not condemn Cresseid, as Moran would have us believe. Rather, the narrator remains sternly compassionate in his attitude toward her, demonstrating the sort of anxious concern a father might have for a deflowered daughter. And though he could be understanding toward her in his heart, he would at the same time require of her some recompense for her moral error. Thus the narrator.

If one looks in this light at what Henryson is doing in the Testament, Moran's image of a chuckling, gloating poet is as inapplicable to Henryson as the phrase, "abject slave to vice" is to Cresseid. When Miss Moran uses these hardly accurate terms to describe Cresseid, she misses the obvious signals warning of her unsteady sense of security. Indeed, it seems not too far afield to explain Cresseid's tragedy as resulting from an emotional instability, itself perhaps

1 Stearns, Robert Henryson, p. 63.
2 Moran, p. 22.
easily explained in the terms of "modern" Freudian psychology. Judging from the insecurity Crisneyde suffers in the Troilus, one might cite as its cause the absence of father-love. In fact, she has good reason to feel insecure in every relationship she has involving a man. Every one of them ends unhappily for her. Her father deserted her; her husband died or was killed; she is forcibly separated from her first lover (traded, actually, and to make matters worse, for a man!); and she is slyly seduced by her second lover.

Can it be denied, given this chain of disappointments, that Diomeid's rejection of her in the Testament would cause massive trauma? Can it be thought so strange that she ventures into the Greek court as a whore, seeking yet another love—hopefully a permanent one this time—seeking that relationship with a man that would give her the security she has not found from father, husband, or lovers two? Professor Pitch rightfully has called the Troilus the first psychological novel and in that train of thought the Testament might rightfully be called the first case study—in Freudian concepts—of a prostitute's reasons for being what she is.

Though Henryson's ideas here antedate by several hundred years Freud's theories on the consequences of child rejection, Crisneyde's lamentable and desolate walking up and down (I. 75) when viewed in the light of Freudian psychology, suggests more than mere dissipation. Apparent to this reader is the

1See Alain Morier's discussion entitled "Crisneyde's Two Half-Lovers."
fact that Henryson's key word "desolait" in line 76 minimizes what would otherwise be full censure of Cresseid as, in fact, a whore. But with the term "desolait" Henryson seems to be saying that Cresseid's behavior is the result of psychological stress as well as physical need.

Henryson, however, when writing his poem, could not realize, of course, that the details he added to Chaucer's description of Criseyde provided a clear, behaviorally sound explanation for Cresseid's walking into the Greek camp. He lacked the explanations of modern psychology. Nevertheless, even though he was unaware of the dimensions his details had, there is some evidence that Henryson's understanding of his heroine went beyond what might have been expected of him. Remarkably in the single word "desolait" Henryson sums up not only all that has been forced upon her, but also all that Cresseid has become at that moment: turned out, rejected, alone and unsure about self and future. The word is heavy with implication; it is sadly precise in describing Cresseid's dire circumstances. And these circumstances are sounded loudly in the lines to follow, wherein the narrator-author comes down hard on Cresseid in a verbal lashing which is only softened once the poet realizes--and abruptly quiets--his vehemence. All this happens in the conciseness of stanza 12.

It is in this stanza, however, so filled with scorn for Cresseid, that one easily sees working the late fifteenth
century morality that Henryson would have been obedient to. The remark of Alexander Kinghorn is pertinent to the narrator's tone in stanza 12. Kinghorn states that Henryson shared with other Scottish poets like Dunbar and Lyndsay "a keen sense of moral indignation. Nearly all his writings show this and the Testament is no exception."¹ Thus we see in this instance (stanza 12) that Henryson's usually calm, if somewhat doting narrator momentarily gives way and bewails the immoral livelihood to which Cresseid has turned. His tone contemptuously indicates his suspicion that she is probably tainted with every venereal infection, and, in fact, he charges her, in Moran's words, harshly for her "filth," "fleschlie lust" and "foull plesance." Here the narrator pronounces judgment much in the style of his Calvinated progeny, rising to indignant falsetto as he imputes her now-spotted femininity with repeated cries of shame. The charges themselves, in diction at least, are poetic, if harsh, the several reproachments sounding in near perfect rhythm as the narrator's disdain for her weakness finds its pitch. At the same time, however, that Cresseid's one-time fortune receives its appropriate emphasis in the first thought of stanza 12:

O fair Cresseid, the flour and A per se
Of Troy and Grece...

(11. 78-79)

¹Kinghorn, p. 24.
the alliterated "f" sound which follows it five times close in succession hisses quintessentially her most recent disgraces. It is as though "fyel" is perpetually on his lips as the poet indignantly sputters out Cresseid's moral deterioration. In his age, and in his aged disgust for her prostituted femininity, he does make her seem much like the "loose woman" Professor Rollins termed her.\(^1\) In contrast with the poem's tenor in most other parts, stanza 12 carries little tolerance and no compassion as Cresseid is indicted for her fleshly infirmity:

O fair Cresseid, the flour and A per se
Of Troy and Grece, how was thow fortunait
To change in filth all they feminitie,
And be with fleshlie lust sa maculait,
And go amang the Grekis air and lait,
Sa giglotlike takand they foull plesance!  
(11. 78-83)

The plaint of the narrator in the first two lines sounds a woeful note—a begging "why, oh why did you do it?" form of rhetoric. But the closely following "filth" and "feminitie" join in such a violent accusation that he realizes the dimensions of his full disappointment only a moment before the reader does—and he hastens to quiet himself with the softened touch of the stanza's final line: "I have piatie thow suld fall sic mischance!" (1. 84).

But the charge is out, the entire catalog of suggestion

\(^1\)Hyder E. Rollins, "The Troilus-Cressida Story from Chaucer to Shakespeare," p. 397.
and open statement let loose as he denounces Cresseid for the fleshly lust now spotting her once immaculate beauty. The images are resolute—there is no understatement here! There is denoted, even, in line 80, a willingness on Cresseid's part to abide Fortune's adverse twist "to change in filth all they feminitie" as though Cresseid herself has been the eager procurer, a notion further punctuated by the full sensuality of her "fleschlie lust." It is as though neither "fleschlie" nor "lust" by itself is sufficient to tell the full force of the narrator's contempt. He must have their compounded effect. How far and how fast she has fallen since Diomeid turned her out!

In the subsequent mention of her walking early and late (l. 83), there is further implication of Cresseid as an established woman of the trade, this idea getting reinforcement from the last of the narrator's charges. This final one is perhaps the most inclusive of all, for here we are told that Cresseid has become the wanton. The line proceeds in the implication that she has what can only be construed as some venereal infection—"foull plesance"—and is spreading it "giglotlike," i.e., in the manipulations and contortions of her profession, among the Greeks she has serviced. At any rate, the phrases, "giglotlike" and "foull plesance" couple oxymoronically, bringing to mind the image of a diseased whore tricking her favors in pixie-like innocence!
Up to the eruptive juncture of stanza 12, the narrator has maintained near clinical, if undeniably interested, control over his feelings for Cresseid. There is, perhaps, in line 72, meager indication that Cresseid is hungrier, in a sexual sense, than a lady ought to be, but the indication is restrained rather than direct. Though the total effect of line 72 is to suggest that Diomeid turned her out partly because she thrust herself too much and too often on him, the idea seen in the phrase, "And mair," is hinted at rather than openly stated. There is distinct ambiguity in the two words, "And mair," making uncertain exactly whose appetite—Cresseid's or Diomeid's—is the more voracious. In their full context the words implicate both Diomeid and Cresseid:

When Diomeid had all his appetyte,
And mair, fulfillit of this fair ladie... (ll. 71-72)

Is it Diomeid who wants more than his appetite requires? Or is it Cresseid who is overly willing, too anxious, perhaps, for the pleasures of the bed? In his comments on the stanza in which these lines appear, Kurt Wittig notes with relevance to the present discussion that Henryson was capable of "immense suggestion in his understatement."¹ Henryson's understatement in "And mair" certainly to Cresseid's growing sensuality, a characteristic he certainly intended from the onset of the work, but one which he kept purposely subdued.

Another critic, Robert MacQueen, also speaks on the "and mair" implication. His remarks attempt to clarify the confusion of the phrase by relating its reference to Cresseid as well as to another of Henryson's femme fatales, Euridyce. MacQueen says of both women: "Allegorically, Euridyce represents non-intellectual appetite, concerned only with immediate satisfaction, and damned when she deliberately tries to escape the domination of moral virtue... Much the same is to be said of Cresseid, and Henryson's diction indicates that in fact he made this judgment, and thought in these terms."¹ He then quotes lines 71-72 in full, the "And mair" phrase, in view of his commentary, clearly falling to the "fair ladie" and not to Diomeid. The effect of this understatement on the reader is to arouse in him a feeling of curiosity about Cresseid, a curiosity heavily influenced by the sexual connotations of the words "appetyte, / And mair, fulfillit." But the phrase remains in keeping with the slowly developing characteristic of Cresseid's sensuality, a characteristic Henryson's narrator clearly avoids any caustic charge against except, as we have seen, for the indignant outburst of stanza 12.

Still another of Henryson's suggestions works subtly toward his desired end, that being to show Cresseid's ruin as a consequence of her sexual iniquity. The whispered, but

perceptibly condemnatory tone of:

Than desolait scho walkit vp and down,
And sum men sayis, into the court, commoun
(ll. 76-77)
is hardly emphatic, but it adds force to the reader's
growing suspicion that Cresseid's need—whether that need is
purely appetite or, more precisely, security, cannot at this
point be determined—will continue to seek fulfillment even
at the expense of name, reputation and health.

To summarize thus far the conditions of Cresseid's
fate, we can see that Henryson is concerned with her morality
in the sexual sense. It is, I believe, essential to his
purposes in the Testament, to show her fall, in part, as one
caused by sins of the flesh. Denton Fox makes some observa-
tions along this line of thought regarding Cresseid's
sexuality, or, as he terms it, "... her misuse of her
flesh." Fox's point is that Cresseid is "in effect, prostit-
tuting herself, trading her body for attention and security."
And "because she has been maculait, 'spotted' with lust,"1
the narrator's emphatic charge in stanza 12 serves to des-
cribe the moral corruption she has undergone. There she
is reviled for her charged femininity in a powerfully pro-
nounced moral judgment that takes into account not only what
Cresseid did, but also the total abandon with which she did it.

Also in his fifteenth-century poem, with Cresseid now

1Fox, p. 28.
decidedly marked as the wanton woman, Henryson manages to provoke inquiry into medieval attitudes on sex, love and marriage. The woman, we have seen, has betrayed one lover, has been betrayed by another, and has finally turned in desperation to street walking. One critic, Tom Scott, speaks to this matter in his volume, *Late Medieval Scots Poetry*. He observes that Henryson appears to join other Scots poets of the time in writing with "a moral seriousness combined with a passionate vigour . . ." to show "an essentially Christian outlook on marriage, as distinct from the Venus-worship implied by _amour courtois._"\(^1\)

In this vein, Scott suggests that the *Testament* is an original invention, "a story, as far as can be traced, invented by Henryson for his own moral purpose of visiting justice on the unfaithful Cresseid."\(^2\)

Scott may pose a moot point when he tries to uncover Henryson's "moral purpose." Nevertheless, the phrase seems to have applicability, at least in the sense of the drama of Cresseid's demise, which more and more appears to be essentially a sexual one. Every sign is there to support such a conclusion. Her condition comes to be one of "filth" (1. 80): she is charged with being filled with "fleschlie lust" (1. 81): she is perceived to be spotted, "maculait" (1. 81), a figure of speech undeniably sexual in its


\(^2\) Scott, p. 12.
connotations, more literal than figurative, perhaps, in its intention; and further, she is directly accused of loose and easy living among the Greeks at all hours, "air and lait" (1. 82). Finally, Henryson's moral, though soon-to-be-compassionate, narrator implies that the once fair Cresseid has assumed this new and debauched life without much shame; rather, she has taken it in stride with a flirtatious acquiescence, "sa gigotlike" (1. 83).

At this point, Henryson himself, I think, has difficulty coming to exact terms with his feelings for Cresseid. His narrator has much the same problem. Even though he has just vilified her in furious reproach, this well-meaning and magnanimous spokesman readily shifts the blame for Cresseid's plight onto Fortune or onto wicked rumors—he cannot be certain which is more at fault—in a kind, though clumsy effort to lessen her own obvious responsibility for her tragic circumstances. The narrator's only real certainty for the moment is that he can neither completely absolve her for her misfortune—"I sall excuse als far furth as I may" (1. 37)—nor completely blame her for it—"... and nothing throw the gilt / Of the" (1. 90). One has the distinct impression from the narrator's situation that he cannot deal easily with Cresseid's fall. Yet it is clear that she is the focus of the poet's concern, and he, for certain, is seeking to illuminate her in the most appropriate light, considering
what she was and what she now is.

Neither can Henryson depict her as essentially the timid, though victimized infidel that Chaucer showed her to be, nor can he let her remain the wanton so severely chastised by the narrator. Clearly, to Henryson either accounting ignores the miserable condition of her fate. And so, though he would punish her, Henryson would not damn her, this decision evident in his determination to contrive, through the drama of suffering, a fate for Cresseid that holds the promise of salvation.

From stanza 13 on the author is insistent on a portrait of Cresseid that shows the range of her human potential, a range that includes the depths of depravity, the plains of self-knowledge, and the heights of eternal promise. According to the ideals of the Christian ethic, Cresseid can attain the regenerated spirit promised in this first code of love. In fact, she is bound to pursue that end according to the demands of Christian morality, a morality Henryson seems anxious for her to accept.

B. HER PUNISHMENT AND REDEMPTION

The focus of Henryson's concentration in the last two thirds of his poem is actually the process through which Cresseid goes in order to lose one morality and gain another. As we have just seen, she has been brought to a low point
of moral depravity, up from which the poet (if not the narrator) is intent on lifting her, his ultimate purpose being to see her through to another life, perhaps a better one. Just how will he achieve this end?

At this juncture in the story, as was pointed out earlier, we find Cresseid returning to her father in her time of despair and seeking his help. He receives her and provides succor, making her welcome in the temple of Venus, the sharpened irony of these circumstances already discussed. Once at her father's mansion, she enters into a secret chapel, where, we are told, "... echo micht weip hir wofull desteny" (1. 121). But Cresseid's difficulty her-, as it has been all along, is in not being able to see beyond herself. It is in Cresseid's self-concern that we see one of the more persistent aspects of her character, and it is because of it that her unfortunate circumstances seem to be compounded. One critic, M. Duncan Aswell, says of Cresseid in this regard that "we are barely introduced to her story before we learn that she views herself in one very simple light, as the unfortunate, passive victim of malevolent external forces, in no way responsible for her downfall."1 Thus her downfall, according to Aswell, is forthcoming at her own insistence. But it would appear from the line quoted

above (line 121) that she enters the chapel in a prayerful attitude, seemingly anxious to confess the sinful life she has led of late. Cresseid's mood, however, is hardly repentent:

... scho cloisit fast the dure
and on hir knees bair fell down in hy;
Upon Venus and Cupide angerly
Scho cryit out, and said on this same wyse,
'Allace, that ever I maid you Sacrifice!
(ll. 122-126)

The image of her on her knees railing against the gods who have promised her beauty is one that denotes deep prideful vanity, a self-love that motivates her to blaspheme against the gods who once favored her. She reiterates her frantic charge, implicating herself once and for all in the doing:

'O fals Cupide, is name to wyte bot thow
And thy mother, of lufe the blind goddes!
Ye causit me always understand and trow
The seid of lufe was sawin in my face,
And ay grewe grene throw your supplie and grace.
But now allace that seid with froist is glane,
And I fra luifferis left, and all forlane.'
(ll. 134-140)

Within this wail is seen what Cresseid decries most—the loss of her fair looks and the consequences of that loss, her lovers' desertion of her. With reference to the crux of Cresseid's lament in this passage, Aswell notes that her "metaphor of a growing plant and her emphasis upon her face imply that she greatly laments her loss of beauty." In keeping, therefore, with her self-concern, and her sensuality as described above, "Cresseid's all-too-feminine assumption
is that because she does not presently have a lover, she must therefore have lost her youth, beauty, and capacity to attract men.¹ The evidence from this passage, then, would point as much to Cresseid's act of blasphemy as to her sin of self-pride. And it seems reasonable to suggest that, in fact, her punishment results as much from the one as from the other. When her outcry against the gods is finished, however, Cresseid falls exhausted into a deep sleep.

While in the thralls of sleep, she becomes the subject for discussion of one of the most impressive gatherings of planetary jurors ever assembled, which has convened to hear the charges brought against her for her blasphemy. This planetary judicial bench, sketched by Henryson in stanzas 21-49, seats the most complete assemblage of heavenly bodies in all of Scottish literature. And there is multiple evidence available for the astrological significance of the individual descriptions given of each planetary personae.²

It remains for our purpose here, however, to consider specifically the sentence pronounced on Cresseid (there apparently being little question among her judges that she is guilty).³ In effect, she is to change again the femininity

¹Aswell, p. 473.

²For the fullest discussion of the planetary portraits in the Testament, see M. V. Stearns, Robert Henryson, pp. 70-97.

³That all the planets concur in Cresseid's punishment is remarked on by Tillyard (Poetry, p. 21), who writes: "What must have been especially terrifying in Henryson was the
she has just recently changed to filth. The forthcoming alterations, however, impose a far more horrible sentence than she has heretofore known. The goddess Cynthia reads the deposition:

'Thy cristall ene misgit with blude I mak,
Thy voice sa cler vnplasand haur and hace,
Thy lustie lyre ouirspred with spottis blak,
And lumpis hau apareirane in thy face:
Quhair thow cummis, ilk man sall fle the place.
This sall thow go begging fra hous to hous
With cop and clapper lyke ane lazarous.'

(11. 337-343)

The extremes of her repulsiveness seem to have no end as Henryson adds detail after detail to the horrible picture of her affliction. And with that affliction, Cresseid's doom is sealed, as two grave consequences of this punishment become clearly evident, the first in the ugly affliction it brings upon her, and the second in the terrible aloneness she must now endure: "Quhair thou cumis, Ilk man sal fle the place" (l. 341). Cresseid is made a leper!

It appears at first glance that this horrible punishment is meted out to Cresseid for her sin of blasphemy specifically against Cupid and Venus, her previous champions. During the dream-trial, however, we see that she is being charged with blasphemy against all the gods, for Cupid emphasizes that her outburst against his mother and himself concurrence of all the planets. In the normal operation the influence of one planet balanced or impeded that of another. 'by a singular concurrence they all combine to punish Cresseid.'
is as much against all the gods as the two of them:

'Lo,' quod Cupide, "quha will blaspheme the name
Of his awin god, outher in word (or) deid,
To all goddis he dois baith lak and schame,
And suld haue bitter panis to his meid.'
(ll. 276-279)

Cupid further exclaims her sin because of the fact that she
has irresponsibly laid the blame of her infidelity on him,
as well as called his mother blind:

'Saying of hir greit infelicitie
I was the cause, and my mother Venus,
Ane blind goddes hir cald, (and) micht not se... .'
(ll. 281-283)

It appears therefore that the awful punishment of leprosy
with which she is afflicted comes as a result of Cresseid's
angry outburst in stanzas 18 and 19. There is indeed suffi-
cient cause in the retort of these stanzas to anger the gods
excessively and prompt from them a response with far-reaching
effects.

All this notwithstanding, however, the poet seems to
have other motives as well for serving his heroine with this
dreadful penalty and, consequently, his work with perhaps
its most striking reader impact. The disease of leprosy was
too filled with popular and religious meaning relevant to
medieval morality for it not to suggest several consequences
for Cresseid. Among the popular notions regarding leprosy,
for example, was the one that viewed leprosy as resulting
from coitus, a point made by Charles Creighton. Creighton
quotes from an order given by Edward III in 1346 to drive
lepers out of the cities because "they communicate their disease 'by carnal intercourse with women in stews and other secret places,' and by their polluted breath."¹ On the other hand, leprosy was also considered to have religious significance for the sufferer, and the disease was, in this sense, according to R. M. Clay, "an expiation for sin." Miss Clay continues, however, with the explanation that "... except in signal cases of wrong-doing this morbid idea was not prominent; and the phrase 'struck by the secret judgment of God' implies visitation rather than vengeance. Indeed, the use of the expression 'Christ's martyrs' suggests that the leper's affliction was looked upon as sacrifice—an attitude which illuminated the mystery of pain."²

Thus Cresseid's leprosy would certainly have had sexual as well as religious implications for Henryson and his audience. And only when Henryson's complex reasons for choosing leprosy are explicated does one clearly see the effects of these implications, or, in Professor Stroud's words, "how neatly the punishment fits the crime."³ For it does fit precisely, not only the crime of blasphemy for which

² Clay, Medieval Hospitals, p. 66.
Cresseid is ostensibly punished, but also the crime of sexuality, of which she would be undeniably guilty by medieval moral practices.\(^1\) If Dr. Tillyard's view is correct that Henryson, through his poems, expresses medieval orthodoxy, that, in Tillyard's own words, "Henryson still belongs to an age of assured and static belief . . .,"\(^2\) the impact of leprosy is great, for it does, as will be pointed out, meet the demands of that "static belief."

Certainly the standards of the time, those that made up the "static belief" pertaining to sex, though paradoxically lenient within the protective garden of courtly love, would have decided harshly against offenders outside that privileged sanctuary. And Cresseid has long since lost her ties with the court—except as a camp follower—and it is in that compounded offense that Henryson must have viewed her greater sin. It is, in fact, this allegation that Cupid makes during the trial to reinforce his other charge against her. Cresseid has, to be certain, blamed Cupid and Venus for the loss of

\(^{1}\) Morton W. Bloomfield (The Seven Deadly Sins (East Lansing, Michigan, 1962'), pp. 176-177) notes that the author of The Prince of Conscience (Stimulus conscientiae) [c. 1325] discusses the seven sins and what ought to be the punishments for those sins. Interestingly enough, Bloomfield records, "the lechers will suffer from leprosy." Further on, (p. 233-234) Bloomfield notes that "the backs of lechers are corrupted (rotted away)" and "lechery is like the flux and stinking flesh." Finally, as perhaps the period to Cresseid's punishment for her sins in worldly love, Bloomfield notes that the attendant planet for lechers was Venus.

\(^{2}\) Tillyard, Poetry, p. 28.
her "said of lufe" (l. 137), that is, for losing whatever attractiveness with which she might have held Diomede, but Cupid perceives something else in the chain of events that Cresseid fails to mention. Cupid states that:

'Thus hir loyng vnclene and lecherous
Scho wald ret(orte i)n me and my mother.'

(1l. 285-286)

The implication is heavy that Cresseid has the gall to blame them for the life of lust and lechery she has taken to by choice. The first of her outcries is bad enough:

'Allace, that euer I maid you sacrifice!' (l. 126)

But the next suggests that the gods, and not she herself, have made her the outcast she is:

'Now am I maid ane vnworthie outwaill ... .' (l. 129)

The phrase, "... am I maid," suggests, of course, that she has been the puppet and in no way the arbiter of her own destiny. The last of Cresseid's outwails leaves little doubt as to which loss Cresseid feels is the worst:

'But now, allace, that seid with froist is slane,
And I fra luifferis left, and all forlaine.' (11. 139-140)

From this evidence it would seem that the leprosy with which she is afflicted comes about not only as punishment for her blasphemy, but also, in part, as the natural consequence of "hir loyng vnclene."
Obvious venereal connotations can be seen in the phrase "leuing unclean and lecherous" (I. 235), and it would seem likely that the sinful and unclean life Creaseid has led is to have its consequences in the disease commonly associated with unclean people - leprosy. Furthermore, we have sufficient information that leprosy in the Middle Ages was popularly confused with syphilis, both diseases extant in Britain at about the time Henryson may have been writing the Testament.1 The general confusion between the two diseases started perhaps from what mistakenly was believed to be a symptom of leprosy: the skin ulceration or eruption that was supposed to be one sure sign of leprosy. Due to this confusion, it is probable that many people infected with syphilis were given the leper's last rites2 simply on the evidence of skin pustules and sores, common in and around the body orifices in the early stages of syphilis, but not

1Aidan Cockburn (The Evolution and Eradication of Infectious Diseases [Baltimore, 1963], p. 61) writes: "There is a school of thought that thinks that leprosy in ancient times was really syphilis and that about 1490 the name was merely changed, so explaining the sudden appearance of "syphilis" and the simultaneous disappearance of leprosy in Europe about that time." Cf. B. L. Gordon, Medieval and Renaissance Medicine (New York, 1959), p. 531.

known to be an identifiable symptom of leprosy.¹

In this vein, it would seem quite possible that Cresseid's affliction could have been, as Mrs. Beryl Rowlands has suggested, not leprosy at all, but syphilis.² The difficulty with this assumption, however, is in not discerning what is clearly Henryson's full intention. And his intention, as stated earlier, is not simply to punish Cresseid. (Nor is it likely that Henryson would have known a case of syphilis had he seen one!) The assertion made by Mrs. Rowlands loses more ground in light of the clear evidence of the poem itself, as pointed out in Kathy Hume's article,³ a reply to Mrs. Rowlands'. Miss Hume points to

¹Gordon (Medicine, p. 533), quoting from Holcomb, writes that "if the word 'leprosy' is changed to the word 'syphilis,' one has a good picture of chronic syphilis." Gordon also comments on the means of contracting the disease: "That the word 'leprosy' was used for venereal disease may be seen from Philip Shepp's 'Libra de Lepra.' He tells of a carpenter who, having had relations with a leprous woman, was infected with leprosy a short time after. The manner of contamination is that of syphilis as leprosy cannot be communicated in such a manner. According to Dr. Zambaco who carefully studied the nature of leprosy, perfectly healthy men and women may live with their leprous wives and husbands without contracting the disease."


several instances in Henryson’s own description of Cresseid’s affliction that distinctly categorize her disease as leprosy. Miss Hume says in summary: "Whether her symptoms agree with syphilis or not, Henryson seems to have considered her a leper, and that is what matters."

Indeed, her leprosy is what matters, but also important to the full impact of Cresseid’s permanent fate is exactly how she got it! Oh, yes, ostensibly she gets it from the gods who are angry with her, even enraged, perhaps, at her impudent outcrying against them. But on another level of suggestion, a more profound one, it seems very likely (if not proper, if the punishment is to fit the crime) that the affliction is intended by Henryson to connect with, actually be a result of, the unclean and lecherous life Cresseid has led. And leprosy is a perfect fit in this sense. As we have seen, popular notions of the time viewed leprosy as a venereal disease, which infected its victims not only with the physical symptoms, but also with the social stigma of what Cupid so fittingly terms unclean living. It would seem that Henryson reflects the popular (mis)understanding of leprosy when he afflicts Cresseid with it. Thus Cresseid. She is drawn by Henryson at the beginning as a fast-falling woman, soon becomes destitute and turns to prostitution, and finally is a reputed wanton.

Hume, p. 244.
With this history, there is every reason to believe that Henryson, at least, viewed the leprosy partially as a result of her promiscuity. She may have contracted syphilis, too, in the process, and, in fact, that condition is more likely, since, as Gordon has shown, leprosy is not communicable venereally. But Henryson could not have known how leprosy was transmitted for all his knowledge of how it appeared.¹ His design, though, is clear. The earlier vehemence of stanza 12 strongly suggests the poet's concentration on the heroine's sexual promiscuity, and I do not think he could let it go unattended. Thus we see that the leprosy is the thing. And so it serves Henryson's purpose in part to deal with Cresseid within the full range of his concern, a concern interestingly and perhaps correctly interpreted by one writer as Henryson's "strict moral sense and his deep humanity."²

In view of the popular medieval understanding (misunderstanding, actually) that leprosy was communicable through sexual intercourse, Henryson's "strict moral sense" is at work in the contrivance of Cresseid's repulsive affliction.

¹Stearns writes that Henryson's description of leprosy (ll. 316-318, 334-340, 437-451) is so accurate "that the physician, Sir J. Y. Simpson, cited it as proof that cases of Greek elephantiasis existed in Scotland just as they are known to have existed on the Continent."

With it be appears to punctuate graphically the awful extent of her downfall, suggesting that what used to be her "foull plesance" (1. 83) no longer contains the happy paradox of that phrase, but instead is fully the loathsome consequence of her wanton excesses. The disease has additional venereal connotation in that Cresseid, because of it, will from this time forward "... to all louers be abominabill" (l. 308). The effect of this line certainly suggests that Henryson cannot set over the fullness of Cresseid's moral deterioration and is making sure whatever befalls her will make her repugnant to men. Generally speaking, lepers would be repulsive, abominable to everyone, cast off and segregated with their own kind. 1 So, in preparation for the pronouncement of the disease from Cupid in lines 337-342, Henryson seeks to assure the reader (as much as himself, perhaps) that Cresseid's punishment will carry the full impact of her ignominious sin. The point of her sexual repulsiveness is stressed once again in line 340, when the reader learns that every man will flee the place where Cresseid is, so physically abhorrent is she.

1Stearns (p. 13) writes that "the Scottish parliament decreed in 1427 that lepers could enter the burghs three times a week only, and not at all if a fair or market were being held: lepers... were ordered to stay outside the burghs and be either at their own hospitals or at the town rate."
In the sense of total effect, there appears to be little doubt that Henryson is punishing Cresseid in kind for her sins of the flesh. She has, by choice, taken up a life of loose morals and imbedded herself, as it were, in the sexual stench of the Greek court, again by choice. Even Cresseid herself sorrowfully admits to the reputation that must have followed her as a prostitute:

'My mynd in fleschelie foull affectioun
Was inclynit to lustis lecherous...'

(11. 558-559)

There is no doubt whatsoever, in view of these remarks from the heroine herself, about the measure of Cresseid's illicit behavior. And with her self-admission, Henryson intends that behavior to be vivid in the reader's mind, indelible there is the essential, causal force, the infecting agent, in a sense, through which she logically contracts leprosy. And though the poet's sense of justice is heard behind the narrator's plea for mercy:

O cruel! Saturne! Favoured and amrie,
Hast is thy dome and to malitious!
On fair Cresseid quhy hes thou na mercie,
Quhilk was sa swait, rentill and amorous?

(11. 323-326)

there can be permitted nothing less than full reparation for her sin. Her reparation, therefore, is seen in terms of the leprosy with which she is afflicted, a disease for Henryson's purpose as unmistakable in its sexual overtones
as it is detectable through physical evidences. Ultimately, then, Cresseid's disease destroys the womanhood, the grace and the beauty, all for which she is widely known, setting in their place a disgusting, repulsively unsexed figure, now the stinkweed rather than the flower of Troy and Greece.

Thus we see the first part of what Duncan capsulized as Henryson's concern, his "strict moral sense." It is undeniably evident, as just pointed out. But what of the other part of Duncan's pertinent phrase? What of the "deep humanity" Henryson is also supposed to manifest? Is it there? And if so, where seen in view of the horribly altered Cresseid, now bent, with hoarse voice, unclear eye, and lumpy skin? Where, in any of this, is there any humanity?

The question can be answered, in my opinion, by first interpreting humanity to mean compassion, and that to include a kind of Christian morality—the other extreme, perhaps, of the kind at work in devising Cresseid's terrible fate. The two attitudes of morality are, in fact, like the two sides of the proverbial coin. The one side demands retribution for sins committed against God's commandments; the other, working not exactly in opposition to the first one, but certainly not hand in hand with it, seeks to restore the sinner to God's grace, no matter the extent of his sin (or crime), no matter the temporary loss of heaven's promise. The matter is the soul and Cresseid's soul mattered to Henryson.
Much opinion has been projected regarding the ultimate
destiny of Cresseid's soul and the theme of her regeneration
in the Testament. Some critics view the regeneration idea
(i.e., Cresseid's salvation) as the central point of the
poem; Tillyard, Stearns, Duncan and Fox, for example, all
of whom cite the author's basic Christian standards as the
ones guiding his motives—though they are at times obscured—
throughout the poem. These "morality" critics clearly point
to Henryson's lasting interest in the final destiny of his
heroine. Clearly her leprosy is not Cresseid's final destiny,
though it definitely contributes to that end, functioning as
a vehicle through which her regeneration—the term generally
agreed on by the scholars cited—is experienced.

The affliction of leprosy, notwithstanding the earlier
remarks about it as a sexually derived infection, is at the
same time a device of torment Cresseid must suffer if she
is to realize full self-understanding, a quality sadly lack-
ing in her from the poem's start. In fact, one of her
primary errors has been one of judgment—not discerning
clearly when and for what she has been to blame as the
crowded and fortuitous events of her life unfold. In this
vein, the suffering caused by her leprosy is of critical
importance to her final destiny, and Henryson, I think, works
diligently to show her (and us) that in order to regain a
state of grace with God, she will have to accomplish several
things: for one, throw off the extravagant trappings of high
and courtly living; for another, come to know herself through
her suffering; for a third, ultimately acknowledge her own
blame, thereby overcoming her first sin of pride.

These are not easy tasks for mortals, and Cresseid's
struggle with them takes into account her all too human
failures. She cannot, for example, for a very long time
come to reject the life she once led. Indeed, her response
to the gods' punishment is to cry out again against them,
not seeing at all her own contributions to her destiny.
She shows, for example, an interesting, though typical
attitude in her initial response to her leprosy when first
she sees it reflected in her hand mirror:

. . . than rais scoth up and tuik
And pulestglas, and hir schadow culd luik;
And quhen scoth saw hir face se deiformat,
Sif scoth in hart was wa aneuch God wait!
(11. 347-350)

And God knows her woe is of the wrong ilk. Henryson's point
here is that Cresseid's heart is unchilled when she beholds
herself in her mirror. At that moment she remains unable
to comprehend that her misfortune is not only brought about
by external forces, but also determined in part by the
attitudes in her own heart. The next lines contribute
tellingly to Cresseid's selfish and somehow childlike feel-
ing of being victimized. She does again what she has done
and will continue to do; she views her misfortune totally independently of any action of her own, and blames the crabby gods for sentencing her with the affliction:

Weeping full saif, 'Lo, quhat it is,' quod sche,
With fraward langage for to muec and steir
Our craibit goddis; and sa is sene on me!

(ll. 351-353)

This mirror incident joins in the same attitude of self-pity with the next, in which the reflection motif is again used by Henryson. In the first one, Cresseid looks on her reflection with self-pitying horror, her image, hideous with its livid lumps and cold grey skin, the workings of the gods. And later, again expressing self-pity, even after she has experienced the suffering her leprosy has caused, after she has known the aloneness and ostracism of her plight, after she has been forced to look inward because she dare not look outward, Cresseid views herself with a noticeably similar tone. She advises the ladies of Greece and Troy to look on her as an example of misery gotten from fortune's perversity. She admonishes them: "And in your mynd ane mirour mak of me ..." (l. 457). And further:

'Exempill mak of me in your memour
Gubik of sic thingis wofull witnes heiris,

We war thairfoir, approchis heir (your) haur;
Fortoun is fikkil quhen scho beginsis and steiris.'

(ll. 465-469)

Thus through her formal "complaint" (stanzas 59-65), Cresseid announces again the very attitudes and feelings of self-pride
that in the beginning contributed to her woeful aloneness.

There is, however, a comradeship in the leper hut, and one wise old leper woman admonishes Cresseid for her continued moaning and self-pity (l. 477). Instead, she advises, do the best with what you have, learn to sound your leper's rattle according to the law of leper land (ll. 478-480). And in following that advice, Cresseid, for the first time in her history (perhaps even since before Boccaccio) joins the commune and experiences a relief from the isolation, the exclusion she has known as daughter, widow, courtly lady, infidel, rejected lover, destitute wanton, and lastly, leper. Ironically, if finally, Cresseid joins the group, contributing what she begs to the communal pot and thereby reaping the profits that come of selflessness.

Whereas before Cresseid was, for the most part, to herself and by herself, she now partakes of and contributes to the joint efforts of the band:

... with thame scho yeid
Fra place to place, quhill cauld and bounser sair
Compellit hir to be are rank begair.

(ll. 481-483)

Though the picture is a cruel one for Cresseid, it contains the seeds of hope for her. There is a note--though a meager one--of acceptance there, suggesting, I think, a changed attitude on Cresseid's part toward her fate. It is as though she is reminded through the explicit advice of the leper woman of the leper's fate, permanent and unchangeable,
a consequence of her own doing and not the blame of gods or Fortune, but instead her own. When she goes forth "fra place to place" (1. 482), it is as though the leper hut with its bed of straw becomes less an imprisonment, as though she is freed in part from her place "in ane dark corner of the hous allone" (1. 405). It is as though Cresseid's suffering has, in fact, loosed her own spirit of hope, a spirit that grasps unsteadily for a place on the ladder leading to eternal promise. The rung is there for her, however, and through the painful experience of self-knowledge she locates her place on the bar:

'Because I knew the greit vnstabilnes, 
Drnkkill as glas, into my self I say-
Traisting in vther als greit vnfaithfulnes, 
Als vnconstant, and als vntrue of fay-
Thoot sum be true, I wait richt few ar thay; 
Qua ha findis treuth, lat him his lady ruse; 
ane but my self as now I will accuse.' 
(11. 563-574)

In this drama of suffering that concludes with a final scene of self-understanding, Henryson bespeaks the importance of Cresseid as a fellow human being and therefore worth the saving. The expiation to which Cresseid's leprosy is vehicle shows her in the light of human suffering through which one goes if he is to gain salvation. It seems clear that Henryson's deep humanity comes through in this light. Cresseid, a repugnant and regrettably depraved sinner, still is entitled to receive the chance for the recovery or rebirth
that will promise her a state of grace, through suffering, rather than the permanency of the sickness incurable.

Herein the medieval phrase applicable to lepers, "Christ's martyrs,"\(^1\) (sometimes "Christ's poor") has connection, for it seems a likely probability that Henryson intends the leprosy affliction to serve as much for her redemption as for her punishment. The medieval attitude that considered lepers repulsive and legislated strict laws governing their exclusion from the town\(^2\) also through necessity provided for their care and well-being. Apparently the prevailing notion was that the extremes of suffering and ostracism the lepers experienced likened them in a sense to Christ Himself, the Great Suffering One, and from this a superstition grew that regarded the lepers as "beloved of God as was Lazarus."\(^3\) Along this line of thought, Ojars Kratins makes the observation: "The Christian commonplace of the spiritual blessings of disease naturally resulted in a certain veneration of the diseased person, since ministering to the most wretched amounted to ministering to Christ Himself."\(^4\)

\(^1\)Clay, p. 66.

\(^2\)Clay writes that "it is a startling fact that there is documentary evidence for the existence of over 200 such institutions [Lazar-houses] in this country [England] in the Middle Ages..."

\(^3\)Clay, p. 66.

\(^4\)Ojars Kratins, "The Middle English Aris and Amiloun: Chivalric Romance or Secular Historiography?" \(PMLA, LXXXI\) (October, 1966), p. 382.
Certainly Cresseid is most wretched in her plight, and perhaps approaches a Christ-like suffering when she looks upon Troylus without recognizing him, and then is told that it was he who gave her the generous gift of gold. This incident does, in Henryson's words, wrap the wretch in woe (1. 543) when she ponders the drastically altered fortunes she and Troylus have had. Yet, her full response to the meeting shows a certain grace and peace to which she seems to have come through the experience of suffering.

For her to realize fully the extent of her part in her destiny, she does have to go through the heart-rending, if needed confession found in stanzas 77-78:

'Thy lufe, thy lawtie, and thy gentilnes
I countit small in my prosperitie,
Sa (erflated) I was in wantones,
And clam upon the fickill qubeill sa bie.
All faith and lufe I promissit to the
Was in the self fickill and friuolous:
O fals Cresseid and trew knicht Troylus!

'For lufe of me thou keipt continence,
Honest and chaist in conversatioun;
Of all women protectour and defence
Thou was, and helpt thair opinion:
My mynd in fleschelie foull affection
Was inclynit to lustis lecherous:
Fy, fals Cresseid: O trew knicht Troylus!' (ll. 547-560)

Here, in unmitigated self-chastisement, the rank beggar Cresseid contrasts her frivolity and infidelity, her lust and desire, to Troylus' honesty and faithfulness, his loyalty and gentleness. Now she rails against herself
thrice, counting as her own the very defects of character which before she was blind to. Her plaint, "O fals Cresseid, and trew kniicht Troilus!" (l. 546) sounds three times true, as the agonizing realization of her own part in her horrible fate starts vividly in her mind. The process is an agonizing one for the once fair Cresseid, but from the agony, a purified spirit emerges. She is purged of the foul affliction of self-deception and true, now, to herself as the final stage of retribution, that of giving, becomes Cresseid's ultimate destiny:

"Heir I beteiche my corps and carioun With wormis and with taides to be rent; My cop and clapper and myne ornament, And all my gold the lippe folk sall have, When I am deid, to burie me in graue."

(ll. 577-581)

Cresseid's testament is in keeping with the Christian morality toward which she has been moving since first the affliction of leprosy struck her. Her flesh, worldly goods, and soul are all dedicated in the spirit of selflessness, a state which Cresseid has attained only through the personal suffering and alienation caused by her leprosy. And Henryson, persuaded of her worth through his own "deep humanity," rides the tempest with his heroine, seeing her through its most violent labors to the peaceful rebirth she knows at the poem's end.

\[\text{It is interesting to note that the custom of disinheriting lepers was either not known to Henryson, or had died out by his time. As Clay points out (p. 56) the custom was}\]
Fittingly, Cresseid's rebirth is climaxed with her death, the distinctly Christian doctrine of birth through death startlingly clear in two of Cresseid's final lines:

'Now spreit I leif to Diane, quhaire scho dwellis,
To walk with hir in waist woddis and wellis.'
(11. 587-588)

The glad end of Cresseid's woeful destiny, there in the woods and wells, is what Henryson leaves his reader contemplating. Her heinous affliction, at first glance the very worst possible punishment, finally turns the tide of her own wrath and pride and self-pity and brings her to redemption through the tribulation and self-examination imposed by suffering.

practiced in the early medieval period. She writes: "When pronounced a leper in the early days, a man lost not only his liberty, but the right to inherit or bequeath property."
V. CONCLUSION

If one looks back over the Testament and the discussion of this paper, it seems reasonable to say that Henryson was writing a poem about love through which the twin forces of compassion and justice combine to create an artistic sense of tension. In final consideration of this tension, then, let us look firstly at the role of Henryson's narrator, and secondly at the drama of his heroine's punishment and redemption.

There is little reason to doubt that Henryson builds tension into the complexity of the narrator's paradoxical function as Cresseid's accuser and her defender. It is the same narrator, for example, who, in response to Cresseid's sins of the flesh, indignantly repudiates her and frankly criticizes her (stanza 12) in the same breath, then later pleads her case before the gods and implores Saturn to be merciful toward her (ll. 323-325). As Cresseid's accuser the narrator personifies Henryson's keen feeling for justice; as her defender he epitomizes the poet's own deep humanity. As both, then, he is one of the main vehicles for what I have called Henryson's artistic sense of tension.

Nowhere in the poem, however, is the nerve of this artistic sense of tension more dramatically exposed than in
the entire sequence dealing with Cresseid's punishment and redemption. Her punishment, harsh and cruel in its leprous effects, clearly emanates from Henryson's sense of justice--of the need for a punishment to fit the crime. Whether her punishment by leprosy really does fit her crime, in view of the alienation, isolation, and anonymity it causes her, is a debatable point. Henryson indeed appears at this point almost relentless in his insistence on full atonement. But the punishment, in the final analysis, gives way to redemption in the last stanzas of Cresseid's own "testament." Henryson the vindictive, it would appear, has been superseded by Henryson the compassionate.

In these last stanzas of Cresseid's "testament" Henryson sounds the hopeful notes of her regeneration--after all, the end result of her punishment. It is the punishment, at all events, that combines the trappings of justice with the expiatory effects of suffering, both experiences necessary for her salvation. The thoughts of Tillyard are here again applicable. He notes that Cresseid "... was punished, brought to penitence, and ended by taking the blame on herself: in fact the story of her salvation according to the Christian scheme. The process is beautifully contrived."¹

¹Tillyard, p. 17.
And nowhere is the contrivance sweeter in its beauty
than in the final utterances Henryson has Cresseid make.
These utterances, in fact the voice of her own self-knowledge,
resolve for herself and for him the tension she has known
between the timelessness of her punishment and the temporality
of earth's vanities. Once she has claimed her own part in her
destiny (l. 574), and is willing to acknowledge that nothing
earthly lasts forever, she is safe to bequeath to the soil her

'. . . corps and carioun
With wormis and with taidis to be rent. . . .'
(11. 577-578)

and she can now happily respond to the permanency of another
existence, leaving her imperfect flesh to the earth but
bequeathing her eternal spirit to Diana:

'. . . quhair scho dwelis,
To walk with hir in waist woodis and wellis.'
(11. 587-588)

The lines are unclouded in their meaning: Cresseid's newly
purged soul will dwell by the streams in the uninhabited
woodlands with chaste Diana, a pagan deity through which
Henryson has clearly allegorized the Christian concept of
birth through death.¹

¹Fox, in his notes to the Testament, p. 129, observes
that the word "spreit" found in line 588 is commonly used
for "The soul of a person, as commander to God, or passing
out of the body, in the moment of death." (OSD, spirit, 2).

²Like Dillyard, Fox also views aspects of the Testament
according to the Christian scheme. In his introduction, p. 57,
Fox asserts that Henryson introduces Christianity explicitly
when he lets "Cresseid use a Christian formula when she
bequeaths her spirit to Diana." Furthermore, Fox writes,
'. . . Diana is a fairly obvious surrogate for God—or possibly
for the Virgin Mary. . . ."
Thus we see that the poet has caused his heroine, through the fulfillment of her suffering, to gain regeneration, a regeneration he has conceived after the pattern of Christianity and according to its redemptive promise. And possibly Henryson, through the scheme of his Testament, has calmed the moral tension aroused in him concerning Cresseid's sin since perhaps his first meeting with Chaucer's parent story. For if, as one might reasonably assume, Henryson felt disturbed upon that meeting with Chaucer's concentration on Troilus' double sorrow rather than on Criseyde's woeful sin, he must have also felt some relief at his own reversal of that concentration. And he must likewise have felt some satisfaction in his ability to voice for his heroine both the justice he required of her and the compassion he felt for her, the twin motivations for what Henryson was really doing in the Testament of Cresseid.
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