Abbreviations

A & A	Chaucer, *Anelida and Arcite*
Aen.	Virgil, *Aeneid*
AL	*The Assembly of Ladies*
AN&Q	*American Notes and Queries*
BC	Skelton, *The Bouge of Court*
BD	Chaucer, *The Book of the Duchess*
BL	British Library
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
Boece	Chaucer's translation of Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae*
CA	Gower, *Confessio Amantis*
CFMA	*Classiques français du Moyen Age*
Chau R	*Chaucer Review*
Cl T	Chaucer, *The Clerk's Tale*
CT	Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*
CUL	Cambridge University Library
De cons	Boethius, *De consolatione Philosophiae*
EC	*Essays in Criticism*
EETS	Early English Text Society
ELN	*English Language Notes*
ELR	*English Literary Renaissance*
EM	*Early Music*
ES	extra series
ES	*English Studies*
Fkl T	Chaucer, *The Franklin's Tale*
FL	*The Floure and the Leafe*
Gen Prol	Chaucer, the *General Prologue* to *The Canterbury Tales*
HF	Chaucer, *The House of Fame*
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
JMRS	*Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*
Kn T	Chaucer, *The Knight's Tale*
KQ	James I of Scotland, *The Kingis Quair*
LGW	Chaucer, *The Legend of Good Women*
LGWP	Chaucer, the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*

LR	Charles of Orleans, *Love's Renewal*
M Ae	*Medium Aevum*
ME	Middle English
MED	*Middle English Dictionary*
Mer T	Chaucer, *The Merchant's Tale*
Mil T	Chaucer, *The Miller's Tale*
MLN	*Modern Language Notes*
MLQ	*Modern Language Quarterly*
MLR	*Modern Languge Review*
NPT	Chaucer, *The Nun's Priest's Tale*
NS	new series
N & Q	*Notes and Queries*
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
OS	ordinary series
PF	Chaucer, *The Parliament of Fowls*
Phys T	Chaucer, *The Physician's Tale*
PLL	*Papers on Language and Literature*
PQ	*Philological Quarterly*
RR	Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*
Romaunt	Chaucer (?), *The Romaunt of the Rose*
SAC	*Studies in the Age of Chaucer*
SATF	Société des Anciens Textes Français
SB	*Studies in Bibliography*
SP	*Studies in Philology*
Sq T	Chaucer, *The Squire's Tale*
SSL	*Studies in Scottish Literature*
STC	*Short Title Catalogue* (see bibliography: Pollard & Redgrave)
TC	Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*
TG	Lydgate, *The Temple of Glass*
TLF	Textes littéraires français
TSLL	*Texas Studies in Language and Literature*
WB Prol	Chaucer, the Prologue to *The Wife of Bath's Tale*
WBT	Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Tale*
YES	*Yearbook of English Studies*

Note on Editorial Policy

The aim in these editions has been to preserve as much as possible of the flavour of the original texts while at the same time presenting them in clear and comprehensible forms. ME thorn (þ) and yogh (ȝ) have been modernized in the texts, as appropriate, and -u, -v, -w, -y, -i, -j have been regularized when this will aid understanding; expansion of abbreviated forms of final-e has also taken account of comprehensibility as well as metrical considerations. The textual notes to each poem explain the principles of transcription and collation which have been followed, and indicate the range of problems specific to each text. Punctuation and layout are editorial. Titles of Middle English Works (e.g. *The Parliament of Fowls*, *Winner and Waster*) are generally cited in modern spelling.

Introduction

THE GENRE OF THE DREAM VISION

The late medieval taste for poems in the form of dreams responds to an extensive and significant tradition of writing of which examples can be cited from the Bible, from the Greek and Latin classics, and from the late antique and early medieval periods.[1] Interest in the prophetic or symbolic potential of dreams is especially marked in ancient and classical writings (as in, for example, the biblical dreams interpreted by Joseph in Genesis, chapter 41; John's dream as recounted in The Book of Revelation; the dream of the underworld in Book VI of Virgil's *Aeneid*), and the body of Latin scholarship in which such dreams were discussed and categorized continued to be influential in the Middle Ages. Macrobius, whose commentary on the dream of Scipio dates from the fifth century, was still widely read and cited ten centuries after his death.[2] The enduring interest in dreaming was demonstrated in various ways. Some medieval writers experimented creatively with narration of fictional dreams, others wrote about the different categories of dream and possibilities for interpreting them, and still more considered the physical causes of dreams, relating them to theories about the balance of bodily humours.[3]

The poets whose works are collected in this volume (Lydgate, James I of Scotland, Charles of Orleans, Skelton, and the anonymous author of *The Assembly of Ladies*) draw productively on all these strands of interest, making sometimes explicit, sometimes covert, reference to aspects of the different traditions concerning dreams which they recognized as influential. At the same time they exploit to the full the liberating possibilities that writing a dream can hold open, and the extraordinary variety of figurative discourse that the form permits. For writers in English, furthermore—still in the fifteenth century a relatively new literary language—the composition of dream poetry

[1] The tradition is outlined by Spearing (1976).

[2] See e.g. Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*, lines 29–84, and Charles of Orleans, *Love's Renewal*, lines 106–9. The commentary is translated by Stahl (Macrobius 1952), and, in extracts, by Brewer (1960).

[3] See Kruger (1992).

offered a notable opportunity for reflection on their own creative practices, particularly in relation to the inescapably dominant models of Chaucer's poems. The texts collected in this volume thus gesture in various ways towards Chaucer's literary experiments with dreams in *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Parliament of Fowls*, *The House of Fame*, and the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*.

MEDIEVAL DREAM VISIONS

For Chaucer, as for the Middle Ages more generally, the most influential late classical experiment with the form of the retrospectively narrated vision was probably Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae* (The Consolation of Philosophy), written in 524–5.[4] Boethius (*c.*480–*c.*525) became a consul in Rome and chief of staff to King Theodoric before suddenly falling from favour after accusations of treason. He was imprisoned at Pavia in northern Italy and executed there, but was able before his death to write the *Consolation*, a treatise in prose and verse which recounts a vision in which the dreamer while in prison is visited by Lady Philosophy, and learns through dialogue with her the means to confront and rationalize his misfortunes. The *Consolation* engaged interest throughout the Middle Ages, prompting influential commentaries by Nicholas Trevet and Remigius of Auxerre, and translations into French by Jean de Meun and into English prose, first by King Alfred (*c.*892) and later by Chaucer himself.

Boethius does not draw special attention to the boundaries between 'real' and visionary worlds in his treatise; he begins the *Consolation* with some lines of lament for his misfortune, and introduces what constitutes the 'dream' simply by recounting that 'I saw, stondynge aboven the heghte of myn heved, a womman of ful greet reverence by semblaunt' (Chaucer's *Boece* I, pr. 1, lines 3–4)[5] and recalling some of Philosophy's supernatural features. That the *Consolation* might be counted a dream is made more explicit in some of the opening illustrations to medieval copies of the text, which set next to an image of the author in colloquy

[4] Ed. and tr. Stewart and Rand (Boethius 1918, repr. 1968), and by Watts (Boethius 1969, repr. 1976). For biographical details and further discussion, see Gibson (1982) and Minnis (1987).

[5] Unless specified otherwise, quotations from Chaucer's writings cite Benson's edition (Chaucer 1987).

with Philosophy another image of the author asleep in bed.[6] The comparative vagueness with which Boethius defined his visionary framework is shared by certain other medieval works, from Alan of Lille's twelfth-century Latin *De planctu Naturae* to Dante's influential *Commedia* and John Gower's fourteenth-century Middle English *Confessio Amantis*:[7] the visionary mode in these works allows freedom for imaginative speculation, without insisting on the necessity for provision of authenticating detail about the dream-narrator's waking existence.

LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE AND FRENCH DREAM VISIONS

Among the longest and most important of medieval vernacular dream visions is *Le Roman de la Rose* (*The Romance of the Rose*), written in French in the thirteenth century.[8] The first 4,028 lines, the work of Guillaume de Lorris, introduce a young narrator, preoccupied by thoughts of love, who recollects a dream about his pursuit of a rose in a delightful garden inhabited by personified abstractions such as Fair Welcome (*Bel Accueil*) and Standoffishness (*Daungier*). Guillaume's section of the poem broke off part of the way through the Lover's difficult pursuit of the rose; the narration was subsequently taken up and completed by Jean de Meun, who extended it by almost 18,000 lines, and expanded the central love allegory into a comprehensive exploration of knowledge. The *Roman* was a hugely popular work, surviving in over 250 manuscripts,[9] many of which contain illustrations. Chaucer translated part of it into Middle English (Fragment A of *The Romaunt of the Rose*),[10] and its influence is manifest in later medieval writing of many kinds. Features of the delicious dream garden of Guillaume's section of the poem infiltrate the gardens constructed in numerous other love

[6] See Courcelle (1967), plates 30, 31, 37, 40, 44, 46, 47.

[7] The *De planctu* (*The Complaint of Nature*) is translated by Sheridan (Alan of Lille 1980); the *Commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*) by Singleton (Dante Alighieri 1980–2), and the *Confessio* (*The Lover's Confession*) by Macaulay (Gower 1899–1902); these and associated works are discussed by Lynch (1988).

[8] Ed. Lecoy in *RR* (1965–70), and translated into modern English prose by Dahlberg in *RR* (1971).

[9] First surveyed by Langlois (1910), and more recently reviewed by Huot (1993), with copious discussion of the illustrations.

[10] In Chaucer (1987).

allegories, while elements and episodes of Jean's continuation (his presentation of the goddess Nature, for example), and the overall richness of detail by which the *Roman* itemizes facets of the psyche, play a formative role in later texts.

Aspects of the form and content of the *Roman* are echoed and sometimes directly alluded to in a number of other French dream poems. Those of Guillaume de Deguileville (written between about 1330 and 1358) build on the notion of the imaginative journey which is implicit in the experience of dreaming, and adapt some of the strategies of the *Roman* to the purposes of religious allegory; all three base themselves on the structure of the pilgrimage, from the *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine* (*Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*), through the *Pèlerinage de l'âme* (*Pilgrimage of the soul*) and the *Pèlerinage Jhesuchrist* (*Pilgrimage of Jesus Christ*).[11]

On secular topics, some *dits amoureux* (courtly poems on the subject of love) are framed as dreams, or make reference to scenes and landscapes reminiscent of the garden of the *Roman* and its inhabitants: fourteenth-century examples include the *Songe Saint Valentin* (*Dream of St Valentine*) of Oton de Granson (*c.*1345–1397);[12] poems by Jean Froissart (1337–after 1404), such as the *Paradis d'amour*, the *Espinette amoureuse*, the *Joli buisson de Jonece*, and the *Temple d'honneur*;[13] the *Fonteinne Amoureuse* of Guillaume de Machaut (*c.*1300–1377).[14] These works were known to Chaucer and through his writings transmitted indirectly to English writers of the fifteenth century. While love visions of these kinds were able to exploit dreams as fantasies concerning desire and sometimes wish fulfilment, other modes of writing made use of the dream framework as a means to convey social or political commentary which might have seemed inflammatory if communicated in any more direct way: the *Songe du Vergier* (1378; extant in both Latin and French versions) was commissioned as a political statement by the French king Charles V, while the *Songe Véritable* (1406) offers, in contrast, a vision of royal corruption.[15]

[11] All ed. Stürzinger: Deguileville (1893, 1895, 1897).
[12] Ed. Piaget: Oton de Granson (1941).
[13] Ed. Dembowski: Froissort (1986); and Fourrier: Froissart (1972, 1975, 1979).
[14] Ed. Palmer; Guillaume de Machaut (1993).
[15] Ed. Schnerb-Lièvre: *Songe du vergier* (1982); discussed by Famiglietti (1986).

DREAM VISIONS IN MIDDLE ENGLISH

The possibilities of vision as a literary mode were evident to early writers in English, and acknowledged in King Alfred's prose translation of Boethius's *Consolation*,[16] and in the eighth-century poem *The Dream of the Rood*.[17] The Latin and French visions discussed above were accessible to English readers familiar with these languages, and writers such as Gower, whose late fourteenth-century *Vox Clamantis* takes the form of an apocalyptic vision,[18] continued to experiment with the Latin tradition. The late fourteenth century was also a period of intense interest in the potential of this form for those writing in English, however. Chaucer's earliest surviving poem, *The Book of the Duchess*, is a dream vision; *The House of Fame*, *The Parliament of Fowls*, and the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* (all discussed below) are his later explorations of the genre. Chaucer's friend Sir John Clanvowe also tried his hand at a love vision on the French model, in the form of *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* (sometimes called *The Book of Cupid*);[19] their London contemporary Thomas Usk chose to explore the vicissitudes of political fortune in a Boethian prose vision called *The Testament of Love*.[20] Poets writing in the alliterative tradition found that the dream vision accommodated a range of purposes: in *Pearl* its framework encloses elegy and a glimpse of the New Jerusalem;[21] in *The Parliament of the Three Ages* a debate;[22] in *Winner and Waster* [23] and in the different versions of *Piers Plowman* (and certain later poems in the *Piers Plowman* tradition)[24] social and political commentary in a variety of modes. By the start of the fifteenth century the dream vision was firmly established in English writing.

ENGLISH POETRY IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

The poems collected in this volume represent a tradition of writing which is often called 'Chaucerian'—a term rather hard to define. The

[16] Ed. and tr. Sedgefield: Alfred the Great (1899, 1900).
[17] Ed. Swanton: *The Dream of the Rood* (1978).
[18] Ed. Macaulay (Gower 1902: iv. 3–313); tr. Stockton (Gower 1962).
[19] Ed. Scattergood (1979).
[20] Ed. Skeat (1897); and Shoaf: Usk (1998).
[21] Ed. Gordon (1953).
[22] Ed. Offord: *Parlement of the Three Ages* (1959).
[23] Ed. Trigg: *Wynnere and Wastoure* (1990).
[24] See Skeat: Langland (1886); and Barr (1993).

works of writers conceived of as 'Chaucerian' do not all share the dialectal forms of Chaucer's London English, for example, or even those of later developments of it: some (like the Scots king James I in this collection) wrote English of very different kinds. Nor is it possible to assume that writers in this tradition necessarily shared with Chaucer their range of interests or contacts: John Lydgate was a Benedictine monk; John Skelton a royal tutor and priest; Charles of Orleans a prince of the French royal blood; and the anonymous author of *The Assembly of Ladies* could have been anything. In a very general sense the term might include texts produced by authors who had read and thought about certain of Chaucer's poems; but this possibility was available to increasing numbers of would-be writers after Chaucer's death in 1400, and the spreading circulation of manuscript copies of his works, and does not add much to the specificity of our definition. References to and quotations from Chaucer appear in a number of contexts in fifteenth-century writing, and it is clear that his writings came to be well known as well as highly respected.[25] The most useful and specific way of understanding 'Chaucerian' in connection with the poems in this volume is in its suggestion that these works share a degree of self-conscious Chaucerian reference, and in certain ways explicitly announce their affiliation to (or in some instances their departures from) a particular tradition of writing which they associate with Chaucer's name.

This tradition is itself best defined by reference to Chaucer's own dream visions, which, while individual in their flavour and subject matter, share a number of common features. All, for example, address themselves at some level to aspects of secular love—whether the love and loss of *The Book of the Duchess*, or the different kinds of sexual love explored in *The Parliament of Fowls*, or the notions about love and praise in relation to poetic inspiration which inform both *The House of Fame* and the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*. The contexts in which love is investigated in all four of these works are, moreover, consistently 'courtly' ones, involving the concerns of people with the means to afford leisure for the cultivation and discussion of human relationships: aristocrats and the socially privileged, whose worlds would in reality have incorporated structures along the lines of the parliaments and courts and

[25] Spurgeon (1925) has a comprehensive collection of later references to and echoes of Chaucer. The gradual transmission of Chaucer's writings is discussed by Strohm (1982) and by Lerer (1993).

households which Chaucer depicts. Such people would have been familiar with activities like hunting (*The Book of the Duchess*), outdoor ceremony (*The Parliament of Fowls* and the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*), or suing for favour (*The House of Fame*); and they would have responded to the aesthetically pleasing gardens, or temples, or tapestries, or wall-paintings of Chaucer's dreams with the judgement of connoisseurs.

In keeping with this depiction of and address to a world of the cultivated and discriminating, Chaucer's dream poems make copious reference to other books and to earlier traditions of writing, both in Latin and in the vernacular languages of medieval Western Europe. Stories originating in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides*, or in Virgil's *Aeneid*, rub shoulders with allusions to Boethius's *Consolation*, to Macrobius's commentary on the dream of Scipio, and with echoes of the *Romance of the Rose* and of poems by Chaucer's closer contemporaries Boccaccio, Froissart, and Machaut.[26] On occasions, these books play material roles in the events recounted in Chaucer's poems: the narrator of *The Parliament of Fowls* falls asleep while reading about the dream of Scipio in an 'olde bok totorn' (line 110), and his dream begins with a recapitulation of this earlier literary vision; the narrator of *The Book of the Duchess* assuages insomnia with a 'romaunce . . . fables | That clerkes had in olde tyme, | And other poetes, put in rime' (lines 48–54), and proceeds in his dream to revisit aspects of one of the stories he reads there. Chaucer seems to have been the first European writer to experiment with the possibilities of significant overlap between bedtime reading and the dreams which it can prompt.[27]

This tissue of references to other writings is clearly a purposeful intertextuality that reaches beyond compliments on the learning of prospective audiences and readers. Chaucer seems to wish in his dream poems to bring to life many of the anxieties which might preoccupy a late medieval writer—particularly one whose situation depended on the goodwill of secular patrons, and whose determination to write in an inauspicious vernacular may have invited accusations of eccentricity or wrongheadedness. Within this frame of reference, books come to figure almost frighteningly in some of the dreams. The narrator of the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* has to confront critics of

[26] See Boitani (1986).

[27] Stearns (1942).

his own poems, and is enjoined by them, as a penance for his 'missayings', to produce a new work (envisaged, in concrete terms, as a presentation manuscript destined for a specific 'real' figure: Richard II's queen), which will give a new spin to stories from the books in his own library. The questions which are explicitly raised in this prologue about the creative relationship between new compositions and 'olde appreved stories' (Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*, line 21) are in *The House of Fame* dramatized as something close to nightmare.

Questions of a similar kind seem to have preoccupied fifteenth-century English writers with a new urgency, as they contemplated not just a distant literary heritage but Chaucer's own very palpable œuvre in relation to their own creative aspirations.[28] Skelton's characterization of himself as 'Drede' (Fearfulness) in *The Bouge of Courte* seems in part to reflect his trepidation before 'the great auctoryte | Of poetes olde' (8–9); his uncertainties and humility are shared by others of the writers whose works figure in the present anthology, and who make frequent reference to models for their own creative practice. The author of *The Kingis Quair* starts by relating the matter of his poem to a recollected reading of Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae* (14–21), prefaces his dream with a scene borrowed from *The Knight's Tale*, and ends by recommending his composition to Chaucer and Gower (1374). The dreamer of Lydgate's *Temple of Glass* sets his vision in a palace designed to recall Chaucer's *House of Fame*, on whose walls are represented figures from a number of other stories, several told by Chaucer (44–142; Chaucer is mentioned by name at line 110); portions of the discussion between the lovers in this poem are modelled on parts of *The Book of the Duchess*.[29] Even in *Love's Renewal*, probably the work of a native French speaker, allusions to writers of a shared European past are woven together with Chaucerian echoes.[30] Intertextuality, contrived with varying degrees of delicacy and humour, is significant in all the poems collected here, and contributes to varieties of authorial positioning which are a part of the complexity of the 'Chaucerian' tradition of

[28] Such 'anxiety of influence', in relation to Chaucer, is discussed by Spearing (1985); and Lerer (1993).

[29] See the notes to the text.

[30] Explored by Petrina (1997); Bennett (1982); and Boffey (1996).

writing in English. And many further texts, beyond those collected here, make their own distinctive commentary on this phenomenon: the Scottish dream vision by William Dunbar which has become known as *The Golden Targe*, for example, manipulates the conventionally delicious elements of the Chaucerian love vision in ways which raise questions about both love and poetic practice,[31] and which acknowledge with some comprehensiveness the 'anxiety of influence' which has been signalled as a feature of post-Chaucerian writing.[32]

COURTS AND COURTLINESS

As has been noted, Chaucer's dream poems depict a range of situations in which behaviour of a literally 'courtly' kind might be thought appropriate. Cupid and his entourage accost the narrator of the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*, and in the context of this court gathering he is faced with a quasi-legal judgement on the perceived bias of his writings. In *The House of Fame*, Fame holds formal court to companies of supplicants, and responds to their pleas with arbitrary justice. *The Parliament of Fowls* introduces Venus's courtly household (not unlike that of Cupid in the *Romance of the Rose*), and follows it with Nature's parliament, which debates the claims of various birds to a mate. Even in the more intimate world of *The Book of the Duchess*, the narrator exercises courtly discretion in addressing a social superior, and responding properly to his recollections of the pursuit of love. Court and household were important medieval models of social cohesiveness, and must have defined many people's experience of social processes and bonds (hence, too, their understanding of matters such as the operation of law).[33] It can hardly have seemed out of the way for a secular writer to situate discussion of important issues in the context of an imagined court or parliament, and to build creatively on some of the activities common to such bodies (hearing pleas, holding debates, inviting judgements, for example). Documentary evidence confirms that

[31] See Bawcutt: Dunbar (1996).

[32] See especially Spearing (1985); and Lerer (1993).

[33] The implications of living in court or household have been discussed by Mertes (1988); and by Starkey (1981, 1987); for more detailed discussion of the composition of English courts of the late 14th and 15th c., see Given-Wilson (1986, 1996).

most of the writers whose works feature in this collection had direct experience of life in a court of some kind,[34] and even the anonymous author of *The Assembly of Ladies* seems at pains to demonstrate familiarity with the structures and processes of an aristocratic household.

The importance which love assumes in these court contexts (quite apart from any connection with the anachronistic term 'courtly love' which is often used of the body of conventions governing amorous relationships in medieval polite society) is not especially surprising. Courts and households were generally mixed—the all-female household of Lady Loyalty, as depicted in *The Assembly of Ladies*, bears little relationship to social reality—and their leisure activities and imaginative recreation offered considerable space for semi-flirtatious conversation and 'dalliance',[35] even for mock courts in which questions of love might be debated and offered for judgement.[36] At a more serious level, the representation and airing of amorous problems may have offered considerable figurative potential, whether of a specific or more generalized kind. The sorts of 'service' which might be expected of a lover, like the bestowing of 'grace' or 'favour' or 'mercy' which might be necessary to any 'accord' with the object of desire, are forms of behaviour which might be manifest in a number of secular relationships. Communications between lord and servant, patron and would-be dependant, supplicant and arbitrator, might in many contexts have taken the same shapes and assumed the same vocabulary as those between lover and lady.

The appeal of certain figurative patterns which had been sanctioned by long use in amorous contexts is cleverly exploited in some of the texts collected here. *The Bouge of Court*, for example, repositions the fearful lover (here in the character of 'Drede', the dream-narrator) among a company who pursue political favour and material reward at a determinedly worldly court. Rather differently, both *The Kingis Quair* and *Love's Renewal* make extensive and pointed use of the figure of the prisoner of love, a man oppressed by circumstances which keep him from the presence of his lady, and constrained to languish in distress.[37] Chaucer had explored this figure in *The Knight's Tale* and elsewhere, intensifying his effects by incorporating aspects of the experiences of the Boethian prisoner of Fortune. Since James I and Charles of Orleans

[34] See the biographical information cited in the headnote to each text.
[35] Effectively evoked in Stevens (1961). [36] Green (1983).
[37] The figure is explored by Leyerle (1974); and by Boffey (1991).

were both quite literally prisoners of fortune (James captured at sea by the English, Charles taken after the battle of Agincourt), they were subsequently able to activate the figure with a range of fresh and topical implications—some quite naturally of a political kind, and highlighted by their decisions to experiment with the language and cultural capital of their captors. The autobiographical elements of the writings attributed to James and to Charles are especially pointed, indeed humorous, instances of the capacity of dream visions to explore and problematize the relationship between historical reality and imaginative construction, and their invitation to readers to 'decode' meanings is a common feature of the dream genre. A number of attempts have been made to attach the other poems collected here to particular historical circumstances,[38] and the texts' characteristic mixture of deliberate vagueness and specific detail (typified in the personal mottoes which figure in *TG* and *AL*) irresistibly provokes historicist readings.

THE WOMAN QUESTION

A different field of critical enquiry would highlight the fact that the dreams in all of the poems here are ostensibly initiated by desire, in most cases the desire of a male lover to win a lady: the narrators of *The Temple of Glass*, *Love's Renewal*, and *The Kingis Quair* all more or less identify with the central male figures of their dreams, and even *The Bouge of Court* opens with the apparatus of a dream vision on the model of *The Romance of the Rose*, as the dreamer-narrator takes advice from 'Daunger' (Standoffishness) and 'Desyre'. The focus on desire, the allegorical modes which isolate and often personify varieties of human impulse, and the construction of the poems in the form of dreams all serve to open the texts to psychoanalytical interpretations of different kinds, and like the *Roman de la Rose*, they respond fruitfully to such readings. Women play significant parts in all the texts collected here, and their voices are heard at some length, if in ventriloquized form. In *The Temple of Glass*, for example, the lady's complaints precede those of the lover and are outlined both more poignantly and with a greater specificity. In *The Assembly of Ladies*, untypically narrated by a female, much of the dream is devoted to outlining women's grievances in love. Resolution of the

[38] See the headnotes to individual poems, particularly to *TG*.

problems addressed in most of the dreams is left to powerful female arbitrators (Venus in *The Temple of Glass* and *Love's Renewal*; Venus with the help of Minerva in *The Temple of Glass*), and the male narrators are in all cases made aware of the significance of the female Fortune to their destinies. Aspects of this last figure are of course threatening and likely to instil fear: 'Whome she hateth, she casteth in the dyche', as Skelton's Drede soon learns (*The Bouge of Court*, line 115). On the whole, though, the representation of women in these texts is unusually positive and sympathetic.[39] The three earliest of the texts (*The Temple of Glass, The Kingis Quair*, and *Love's Renewal*) were probably written while the repercussions of the so-called 'querelle des femmes', a literary dispute about women's nature and status, initiated in Paris at the very end of the fourteenth century by Christine de Pizan, were still to be felt,[40] and they may reflect aspects of that debate. Various of the issues which fuelled it were addressed at intervals throughout the fifteenth century, in works such as Alain Chartier's *La Belle Dame sans Merci* (translated into English by Sir Richard Roos),[41] and their topicality may have had some influence on the continuing circulation of *The Temple of Glass* and the inspiration of *The Assembly of Ladies*.

READERS AND CIRCULATION

Apart from *The Bouge of Court*, which survives in two early printed editions, all of the poems collected here circulated in manuscript copies in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The authors of *Love's Renewal* and *The Kingis Quair* do not seem to have made extensive efforts to secure the transmission of their poems, and it may be that these texts were available only to their close acquaintances or to some other form of coterie readership (evidence that Charles of Orleans may have

[39] Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, in which Criseyde, the pattern of faithlessness, is portrayed with interest and sympathy, may also have been significant: the poem appears together with Chaucer's dream visions and a variety of the poems in this anthology in Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 4. 27, and in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Selden. B. 24 (see notes to the texts for further information on these manuscripts).

[40] See Hicks (1977); and Fenster and Erler (1990). Hoccleve's *Letter of Cupid* (ed. Fenster and Erler) translates one of Christine de Pizan's contributions to this debate, and is collected in various of the manuscript anthologies which contain some of the poems edited here.

[41] Ed. Skeat (1897), pp. 299–326.

read *The Kingis Quair* does however suggest some limited circulation).[42] Lydgate's *Temple of Glass* survives in seven complete copies, in a further selection of fragments, and in early printed form, and was clearly quite well known. Most of the manuscripts in which it is found are collections of the writings of Chaucer and other contributors to the Chaucerian tradition; some seem especially to focus on dream visions, and on poems concerning questions of love and gender. *The Assembly of Ladies* survives in three manuscripts (in one of which, now Longleat 258, it appears with *The Temple of Glass* and with a selection of other texts including *La Belle Dame sans Merci*); it was printed in 1532 in William Thynne's edition of *The Workes of Geoffrey Chaucer*, to which a number of other non-Chaucerian texts were appended.[43] While *Love's Renewal* and *The Kingis Quair* must have reached aristocratic readers (if only small numbers of them), evidence gleaned from the manuscripts of the other poems indicates a readership among gentry and cultivated urban circles. Skelton's decision to have *The Bouge of Court* printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1499 may reflect some understanding on both their parts that an established audience existed for courtly visions, and that such an audience would be sufficiently familiar with the conventions of this genre to comprehend the experiments which Skelton made with it.

[42] See Petrina (1997) and Boffey (1996).

[43] *STC* 5068, and facsimile in Brewer (1976).

Fifteenth-Century English Dream Visions

AN ANTHOLOGY

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