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NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Hary's *Wallace* and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*

In his recent excellent edition of Hary's *Wallace*,¹ Matthew McDiarmid demonstrates the medieval Scottish poet to have been possessed of his sight until after the composition of the poem, and literate.² By doing so, McDiarmid is able with much more assurance than previous scholars like J. T. T. Brown³ to postulate Hary's specific indebtedness to, among other authors, Chaucer. Borrowings and adaptations are traced to *The Complaint of Mars*, *The Legend of Good Women*, *The Knight's Tale*, *The Squire's Tale*, *The Franklin's Tale*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*.⁴

The single parallel noted with the last work appears in the poem as Hary anticipates Wallace's loss of his beloved wife:

Go leiff in wer, go leiff in cruell payne.⁵

This is compared to Troilus' vow, when he learns of Criseyde's imminent departure from Troy, that he will lament his misfortune

". . . while I may dure
On lyve and in cruwel payne"⁶

McDiarmid points out that in both poems the passages are "followed by a contrasting of this world, where false fortune rules, with the truth of heaven."⁷

On first inspection this borrowing or recollection seems probable, but the case for Hary's knowledge of and indebtedness to the *Troilus* can be strengthened by investigating the possibility of more extensive and detailed parallels between Wallace's wooing of the Bradefute maiden and his subsequent loss of her, and Troilus' wooing and loss of Criseyde.

1. Scottish Text Society, 2 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1968-1969).

2. I, pp. xxvi-lx.

3. *The Wallace and the Bruce Restudied* (Bonn, 1900).

4. *S.v.* Chaucer, Index to Introduction and Notes, II, p. 284.

5. I, p. 111, l. 88.

6. *Troilus and Criseyde* in *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2d. ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), p. 444, ll. 295-296.

7. II, p. 184, n. to l. 88.

The ultimate source for this episode in the *Wallace* Hary found in Andrew of Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle*,⁸ and McDiarmid has shown that he did not in addition draw upon a popular "geste."⁹ In Wyntoun's account, one day in Lanark Wallace is accosted by an insolent Englishman, and a fight begins. Outnumbered, Wallace retreats to his inn. His "lemman" helps him to escape by delaying his pursuers. For this the English later put her to death, an act which Wallace watches in disguise. The Scot takes revenge by killing the guilty sheriff.

Hary changes and expands the episode.¹⁰ During an uneasy truce between the Scots and the occupying English, Wallace often comes to Lanark. Dwelling there is a well-born maiden of the Bradefute family. All of her immediate kin are dead, so she has obtained King Edward's protection and lives quietly. Amiable and virtuous, she enjoys the favor of righteous folk. One day "to the kyrk as scho went," Wallace is struck by her beauty and is pierced by love for her. For a time he alternates painfully between a desire to pursue her and his consciousness of his duty as military leader. (Earlier in his struggles against the English he has been betrayed by a mistress.)

He confides his quandary to his friend Kerle, who counsels that he take the maiden in marriage, but Wallace's indecision persists. Kerle, accusing him of "slogardy," urges that he see her. When Wallace dines with the maiden, he proclaims his love. She is responsive, but declares that she will be only his wife, not his mistress. Wallace replies that he would wed her if the kingdom were free, but now he must devote himself wholly to war. Following an interval of fighting against the English, Wallace is assailed again by his "lusty payne," and he returns to her company. After still more inward debate, he marries her. For a time both enjoy "hail plesance"¹¹ as Wallace continues his heroic resistance against the English. A daughter is born to them. Then, in three consecutive stanzas¹² the poet rebukes fortune for the cruel blow which Wallace is about to endure, and concludes

Than pray we all to the makar abow,
 Quhilk has in hand off iustry the ballance
 That he vs grant off his der lestand lowe.

8. Ed. F. J. Armour, Scottish Text Society, 6 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1903-1914), V, pp. 300-304, ll. 1993-2076.

9. I, pp. lxxviii-lxix.

10. I, pp. 90-95, ll. 561-717, and pp. 108-117, ll. 1-270.

11. At this point there seems to occur recollection from another of Chaucer's works. "For scho be chos has bath hyr luff and lord . . ." (*Wallace*, I, p. 109, l. 51). Cf. *The Franklin's Tale*, ed. cit., p. 136, ll. 792-793: "Thus hath she take hir servant and hir lord,—/ Servant in love, and lord in mariage."

12. I, p. 111, ll. 81-104.

Following Wyntoun, Hary now narrates how Wallace is embroiled in a fight with Englishmen and how he escapes with the aid of his wife. The Englishmen execute her. Learning from a servant of her death, the grieving Wallace vows vengeance against all Englishmen, slays the sheriff, and gives himself wholly to war with the hated enemy.

This portion of Hary's poem, then, is parallel in a number of significant ways to Chaucer's well-known account of Troilus and Criseyde. Criseyde, like the Bradefute maiden, is a desirable woman alone in time of war who has found an uneasy refuge and who bears a good reputation. The great warrior Troilus sees her in a temple, falls at once in love, and suffers for a time without approaching her. He confides in his sympathetic friend Pandarus, who rebukes him for his passiveness and urges action. Much concerned for her honor, Criseyde initially rejects the possibility of an extramarital liaison. Ultimately she and Troilus are united in perfect happiness, and Troilus is both ideal lover and warrior. Then they are separated by the fortunes of war. When Troilus learns that he has lost his beloved, he grieves and seeks vengeance in battle. To these correspondences may be added the comment by McDiarmid cited above.

Some of the parallels consist of motifs more or less widespread in romances, e.g., the meeting in church, love at first sight, the lover's friend. But the accumulation of resemblances is impressive, and so far as I know, the motifs in question are not to be found all together in any other work which Hary can reasonably be assumed to have known.

If Hary's indebtedness to the *Troilus* be granted, one is prompted to concur with McDiarmid's praise for the Scottish poet's masterly handling of his sources.¹³ Wallace has none of Troilus' self-abasing lack of confidence, though he is convincingly torn for a time between love for the maiden and his duty to this country. Unlike Criseyde, the Bradefute maiden is immediately and openly responsive to her wooer but on terms of Christian marriage. It is through her very faithfulness to Wallace that she is lost, and the grieving but heroic Scot gives himself again wholly to his nation's cause as a convincing tragic protagonist. Hary joins other Scottish makars like Henryson in his ability to make his own what he adapts from Chaucer.

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13. I, pp. lx-cviii.