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DOUGLAS'S *PALYCE OF HONOUR* RE-EDITED

David J. Parkinson, ed. *Gavin Douglas: "The Palyce of Honour."* 2nd edition. Kalamazoo, MI: Published for TEAMS (Teaching Association for Medieval Studies) in Association with the University of Rochester by Medieval Institute Publications, 2018. Pp. ix + 222. Hardback, \$89.00. ISBN 978-1-58044-373-9. Paper, \$24.95. ISBN 978-1-58044-372-2.

Gavin Douglas, "this most talented and lively poet—and perhaps the most promising of his generation," as Douglas Gray notes—wrote very few poems.¹ In early sixteenth-century Middle Scots, he translated Virgil's *Aeneid* and Maffeo Vegio's Book 13, which C. S. Lewis lauded for its "greatness," and wrote the scribally attributed short poem "Conscience" and the dream vision allegory *The Palyce of Honour*.² David J. Parkinson's new edition of the *Palyce* is an important contribution to Douglas studies.

Parkinson's accomplishments are brought into focus by contrasting his second edition with Priscilla Bawcutt's in her Scottish Text Society volume of Douglas's shorter poems.³ Bawcutt made the shorter poems the subject of modern editorial methods, which for the *Palyce* meant ending the monopoly that Ross and Charteris's Edinburgh text had enjoyed as editors' copy-text for over two centuries. Bawcutt used a facing-page format with Copland's London text (1553?) on the left-hand side and the Edinburgh text (1579) on the right. This arrangement makes good editorial sense, given her conclusion that "In many cases it seems impossible to decide which text has the correct reading" (xxiv). The format encourages readers to compare the facing pages and note the many variants, large and small, that exist between

¹ Douglas Gray, "Gavin Douglas," *A Companion to Medieval Scottish Poetry*, ed. Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), 164

² C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 81.

³ Priscilla Bawcutt, ed., *The Shorter Poems of Gavin Douglas (Bishop of Dunkeld)* [Scottish Text Society, 4th ser., 3] (Edinburgh: for Society by William Blackwood, 1967); *The Shorter Poems of Gavin Douglas*, 2nd edition [Scottish Text Society, 5th ser., 2] (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 2003). Both Bawcutt editions print the parallel texts.

those two texts. As befits the Scottish Text Society's goals and readers, Bawcutt's excellent edition of the *Palyce* is mainly intended for scholars. Parkinson's second edition of *The Palyce of Honour* extends the reach of her edition and of his previous edition to include a wider audience.

In 1992, Parkinson offered his first edition of *The Palis of Honoure* "as a student's introduction" (vii). Yet his new edition is not a revision but a complete remaking of his earlier work. Academic publications sometimes proclaim that they meet the needs of advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and scholars. Parkinson's *Palyce* actually does, though there is a textual caveat for the last group. This edition includes ample amounts of marginal vocabulary glosses, which make it an ideal reader's text but, because many glosses are unchanged from the first edition, may make scholarly readers underestimate the extent of revision. Not only has the spelling of the title changed in the second work—now it is *The Palyce of Honour*—but almost all of the paratextual material that accompanies it is new. The eight pages of the first edition's Introduction have now increased to a small monograph size of 55 pages. Some of Parkinson's Introduction argues an interesting thesis: the London printing shows Douglas's poem as "emerg[ing] afresh as both rootedly Scottish and largely accessible to readers south of the border" (vii). After a full consideration of Gavin Douglas's life and a detailed analysis of the *Palyce*'s textual issues, Parkinson presents an encyclopedic section on language: sounds; spellings and forms; grammar; terms, *colouris*, and style; and versification. There is plenty of information in these discussions to meet the needs not only of Douglas's readers but also of linguists and those studying other Middle Scots poems.

If perhaps only some of these pages are of interest to, say, an advanced undergraduate, then the following section is first-rate literary criticism, again of a wide-ranging kind. After a synopsis of the poem, possibly helpful to students but unnecessary for scholars, Parkinson examines the *Palyce*'s design, noting how its Prologue and three parts show that the narrator's "impulse or ambition to rise, to learn, and to praise" is "repeatedly met by a counter-impulse of failing and falling" (40). The result is that, with the help of the scenes the narrator sees in Venus's mirror, he "imbibes the inevitability of failure" (41). As Parkinson explains, the poet "is undoing the ostensible meaning and purpose of the dream, to celebrate virtuous honor, the chivalric *summum bonum* tinged with humanist values..." (45). Following this perceptive analysis of the *Palyce*'s narrating and subverting many of the dream vision allegory's motifs, Parkinson examines sources and affiliations, which contribute to the poem's complexity, and its influence. This volume's Introduction gives a comprehensive study of Douglas's biography and the *Palyce*'s textual issues, language, and participation in the genre of the dream vision allegory.

Parkinson's text of *The Palyce of Honour* is "based on the forms of L," the London printing (24), plural because a few changes were made while the poem was in press. There is, however, one caveat:

In the interest of providing an edition of use to readers at various stages of training, the actual presentation of the text ... involves some modifications to spelling and punctuation that have been made as consistently as possible. (24)

This statement of editorial policy, while it follows the procedure of the Middle English Texts Series, understates the matter. A spot-check indicates that in a few places in virtually every stanza in the *Palyce* Parkinson replaces the punctuation in the London text in favor of the Edinburgh one or, occasionally, his own emendation.

This *Palyce*, then, is an eclectic text, in which careful (and, when it comes to punctuation, silent) emendation creates something like a hybrid of the London and Edinburgh texts; this means that, unlike when reading Bawcutt's parallel-text edition, we do not have to jump back and forth. Readers can review Parkinson's substantive emendations by turning to the back of the volume, but we must trust him to have made the most appropriate decisions about emending punctuation.

I find almost all of Parkinson's emendations, of substantives and accidentals (including punctuation), to contribute greatly to the poem's clarity and readability. One example can illustrate the gains from this approach, and the issues it raises in particular passages. In the London printing the narrator's closing stanza in his song to Honour (quoted below) begins: "Hail rois, maist chois, til clois, thy foyes, gret mycht" (line 2134). Those commas, which serve a rhetorical and stylistic purpose as they emphasize the internal rhyme, also give the line a clumsy staccato effect, so they disappear in Parkinson's edition (even the one after "rois" in the Edinburgh text, which was retained in his first edition). The two sixteenth-century printers' options to end the line—no punctuation (London) or an exclamation point (Edinburgh)—are replaced in Parkinson's edition by a period. This is one of the many places where readers should recall Bawcutt's view about the impossibility of determining which text is correct, while noting that the punctuation often has a bearing on interpretation. Ideally, Parkinson's apparatus would have included, at least selectively, a record of the most important instances where he has emended punctuation, and of the punctuation in the early sources.

After the text of the *Palyce*, Parkinson presents full Explanatory Notes, which include not just sources and analogues, but also cultural information and concise discussions of the poem's diction. These Notes also reproduce all the brief summary material printed in the margins of the London text ("Venus complaint," for example [line 944], concisely states the subject matter of one event in the poem) and some of the handwritten emendations

in the National Library of Scotland's copy of the Edinburgh printing. The Textual Notes include spelling and such substantive matters as differences in wording between the London and Edinburgh texts. The volume closes with a useful Glossary, which readers rarely need to consult given the wealth of glosses in the *Palyce*'s right-hand margins, an Index of proper nouns used in the poem, and a generous Bibliography.

Before a Dedication to "James the Ferd, Kyng of Scottis," Douglas's *Palyce* proper ends with the narrator's "versis thre" that he wrote "In laude of Honour" (line 2115). Using only two rhymes, the first of these three stanzas adds two internal rhymes, the second three, and the third four:

Hail rois maist chois til clois thy foys gret mycht.	<i>choicest rose; stop; foes'</i>
Hail stone quhilk schone apon the trone of lycht,	<i>gem that shone; throne</i>
Vertew, quhais trew swet dew overthrew all vyce,	<i>sweet dew</i>
Was ay ilk day, gar say, the way of lycht,	<i>each; cause to say</i>
Amend offend and send our end ay richt,	<i>misdeed; always justly</i>
Thow stant ordant as sant of grant maist wyse	<i>remain dedicated; saint; favor</i>
Til be supplé and the hie gre of pryce.	<i>[a] support; platform; worthiness</i>
Delyte thee tite me quyte of syte to dycht,	<i>Please; quickly; free of misery; make</i>
For I apply schortly to thy deyve.	<i>commit [myself]; plan</i>

(lines 2134-42)

This passage illustrates, not just Parkinson's extensive glosses of the poem's vocabulary, but, depending on how one interprets the three final stanzas, a continuation of the theme of a failed quest or a waking revelation into an unexpected kind of success. Beginning in a garden, "that hevinly place complete" (line 55), the narrator's "sweven" (line 121) leads him to feel the wrath of Venus and Cupid, and—despite the help of a Nymph, whom Calliope assigns to have the narrator "in kepyng" (line 1070)—he is pushed aside at the Hippocrene spring and receives no drink. He later looks through a peephole into the Palace of Honour, where despite warnings he is dazed by what he sees and faints. His journey thus collapses into failure, a theme that is continued when, according to Parkinson, the narrator "clangorously" (37) uses internal rhyme in the stanza quoted above. That description, consistent with the theme of "a counter-impulse of failing and falling" emphasized in the Introduction, implies that the narrator has experienced his final failure, this time as a poet writing to praise Honour.

With its combination of a scholarly Introduction, and other apparatus, and a text that is approachable for anyone who has at least a basic grasp of Middle English, Parkinson's second edition of *The Palyce of Honour* is an impressive accomplishment.

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