This book explores the anxious and unstable relationship between court poetry and various forms of authority, political and cultural, in England and Scotland at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Through poems by Skelton, Dunbar, Douglas, Hawes, Lyndsay and Barclay, it examines the paths by which court poetry and its narrators seek multiple forms of legitimation: from royal and institutional sources, but also in the media of script and print. The book is the first for some time to treat English and Scottish material of its period together, and responds to European literary contexts, the dialogue between vernacular and Latin matter, and current critical theory. In so doing it claims that public and occasional writing evokes a counter-discourse in the secracies and subversions of medieval love-fictions. The result is a poetry that queries and at times cancels the very authority to speak that it so proudly promotes.

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This series of critical books seeks to cover the whole area of literature written in the major medieval languages – the main European vernaculars, and medieval Latin and Greek – during the period c. 1100–1500. Its chief aim is to publish and stimulate fresh scholarship and criticism on medieval literature, special emphasis being placed on understanding major works of poetry, prose, and drama in relation to the contemporary culture and learning which fostered them.

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For Joan, Jack, Loie and Maud
## Contents

_Acknowledgements_  
_Abbreviations_  

*Introduction*

1. *Beginnings: André’s Vita Henrici Septimi* and Dunbar’s aureate allegories  

2. *The Bowge of Courte* and the birth of the paranoid subject  

3. “My panefull purs so priclis me”: the rhetoric of the self in Dunbar’s petitionary poems  

4. Translative senses: Alexander Barclay’s *Eclogues* and Gavin Douglas’s *Palice of Honour*  

5. *Mémoires d’outre-tombe*: love, rhetoric and the poems of Stephen Hawes  


*Conclusion*  

*Notes*  

*Bibliography*  

*Index*
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Abbreviations

BL British Library, London
CCSL Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
EETS Early English Texts Society
EHR English Historical Review
ELH English Literary History
JEGP Journal of English and Germanic Philology
JMEMS Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies
MLN Modern Language Notes
MLR Modern Language Review
PL Patrologia Latina
PMLA Proceedings of the Modern Language Association
SAC Studies in the Age of Chaucer
SATF Société des Anciens Textes Français
SSL Studies in Scottish Literature
STS Scottish Text Society