

‘To gowerne þi persoune, crowne, and realme’:
The Development of Advice to Princes in Britain in the High and Late Middle Ages

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Abstract

This thesis traces the development of advice to princes texts in Britain during the High and Late Middle Ages. Advice to princes texts were often produced at particular moments of political crisis, predominately those written by figures operating in the context of royal and aristocratic patronage – from Gerald of Wales and John of Salisbury to John Gower and Thomas Hoccleve. Charting the complex relationship of advisory literature to wider textual traditions, as well as the political world beyond the text, this thesis is concerned also with the multigeneric nature of advisory literature, which operated in relation to prophetic, pastoral, and complaint literature, among others – a selection informed by the specific topicality of these genres in the context of specific periods. While many advice to princes texts provide seemingly similar advice for rulers, such as the need to heed good counsel, eschew flattery, and ensure the stability of the kingdom, they more often than not express this advice as possessing pointed applicability to their king and closely paralleling other contemporary writings which articulate modes of critique conventionally understood as more direct. This thesis aims to contextualise such advice and criticism, providing instances where the language and themes found within the work echo that used by other contemporary authors and appear to react to specific political events. Thus, both the political and textual environments in which these works were written and/or compiled are revealed as formative sites of textual and extra-textual exchange and development in late-medieval political culture.

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Aristotle, moost famous philosophre,
 His epistles to Alisaundre sente...
 By wrytyng his conseil gaf he cleer
 Unto his lord to keepe him fro nuisance,
 As witnessith his book of governance.¹

So begins the prologue of Thomas Hoccleve's *The Regiment of Princes* (c. 1411), an advice to princes work dedicated to the future Henry V of England (r. 1413-1422). Advice to princes (sometimes referred to as mirrors for princes or *Fürstenspiegel*) was a form of literature found across the classical and post-classical periods that flourished during the Middle Ages. In mentioning Aristotle's role as Alexander the Great's advisor, Hoccleve refers to one of the most influential advice to princes texts, the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum Secretorum*, or *Secreta* (9th century) – a clear illustration of the ways in which advisory authors built upon earlier material in the creation of their own works. In this passage, Hoccleve outlines the purpose of advice to princes: to counsel rulers on the principles of good conduct and governance by providing advice on princely virtues, seeking counsel, and maintaining justice. Hoccleve provides such general advice in *The Regiment* and, in doing so, utilises common advice to princes characteristics, including extensive discussion of the importance of counsel. Yet, the work is also specific to the period in which it was written and features many references to the difficulties faced under Lancastrian rule. This reactivity to political events is, I argue, an essential quality of advisory works. Given their ability to respond to contemporary political affairs, it is perhaps no surprise that advisory works are often written around crisis periods. In

¹ Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. by Charles R. Blyth (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), 2038-9, 2049-51.

responding to such events, advisory authors purport to describe the role of king and crown, and by doing so, these writers might even be understood to explain these the roles into being, shaping conceptions of what governance ought to look like and be.

Studying advice to princes texts is valuable for several reasons. These works provide insight into political thought, particularly on the relationship between a ruler and his people, and the expectations for a ruler to properly minister justice. Furthermore, these works can reveal contemporary political, social, and economic concerns and how writers reacted to such concerns, most notably in relation to historical perceptions of and reactions to political crisis. Although several scholars, including Charles Briggs, Cary J. Nederman, and Matthew Giancarlo have noted the tendency for advice to princes texts to be written in response to specific political issues, there has yet to be any book-length scholarship on those written during crisis periods.² This study attempts to fill this gap, situating royal advisory tradition across time and place in Britain within its multigeneric and multilingual contexts.

The works discussed in this thesis are royal advisory writings produced in medieval Britain between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, drawing on recognisable conventions within the *Fürstenspiegel* tradition. The authors are all named and their works are datable and, thus, directly locatable in terms of political context. They also form the primary corpus of royal advisory writings during this period that are aligned with dominant advisory conventions. My study utilises a cross-border approach, choosing texts written in England, Wales, and Scotland (regions linked and influenced by each other's

² Briggs and Nederman, 'Western Medieval Specula, c. 1150–c. 1450', in *A Critical Companion to the 'Mirrors for Princes' Literature*, ed. by Noëlle-Laetitia Perret and Stéphane Péquignot (Leiden: Brill, 2023), pp. 160-96 (p. 189); Matthew Giancarlo, 'Mirror, Mirror: Princely Hermeneutics, Practical Constitutionalism, and the Genres of the English Fürstenspiegel', *Exemplaria*, 27 (2015), 35-54 (p. 38).

literary culture) during conflicts that were often pan-insular in contexts and effects. In selecting texts across time and borders, the works analysed are produced in different languages. Initially, advice to princes texts were written in Latin, but in the Late Middle ages, we see the vernacularisation of advisory works, and works are produced in English and Scots.

Beginning with the writings of authors at the Angevin court in the twelfth century – John of Salisbury and Gerald of Wales – I then consider the advisory tradition in the reign of Edward II and III, the works of Gower and Hoccleve, and, finally, of the Scottish author John Ireland. These works were all produced during periods of regnal instability and change, often situated on either side of a transition of power: the rebellion of Henry II’s sons and the usurpations of Edward II and Richard II in England and James III in Scotland. The works discussed were written by men who were a part of or had close ties to the royal court and who were thus qualified (or felt qualified) to offer an informed perspective on governance and the anxieties that surrounded such transitional periods. The parameters of my study necessarily exclude material such as Geoffrey Chaucer’s ‘Tale of Melibee’ (1387-1390) and *Boece* (c. 1380-1387), neither of which are conceptualised by the author as points of direct political engagement, and I exclude, too, analysis of the *De regimine principum* (1280) and the *Secreta* a works produced beyond Britain (although, as noted, the latter text in particular stands in an important relationship to my examples).³

³ Paul Strohm, ‘The Allegory of the “Tale of Melibee”’, *The Chaucer Review*, 2 (1967), 32-42; Craig McDonald, ‘John Ireland’s Meroure of Wyssdome and Chaucer’s Tale of Melibee’, *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 21 (1986), 23-34; Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), pp. 39-54; Steven J. Williams, ‘The Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secret of Secrets* as a Mirror of Princes: A Cautionary Tale’, in *A Critical Companion to the ‘Mirrors for Princes’ Literature*, ed. by Noëlle-Laetitia Perret and Stéphane Péquignot (Leiden: Brill, 2023), pp. 376-402; Charles Briggs, *Giles*

In showing an alertness to crisis periods and examining the multigeneric and multilingual aspect of advisory works across borders, my thesis allows us to answer the following questions: How was a work influenced by and engaged with contemporary events and literature? How did changes in regime impact political writing and the ways in which writers expressed their concerns about these periods of crisis? In what ways did writers depart from other literary works of the period and why did they do so? How does the discourse change over time, space, and language? Answering these questions will make a notable intervention in the study of medieval political literature, particularly in relation to a form of literature designed to advise on the ideal manner of kingship.

Genre Versus Discourse

The term mirror for princes is most often used by scholars to describe this corpus of work, but there is a lack of consensus on its meaning and whether the term best describes such literature. Mirrors for princes comes from the Latin *speculum regum* or *speculum principum* – a term used initially in the High Middle Ages to describe texts that provided advice to rulers on governance of their kingdoms and themselves – with the idea being that the text is a mirror the ruler should hold up to himself in order to determine how to behave and rule. Scholars such as Roberto Lambertini, Stéphane Péquignot, and Noëlle-Laetitia Perret have described mirrors for princes as a type of literature which portray the ideal prince and proffer advice on governance.⁴ Given this broad definition, works that are considered mirrors for princes take on a variety of forms, which includes, among

of Rome's De Regimine Principum: Reading and Writing Politics at Court and University, c. 1275 - 1525 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 2-3, 55-6.

⁴ Roberto Lambertini, 'Mirrors for Princes', in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy* <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9729-4_338> [accessed 28 March 2024]; Stéphane Péquignot and Noëlle-Laetitia Perret, 'Introduction', in *A Critical Companion to the 'Mirrors for Princes' Literature*, ed. by Noëlle-Laetitia Perret and Stéphane Péquignot (Leiden: Brill, 2023), pp. 1-17 (p. 4).

others, treatises, letters, poems, and dialogues, and the term is often applied to works drawn from multiple distinct genres, including prophecy and pastoral literature.⁵ Herein lies the difficulty with the conception of ‘mirrors for princes’ as a genre. Genre denotes literature with a particular form, style, and purpose and designates a certain configuration of literary possibilities. However, works considered a part of the mirrors for princes tradition do not all adhere to such specific guidelines.⁶

Many scholars have grappled with the various issues that arise from the term ‘mirrors for princes’ and its definition, but the problem has not been fully resolved. Between the world wars, L.K. Born and Wilhelm Berges expressed great interest in mirrors for princes but failed to express precisely what constituted one. Instead, this early interest was defined by brief analyses of works they considered a part of the genre, such as John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus* (1157), William Perrault’s *De Eruditione Principum* (c. 1265), and the anonymous *Liber de informatione principum* (1300). Rather than provide close examinations of the texts, Born and Berges provided overviews of the traits a prince ought to possess.⁷ Later scholars sought to clarify what constitutes a mirror for princes text. In his 1977 work, *Four English Political Tracts of the Late Middle Ages*, Jean-Philippe Genet outlined four key features found in mirrors: they were written by clerics, employed a didactic tone, emphasised practical theology, and drew on Aristotelian political theory. Despite these commonalities, Genet remarked that this form of literature in the late medieval period ‘defies all attempts at definition, even at

⁵ Ibid., pp. 1-5.

⁶ Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. by Philip Bennett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. 120.

⁷ Lester Kruger Born, ‘The Perfect Prince: A Study in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Ideals’, *Speculum*, 3 (1928), 470-504 (pp. 470-1, 484-5, 502-4); Wilhelm Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann Verlag, 1952), pp. 291-356.

classification'. Further, he questioned whether mirrors for princes was even a genre (for there was little homogeneity among the texts traditionally considered mirrors for princes) although he ultimately argued that, in fact, it was.⁸ Nearly two decades later, scholars had still not reached a consensus. Like Genet, Einar Már Jónsson argued that the variety between mirrors for princes made it difficult to establish a clear generic catalogue and sought to develop a definition in which there was a greater sense of homogeneity. He defined them as treatises 'written for a prince – and in general dedicated to him in one fashion or another – which had the principal object of describing the ideal prince, his comportment, his role, and his situation in the world'.⁹ With these attempts at creating a narrower definition, a consensus was reached, yet a new issue arose: many works traditionally considered as mirrors for princes no longer qualified as such.

The difficulty we find in categorising these works suggests that they were not viewed by medieval people in the same way as they are by modern scholars. Rather than seeing them as a distinct genre of literature, medieval people likely saw such works first and foremost in terms of their subject matter and function. There were no expectations of a particular form or the presentation of ideas in a particular manner in mirrors for princes. Instead, they were works political in nature with the aim of providing counsel on good governance. In utilising a similar conception of mirrors for princes, modern scholars are more likely to understand this body of literature, for they are less likely to ignore particular works because they do not align with modern imposed characteristics.

⁸ Jean-Philippe Genet, *Four English Political Tracts of the Late Middle Ages* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), pp. ix-xviii.

⁹ Einar Már Jónsson, 'La situation du *Speculum Regale* dans la littérature Occidentale', *Études Germaniques*, 42 (1987), 391-408 (p. 394-5); Cary Nederman, 'The Mirror Crack'd: The *speculum principum* as political and social criticism in the middle ages', *The European Legacy*, 3 (1998), 18-38 (pp. 19-20).

Further, not only do mirrors for princes draw upon multiple recognised genres, making them even more difficult to categorise, but also, they were integrated into works belonging to other genres, like chronicles and romances. Indeed, by their very nature, mirrors for princes are multidiscursive and multigeneric. Through this engagement with other forms of literature, mirrors for princes can be seen as compilations, in which the authors combine advice, adages, and tales from across ancient and medieval European literary traditions. This thesis aims to bring these elements to light by charting the development of the mirrors for princes tradition in medieval Britain, examining the ways it was adapted and drew upon other forms of literature to respond to specific moments of political unrest.

Matthew Giancarlo, in a 2015 article, reintroduced the issue of genre, asserting that mirrors for princes appear ‘less as a genre and more a genre of genres’. He writes that these works are difficult to categorise into a single group, for they incorporate the sayings of wisdom-literature and proverb collections, exempla and history, elements of legal writing, among others. Not all of these mirrors, or ‘meta-generic’ works as Giancarlo refers to them, employ each of these elements to the same degree. Yet, because they ‘make themselves felt across [a] textual field with something like the force of a genre’, Giancarlo maintains the conceptualisation of mirrors for princes as a unique genre of literature.¹⁰ Most recently, Charles F. Briggs and Cary J. Nederman have revisited this discussion of definition and categorisation, suggesting that mirrors for princes are not, in fact, a genre. Instead, they view them as part of a ‘network of similarities’ in which the works share concepts and elements, but none are considered archetypal. They believe that mirrors are better viewed as a family of writings with similarities ‘distinct from other families of

¹⁰ Giancarlo, pp. 35-6.

the era'. And so, Briggs and Nederman believe there is no need to argue about a genre's essence, for scholars can view each mirror as 'unique in terms of authorship, audience(s), locale, and date of composition', thus avoiding the 'probably intractable debate about the chief properties of the mirror genre'. In addition to this reconceptualisation, Briggs and Nederman also address the term 'mirrors for princes'. Mirrors for princes differ from other types of advisory literature, for they are specifically addressed to a ruler and provide advice on his personal conduct and governance of the kingdom. So, it is necessary to have a term for these works, and Briggs and Nederman suggest using the term 'political advice literature' to describe texts traditionally categorised as mirrors for princes, believing it to be a more inclusive and less restrictive phrase. With this new term, Briggs and Nederman hope to distance these works from preconceptions about what an ideal mirror for princes is.¹¹

Like Briggs and Nederman, I suggest that the term mirrors for princes is not the most appropriate way to describe this type of literature. I prefer the phrase advice to princes, for it encompasses the purpose of the works (to guide rulers on good governance) without the preconceptions often associated with the term mirrors for princes. As far as the issue of whether these works form a distinct genre, I suggest that we might instead approach these works as participating within a shared advisory discourse. Whereas a genre utilises a particular style, purpose, and form, a discourse does not. Works using a set of common discursive conventions are not expected to conform to a specific form or style but will possess certain common characteristics. For instance, works within a discourse will have the same subject and particular ideological valuations of that subject, and in advice to princes, the subject is the training of the prince and guiding how he should

¹¹ Briggs and Nederman, pp. 163-4.

govern himself and his people. Discursive elements found across advisory works include the recognition of the value of good counsel and the danger of bad, the value of exemplars to instruct rulers, the understanding of historical events as portentous, and the importance of rulers governing for the benefit of their subjects rather than themselves – elements we see throughout each advice to princes text examined in this thesis.

As Gabrielle Spiegel has observed of medieval historical writing, which she views as comprised of a set of familiar discursive conventions, a discourse ‘assumes the place of a specific social realm involving structures of domination and systems of power, ones that operate according to their various internal “logics”’.¹² As a result, the discourse holds a particular meaning among its users and readers, who, as Guy Cook notes similarly of modern English literature, will view texts within the discourse as ‘purposeful, meaningful, and connected’.¹³ This can be seen through the audience – both real and imagined – of advice to princes works and in their construction of the ‘correct’ image of kingship. Though advice to princes texts purport to provide counsel to rulers, readers of these texts (which I will discuss throughout this thesis) were not necessarily rulers but learned men, including ecclesiasts, bureaucrats, nobles, and men who would have had a vested interest in contemporary political affairs and policy.¹⁴ While many works in this thesis were addressed to a specific monarch, such an address is most often a rhetorical ploy in which authority is lent to the work by virtue of the distinguished person to whom

¹² Gabrielle M. Spiegel, ‘Introduction’, in *Practicing History: New Directions in Historical Writing after the Linguistic Turn*, ed. by Gabrielle M. Spiegel (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 1-31 (p. 11).

¹³ Guy Cook, *Discourse and Literature: The Interplay of Form and Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 25.

¹⁴ We do need to acknowledge that our evidence is limited to those texts that have survived. Susan Hagen Cavanaugh, ‘A Study of Books Privately Owned in England: 1300-1450’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1980), pp. 298, 582, 705, 806, 473.

it was addressed.¹⁵ Of the texts examined in this thesis, there are only two that we know were in the royal library of the monarch to whom they were addressed: Walter de Milemete's *De Nobilitatibus, Sapientiis, et Prudentiis Regum* (1326/7) and Thomas Hoccleve's *The Regiment of Princes*.¹⁶ The other works were largely owned by ecclesiasts and nobles although many advice to princes texts not directly studied here were owned by bureaucrats.¹⁷ In addition to this readership, advice to princes texts function within a specific power system and represent the position of those with similar views on governance, which includes writers of earlier advice to princes works and contemporary readers. This is often done by portraying the ideal ruler as one who is simultaneously a strong leader, accepting of counsel, and just. By using advisory discourse, authors articulate their perceptions of contemporary politics – perceptions that are often critical of the monarch. Advisory discourse's ability to criticise the faults of rulers is, in part, what led to its wide use.¹⁸ Many writers negatively cast the previous monarch and oversimplify the events that led to his demise by suggesting that a few, key vices led to his death. Others, though, negatively cast the current monarch, deriding his policies and warning of the consequences that befall rulers who act in such a manner. One difficulty in analysing these approaches is the tendency of modern readers to ascribe prophetic qualities to advisory authors writing in close proximity to regnal change – most famously,

¹⁵ David Matthews, *Writing to the King: Nation, Kingship, and Literature in England, 1250-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 112-3.

¹⁶ Not much is known about the royal English libraries. We only know seven books owned by Edward II and fourteen by Edward III. It is possible that John Ireland presented his *Meroure of Wysdome* to James IV of Scotland given their relationship with each other, but there is no evidence of the book was in James' royal library. Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 7; Charles Macpherson, 'Introduction', in *The Meroure of Wysdome*, ed. by Charles Macpherson (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1926), I, pp. xi-ii; Cavanaugh, pp. 278, 415.

¹⁷ Again, we are limited by the evidence that survives. It is more often that we have records from monasteries, which skews the evidence. Cavanaugh, pp. 117, 513, 174, 572, 480, 813, 305.

¹⁸ Nederman, p. 19.

as Kimberly Fonzo notes, John Gower, whose dedication of his *Confessio Amantis* to Richard II was understood by previous critics as pre-empting the Lancastrian revolution. I suggest, rather, that on occasion these works might indeed be prophetic, but only in that they draw on prophecy as a recognisable discursive convention operating in relation to recognisable formulae concerned explicitly with the present moment as much as the future.¹⁹ In both cases, this characterisation creates a figure for the current monarch to strive *not* to be in an attempt to guide how rulers *ought* to be.²⁰ As a result, advisory authors craft an image of not only royal power but also how it can be maintained.

As scholars have noted of literature in later periods, a discourse utilises particular vocabulary and syntax to discuss a specific subject or subjects, which ‘it will treat in distinctive ways, formulating and giving prominence to particular problems and effectively excluding others from consideration’.²¹ We see such a cohesiveness of formulations across insular advice to princes. Writers of Latin and the vernacular relied upon certain motifs in presenting their advice, like ‘garciones diaboli’ (‘servants of the devil’), often used to condemn groups of people, such as flatterers and tyrants.²² With these motifs, the authors maintain ideological cohesion within their works, casting types of people in a specific way and presenting their views of those who should or should not have influence over the kingdom’s governance. These portrayals remain consistent among advice to princes throughout the medieval period in Britain. Thus, the vocabulary

¹⁹ I am indebted to Kimberly Fonzo’s work on retrospective prophecies, which has helped formulate my own conceptions of advice to princes. Kimberly Fonzo, *Retrospective Prophecy and Medieval English Authorship* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022), pp. 10-11.

²⁰ Nederman, p. 19.

²¹ Stephen Copley, *Literature and the Social Order in Eighteenth-Century England* (Dover, New Hampshire: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 2.

²² William of Pagula, *Mirror of King Edward III*, in *Political Thought in Early Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. by Cary J. Nederman (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002), pp. 73-139 (pp. 75-6, 94); John Ireland, *Meroure of Wyssdome*, ed. by Craig McDonald, 3 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1990), III, p. 130.

and elements used by John of Salisbury in mid-twelfth century England are also found in William of Pagula's early fourteenth-century English work the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* (1331/2) and in John Ireland's late fifteenth-century Scottish work the *Meroure of Wyssdome* (1490), a vernacular work heavily reliant upon Latin sources, suggesting there is certain vocabulary advisory authors were expected to employ. Advisory authors, however, manipulate and adapt these elements and language to provide the advice they believe appropriate for the time and place. For instance, discussion on counsel and the encouragement for wise, experienced counsellors is found in all the texts presented in this thesis, but the biblical and ancient tales used to support this advice are modified from their source to support the authors' specific arguments.²³ It is perhaps in these adaptations that we best see the dynamic nature of advisory discourse because the author is able to mould his work to the issues he perceives as affecting the kingdom.

Outside of these common features of subject and vocabulary, what ties advice to princes texts together are the many discursive shifts and use of elements from other literary genres. They draw upon, among others, political prophecy, complaint, and pastoral literature, and, in turn, upon earlier advice to princes. This is often seen in the adoption of particular terms and phrases, such as describing flatterers as having 'honey in their mouths'.²⁴ In doing so, the author engages with contemporary literature and creates a work that, upon initial inspection, seems quite derivative. This borrowing, however, is found throughout medieval literature, for it was viewed as a way to lend authority to the

²³ These tales can be derived directly from original source material or can be derived second-hand. Alexander the Great, Caesar, and Ahab are three rulers used most often and discussions on them are found in each chapter of this thesis.

²⁴ Walter de Milemete, *On the Nobility, Wisdom, and Prudence of Kings*, in *Political Thought in Early Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002), p. 45. Hoccleve, 2022.

new work and to widen its appeal. Most often, authors relied upon the bible to provide such authority, but they also relied upon ancient, patristic, and, later in the fifteenth century, earlier medieval writers, like Chaucer and Hoccleve.²⁵ They apply elements of other discourses and genres to support the specific arguments within their work, for although advice to princes texts centre on providing advice on the governance, each individual text maintains its own arguments on governance, such as admonishing the ruler's use of purveyance. Authors, then, support these arguments by using codes and conventions from other forms of literature, and they do so to emphasise the danger or importance of governing in the manner the author deems appropriate. To fully understand advice to princes texts, we must analyse these discursive shifts and elements of different genres. In doing so, we gain a greater understanding of the interplay between different modes of writing and how ideas were transmitted and adapted across borders and from different languages to respond to contemporary concerns and anxieties surrounding the kingdom's rule.

Discourses are neither static nor isolated from influence and are able to adapt to changes in time and place.²⁶ We see this with the advisory discourse, for advice to princes works are able to use conventions of the discourse and adapt them to respond to the particular historical moment and social environment in which they were created. Writers of advice to princes represent their view of the current social and political realities, albeit often in a coded way, and create an image of the political environment they wish to see.

²⁵ Hoccleve, 4983; Ireland, p. 164; Sini Kangas, Mia Korpiola, and Tuija Ainonen, 'Foreword', in *Authorities in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Sini Kangas, Mia Korpiola, and Tuija Ainonen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), pp. vii- xiii (pp. vii-viii); Alastair Minnis, *Translations of Authority in Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. ix, x, 2-6, 22-4.

²⁶ Karen K. Jambeck, 'Discourse', in *Handbook of Medieval Studies*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 1488-99 (p. 1492).

In doing so, they create their view of an ideal political system in which a king governs over and dispenses justice to his realm in the manner the writer believes most fitting. To be able to respond to political contingencies and to maintain applicability across space and time, advice to princes need to be flexible. It is this adaptability that allows them to maintain relevance across different time periods and take the form of letters, treatises, or manuals. In viewing advice to princes as a discourse rather than a genre, we are able to study works with a variety of forms without worrying whether they ‘fit’ within the schema of the *speculum principis* genre and can analyse them as a series of texts with shared habits of thoughts.

Advice to Princes Scholarship

Despite advice to princes forming one of the most extensive literary forms in medieval Britain, scholarship on the discourse is somewhat limited. Studies typically take one of two approaches: an examination of individual works or an examination of works from a particular geographic region. Since the 1980s, interest in the topic has varied with much of the work done from the mid-1980s to mid-1990s, but in the past several years there has been a renewal of interest with several articles and book chapters published. A recent, full-length study on the discourse, however, is still lacking.

Perhaps the most comprehensive study of (primarily) English advice to princes texts is Judith Ferster’s seminal work, *Fictions of Advice* (1996), which historicises advice to princes texts in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Ferster utilises a survey approach, with each chapter centring on a different advice to princes treatise or author. Though many of the works she selects are English, she also analyses the *Secreta* and its various translations as well as Niccolò Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (1513). In the work, Ferster contextualises the political and literary environments in which these works were

produced and posits how contemporary political events inspired writers to proffer certain pieces of advice. Additionally, she argues that because advice to princes is a form of public discourse, a balance between the writer's desire to criticise governance and the need to mitigate any consequences that result from that very criticism is necessitated, resulting in works that are covertly critical.²⁷ Unlike Ferster, I incorporate texts that are overtly critical towards the monarch and, thus, tied to complaint literature, and I suggest how such texts shed light onto the advice to princes readership.²⁸

Work on Scottish advice to princes texts is heavily indebted to Sally Mapstone, whose 1986 doctoral thesis 'The Advice to Princes Tradition in Scottish Literature, 1450-1500' examines conventions of advisory discourse during its dominance in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Scotland. Mapstone selected a broad array of texts that provide counsel on governance, not just those that are traditionally viewed as advice to princes texts and, thus, engages in a broader approach to advisory work. Her thesis centres on several works from the latter half of the fifteenth century, including the vernacular *De Regimine Principum Bonum Consilium* (c. 1449-52), Gilbert Hay's *The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour* (1460), *Lancelot of the Laik* (c. 1460-79), *The Talis of the Fyve Bestes* (c. 1470s), and John Ireland's *Meroure of Wyssdome*.²⁹ Though most of the texts cannot be dated with certainty and have unknown authors, many scholars traditionally associate a number of them with the vexed reign of James III of Scotland (r. 1460-1488). Mapstone interrogates this association and posits that the

²⁷ Ferster, pp. 3-4, 10-3.

²⁸ Wendy Scase, *Literature and Complaint in England, 1272-1553* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 22-4.

²⁹ The earliest manuscript of *De Regimine Principum Bonum Consilium* dates to 1489, but there is some debate on when the work was composed. Mapstone traces the various arguments surrounding its dating. Sally Mapstone, 'The Advice to Princes Tradition in Scottish Literature' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford University, St Hilda's College, 1986), pp. 13, 30.

relevant texts were written by clerics who moved within courtly circles and were not written for or directed toward a specific monarch.³⁰

Throughout her thesis, Mapstone analyses writers' treatment of justice, their work in defining the role of the king's great council, and their conceptions of Scottish kingship. Additionally, she highlights how the texts incorporate conventions of advice to princes as a whole, including discussions on counsel and the administration of justice, but also how they are distinctly Scottish. This can be seen in texts that focus on issues that plagued Stewart rule, such as the concern about minority rule and the need for a strong yet accountable ruler. Despite such instances of applicability to Stewart rule, Mapstone argues that these works largely provide advice typical of the discourse and do not necessarily or solely respond to specific moments in Scottish history. She highlights areas of similarities and differences between her selected works and identifies two main areas of influence on Scottish advice to princes: Aristotelian and pseudo-Aristotelian thought and French advisory literature.³¹ While Mapstone's thesis remains unpublished, its influence upon advice to princes scholarship remains. In the decades since, some of the texts in her thesis have been the focus of scholarship while others have received little attention and would benefit from further examination. In this thesis, I will analyse one of the works in Mapstone's thesis: the *Meroure of Wyssdome*. I select this text because it can be securely dated to a period following the rebellion against James III and the coronation of his son as king. Although Mapstone argues that the advice in the text is ahistorical, I posit that this work utilises the advisory discourse to respond to the turbulent reign of James III and concerns for the reign of the young James IV (r. 1488-

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 3-6, 148.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 3-6, 23, 148.

1513). To do so, I closely examine passages from Ireland and his source material to see how and suggest why Ireland adapted this material.

Since Mapstone's and Ferster's monographs, scholarship on medieval, insular advice to princes has been limited to a handful of articles and chapters in books. Nederman's article 'The Mirror Crack'd: The *Speculum Principum* as Political and Social Criticism in the Late Middle Ages' explores works that, while 'adhering to intellectual and linguistic constructions', were more explicit in their criticism of rulers than those found in Ferster's study.³² Following this article, there is a dearth of scholarship on the subject. In the past decade, scholars Giancarlo, Briggs, and Nederman have revisited advice to princes texts in medieval Western Europe. These works, in addition to addressing the difficulties of the genre-based mode of interpretation, offer brief analyses of various advisory texts of the High and Late Middle Ages.³³ Giancarlo's, Briggs's, and Nederman's works are notable interventions, and I seek to build upon their historicisation of advisory works and their questions of whom these works were written for and how they changed over time by performing a close analysis on selected advisory works (some of which they have examined) written near crisis periods in Britain. Beyond Mapstone, Ferster, Giancarlo, Briggs, and Nederman, most work on advice to princes in medieval Britain centres on individual advice pieces. Certain works, such as the *Policraticus* and *The Regiment of Princes*, have been studied at length while others have selected have received some to little critical attention.

³² Nederman, p. 19.

³³ Giancarlo, pp. 35-6, 38, 49-50; Briggs and Nederman, pp. 163-5, 170-1, 182-3.

Approaching Crisis Periods

The study of crisis periods has taken three different approaches. One approach centres on the ruler himself during a time of major rebellion, examining how his personal life and rule fostered dissent and re-examining traditional assumptions about kings with poor reputations in order to better understand their reign and image. Another approach is to analyse a particular period of political upheaval and its impact on literature, and a third approach gives an overview of a crisis period within a particular kingdom.³⁴ Such scholarship helps to contextualise the political issues medieval kingdoms faced, but there has yet to be a survey on how crisis periods prior to the late-fourteenth century impacted literary culture and were mobilised by advisory authors in medieval Britain. It is the aim of this thesis to fill that gap and to show how writers associated with the royal court used advisory discourse to comment upon regime changes and rebellions. The works I have chosen are centred around crisis periods, including the rebellion against Henry II (r. 1154-1189) by his sons and the usurpations of Edward II (r. 1308-1327) and Richard II (r. 1377-1399) in England and James III in Scotland. This is, in part, because advice to princes writing flourished during and immediately after crisis periods, for such periods necessitate advice on governance with writers attempting to guide rulers towards stability within the kingdom. Because of the adaptability of advisory discourse, authors are able to use its conventions to react to periods of tumult in a manner that is specific to contemporary troubles by providing advice applicable to and (often veiled) critique of the issues they saw occurring by royal hands. Examining these conventions shows what

³⁴ Kit Heyam, *The Reputation of Edward II, 1305–1697* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2020), pp. 9-11; Christopher Fletcher, *Richard II: Manhood, Youth, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 21-4; Matthews, pp. 112-3, 116-7, 125-6; Scase, pp. 11-13, 62-3, 138-9; Claire Valente, *The Theory and Practice of Revolt in Medieval England* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 1-5.

anxieties about governance were pervasive and what were unique to the particular time in which they were written.

To situate my texts within their respective periods of crisis, I draw on documentary sources alongside literary texts, illuminating meanings that might seem obscure to us but would have been clear to contemporary readers.³⁵ This type of approach reveals why advisory authors chose to write on certain topics and crafted their work in a particular manner. For instance, late-thirteenth- and early-fourteenth-century English political authors, working across genres and utilising a range of discursive conventions (from prophecy to complaint) often wrote about royal agents and the collection of taxes during a period marked by foreign campaigns.³⁶ Viewing the taxation policies and the complaint literature alongside advice to princes works, then, suggests why William of Pagula and other writers of political literature created works condemning taxation in this period more so than in others (as I discuss in chapter two). I argue that this reveals two elements essential to advice to princes. Firstly, they can be read in relation to wider socioeconomic concerns – concerns that we also find in documentary sources – and so we see how advice to princes texts are highly historically contingent to the period in which they were written. Secondly, these texts can be highly critical and tied to complaint literature. Such elements would be missed if these works are viewed in isolation.

With this approach, I follow the lead of historians like W. Mark Ormrod, who has examined the reign of Edward III and the periods of crisis and political tumult that marked it, including the Black Death and the crisis of 1340-1341.³⁷ In his analysis of *Winner and*

³⁵ For this thesis, I am indebted to the biographies by W.L. Warren, W.M. Ormrod, Nigel Saul, Chris Given-Wilson, and Norman MacDougall.

³⁶ Scase, pp. 19-21, 29-31.

³⁷ Mark Ormrod, *Edward III* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 357-61

Waster (c. mid- to late-1360s), Ormrod illustrates how the alliterative poem responded to economic issues of the 1350s and 1360s, a period marked by war and plague.³⁸ Additionally, he has explored the ways in which kings asserted royal authority during and following periods of crisis. In his doctoral thesis and article ‘Edward III and the Recovery of Royal Authority in England, 1340-60’, Ormrod examines how Edward III used the bureaucracy to expand and assert royal authority despite opposition to his military policies and the economic strain they caused.³⁹ Like Ormrod, I am interested in the ways in which royal authority was expressed during crisis periods; however, I examine the ways in which advisory writers expressed their conceptions of royal authority and the ways in which they viewed it as limited.

I am also indebted to the works of historians Nigel Saul and Chris Given-Wilson. In tracing the events of the reigns of Richard II and Henry IV (r. 1399-1413), they discuss the political difficulties that plagued England, most notably Richard’s deposition but also the Peasant’s Revolt early in Richard’s reign and Hotspur’s revolt early in Henry’s.⁴⁰ Paul Strohm has studied the ways in which Henry IV attempted to establish himself as the rightful king of England following Richard’s deposition. This was done, in part, with the attempt to control speech and encouraging the production of political prophecies that predicted English military success. Strohm analyses these and other ways in which Lancastrian monarchs often ‘engaged... in pre-emptive intervention’ to establish themselves as rightful rulers of England and of France. Specifically, Strohm examines

³⁸ Mark Ormrod, *Winner and Waster and its Contexts* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2021), pp. 10-11.

³⁹ Mark Ormrod, ‘Edward III’s Government of England c. 1346-1356’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, Worcester College, 1984), pp. i-iii, 4-5; Mark Ormrod, ‘Edward III and the Recover of Royal Authority in England, 1340-60’, *History*, 72 (1987), 4-19 (pp. 1-2, 6-7).

⁴⁰ Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 59-69; Chris Given-Wilson, *Henry IV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 219-21.

persecuting Lollard heretics, the handling of rebellions, and performative ceremonies by Lancastrian monarchs, and though these strategies achieved varying levels of success in squelching opposition to Lancastrian rule, Strohm notes the complexity of these efforts to craft the Lancastrian royal image.⁴¹

Similarly concerned with Ricardian and Lancastrian rule, Kimberly Fonzo reexamines the political prophecy produced during this period and its role as Lancastrian propaganda. She argues that John Gower's *Vox clamantis* (written prior to 1400) and the *Confessio Amantis* (1390-1393) did not correctly predict Richard's fall. Rather, the *Vox clamantis* was revised after Henry's ascension to the throne to include a passage about Richard's eventual fall, and the dedication of the *Confessio* to Richard was purposefully reproduced during Henry's reign to encourage the idea that Richard's deposition was inevitable.⁴² I, too, am interested in the ways in which texts were changed to serve political purposes, analysing the ways advisory writers adapted their source material. By expanding my analysis across different centuries and kingdoms, I will reveal how a particular form of literature, advice to princes, was used to deal with the political instability that resulted from challenges to royal authority.

Advisory Literature across Borders and Languages

There has been a growing interest in the transmission and translation of political literature across England, Scotland, and Wales.⁴³ Within these areas exists a sense of coherence,

⁴¹ Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 1-3, 9-12, 26, 35-6, 64-5, 116-8. Elliot Kendall similarly situates John Gower's works within the political context of Ricardian and Lancastrian England. Elliot Kendall, *Lordship and Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008).

⁴² Fonzo, pp. 72-5, 87-93.

⁴³ Victoria Flood, *Prophecy, Politics, and Place* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2016); Aisling Bryne and Victoria Flood, 'Insular Connections and Comparisons in the Later Middle Ages', in *Crossing Borders in*

for there was close culture contact between these kingdoms. Thus, texts composed in one region were often transmitted to another and influenced its writing. We can see this in the common attitudes towards kingship and governance in advisory works: whether composed in England or Scotland, they espouse the need for a strong monarch who seeks and heeds the advice of counsel. In this thesis, I take a pan-insular approach, selecting advice to princes from England to Scotland (and, in the case of *De Principis Instructione*, English with an interest in Wales and Welsh literary traditions) advice to princes.

Analysing texts across borders allows us to see what ideas were transmitted and how they were adapted to the political situation at a specific location and moment. For example, Trojan mythology, which had a rich tradition in both English and Scottish literature in the Middle Ages, was wielded frequently by advisory authors. English texts utilised the tale of Troy as a foundation myth, in which Brutus, the great-grandson of Aeneas, settled Britain and established New Troy on the Thames. Scottish texts, though, utilised it as a cautionary tale of the dangers internal and external enemies pose to a kingdom. Yet, both the English *The Regiment of Princes* and the Scottish *Meroure of Wyssdome* (1490) employ Ulysses as a positive exemplar, extolling his virtues as a wise king and counsellor to Agamemnon during the Trojan War (which I will discuss in chapters three and four).⁴⁴ Instances such as these show how advisory discourse was implemented in a similar manner despite differences between national literary traditions. In other instances, we find that authors utilised elements of the discourse and adapted them to align with their geopolitical perspective. This can be seen in Gerald of Wales'

the Insular Middle Ages, ed. by Aisling Bryne and Victoria Flood (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), pp. 1-22; David Wallace, *Europe: A Literary History, 1348-1418*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), I.

⁴⁴ Hoccleve, 1485-91. Ireland, III, p. 162.

emphasis on the distinction between England, Wales, and Ireland when referring to domains under Angevin rule and his emphasis on Wales as a place of true political prophecies (a discussion found in chapter one).⁴⁵ These elements are missed if advice to princes works are viewed in geographic isolation, and so, taking a transnational approach is needed to effectively historicise advice to princes literature and chart its development.

Such an approach means an analysis of works composed in different languages. Until the late fourteenth century, advice to princes texts were written in Latin, considered the language of erudition throughout the High Middle Ages, and readership would have been limited to those who were literate in Latin. By the late fourteenth century, advisory works were being written in Middle English as seen in the *Confessio Amantis* and *The Regiment of Princes* (the subject of chapter three). The choice to use the vernacular by advisory writers like Gower and Hoccleve – writers who were multilingual – was a deliberate one. In using the vernacular, a wider audience was reached, for the barriers Latin posed were broken down, and writers asserted ‘the potential for... [the vernacular] to carry out learned functions’.⁴⁶ The choice to write in Middle English may have been a matter of both fashion and the increase in English education.⁴⁷ And while many vernacular authors relied upon Latin source material, their translations of the material were not merely vernacular substitutes for the original work but were rather a new work, original in purpose and topical to its political environment.⁴⁸ In these vernacular advisory

⁴⁵ Gerald’s view of Welsh prophecy, though, was not always so straightforward. Gerald of Wales, *De Principis Instructione*, ed. and trans. by Robert Bartlett (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), pp. 351, 365, 485, 489, 699, 703; Flood, pp. 48-53.

⁴⁶ Wendy Scase, ‘Vernacularity’, in *The Routledge Companion to Medieval English Literature*, ed. by Raluca Radulescu and Sif Rikhardsdottir (New York: Routledge, 2023), pp. 27-38 (pp. 31-2).

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 34; Ad Putter, ‘Multilingualism’, in *The Routledge Companion to Medieval English Literature*, ed. by Raluca Radulescu and Sif Rikhardsdottir (New York: Routledge, 2023), pp. 107-19 (pp. 111-2).

⁴⁸ Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 179-83; Matthew Fisher, *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in*

works and earlier Latin ones, we can see the interplay between languages and how advisory writers produced texts that aligned with advisory discursive conventions across languages.

Chapter Overview

In this thesis, I pose the overarching question ‘How did advice to princes develop over the course of the High and Late Middle Ages in Britain?’ More specifically, I seek to answer questions, such as ‘What are common conventions of the discourse and how were they employed to fit the nation in which they were written?’, ‘What political, social, and economic issues were writers of the discourse responding to in their works?’, ‘How did writers adapt conventions of the discourse to suit such issues?’, and ‘How did the use of certain exemplary rulers change throughout this period?’ In order to answer these questions, I will examine lesser studied advisory works while simultaneously shedding new light on those that have been well studied. I employ a survey approach, selecting several works from across Britain in the High and Late Middle Ages. Each chapter centres on a specific crisis period and the advice to princes text or texts written around the same time. Often, chapters are composed of two texts situated on opposite ends of regime changes. Such a grouping allows for a better understanding of the issues writers perceived as plaguing the kingdom during a particular monarch’s reign, the repercussions of their rule, and how writers employed advisory discourse to reflect these anxieties.

Medieval England (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2012), p. 7; Minnis, pp. 11-6; Ruth Evans, Andrew Taylor, Nicholas Watson, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, ‘The Notion of Vernacular Theory’, in *The Idea of the Vernacular*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), pp. 314-30.

Chapter one centres on two works written on opposite ends of Angevin rule:

John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (1157-1159) and Gerald of Wales' *De Principis Instructione* (completed in 1216). Considered one of the earliest examples of an advice to princes text, the *Policraticus* has been the centre of numerous studies with scholars examining John of Salisbury's conceptions of tyranny and power, his use of exempla, and his use of dream interpretation and the organic metaphor of the state.⁴⁹ Unlike the *Policraticus*, *De Principis Instructione* has been the subject of only a handful of studies, and most critical attention has been given to two of Gerald's other works, *De Topographia Hibernica* (c. 1187) and *De Expugnatio Hibernica* (completed 1189).⁵⁰ In my analysis of these works, I consider the political concerns England faced at the beginning of Angevin rule, the disruptions suffered during it, and how they impact John of Salisbury's and Gerald of Wales' writings. Specifically, I analyse the different approaches the two writers have towards the use of prophecy and dream interpretation and their discussion on counsel.

⁴⁹ Kate Langdon Forhan, 'The Twelfth Century Bureaucrat and the Life of the Mind: John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, John Hopkins University, 1987), pp. 263-66, 290-301; Cary J. Nederman, 'The Changing Face of Tyranny: The Reign of King Stephen in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 33 (1989), 1-20 (pp. 7-9); Cary J. Nederman and Catherine Campbell, 'Priests, Kings, and Tyrants: Spiritual and Temporal Power in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*', *Speculum*, 66 (1991), 572-90 (pp. 573-4, 576-7); Peter von Moos, 'The Use of Exempla in the *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury', in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. Michael Wilks (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 207-61 (p. 233); Dean Swinford, 'Dream Interpretation and the Organic Metaphor of the State in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*', *Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 38 (2012), 32-59 (pp. 33-4).

⁵⁰ Georgia Henley and A. Joseph McMullen, 'Gerald of Wales: Interpretation and Innovation in Medieval Britain', in *Gerald of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2018), pp. 1-16 (pp. 1-6); István Bejczy, 'Gerald of Wales on the Cardinal Virtues: A Reappraisal of "De Principis Instructione"', *Medium Ævum*, 75 (2006), 191-201 (pp. 191-3); Matthew Giancarlo, 'The Other British Constitution: Fürstenspiegel Texts, Popular Constitutionalism, and the Critique of Kingship in the Franco-British *De regimine* Tradition', in *Criticising the Ruler in Pre-Modern Societies – Possibilities, Chance, and Methods*, ed. by Karina Kellermann, Alheydis Plassmann, and Christian Schwermann (Göttingen: Bonn University Press, 2019), pp. 89-118 (p. 91).

In chapter two, I analyse Walter de Milemete's *De Nobilitatibus, Sapientiis, et Prudentiis Regum* and William of Pagula's *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* – both of which were written around the time of Edward II's deposition. The former has been studied predominately for the illustrations in its illuminated manuscript, Oxford, Christ Church MS 92, rather than for its text with one scholar commenting that this is rightly the case.⁵¹ The latter, although mentioned in several articles and books, has been the focus of only two studies: Leonard Boyle's 1970 article and Nederman's introduction to it in his translation of the work.⁵² With these two texts, I examine how their authors address the dangers of the loss of kingdom, notably, with the use of prophecy and exemplars. Central to my discussion is the influence the *Secreta* had on *De Nobilitatibus*, William's deviation from other advice to princes, and his incorporation of topoi from pastoral and prophetic literature.

Chapter three centres on two works written on opposite sides of Richard II's deposition: John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Thomas Hoccleve's *The Regiment of Princes*. While the *Confessio* has been thoroughly analysed, there has only been some scholarship on the work's advisory and political nature.⁵³ Similarly, *The Regiment* has received much critical attention.⁵⁴ Notable interventions include Nicholas Perkin's

⁵¹ Michael Michael, 'The Iconography of Kingship in the Walter of Milemete Treatise', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 57 (1994), 35-47 (p. 37); Libby Karlinger Escobedo, "'To the Illustrious Lord Edward: A Re-evaluation of Audience and Patronage in the Milemete Treatise and the Companion *Secretum Secretorum*', *Manuscripta*, 50 (2006), 1-19 (pp. 3-9).

⁵² Scase, pp. 22-3, 34. Nederman, 'The Mirror Crack'd', 18-38 (pp. 25-9); Leonard E. Boyle, 'William of Pagula and the *Speculum regis Edwardi III*', *Mediaevalia*, 32 (1970), 329-36; Cary J. Nederman, 'Introduction to the *Mirror of King Edward III* (Versions A and B) by William of Pagula', in *Political Thought in Early Fourteenth-Century England* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002), pp. 63-72.

⁵³ Amanda Walling, 'The Authority of Impersonation: Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and the *Secretum Secretorum*', *Viator*, 47 (2016), 343-64 (pp. 343-4, 352).

⁵⁴ John M. Bowers, 'Thomas Hoccleve and the Politics of Tradition', *The Chaucer Review*, 36 (2002), 352-69 (pp. 352-6); David R. Carlson, 'Thomas Hoccleve and the Chaucer Portrait', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 54 (1991), 283-300 (pp. 291-4); Strohm, pp. 146, 194-5.

examination of Hoccleve's ideological positions in *The Regiment* and the way in which he expressed them and Elisabeth Kempf's analysis of both the literary persona Hoccleve crafted and his awareness of and participation in manuscript culture.⁵⁵ My analysis of the *Confessio* and *The Regiment* focuses on the ways in which they deal with the effects of Richard II's reign and, in *The Regiment*, of Lancastrian rule. I highlight how Gower and Hoccleve covertly critique the king in their works and their use of political allegory to express their anxieties surrounding English rule.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, I examine John Ireland's *Meroure of Wyssdome*, completed early in the reign of James IV who ascended the Scottish throne following his father's deposition. The *Meroure* was the focus of a few studies in the 1980s and 1990s, including Sally Mapstone's thesis and Roger Mason's *Kingship and the Commonweal*, and both Mapstone and Mason illustrate the ways in which Ireland engages with Scottish literary traditions and political thought.⁵⁶ Similarly, my analysis of the *Meroure* shows how Ireland engaged with literary traditions and political thought, but I specifically highlight his engagement with both Scottish and insular traditions. Further, I analyse points at which Ireland departs from his source material to respond to political events and to align with advisory and Scottish literary traditions.

In reading these works together, I suggest that we can see how advice to princes texts developed in Britain across the High and Late Middle Ages. Analysis of these

⁵⁵ Nicholas Perkins, *Hoccleve's Regiment of Princes: Counsel and Constraint* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), pp. 4, 51; Elisabeth Kempf, *Performing Manuscript Culture* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 1-2, 179-81; Linne Mooney and Estelle Stubbs, *Scribes and the City* (York: York Medieval Press, 2013), pp. 19-21, 132-3.

⁵⁶ Roger Mason, *Kingship and the Commonweal* (East Lothian, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 1998), pp. 12-6, 18-20, 23-6; Craig McDonald, 'Introduction', in *The Meroure of Wysdome*, ed. by Craig McDonald (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1990), pp. ix-lviii (pp. xxiv-xlvi); Craig McDonald, 'John Ireland's *Meroure of Wyssdome* and Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee*', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 21 (1986), pp. 23-34.

works reveal that writers express many of the same concerns during crisis periods and reveal their expectations for royal authority and conceptions of how kings failed to effectively rule. We also see how advisory writers engaged with contemporary literature and what types of literature they often drew upon. Further, we can chart the differences between the writers' use of literary conventions to see how contemporary events were viewed.

Chapter One

Early Insular Advice to Princes: Dreams, Prophecies, and Omens

In this chapter, I examine two of the earliest advice to princes texts in Britain: John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (1157-1159) and the Gerald of Wales' *De Principis Instructione* (completed in 1216). Their place early within the advice to princes traditions shows how conventions of the discourse, established in the classical period, were first used by advisory writers in England and from this we are able to see their use and adaptations by later writers.¹ I have selected these works because not only are they early examples of medieval insular advice to princes texts, but both were also written following periods of crisis in England: the *Policraticus* early in Henry II's reign following the Anarchy (1135-1154) and *De Principis* following a period of disillusionment with Angevin rule. As previously discussed, scholarship on the *Policraticus* is extensive while *De Principis* has received little critical attention (and criticism has been dismissive of the work).² Here, I will analyse these works with a literary-historical lens and highlight how the *Policraticus* was influenced by contemporary political events and the strategies John utilised to express his concerns and hopes for Henry's rule. I will also reevaluate *De Principis*, examining the ways in which it engages with different forms of twelfth- and thirteenth-century political and prophetic literature in order to critique Angevin rule. Analysing these works alongside each other will shed light on the political concerns and the views of kingship of mid- and late-twelfth century England as well the models John and Gerald employed and

¹ John R. Lenz, 'Ideal Models and Anti-Models of Kingship in Ancient Greek Literature: Mirror of Princes from Homer to Marcus Aurelius', in *A Critical Companion to the 'Mirrors for Princes' Literature*, ed. by Noëlle-Laetitia Perret and Stéphane Péquignot (Leiden: Brill, 2023), pp. 21-43 (pp. 21, 25, 27, 29, 40).

² See discussion in the introduction.

material from other literature they drew upon, notably biblical and secular prophecy, accounts of biblical rulers, and philosophy of Augustine and Macrobius. This allows us a greater understanding of the shifting attitudes towards political prophecy and how a ruler was expected to engage (or not engage with) it.

Stephen's reign – from his contested accession in 1135 until his death in 1154 – was long viewed as a chaotic period of violent anarchy. This view is now outmoded, but historians vary in their conclusions about the extent to which it caused civil unrest. Some perceive that the unrest had limited impact while others argue it was indeed a 'true and terrible anarchy.'³ More recently, scholars have begun to examine the impact Stephen's usurpation had on different groups of people and on aspects of governance, such as the aristocracy's reaction to and involvement in the hostilities between Stephen and Matilda and the disruption of royal governance.⁴ Chronicle evidence, though, does attest to the anxiety surrounding Henry I's death and the resulting conflict between Stephen and Matilda.⁵ Henry II's reign, which initially offered a reprieve from hostilities, was also wrought with civil unrest, notably with Thomas Becket's murder in 1170 and the princes' rebellion against their father in the 1170s and 1180s. It is in the aftermath of these tumultuous periods which the *Policraticus* and *De Principis* were written, and while both works discuss counsel and prophecy, utilising exemplars to

³ David Crouch, *Beaumont Twins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 138; Frank Stenton, *The First Century of English Feudalism 1066-1166* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), pp. 218-9. C; Warren Hollister, 'The Aristocracy', in *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign*, ed. by Edmund King (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 38-66 (p. 49).

⁴ C. Warren Hollister, 'The Aristocracy', in *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign*, ed. by Edmund King (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 38-66 (pp. 44-50); Graeme White, 'Continuity in Government', in *The Anarchy of King Stephen's Reign*, ed. by Edmund King (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 118-44 (pp. 122-8).

⁵ Hollister, pp. 49-51.

guide proper engagement with them, John's and Gerald's treatment of these elements differ.

During this period, a distinctive mode of secular prophecy saw particular interest from clerical authors. Throughout much of the Early Middle Ages, prophecy was considered a theological subject, largely based upon biblical prophecy, but in the twelfth century, prophecy began to be seen as a subject of secular relevance. Prophecies concerning a ruler and his nation were well-known in the early 1100s, and there was a shift in readers' perceptions of prophecies like the 'Sibille generaliter' and 'Pseudo-Methodius', which became associated with the ideas of kingdom and empire. But it was Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1136), one of the most popular historical works of the twelfth century, that helped to make interest in political prophecy widespread.⁶ Political prophecy became a useful tool for authors of advisory works, for political prophecy centres on the nature of a nation and its ruler. Given their similar interests, writers of advice to princes often incorporate political prophecy within their works, using it as 'both a tool and a weapon' in discussing contemporary political issues.⁷ Prophetic discourse further corresponds with the concern with history that characterises the advice to princes tradition. In the twelfth century, there was a tendency of authors to view history as prophecy and to expect their readers to learn from kings of the past to avoid repeating the same mistakes.⁸ And though this view changes throughout the development of the advisory discourse, many advisory works examined in this thesis, including the *Policraticus* and *De Principis*, refer to biblical and

⁶ Lesley Coote, *Political Prophecy and Public Affairs in Late Medieval England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2000), pp. 44-50; Victoria Flood, *Prophecy, Politics, and Place* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2016), pp. 18-9, 24-5; Fonzo, p. 13-7, 22-4; Rupert Taylor, *Political Prophecy in England* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1911), pp. 7-15.

⁷ Copley, p. 2; Coote, p. 14.

⁸ Moos, p. 208.

contemporary prophecy to highlight the ways in which rulers should and should not engage with prophecy and warn of the potential consequences associated with such engagements.

In their advice to princes texts, John and Gerald discuss the various ways in which the future can be predicted, including prophecy, dreams, visions, and omens. Both John and Gerald use the supernatural (including events or utterances which seem to defy natural laws, such as prophecy, prophetic dreams, signs, and portents) to support their argument that rulers need the power of discernment as they expect a ruler to be able to determine good counsel from bad, prescient dreams from common ones, and revelatory prophecy from false.⁹ The two works inextricably link prophecy and dream interpretation with the seeking of counsel, and they suggest that heeding false prophecy is heeding poor counsel, and this, along with a king's failure to wisely discern dreams, is a sign of poor kingship. However, John's and Gerald's treatment of dreams and prophecies is markedly different from each other. John, concerned with the uncertainty of dreams and prophecy, writes derisively of those who vaticinate future events while Gerald expresses support for those who do and disdain for those who do not heed prophetic advice. Their different perspectives illustrate the changing perceptions of political prophecy and its growing acceptance among secular clerics as well as the continued popularity of oneiric interpretation in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.

Despite their different views on the supernatural, both John and Gerald emphasise that true dreams and prophecies are divine in origin, which reflects their

⁹ C.S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 112-4; Monica Otter, *Inventiones: Fiction and Referentiality in Twelfth-Century English Historical Writing* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 121, 154.

position as members of what Monika Otter has referred to as a ‘secular, half-courtly, half-clerical intellectual tradition’.¹⁰ The twelfth century saw a rise in bureaucrats who were school-trained clerics moving between the church and royal court and engaging with secular literature. This group of men included writers such as Geoffrey of Monmouth (d. 1154/5) (whose *Historia* conflated history and prophecy) and Walter Map (d. 1209/10), and their rise shows a transition from the monastic dominance of literary culture to the dominance of courts and schools.¹¹ John and Gerald, whose positions as secretary to Archbishop Theobald and as a royal clerk, respectively, were members of this group. As such, they held insight into the workings of the court while their ecclesiastical backgrounds helped fuel their critical opinions of the court and secular rule both prior to and after Thomas Becket’s death.¹² Many writers within this group of men, such as Walter Map (fl. 1180s-1190s), Peter of Blois (fl. 1170s-1190s), and Nigel Longchamps (fl. 1170s-1200), wrote contemptuously of the royal court. This was, no doubt, because Henry II’s reign was marked by rebellion and strife, prompting writers to be more cautious of the monarchy.¹³

Unsurprisingly, both John and Gerald make frequent use of exemplary rulers (both positive and negative) when discussing good governance. Both draw particular

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

¹¹ Geoffrey Thomas Shepherd, ‘The Emancipation of Story in the Twelfth Century’, in *Poets and Prophets*, ed. by T.A. Shippey and John Pickles (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), pp. 84-97 (p. 90); Otter, p. 2; Paul Dalton, ‘The Topical Concerns of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britannie*: History, Prophecy, and Peacemaking, and English Identity in the Twelfth Century’, *Journal of British Studies*, 44 (2005), 688-712 (p. 690); Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 17, 328.

¹² Robert Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales 1146-1223* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 15; Cary J. Nederman, ‘Editor’s Introduction’, in *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. xv-xxvi (p. xvi); John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 4-5; Gerald of Wales, p. 7.

¹³ C.N.L. Brooke, ‘Introduction’, in *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. and trans. by M.R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. xiii-l (p. xxxiii); John D. Cotts, *The Clerical Dilemma* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), pp. 12, 102-3.

attention to the issue of tyranny, and they use many of the same rulers – several of whom, like Saul, Ahab, and Alexander the Great, functioned as exempla in early advice to princes texts. However, such incorporation of biblical and ancient rulers is not something we see in these works until the High Middle Ages.¹⁴ Additionally, advisory writers use exemplary rulers to show the dangers of heeding poor counsel and predictions of the future, emphasising the importance of the source of these, whether from immoral individuals or demonic beings. Through their discussions on how princes make decisions, John and Gerald suggest that it is a prince's responsibility to discern the correct meaning of and responses to dreams, prophecies, and omens. In this chapter, I will first explore John of Salisbury's treatment of predictions of the future, counsel, and exempla, and then Gerald of Wales'. Viewing these works together will show how the beginnings of the advice to princes tradition in Britain and the strategies advisory writers use to respond to contemporary political events.

John of Salisbury and the *Policraticus*

Not much is known about John of Salisbury's early life. Born around 1115 in southern England, he travelled to Paris in 1136 where he studied under the notable scholars Peter Abelard, William of Conches, and Gilbert of Poitiers. By 1147, John had become a cleric in the court of Theobald, the archbishop of Canterbury, and as one of Theobald's clerics, John became a member of the growing group of educated administrators – men whose primary role was the maintenance of the ecclesiastical royal court and, because of this, developed ties with prominent political figures.¹⁵ Although John supported

¹⁴ Lenz, p. 22; Karl Ubl, 'Carolingian Mirrors for Princes: Texts, Contents, Impact', in *A Critical Companion to the 'Mirrors for Princes' Literature*, ed. by Noëlle-Laetitia Perret and Stéphane Péquignot (Leiden: Brill, 2023), pp. 74-107 (pp. 78-9).

¹⁵ Nederman, pp. xv-xvi.

Henry Plantagenet during the struggle with Stephen, his relationship with the king grew contentious and remained so for much of the 1150s and 1160s.¹⁶ John opposed Henry's position towards the English church, and he was exiled from the royal court in 1156 after being accused of 'maiestatem regiam minuisse' ('abasing the royal dignity') although the exact reasons are unknown.¹⁷ He spent this first exile in France, and it was during this period that he began to write the *Policraticus*. John returned to England in 1157 and completed the work in 1159.¹⁸ The *Policraticus*, which proved influential later in the advice to princes tradition, is the first known advice to princes produced in Britain, for most advisory works were produced on the continent until this point.¹⁹ The work, which is dedicated not to Henry II but to Thomas Becket, then chancellor of England, articulates the behaviours a ruler ought to follow to preserve his kingdom's physical and spiritual safety.²⁰ Because of its many topics, the *Policraticus* comprises eight books with the first three books belonging to advisory discourse and the remaining five books functioning more as a political manual.²¹

Given the focus of this thesis, I will primarily centre my analysis on the first four books: the omens and prophetic dreams detailed in Books I and II; and the treatment of

¹⁶ Henry I made his daughter Matilda his heir to the throne and had prominent English magnates swear to uphold this upon his death. However, following Henry's death in 1135, Stephen, Henry's nephew, seized the throne, and a decades-long strife ensued. Ultimately, Stephen acknowledged Matilda's son, Henry, as his heir. After Stephen's death in 1154, Henry became Henry II of England. Although Henry's reign was viewed initially as an end to the conflict, it was marked by conflict with the church. Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire: 1154-1224* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2007), pp. 16-7.

¹⁷ John speaks of leaving the court in several of his letters, but his only explanation for why Henry thought he abased the royal dignity was that John's enemies spread this rumour about him. John of Salisbury, *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, ed. by W.J. Millor, S.J. and H.E. Butler, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), I, pp. 47-50.

¹⁸ John was exiled again in the 1160s when he supported Thomas Becket in his conflict with Henry. John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of courtiers and footprints of philosophers*, ed. by Joseph B. Pike (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1938), p. 7; Aurell, p. 221.

¹⁹ The *Policraticus* is not explicitly mentioned in the other advice to princes texts examined in this thesis; however, many of its ideas are.

²⁰ Ubl, pp. 95-6; Briggs and Nederman, p. 166.

²¹ David Luscomb, 'John of Salisbury in Recent Scholarship', in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. by Michael Wilks (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 21-37 (p.29).

the vices and virtues of princes and the court in Books III and IV.²² These portions of the *Policraticus* have been largely ignored by scholars until recently. Early twentieth-century scholarship on the *Policraticus* paid limited attention to the context of its composition, but by the second half of the century, there was a growing attempt to historicise the work, and in the 1980s scholarship on the work greatly expanded.²³ Initially, scholars sought to identify a single coherent theory behind the work, but gradually they moved away from this attempt to understand the *Policraticus* within modern constructs of political theory. Scholars like Cary J. Nederman and Kate Langdon Forhan began to analyse individual aspects of the work, such as John's use of the organic metaphor to describe the state.²⁴ More recently, Dean Swinford has examined Book II of the *Policraticus* where John discusses mystical practices, in relation to John's stance on clerical authority, but there is much more to be done on John's treatment of the supernatural, including his use of prophetic discourse.²⁵ Despite the increase in scholarship, little work has explored John's position as an ecclesiastical administrator or its function as a commentary on the political events of mid-twelfth-

²² The entire text is not available in one, single English translation, in part because of the work's breadth of topics and the distinction between them in the *Policraticus*' many books. As such, I make use here of three partial translations as well as the original Latin text. In 1938, the University of Minnesota published Joseph B. Pike's translation of the first, second, third, and portions of the seventh and eighth books in the *Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers*. Passages from this will be denoted by 'F' and the page number. The most recent translation is Cary J. Nederman's translation of the *Policraticus* from 1990, which includes portions of all books except Book II. Passages from this will be denoted by 'P' and the page number. Quotations in Latin come from a 1595 version of the work published by Apud Franciscum Raphelengium. Passages from this will be denoted by 'L' and the page number. John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of courtiers*, pp. 39, 55-56; John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* (Lyon: Apud Franciscum Raphelengium, 1595).

²³ Cary J. Nederman, 'The Changing Face of Tyranny', p. 1.

²⁴ Marjorie Chibnall, 'John of Salisbury as Historian' in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. by Michael Wilks (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 169-77 (pp. 169-70); Janet Martin, 'John of Salisbury as Classical Scholar', in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. by Michael Wilks (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 179-201 (p. 179).

²⁵ Swinford, 32-3.

century England.²⁶ In the following analysis, I examine those elements of the *Policraticus* that we might view as explicitly political as well as those where the political commentary is more covert. By doing so, I suggest that John is specifically engaged with questions of royal discernment, for instance, how a ruler might distinguish between true and false portents of the future and good and bad counsel.

Policraticus' focus reflects John's role as an ecclesiastical administrator – one who recently lived during the conflict of Stephen's rule and Henry's growing conflict with the church.

Dream Interpretation

Throughout the *Policraticus*, John's treatment of the supernatural varies between derision and belief. According to John, predictions of the future are only reliable if they derive from the divine or liturgical sources and not magical or pagan. This idea was deeply embedded in twelfth-century thought and was borrowed from Isidore of Seville's interpretation of St Augustine's works.²⁷ John describes those who attempt to predict future events as practitioners of artifices: 'omnia haec artificia, uel potius maleficia, ex pestifera quadam familiaritate daemonum et hominum' ('all these arts, or rather artifices, derive from unholy commerce between men and demons') (*L* 30. *F* 39). Such concern surrounding the demonic nature of predictions of the future is common to the Middle Ages – dreams and prophecy were seen as being either divine or demonic in origin and their meaning could be transcendent or immanent.²⁸ However, John

²⁶ Kate Langdon Forhan did explore John of Salisbury as an ecclesiastical administrator in her unpublished doctoral thesis. Forhan, pp. 8-9; Swinford, pp. 32-3.

²⁷ Watkins, pp. 9, 47.

²⁸ Steven Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 65, 75, 83-4; Augustine's works *De divinatione daemonum* and *De civitate Dei* both discuss the demonic nature of prophecy and influenced thoughts on prophecy throughout the Middle Ages. Eric Constant,

delineates instances in which its use is permitted: ‘credo illa sola non esse respuenda, quae ex fide proueniunt et referuntur ad gloriam omnipotentis Dei’ (‘I... firmly believe that only those things should be accepted which are the product of faith and are attributed to the glory of an omnipotent God’) (*L* 42. *F* 55-6). This mix of belief and disbelief surrounding predictions of the future shows John’s anxieties surrounding their use; he stresses a king’s need to be able to distinguish between true and false predictions as their inability to do so can lead to the fall of the kingdom. John uses exemplary rulers to show the outcome of kings prudently following true presentiments and kings foolishly following false ones, and through these examples, he outlines how to decide which dreams to heed: those of divine origins and those received and interpreted by eminent men, such as those known for their morality or associations with the church.

Concerns regarding portents of the future are common to theological and philosophical literature from the twelfth through fifteenth centuries. During this period, dreams were viewed with concern, yet fascination, and as potentially divine in origin and trustworthy, or dangerous with demonic associations. The writers Macrobius and Calcidius held particular influence within the field of dream interpretation, and the popularity of their works is evident by the number of extant dreambooks from the Middle Ages – about ninety manuscripts of Macrobius’ *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* and one hundred of Calcidius’ *Commentary on the Timaeus* are listed in medieval library catalogues.²⁹ The *Policraticus* itself was highly influenced by

‘Concepts of Prophecy in the Middle Ages’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Michigan State University, 2016), p. 15.

²⁹ Kruger notes that there are three kinds of dreambooks: 1) dream alphabet, containing a list of potential dream significations keyed to the letters of the alphabet, 2) dreamlunar, in which the phase of the moon predicts what will occur (thus, dreams under the same moon all predict the same thing), and 3) dreambook proper, which bases the interpretation on the contents of the dream. Kruger, pp. 7, 8-9, 58-9, 83-4, 86.

Macrobius. John quotes him extensively and echoes many of his ideas, such as his identification of five types of dreams – the troubled dream, the dream of hallucination, the ordinary dream, the prophetic dream, and the visionary dream (‘aut enim insomnium, aut phantasma, aut somnium, aut oraculum, aut visio est’) (*L* 60. *F* 75-6).³⁰ Although John holds a hesitant belief in dream interpretation, he expresses apprehension of the interpretation of dreams and other predictions of the future. He describes dreams as wrapped in ‘cloak[s] of disguise’ (‘inuolucra... imagines’) and writes that dream interpretation is an attempt to unravel this disguised nature ((*L* 61. *F* 77). In other places, John disparages dream interpretation, referring to it as ‘aut nulla, aut inanis ars est’ and ‘inepta’ (‘no art or at best a meaningless one’ and ‘foolish’), and he accuses dream interpreters of being a part of the deceptive nature of dreams and not knowing the law of God (*L* 67. *F* 84). These concerns are not unique to John. The Cistercian monk Thomas of Froidmont (fl. 1165) warns that those who believe in dreams do not have faith in God and that they will quickly be deceived in his *Liber de Modo Bene Vivendi*.³¹

The potentially mendacious nature of dreams, however, needed to be reconciled with the biblical stories of prophetic dreams. John concedes that sometimes God does warn men with signs and that it is a dream’s origination that determines its veracity; he writes that he only accepts those things which are the product of God. He cites the tales of Daniel and Joseph (the brevity of which suggests that medieval readers would have been familiar with the stories of Daniel and Joseph) as giving credence to the potential accuracy of dream interpretation, but it is only because God gave Daniel and Joseph the

³⁰ Macrobius describes three types of true dreams (the (*oraculum, visio, and somnium*) and two false dreams (*insomnium and visum*). *Ibid.*, p. 63, 68.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

gift of oneiric interpretation (*F* 83).³² In contrast, John deems the interpretations of those not given a divine gift to be so unreliable that one does not know what decision to make or where to turn. He notes that dream interpretation has its source not in God but in nature ('habeat a natura originem'), and that, although nature possesses its own reason, its reason is unreliable (*L* 69). Many twelfth-century writers, including Pascalis Romanus in his *Liber thesauri occulti* (1165) and the writer of the *De Spiritu et Anima* (c. mid-twelfth century), similarly expressed scepticism about dream interpretation and described the physical causes behind dreams. The *De Spiritu* writer believed the cause of some dreams was a result of gas arising to the brain from the stomach and that sleeping people often dream things which have much meaning or no meaning. And, while Pascalis explained how humours caused dreams, he also suggested that biblical tales and the church fathers believed in the truthfulness of prophetic dreams.³³ As both a secular writer and a member of the church, John's cautious belief in dream interpretation serves to reconcile the conflicting beliefs surrounding dream interpretation.

Not only was dream interpretation potentially indeterminate but so was the validity of the dreams themselves. Dreams were often viewed as reliable and unreliable, and philosophers were unsure of how to determine which dreams were true and which were false. In the *Policraticus*, John himself notes that dreams are at times true and at other times false ('Signa etenim interdum vera, interdum falsa sunt') (*L* 59). Similar language is found in Guillaume de Conche's (fl. 1144) commentary on Plato in which he writes that dreams sometimes signify something and sometimes nothing ('hec

³² Swinford, p. 46; Daniel 2.1-49; Genesis 41.1-47.

³³ Kruger, pp. 71-5.

somnia... nichil significant. Sed ea... aliquid significant').³⁴ When discussing the doubleness of dreams, John describes the gates of sleep, which encapsulate the ambiguity of a dream's meaning: one gate is comprised of horn and transparent, and the other is comprised of ivory and opaque (*F* 75). This metaphor, derived from Virgil's *Aeneid*, refers to Aeneas and the Sibyl being presented with two passageways to leave the underworld. One, composed of horn, is transparent and is the way true dreams travel from the underworld to the human world, and the other, composed of ivory, is opaque and is the way false dreams travel from the underworld to the human world.³⁵ The metaphor was commonly used to describe the difficulty in understanding dreams and is found in Macrobius's *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* as well as Boccaccio's *Genealogiae Deorum Gentilium* (1360-1374).³⁶

To offer clarity on the potential doubleness of dreams, John discusses when dreams ought to be believed, suggesting both that interpretation depends upon the prophet and that a dream's veracity also depends upon the dreamer. John writes that the more august the person, the more likely the dream is to be true. To support this, he cites the dreams of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar which correctly prefigured their eventual fall as well as the dream of Caesar Augustus who dreamt of his victory over Antony. These dreams, coupled with John's statement about the eminent nature of the dreamer – 'regis credatur somnio, aut eius qui magistratum gerit' ('credence should be given to a king's dream or for that matter to that of any chief magistrate') – suggest that the dreams of certain people are more significant and meaning-laden than a commoner's

³⁴ Ibid., p. 75.

³⁵ Nicholas Reed, 'The Gates of Sleep in *Aeneid*', *The Classical Quarterly*, 23 (1973), 311-5 (p. 311).

³⁶ Kruger, pp. 21, 99.

(*L* 61. *F* 77-9).³⁷ John also suggested a hierarchy of dreamers that might be used to determine whether to follow the dream. Prominent biblical figures and prophets John the Apostle, Ezekiel, and Joseph are included at the top of the hierarchy, and John remarks that with them ‘personis quoque: quibusdam veritas frequentius illucescit, vt pote compositum habentibus animum, alias frequentior error inuoluit’ (‘the light of truth shines out more frequently in the case of certain personalities inasmuch as they possess well-ordered minds; others are more prone to be led astray’) (*L* 66. *F* 83). His use of the phrase ‘frequentius’, however, suggests that the dreamer’s credibility does not always mean their dreams are true. Such a caveat coincides with John’s broader hesitant approach to dream interpretation.

Prophetic Ambiguity

John's concern about and treatment of prophecy are similar to his attitudes towards dreams in that he expresses a hesitant belief in them and stresses the need for a king to be able to distinguish between true and false prophecy. As with dreams, he defines prophecy as intimating future events. However, he views prophecy as an activity – a conscious attempt to foresee the future produced during a state of wakefulness – and because it is a conscious attempt, John is more scornful of it. Writing of prophecy’s indeterminacy, John refers to prophets as ‘nugatores’ (‘mountebanks’) and liars and accuses prophets of ‘rationis velamento’ (‘deception by some cloak of reason’) (*L* 105. *F* 127-8). Thus, prophets actively seek to deceive, for they disguise their prophecy to make it appear true.³⁸ Not only does John associate prophecy with deception, but he also

³⁷ John provides several tales of dreams by rulers that came true. He cites Valerius Maximus as his source for the tale of Alexander and Lucan for the tale of Caesar.

³⁸ The term ‘nugator’, though limited in use, is also found in Walter Map’s *De Nugis Curialium*. Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. and trans. by M.R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 319-21.

links prophecy with darkness and blindness (*F* 127-8). However, he must also reconcile his distrust of prophecy with the Old Testament's tales of veracious prophecy, and so John subsequently delineates the conditions in which prophecy should be believed, which lie with the morality of the person receiving the prophecy and the divine origin of the prophecy (*F* 41, 135). John views the dangers of engaging with prophecy through the moral lens with which he reads the Old Testament and, because of this, links false prophecy with impiety. For John, a prophecy's truth depends upon its origin – revelatory prophecy is given from God while deceptive prophecy is given via earthly or demonic sources. Advice to princes is supposed to reflect biblical morality as religion and politics were inseparable during this period.

John of Salisbury's discussion of prophecy is likely a reaction to the rise of political prophecy in the mid-twelfth century that followed the completion of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetiae Merlini* (although the *Policraticus* is more engaged with classical and biblical dreams and prophecy).³⁹ The work was quickly disseminated both within and beyond its immediate political environment and reached the continent by the late 1130s.⁴⁰ By the 1150s and 1160s, its prophecies were used to describe Henry II, and they formed the basis of his association with the eagle – a dominant image throughout his reign – and Henry's various military victories were viewed as the fulfilment of Merlin's prophecies.⁴¹ Despite its rise in prominence, however, responses to the use of political prophecy were mixed. Some writers, like Stephen of Rouen (d. 1169), readily

³⁹ Coote, pp. 49-50.

⁴⁰ Julia Crick, 'Geoffrey and the Prophetic Tradition', in *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cardiff: University of Wales press, 2011), pp. 67-82 (pp. 69-70); Laura Chuhan Campbell, *The Medieval Merlin Tradition in France and Italy* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017), pp. 1, 7.

⁴¹ Nicholas Vincent, 'The Strange Case of the Missing Biographies: The Lives of the Plantagenet Kings of England 1154-1272', in *Writing Medieval Biography, 750-1250* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006), pp. 237-57 (pp. 247-8); Crick, p. 72-3; John of Salisbury, *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, II, pp. 135-7.

accepted the practice and associated imagery found in Merlin's prophecies with English rule.⁴² Others, like John, were hesitant to accept its practice and viewed them as a source of political anxiety.⁴³ Even in the late twelfth century, political prophecy was still met with opposition. William of Newburgh (d. in or after 1198), for instance, denounces Merlin's predictions as fallacious in his chronicle (1196), whilst in his *De Nugis Curialium* (1181-1190), Walter Map ties prophecy to demons, writing that they can 'prestigia struimus' ('cast glamour') and 'ut ueritate contecta uana ridiculaque similtas appareat' ('so as to veil reality and produce a false and absurd appearance').⁴⁴

In the *Policraticus*, many of John's anxieties surrounding prophecy lie with its hidden nature and opacity. Denouncing prophets, augurs, and soothsayers, John accuses these prognosticators of practicing their arts in darkness and secrecy and dissimulating those who seek answers, either intentionally or because of the prophet's own blindness (*F* 127-8). Prophecy's dark and hidden nature is linked to the spirituality (or lack thereof) of both the prophets and those believing in prophecy. To illustrate this, John uses the story of Saul whose failure to uphold God's covenants leads to his own and his kingdom's fall.⁴⁵ In using the story of Saul, John warns against rulers engaging in prophecy, and interestingly, Walter Map later draws comparisons between Henry and Saul in the *De Nugis Curialium*.⁴⁶

⁴² Vincent, pp. 247-8.

⁴³ Later, in 1166, John writes to Thomas Becket about one of Merlin's prophecies and how it relates to Henry's current campaign, suggesting a growing acceptance of the discourse. John of Salisbury, *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, II, pp. 135-7.

⁴⁴ William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, ed. By Richard Howlett, 4 vols (London: 1884), I, pp. 12-3; Map, pp. 319-21.

⁴⁵ In one of his letters to Thomas Becket, John compares Henry II to Saul. He complains that Henry, like Saul, was a negligent king and admonishes Henry's relationship with the church. John of Salisbury, *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, II, pp. 173-6.

⁴⁶ Map, pp. 446-7.

John's version of the tale is much longer than the bible's. He begins his version with Saul's inability to receive counsel because people believe him to be too wicked to provide advice to. Saul, then, must disguise himself to find someone who will and arranges to meet a witch with a diving spirit. As with the biblical tale, the meeting between king and witch occurs at night, but John adds that this is a 'apto utique tempore, de morte regum, de strage populi, de luctu publico cum tenebrarum principe tractaturus' ('fitting time indeed at which to discuss with the prince of darkness such matters as the death of kings, destruction of people, and the public woe') (*L* 111. *F* 133-5). Saul demands the witch summon Samuel, and when she does a 'vmbratilis & fictitius' ('shadowy and fictitious') Samuel appears – a description not found in the biblical tale (*L* 115. *P* 139). John's emphasis on the dark and shadowy nature of prophecy illustrates his unease with it and his belief that prophecy obscures the truth. This idea is not unique to the Middle Ages and can be found in Virgil's *Aeneid* (a text John frequently cites throughout the *Policraticus*) where the Sibyl is described 'obscuris vera involvens' ('wrapping truth in darkness').⁴⁷ John makes several additions to the tale to stress the ambiguous nature of prophecy. He writes that Saul is foolish for believing the spirit is an 'ueritatis interpretem' ('interpreter of truth') (*L* 112. *F* 136). Rather, it is a deception by an evil spirit intending to conceal his work ('Haec est enim fraudulentia malignorum spirituum vt quod vltro faciunt & dictant homninibus faciendum operose dissmulent') (*L* 114. *F* 138). The *Policraticus*' emphasis on darkness and the hidden nature of prophecy more than the biblical tale allows John to strongly associate prophecy with obscurity and deception.

⁴⁷ Virgil, *Aeneid*, ed. by J.B. Greenough (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1900), VI. 98.

Not only does John suggest that prophecy dissimulates, but he also stresses how true and revelatory prophecy is divine in origin. John places culpability for false prophecy with those who give it and not those who interpret it, and he believes them to be actively engaging in deception. John's distrust of prophecy lies with its source, believing that revelatory prophecy is given from God and is an art through which hidden knowledge is revealed (*F* 41). Throughout the tale, John writes that the devil is the source of the witch's prophecy and refers to the spirit of Samuel as a foe and enemy of faith and an 'infidelis' ('faithless') apparition (*L* 115, 120. *F* 137-40). He warns that the apparition is one of those evil spirits that 'transfigurant etiam se interdum in angelos lucis' ('even fashion themselves as angels of light') (*F* 114. *F* 139). This biblical allusion to 2 Corinthians 11.14 was commonly used in medieval period to express doubt about the reliability of prophecy and is found in sermons, treatises, and even a papal bull.⁴⁸ In John's account of Saul, this type of misrepresentation is behind Saul's prophetic misinterpretation. The ghost of Samuel warns Saul that he and his kingdom will fall to the Philistines, but tomorrow Saul and his sons will be with him (Samuel). As with demonic prophecy, Saul is misled by this final prediction, believing he will die but go to heaven. He does not realise that the apparition of Samuel is an evil spirit who actually means that Saul will go to hell (*F* 139-40). Because Saul has forsaken God's covenants, he is only able to receive the former type of prophecy.

When John cites other Old Testament rulers, including Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, and Jezabel (to be discussed below), he accuses them of following the

⁴⁸ John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of Courtiers*, pp. 137-140; *Policraticus* manuscript, p. 114, 115, 120. In *De Nugis Curialium*, Map writes of a foolish man named Eudo, who is tricked into being the servant of a demon 'in angelum se transformans lucis' ('transforming himself into an angel of light'). Under the demon's employ, Eudo becomes a wicked man and a scourge to his community and Christendom. Map, 332-3; Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 14, 34, 193.

prince of falsehood, or ‘principem vanitatis’, a phrase which emphasises the deception involved in prophecy of demonic origin (*L* 116. *F* 141). This belief that only God provides revelatory prophecy is also presented by William of Newburgh, who was dismissive of Merlin’s vatic powers, in his *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* (composed 1196-1198).⁴⁹ According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, Merlin’s father was an incubus from whom he gained his magical skills, and in William’s *Historia*, he argues that because Merlin’s father was a demon and excluded from the light of God, Merlin’s prophecies were false (‘a luce Dei seclusos’... divinationum Merlini perspicua fallacia’).⁵⁰ Further, there is a concern for rulers seeking knowledge of the future and a sense that it is hubristic for them to do so. The aforementioned Old Testament rulers meet their demise because they sought to discover what was not permitted for them to know (*F* 141). In linking deceptive prophecy with irreverence for God and impious rulers, John engages with both secular and religious literature and highlights the need for rulers to be selective when seeking predictions of the future. And though John does not seem to reject prophecy completely (Galfridian or biblical), he does stress the need for rulers to be cautious in engaging in it.

The Potential Divine Nature of Omens

As with dreams and prophecy, John expresses a cautious belief in the predictive nature of omens and emphasises a ruler’s need to determine which omens should be heeded. He believes that engaging with omens is potentially dangerous and that only those of divine origins ought to be followed.

⁴⁹ Anne Lawrence-Mathers, ‘William of Newburgh and the Northumbrian construction of English history’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 33 (2007), 339-57 (pp. 344-5).

⁵⁰ Watkins, p. 209; William of Newburgh, I, p. 12.

Non enim eousque contend, vt res magnas nullis vmquam credam indiciis praeueniri, cum in sole et luna & ipsis elementis & ornatu eorum, vim significatiuam a domino esse didicerim. Ceterum artem esse, qua quis de futuris, ad omnia interrogata verum respondeat, aut omnino non esse, aut non dum innotuisse hominibus, mihi multorum auctoritate, & ratione persuasum est.

I do not go so far as to believe that great events are never preceded by warning signs, since I have learned that there is in sun, moon, and in the very elements and their furniture, portentous meaning, derived from the Lord. But as to the existence of an art by which one can give truthful replies to all the questions with regard to the future, I am persuaded on the testimony and evidence of many things that there is no such thing or that it has not yet made known to man (*L* 98-9. *F* 120).

This passage highlights the difference between meaningful signs, which are authored by God, and attempts to predict the future with astrology. By specifying that omens can be portentous if ‘significatiuam a domino’ and suggesting that people purporting to predict the future on command are not to be trusted, John provides rulers with a way in which they can discern between true and false omens (although this advice is not terribly specific). Such guidance on discernment occurs only periodically in advice to princes works. As with dreams, the difficulty with omens lies with their interpretation, particularly since God can change his judgment, and, as such, an omen could be correctly interpreted initially but then appear untrue if the future is changed (*F* 123). John writes of the prophets Elijah and Daniel to illustrate how God may revise the future. However, the *Policraticus*’ versions of these accounts conflate omens with

prophecy as Elijah and Daniel relate their futures from what the Lord has announced to them, and John offers no clear distinction between omens and prophecy.

Elijah (whose vatic gift was divinely given and is thus trustworthy) warns Ahab that God will punish him and his wife Jezebel for their impiety. Upon hearing this, Ahab repents for his deeds by fasting and wearing sackcloth, but Jezebel, portrayed by John in an antifeminist light, does not repent and is immediately condemned to be ripped apart by wild dogs (*F* 121). John's adaptation differs from the biblical tale in its claim that Jezebel was instantly condemned, for in the bible she is not killed until many years after Ahab's death (I Kings 21.27, 2 Kings 9.33). This change serves to emphasise how rulers ought to heed divine omens lest they are punished by God. Furthermore, although this tale of Ahab only comprises two paragraphs within the *Policraticus*, the king becomes a common figure in John's other writings where he uses Ahab as a derisive comparison to Henry II and Ahab's false prophets to those bishops loyal to Henry during the Becket controversy.

Et a facie Domini spiritus mendax egreditur adhuc, ut sit in ore omnium prophetarum Achab et similium regum. Sic et rex Anglorum, ut dicunt qui appellatorias archisinagogi audierunt, episcopos sibi conformes habet, qui (ut de aliis scriptum est) docuerunt linguam suam loqui mendacium, et ut inique agerent laborauerent.

A lying spirit goeth forth from the face of the Lord so as to be in the mouth of all the prophets of Ahab and of kings like Ahab. And so those who have heard the ruler of the synagogue's letter of appeal say that the king of England has

bishops appropriate to him who (as was written of others) have taught his tongue to speak likes, and have toiled to commit iniquity.⁵²

Indeed, Ahab becomes a stock figure in advisory discourse and is used to illustrate the validity of divinely inspired prophecy (rather than omens) and its uncertainty. Another ruler John uses to explore omens is Nebuchadnezzar, who also becomes a stock figure. Like Elijah, Daniel receives his gift of foresight from God, and he warns King Nebuchadnezzar that he must atone for his sins lest he meet his downfall. Nebuchadnezzar assents, performing penance with righteousness and compassion, and is absolved of his sins for a time. However, after boasting that his kingdom's magnificence is an expression of his own power rather than God's, the king is punished with the fall Daniel foretold (*F* 123). John's version of the Nebuchadnezzar story is significantly truncated from the one found in the bible as it omits the king's dream and Daniel's interpretation of it, yet he adds to the tale by noting that Nebuchadnezzar did, indeed, atone for his sins and, by doing so, escaped God's punishment (Daniel 4.1-37). The omission allows John to better position the tale within the chapter's focus on omens to draw a distinction between the interpretation of dreams and omens. It also illustrates how God's judgment can change and, as a result, may make interpreting omens problematic, for omens that would have previously come true will no longer. Thus, it suggests that kings should be hesitant in relying on omens to predict the future because the future is changeable.

⁵² Ahab appears frequently in John's letters - over fourteen times - and only beginning in 1166, during the rise of the conflict between Henry and Thomas Beckett. John of Salisbury, *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, II, pp. 146-7. The tale of Ahab is also used in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, which I will explore in a chapter 3. John of Salisbury, however, focuses on God's punishment of Ahab and his wife while Gower focuses on Ahab's punishment of the prophet Micaiah for not telling Ahab the prophecy he wanted to hear. John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of Courtiers*, p. 121.

Despite his general belief in omens, John expresses concern about their indeterminacy and inconsistency in correctly predicting future events. In discussing Hezekiah, the king of Judah's illness, for instance John writes that the Holy Spirit (through Isaiah) tells Hezekiah of his imminent death, yet Hezekiah does not die and lives for another fifteen years (2 Kings 20.1-5). John suggests this is because God decided to show mercy and amend the future the Holy Spirit had predicted (*F* 120-1). By noting that Isaiah foretells future events through the Holy Spirit, John suggests Isaiah holds the gift of prophecy from God and is therefore trustworthy. However, the incorrect future Isaiah foretells shows that predicting the future from omens is uncertain even though Isaiah has a divine gift. In the same chapter, we are warned that omens found in the heavens can also be misleading, for the stars and planets can be deceitful, and thus John acknowledges that the heavens can correctly presage events but may also lead one astray. Despite this cautious belief, John later writes that in attempting to determine the future via celestial bodies, astrologers stray from God – an idea possibly derived from Augustine's repudiation of astrology in his *Confessions*.⁵³ This concern reflects contemporary interest in royal horoscopes in the mid- and late-twelfth century. Adelard of Bath, Abraham Ibn Ezra, and Roger of Hereford were instrumental in introducing horoscope tables to England during Henry I's and Henry II's reigns, and there are a number of these tables in manuscripts dating from the early 1120s to the early 1160s.⁵⁴ John suggests omens should not be considered fixed. In doing so, John

⁵³ Augustine discusses his interest in astrology prior to his conversion to Christianity. He believed that while astrology could occasionally produce correct predictions of the future, it was a type of blasphemy that limited God's authority and encouraged communion with demons John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of Courtiers*, pp. 122-4; Augustine, *The Confessions of St Augustine*, trans. by E.B. Pusey (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1945), p. 118.

⁵⁴ John David North, *Horoscopes and History* (London: University of London, 1986), pp. 106-7; John David North, 'Some Norman Horoscopes' in *Adelard of Bath*, ed. by Charles Burnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 147-61 (p. 149).

attempts to reconcile his hesitance to believe in them with his biblical sources. It also allows John to critique those who engage with augury while excusing any incorrect interpretations of omens as God may have changed his judgement.

Exemplars and the Power of Discernment

John uses biblical and ancient exemplary rulers to discuss a ruler's need for discernment when engaging with prophecy, omens, and dream interpretation as well as to advise princes on a myriad of other topics. Many of the rulers he uses also appear in Gerald of Wales' *De Principis* and subsequently become common figures within the advisory discourse. Although John uses both positive and negative exemplars in Books II and III, he also makes frequent use of kings who possess both good and poor attributes of kingship, and many of the poor attributes serve as a foundation for John's discussion of tyranny in Books IV, VII, and VIII.

In the *Policraticus*' prologue, John writes that the primary purpose in writing about the 'vestigii philosophorum' ('footprints of philosophers') is to show which paths ought to be followed and which ought to be avoided (*L 3. P 5*). Many of the exemplary rulers John discusses have mixed reputations, principally Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar (two rulers who appear frequently throughout the *Policraticus* and the discourse as a whole), as a way to provide coded critique. Medieval conceptions of Alexander varied with continental literature typically portraying Alexander as a noble, generous, and wise king and insular writers often highlighting the political discord within the Macedonian empire.⁵⁵ Although we will see shifting perceptions of Alexander (and Caesar) throughout the development of the discourse, John highlights

⁵⁵ Venetia Bridges, *Medieval Narratives of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2018), p. 149.

Alexander's and Caesar's positive and negative attributes, creating portraits of two notably complex rulers. Peter von Moos suggests that these contradictory descriptions of the ancient rulers illustrate how John is less interested in the rulers themselves and more concerned with the vices and virtues they represent, but I would suggest that the rulers might in fact hold meaning beyond the vices and virtues with which they are associated.⁵⁶ Rather, they are used to show the importance of a prince's power of discernment. Further, I argue that John's contrary characterisation of the two rulers is a convention of advisory discourse. Authors such as John, Gerald of Wales, John Gower, and Thomas Hoccleve deliberately draw attention to their ambivalent characteristics in order to counsel rulers for or against certain behaviours.⁵⁷

At the beginning of the *Policraticus*' introduction, John writes of Alexander the Great's fame and distinction and continues to describe the ruler's positive qualities throughout the remainder of the work.⁵⁸ We are frequently told of Alexander's military success and position as the greatest of the ancient Greeks, for instance (*F* 53, 204). Because of Alexander's positive qualities, medieval writers often used him as a positive point of comparison to contemporary rulers, including Stephen and Henry II. The *Gesta Stephani* chronicler thus tells of Alexander's martial prowess but that he did not fight as hard for his people as Stephen did during his reign. In his *Expugnatio Hibernica* (1189), Gerald of Wales refers to Henry as the Alexander of the West for his triumphant

⁵⁶ I will discuss later perceptions of Alexander in chapters 2, 3, and 4. von Moos, p. 233.

⁵⁷ John's tales of Alexander are based on the works of Justin, Suetonius, Valerius Maximus, and Augustine among others. John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of Courtiers*, pp. 47, 53, 78, 204, 312.

⁵⁸ 'Who would know of Alexander or Caesar, or would respect the Stoics or the Peripatetics, unless they had been distinguished by the memorials of writers?' *Policraticus*, p. 3. John uses a variety of sources for his material on Alexander the Great, including Justin, Suetonius, Valerius Maximus, Augustine, and Cicero.

campaign in Ireland.⁵⁹ However, medieval descriptions of the Greek king also emphasise his negative characteristics. John utilises this convention in the tale of the notorious pirate Dionides' capture (a story found elsewhere in advisory works, including in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*). When Alexander asks the pirate why he makes the seas unsafe, Dionides replies that if he acted in the same manner with many ships, as Alexander does, he would be considered an emperor and not a pirate. Dionides then proceeds to accuse Alexander of excessive greed and pride, saying that if fortune continues to smile upon the king, Alexander's vices will only grow worse. Rather than punishing the man, Alexander admires him for daring to chastise him as he deserved and enlists Dionides into his service where he never again transgressed against the law (*F* 204-5). While John acknowledges the king's vices in the story, he also describes Alexander's willingness to accept criticism thereby implying that Alexander is ultimately a good king who can heed counsel even if it is unflattering to him. Similar stories of Alexander's willingness to accept criticism can be found in other advisory works examined in this thesis, including Gerald of Wales' *De Principis* and Thomas Hoccleve's *The Regiment of Princes*, although the details of stories all vary. While Gerald does so to warn of what may befall a ruler if his tyrannical behaviour overshadows his good, Hoccleve does so to stress the importance of a ruler heeding the counsel of those willing to tell the truth.⁶⁰

John writes of Alexander's poor qualities throughout the *Policraticus*. In Book III, we are told of Alexander's poor behaviour, impatience, and proclivity for vice, but

⁵⁹ *Gesta Stephani*, ed. and trans. by K.R. Potter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 71; Gerald of Wales, *Expungatio Hibernica*, trans. by Thomas Forester (Overland Park, KS: Digireads Publishing, 2013), ch. xlvii.

⁶⁰ Gerald of Wales, *De Principis Instructione*, pp. 202-3. Hoccleve, 3511-2.

the more scathing portrayals of him are located in Book VIII (*F* 204). Here, John relates two tales illustrating Alexander's poor leadership and avarice. The first one relates a letter King Philip wrote to his son chastising his attempt to gain the loyalty of his people by spending lavishly. Philip tells Alexander that by doing this he degrades himself and encourages his people to think he is their servant, and he instructs Alexander to show moderation with his largesse (*F* 301). The second story, in which John follows his source Valerius Maximus closely, tells of Alexander's insatiable greed and need for fame. When told of the existence of 'innumerabiles mundos' ('innumerable worlds') as a young boy, Alexander reacts by lamenting that he has not yet conquered even one of them – a reaction showing the young prince's desire for fame as well as his credulity in those who should not be believed (*L* 465. *F* 313).⁶¹ John, though, adds the comments that all of Alexander's virtues were consumed by this greed and desire for fame and that all the king's virtues were consumed by this greed. John's use of tales stressing both Alexander's favourable and unfavourable traits develops a complex ruler, which shows that rulers are not expected to be free of vice but that they must at least show moderation. John's emphasis on moderation occurs throughout the *Policraticus* (so much so that scholar John Dickenson remarked upon John's 'spirit of moderation'), and John initially discusses it in Book I where, citing the Roman playwright Terence, argues for 'ne quid nimis' ('moderation in all things' (*P* 18. *F* 25)).⁶²

John's treatment of Julius Caesar is similarly complex. Anglo-Norman depictions of Caesar varied from derision to reverence, but John casts the ruler in a

⁶¹ Andrew Smith, *Attalus*

<https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Valerius_Maximus/8*.html#14.2> [Accessed 8 June 2024]

⁶² John Dickenson, 'Foreword', in *Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers*, ed. and trans. by Joseph Pike (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1938), p. xi.

similarly complex manner as Alexander.⁶³ As with Alexander, John notes Caesar's fame and distinction and at times lauds Caesar as the greatest Roman emperor and conqueror of the world, praising his power and ability to accomplish the impossible (*F* 6, 9, 21, 61, 181. *P* 79, 124). At other times, John tells of Caesar's tyranny, imperiousness, and his attempt to claim authority over all matters (*P* 22-3). Indeed, John writes derisively of Caesar's treatment of his citizens in several places in the *Policraticus*. In one such tale, we are told of a craftsman who created a vase made from unbreakable glass. When the craftsman shows the vase to the ruler and proves its resiliency, Caesar, astonished by the vase's beauty and resilience, asks if anyone else knows how to create such material. After being informed that no one else knows, Caesar orders the craftsman to be beheaded, for 'si hoc artificium innotesceret, aurum & argentum vilescerent quasi lutum' ('if this skill should become widely known, gold and silver would become as worthless as mud') (*L* 188. *P* 38-9). The tale closely follows its source, Gaius Petronius's *Satiricon* (c. 1st century AD), but at the end of the *Policraticus*' version, John deviates by adding commentary on Caesar's treatment of the craftsman. Engaging with the humility topos, John acknowledges that others, who are wiser than him, may have different interpretations of the story, but he believes the artisan was treated poorly. His primary issue is that Caesar expunged a noteworthy skill simply out of avarice, and John believes that mankind is ill-served by such acts from a ruler (*P* 39). Elsewhere, we are told of Caesar's oppression of his people. John denounces the ruler's strict control over Roman citizens and how he deprived them of free will (*F* 184, 327). Such a negative characterisation of Caesar shows how a renowned ruler and conqueror can also be a tyrant, and these descriptions facilitate the subsequent discussions of tyranny. John

⁶³ Nigel Mortimer, *Medieval and Early Modern Portrayals of Julius Caesar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 13-4.

explores tyranny throughout many of the *Policraticus*' books, and his emphasis on the subject may reflect the issues surrounding Stephen's reign. Although initially seen as a model ruler, as his reign went on, Stephen began to be characterised as a tyrant.⁶⁴ Many writers commented on his poor rule, including John in the *Policraticus*: [King Stephen] 'in regno alieno regnare hominem contemptorem boni & aequi... [et] negligentem disciplinae, vt eo non tam regnante, quam concutiente' ('was allowed to rule over the kingdom in contempt for goodness and equity... [and] neglected discipline to the extent that he did not so much rule as intimidate') (*L* 316-7. *P* 119).

When John begins his pointed discussion on tyranny in Book III, he defines a tyrant in a similar way to Caesar – a tyrant is one who seizes power, prevents justice, and wields law for his own means (*F* 211). He further explains that while not all men are rulers, anyone can exercise tyranny, and, thus, tyrants can be monarchical, ecclesiastical, or private individuals ('Patet ergo non in solis principibus esse tirannidem, sed omnes esse tyrannos, qui concessa desuper potestate in subditis abununter') (*L* 549). According to Cary J. Nederman, this expansive definition of tyranny distinguishes John of Salisbury from other writers who defined tyranny as the abuse of public power only in the Latin Christian tradition.⁶⁵ John's definition, though, seems to have gained some traction in the latter part of the twelfth century. For instance, William of Newburgh, in describing the election of the archbishopric of Canterbury, writes of an ecclesiastical 'tyrannus' who aspired to the position but whose attempts were thwarted by the monks of Christchurch Cathedral.⁶⁶ Despite this broad definition

⁶⁴ Edmund King, *King Stephen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 333-4.

⁶⁵ Nederman, pp. 5-6, 9.

⁶⁶ The passage reads, 'Praeterea Rothomagensi archiepiscopo, cui rerum erat principaliter summa commissa regnique episcopis visum est, vocanti primae sedi, ad quam tyrannus aspiraverat et forte adhuc aspirabat, maturius, quo eius spes frustraretur, providendum esse pastorem'. William of Newburgh, I, p. 334.

of tyranny, the only exemplary tyrants of which John writes are those who wield public power likely because John is limited by his biblical and ancient sources, which use ‘tyrannus’ to refer to rulers. In discussing tyranny, John often emphasises the rulers’ impiety and how it leads to despotism and a penchant for injustice (as can be seen in his tale of Saul and Nimrod) – this is likely a reflection of the anxieties surrounding the English crown’s relationship with the church both during Stephen’s and Henry’s reigns.⁶⁷ John writes that Stephen did not keep faith and acted in contempt of God (*P* 120). William of Malmesbury similarly observes that Stephen was an imprudent and dishonest ruler who failed to uphold the authority of the church despite his promise to do so.⁶⁸ Instead, William says that Stephen had some churches stripped of their land and treasures, bishops imprisoned and forced to surrender their land and gave vacant sees to the undeserving. He also records a speech Henry, bishop of Winchester, gave to the English bishops and papal legate in the spring of 1141 in which Henry voiced similar complaints.⁶⁹

John’s descriptions of tyrants may reflect Stephen’s actions and serve as a warning to Henry lest he suffer the same fate as Stephen, a ruler who failed to pass on his kingdom to his son. One of the first tyrants John mentions is Nimrod, who he describes as a prideful and oppressive ruler contemptuous of God. Though man had been created free and equal, Nimrod sought to reduce others to servitude and, thus, created this tyranny as an insult to God (*F* 19). Interestingly, however, John does not mention Nimrod’s punishment for forsaking God and but rather merely mentions the

⁶⁷ The examples John uses of tyrants are likely limited to public tyrants because of the source material available. Biblical and ancient Greek and Roman texts would have discussed tyranny as it relates to the traditional Latin Christian definition.

⁶⁸ William of Malmesbury, *Chronicles of the Kings of England* (London: H.G. Bohn, 1904), p. 491; William of Malmesbury, *Historia Nuella* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 34-7.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7, 92-3.

conflict between Nimrod and his brother Esau before proceeding to a discussion of whether it is acceptable for rulers to hunt (for Nimrod was known to be a great huntsman) (*F* 19-20). The omission of Nimrod's fall may have two functions. Firstly, Nimrod's death does not fit the topic of the chapter, which is on whether kings should hunt; and secondly, it allows John to covertly criticise kings who do not honour God. By eliding God's vengeance upon Nimrod, John intimates rather than explicates that irreverent rulers are punished by God's vengeance. Such commentary may be a reaction to the conflict between Henry II and the church, which began soon after the king's ascension to the throne. Critiquing the English king in this covert manner would have been necessary, for John was in exile while writing the *Policraticus* and overt criticism would not help ensure his return to England.⁷⁰

John also explores tyrants' rejection of God in his story of Saul. The king is described as changing from a pious ruler to a tyrant, stressing the ruler's impiety and irreverence for God, his disobedience and defiance towards God and his spiritual blindness (*F* 129, 137). Because Saul has forsaken God, he is punished severely, losing his kingdom, his sons, and his life. John writes of Saul's punishment, including Saul's death by suicide. John likely does so because suicide, which he refers to as an act of desperation by one already dead in both mind and spirit, was then seen as the most ignoble way to die and therefore another insult to God (*F* 140-1). Further, by mentioning Saul's death, John emphasises the connection between tyranny and impiety – actions that necessitate punishment – and the dangers of engaging with demonic

⁷⁰ The English church acquired autonomy during the reign of Henry I and during the civil war, and when Henry ascended the throne, he attempted to revive the Norman ducal practice of control over the church. One of the earliest conflicts to arise surrounded the nomination of sees where Archbishop Theobald opposed several of Henry's nominations. Aurell, pp. 222-5. W.L. Warren, *Henry II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 428-35.

prophecy. Such focus on a ruler's irreverence for God reflects John's position as a churchman in the age of Becket when difficulties between the church and crown recalled the troubles that occurred during Stephen's reign.

Experienced Counsel

Throughout the *Policraticus*, John discusses the importance of a king having wise counsel. Arguing for the importance of learned and moderate men serving as counsellors, John suggests that these men will offer advice that is needed rather than offer what a ruler wants to hear. Many of John's concerns with counsel pertain to the danger of flatterers and their lies and desire to serve themselves above the king. This mirrors the anxieties of Stephen's rule, for writers, including John himself, accused Stephen of heeding poor counsel and surrounding himself with sycophants. John argues that a prince must be able to distinguish flatterers from those offering good counsel.

John directly criticises Stephen's counsel, viewing him as a *rex inutilis*, or an ineffectual and weak king.⁷¹ He writes of how new counsellors were favoured and placed in positions of power – men whose counsel was foolish (*P* 119). And so, John discusses what types of counsellors a king should surround himself with, arguing they ought to be learned, experienced, and good men, and he uses negative exemplary rulers to illustrate the dangers of not acquiring effective counsel. In the tale of Saul, for instance, John writes that the king's impiety makes him 'indignus enim erat consultatione virili' ('unworthy of receiving man's counsel'), and so he is forced to disguise himself and seek advice from a woman, the aforementioned Witch of Endor (*L*

⁷¹ The *rex inutilis* is a common topic in medieval political thought between the eighth and fourteenth centuries. The term was used to criticise monarchs that possessed qualities like indolence, negligence, and weakness. Edward Peters, *The Shadow King* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. x, 90-3.

110. *F* 134). The criticism of the sorceress is another association between women and bad counsel by John and suggests counsel should be given by men. John also links a king's ability to follow wise counsel with his reverence for God – an idea found in discussions on Stephen's reign. The writer of the *Gesta Stephani* remarked that Stephen's men 'in alterum eum hominem repente mutauerunt' ('changed him into another man') and that Stephen would have kept the promises he initially made to the church if it had not been for the 'consiliatores peruersi' ('perverse counsellors') who urged him to break his promises.⁷² John's frequent emphasis on the importance of a ruler's morality and his inclusion of the quotation by Lucius, which says, "Principem senem moribus esse oportet, & qui moderatiora sequatur consilia" ("a prince must be of a moral character of one of advanced years and should follow the counsel of those who are moderate"), may be a reaction to Stephen's rule (*L* 198. *P* 50). Although he directly criticises counsel – both Saul's and Stephen's – John intimates in these passages that the ruler is also to blame. The Saul and the Lucius quotation suggest that rulers who are morally upright are those who are worthy of sound counsel.

John reflects on the dangers of youthful counsel with the story of Rehoboam. As the king of Judah, Rehoboam burdened his people with heavy taxes and went against the advice of older counsel. Instead, he favoured the 'consiliis iuuenum' ('young counsellors') who encourage the king to increase taxes and show no mercy to his people (*L* 227. *P* 71). By adhering to the counsel of the young and ignoring the counsel of the wise, Rehoboam fails to follow the path of Solomon, and he is punished by God. All but two tribes of Israel rebel against the king, and he loses most of his kingdom to the pious Jeroboam (*P* 70). John links the issue of poor counsel with a ruler's imprudence in

⁷² *Gesta Stephani*, pp. 42-3, 27-9.

governance and his impiety, and he shows how such issues can lead to a king's ruin. The use of Rehoboam is not unique to the *Policraticus*, though, and is commonly used in the discussion of counsel. In his *Ecclesiastical History* (1136- 1141), for instance, Orderic Vitalis compares Stephen to Rehoboam for trusting 'adulantium fauori non senum consilio more Roboam adquiescebat' ('the fawning of sycophants, not the counsel of the elders').⁷³ John emphasises the need for counsellors to be wise and literate with the latter of particular importance if the king is illiterate. He writes that it is impossible for a king to govern well when he does not have wise counsel (*P* 70). We are told of how Philip of Macedon once requested Aristotle teach his son, for he believed that without wisdom no kingdom will last (*P* 45). Using two prominent ancient philosophers further emphasises the importance of wisdom in counsellors and suggests they ought to come from a scholastic background. Such an idea coincides with the increase in learned and trained administrators in the English bureaucracy – a group which included John of Salisbury – and also may serve as a reaction to Stephen's reign. The king was described by Orderic Vitalis as someone who 'prudantium obaudire contempsit' (turned 'a deaf ear to prudent advisors') and by William of Malmesbury as king who heeded the advice of the 'prauorum' ('wicked').⁷⁴

Reflecting specifically on the predilection of advisors for flattery, John makes explicit the dangers that it poses to good governance. John writes that the truth offers more than the 'distillans fauus' ('dripping honeycomb') of the flatterer's voice (*L* 139. *F* 166-7). This comparison is an adaptation of Proverbs 5.2-4, which warns of the deceitful nature of women: 'fauus enim stillans labia meretricis et nitidius oleo guttur

⁷³ Orderic Vitalis, *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. by Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969-78), VI, pp. 206-7.

⁷⁴ Vitalis, VI, p. 542-3; William of Malmesbury, pp. 45-6, 92-3.

eius novissima autem illius amara' ('For the lips of a harlot are like a honeycomb dripping, and her throat is smoother than oil. But her end is bitter...'), and of Song of Songs 4.11, which says, 'Favus distillans labia tua sponsa mel' ('Your lips, my spouse, are as a dripping honeycomb'). Comparing flattery to honey is something that we see in later advice to princes texts, including the *De nobilitatibus, sapientiis, et prudentiis regum* and *The Regiment of Princes*.⁷⁵ Although John does not use the warning of the harlot's demise, readers would have likely been aware of the reference to Proverbs and understood the consequences that befall flatterers. Further, John argues that the 'advlator enim omnis virtutis inimicus est... quo sub amantis specie, nocere non desinit' ('flatterer is the enemy of all virtue... [who] never ceases harming under the guise of friendship') and later accuses them of engaging in fraud and deception (*L* 132. *F* 159, 198). Although he believes flattery anywhere is harmful, John seems most concerned with flatterers within the court, particularly the lofty positions they have attained and their abundance, for they are more able to flatter men of authority, whitewashing those men's faults for their own benefit. Flattery has gotten so out of hand that John describes court flatterers as an army with such power they can conquer kings (*F* 198-9, 203). Such concerns with flattery reflect issues during Stephen's reign. Both Abbot Geoffrey of St Albans (d. 1146) and William of Malmesbury described King Stephen as easily manipulated by the smooth words of flatterers and 'sometimes more inclined to believe flatterers than those who spoke the truth'.⁷⁶ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* remarks that

⁷⁵ Oxford, Christ Church, MS 92, fol. 41r; Thomas Hoccleve, 2022.

⁷⁶ King, p. 334; William of Malmesbury, pp. 46-7.

Stephen followed ‘picci ræd’ (‘wicked counsel’), and John argues that it was these men that curried favour with Stephen in order to gain power (*P* 119).⁷⁷

Despite his criticism of those who engage in flattery, John himself uses flattery throughout the *Policraticus*. In Book I, John states that his purpose for creating the work is the poor state of the royal court, which he has served for twelve years. Addressing his reader directly, John writes that he believes ‘te quidem sentio in eadem conditione versari, nisi quia, rector et prudentior, si facis quod expedit, stas semper immotus in solidae virtutis fundamento’ (‘you too are in a similar situation except that you, more upright and wiser in pursuing the proper course, ever stand unshaken upon the firm foundation of righteousness’) and that he finds it necessary to address one ‘quo nihil nugatorium possit argui’ (‘who [is] entirely unaffected by any foible’) (*L* 2-3. *F* 8).

Lofty praise to the addressee of an advice to princes text is common strategy, and while John’s addressee, Thomas Becket, was not a secular ruler, his position as chancellor and archdeacon of Canterbury gave him significant power and cause for John to flatter him. John also engages with flattery when discussing Henry II and his military campaigns, referring to Henry as the ‘Rex illustris Anglorum’ and ‘maximus regum Britannie’ (‘illustrious king of England’ and ‘greatest of the kings of Britain’) (*L* 596. *F* 410).

Many passages of the *Policraticus* flatter the addressee while engaging in the humility topos. In each book’s introductions, for instance, John directly addresses Becket. Book I discusses John’s intent for the work and his hope that the book (despite its uncouth and lack of charm) will please Becket and honour him even if the book will be ‘velut lapillum in aceruo praeconiorum tuorum’ (‘like a pebble on a heap of your

⁷⁷ The transcription from the manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is my own. Oxford, Bodleian, MS Laud Misc. 636, fol. 91r; *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, trans. by E.E.C. Gomme (London: George Bell & Sons, 1909), p. 250.

laudations’) (*L* 3. *F* 8). Book II praises Becket’s confidence and wisdom as inspiration to John, and he asks Becket to correct any mistake he sees in the evidence presented in the book, thus positioning Beckett as the ideal advisor (*P* 55). He ends the work by saying he hopes it does Becket honour and will earn him the chancellor’s patronage, hoping Becket does not find the work banal or callow in style (*F* 411). Suggesting he may have made errors within his work and requesting these errors be corrected is an example of, as Heather Blatt has termed it, the ‘emendation invitation’ – a rhetorical device and a part of the *humilitas* topos, common to medieval literature and found in many of the advisory works examined in this thesis.⁷⁸ These strategies, which initially seem to provide John with an excuse for any ill-received critique, actually serve to highlight his erudition and scholarship.

John’s use of the emendation invitation and flattery as well as his reliance upon biblical exemplars and incorporation of secular prophecy form a part of how he positions his advisory work to appeal towards his reader. Such strategies reflect both his status as an ecclesiast moving in courtly circles and his audience, who would have been composed of men similar to himself. Many also appear throughout later advice to princes, but, as we shall see with Gerald of Wales’ *De Principis*, they are employed for different purposes, often expressing frustration with Angevin rule overtly.

Gerald of Wales and *De Principis Instructione*

Born into a Welsh and Norman family in Wales in the mid-twelfth century, Gerald of Wales served as a clerk in the royal court (1184-1195) and held several positions within the church, including as the archdeacon of Brecon. His desire to be elected to the see of

⁷⁸ Heather Blatt, *Participatory Reading in Late-Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 27-8.

St. David's was never realized, and his frustrations with this and his growing dissatisfaction with the royal court can be seen across his works.⁷⁹ Although he is largely known for his works about Ireland and Wales, Gerald's wider oeuvre includes hagiographies, poetry, letters, and his advice to princes *De Principis*. This latter text was begun in the early 1190s and completed around 1216, and although not written from a Welsh perspective, the text expresses an interest in Wales, notably its prophetic traditions.⁸⁰ Scholarship on this work is limited largely due to its reputation as one of the 'less esteemed writing[s] of Gerald of Wales'.⁸¹ H.E. Butler referred to the work as the 'dullest thing he [Gerald] ever wrote', and even Robert Bartlett, translator of *De Principis*, criticises the work's 'derivative' and 'commonplace' material.⁸² Gerald does frequently borrow from other sources (particularly in Book I), for many of his classical quotations and historical exempla derived from the *Moralium Dogma Philosophorum* (mid-twelfth century) and *Historia Ecclesiastica* (1109), respectively. Although he does not cite the *Policraticus*, it is possible that Gerald was familiar with the *Policraticus* given its popularity and the similarities between it and *De Principis*.⁸³ More recently, however, scholars have attempted to reassess the work. István Bejczy has analysed Gerald's treatment of sources in Book I, arguing how Gerald adapted them in order to educate on the necessary virtues of kingship.⁸⁴ I argue that *De Principis Instructione*'s

⁷⁹ Robert Bartlett, 'Introduction', in *De Principis Instructione*, ed. and trans. by Robert Bartlett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. xi-lxi (pp. xi, xvi-xvii).

⁸⁰ Micheal Staunton, *The Historians of Angevin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 102.

⁸¹ Bejczy, p. 191.

⁸² H.E. Butler, 'Introduction', in *The Autobiography of Gerald of Wales*, ed. by H.E. Butler (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2005), pp. 22-31 (p. 27); Bartlett, p. xxiii.

⁸³ The authorship and exact date of the *Moralium Dogma Philosophorum* is unknown although it has been attributed to William of Conches. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales 1146-1223*, p. 70.

⁸⁴ Bejczy, pp. 191-2.

derivative nature allows us to see how Gerald engaged with contemporary literary culture by drawing on a common store of material to advise and criticise English rule.

In the prologue, Gerald, like John, laments that he succumbed to the temptations of the court and explains that the book is an attempt to remedy his sorrows (a well-established literary trope also used by Walter Map in his *De Nugis*).⁸⁵ Outlining the general structure of the text, Gerald states that Book I will teach the concepts of effective kingship while Books II and III will teach those concepts through example. However, as Michael Staunton points out, Gerald's intention did not quite come to fruition. While Book I (completed in the 1190s) does, indeed, describe the virtues of an ideal prince, Books II and III (completed around 1216) deviate from Gerald's initial aim and are rather 'historical, political, and prophetic', detailing various events of Henry's reign.⁸⁶ Overall, Books II and III function as invectives against Henry II and his family, focusing on the impiety and demise of the king.⁸⁷ In describing these events, Gerald highlights the aspects of kingship from Henry's rule that coincide with the vices and examples of poor governance listed in Book I. Although the intended function of the text changed, Gerald uses advisory discourse *topoi* throughout *De Principis*, including prophecy, accounts of exemplary rulers, and warnings concerning bad counsel, and models for good governance. His treatment of these *topoi*, which often differ from John's and are more pessimistic in relation to Angevin rule, suggests an apparent shift in political literary culture and a reaction to the tumultuous period of Henry's reign.

⁸⁵ Gerald of Wales, pp. 3-7; Map, pp. 282-5.

⁸⁶ The deviation from the structure Gerald outlines is likely due to Gerald's growing dissatisfaction with Angevin rule and his interest in prophecy. Bartlett, p. 85.

⁸⁷ Bartlett, 'Introduction', pp. xxii, xxviii. Staunton, p. 102.

The Predictive Power of Prophecy

Unlike John of Salisbury's attitude toward prophecy in the *Policraticus*, Gerald's in *De Principis* is one of secure approbation (although in his other works, Gerald is interested in false prophecy), for he treats a ruler's engagement with prophecy as a sign of good kingship. In his earlier works, Gerald used prophetic material to express support for the Angevins, writing that John would be the man who Merlin predicted will conquer Ireland completely.⁸⁸ However, by the time he wrote the final two books of *De Principis*, Gerald used prophecy to illustrate what he suggested was the Angevin's foreordained fall, including the rebellion by and premature deaths of several of Henry's sons and the loss of continental holdings under John. Such treatment of prophecy is not unique to Gerald since, as already noted, there was a flourishing of political prophecy in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries (although derisive treatment of it by other authors remained).⁸⁹ This is in part because of popularity of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* and also because political prophecy allowed kings a means of employing propaganda to show how their kingdom may expand and how peace may be attained. Henry II was known to engage with political prophecy as well as with astrology. In one instance, Henry was persuaded to delay his attack upon the Bretons because Hamo of Savigny prophesied Henry would be more successful if he moved the day from the feast day of Saint Peter and Paul to a less holy day.⁹⁰ The king, and/or those close to him, moreover commissioned Wace and Benoît de Sainte-Maure to write histories of Anglo-Saxon kings and the early dukes of Normandy, for 'history could...

⁸⁸ Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, ch. LII.

⁸⁹ William of Newburgh, I, 12-3; Walter Map, pp. 319-21.

⁹⁰ Vincent, 'The Pilgrimages of the Angevin Kings of England 1154-1272', in *Pilgrimage*, ed. by Colin Morris and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 12-45 (p. 25).

serve prophetic ends, with the past being used as a means of predicting the likely course of the future'.⁹¹ Indeed, we see this attitude about history and exemplary rulers across advisory works as writers use them as a way to warn or encourage styles of governance in monarchs.

Merlin's prophecies were increasingly used, and by the early 1160s, Angevin rulers began to be associated with fulfilling those prophecies. In an 1166 letter to Thomas Becket about Henry II's recent successful military advances, for instance, John of Salisbury himself refers to Merlin's prophecy of an 'Eagle of Broken Covenant' that will own a portion of France and will paint it gold, reporting that 'instat enim tempus... quo aquila rupti foederis, iuxta Merlini uaticinium, fraenum deauratura est, quod apro eius datur' ('the time is at hand when the eagle of the broken covenant, according to Merlin's prophecy, shall gild the bridle, which is being given to his boar') – a phrase nearly identical to that found in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*.⁹² Henry was also associated with prophecies positioning him as the heir to Saint Edward who would unite all of England and Normandy.⁹³ Later, during the 1170s, Roger of Howden writes how the Angevin princes' uprising against King Henry fulfilled Merlin's prophecy of bellowing pups wreaking great havoc ('rugientis catuli... stragem non minimam ex obstantibus facient'), which, again, is nearly identical to the prophecy found in *Historia Regum Britanniae*.⁹⁴ These prophecies were the focus of several scholarly

⁹¹ Vincent, 'The Strange Case of the Missing Biographies', pp. 238-40.

⁹² The line from Geoffrey of Monmouth is: 'Deaurabit illud aquila rupti foederis et tercia nidificatione gaudebit'. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britanniae*, ed. by Michael Reeve and transl. Neil Wright (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), p. 148; John of Salisbury, *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, II, p. 134-5.

⁹³ Vincent, 'Pilgrimages of the Angevin Kings of England', p. 25.

⁹⁴ Roger of Howden, *Gesta Regis Henrici*, ed. by William Stubbs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 42. The quote from the *Historia Regum Britanniae* reads: 'Regentis catuli... stragem non minimam ex obstantibus facient'. Geoffrey of Monmouth, p. 149.

commentators who attempted to ascribe Merlin's prophecies to Henry II and his sons.⁹⁵ In the process of echoing Geoffrey's work, John and Roger here both also draw upon its authority. Two decades later, William of Newburgh writes that the Bretons viewed the birth of Henry's grandson, Arthur, as fulfilment of Arthur's prophecy ('famosis de Arturo fabulis prophetatum') and that Arthur would return from Avalon with an army to ensure Breton independence.⁹⁶

In *De Principis*, Gerald uses prophecy to highlight the inability of rulers to distinguish true prophecy from false and their failures to heed wise counsel. He first explores prophecy in Book I's chapters on prudence and foresight and uses these chapters as an introduction to a direct discussion of Henry's poor engagement with prophecy in the latter half of the text. A central focus for the chapter on foresight is the many dreams and signs that portended Julius Caesar's death. While Caesar functions as a positive exemplar in most of *De Principis* (as he does in the *Policraticus*), Gerald's treatment of the Roman ruler in this chapter is one of disapproval as Caesar ignores all presentiments of his demise, including when lightning struck his statue a hundred days before his death (148-51). He even disregards his wife Calpurnia's prophetic dream. Gerald writes that on Caesar's last night alive, Calpurnia, dreams her husband will be injured with many wounds. Terrified, she begs Caesar not to attend the assembly, but he refuses not wanting to guide his actions "ne mulieris sompno id" ("because of a woman's dream") (148-9).⁹⁷ This dismissal of a woman's counsel echoes John's treatment of the Witch of Endor, yet because Calpurnia's dream proved true, Gerald

⁹⁵ Jacob Hammer, 'A Commentary on the *Prophetia Merlini*', *Speculum*, 10 (1935), 3-30 (pp. 3, 20-1, 25).

⁹⁶ William of Newburgh, I, p. 235; Victoria Flood, 'Arthur's Return from Avalon: Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Development of the Legend', *Arthuriana*, 25 (2015), 84-110 (pp. 85-6, 92).

⁹⁷ The tale comes from Valerius Maximus's *Facta et Dicta Memorabilia*.

appears more accepting of female counsel. In fact, it reveals how women could use prophecy to intervene in politics although their prophecies could be ignored or even lead to persecution.⁹⁸ Further, with these tales, Gerald illustrates how a ruler's failure to follow prophetic dreams and signs can lead to his demise — an issue that plagues Henry II in Books II and III. John discussed the same dream in the *Policraticus*, but although the two versions are largely similar, the writers do differ in their explanations for why Caesar ignored the dream. John says that he did not want to be thought of as acting timidly rather than dismissing the validity of a woman's dream as Gerald's version does (*F* 57). By changing Caesar's justification, Gerald stresses the importance of heeding prophetic dreams, for it is Caesar's disregard for the dream that leads to his death and abruptly ends the legacy he built for himself and Rome.

The latter half of *De Principis* discusses prophecies that presage the fall of the Angevins. These prophecies fall under two distinctions — those Henry himself has and those about Henry had by others. Though Gerald criticises Henry's failure to acknowledge and change in response to the prophecies, many of them are not told to the king but merely about him. Following the murder of Thomas Becket, we are told that God punishes Henry with visions in hopes the king will atone for his sins, but despite the claim that Henry experiences multiple visions, Gerald only relates one: the king has a vision after going to mass in Wales (484). As he is leaving the church, Henry is approached by a barefoot man wearing a long, white tunic. The man introduces himself as William and warns Henry that he must become more religious lest he will hear ““tales de rebus quas in mundo plus diligis rumores”” (“such rumours about what you love

⁹⁸ Diane Watt, *Secretaries of God* (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 2-5.

most in the world”) and experience such “turbacionem” (“disturbance”) disturbance before the end of the year (486-7). Henry responds by riding away, but after a few paces, he stops and turns around to speak with the man. William, however, is nowhere to be found. Gerald’s positioning of the tale in Wales coupled with his failure to heed William’s warning show his antipathy towards Henry, for English writers viewed Wales as a disordered polity oppositional to English rule.⁹⁹ In one of Merlin’s prophecies, Merlin predicts the Welsh will rejoice when the English fall.¹⁰⁰ Eventually, prophecy purportedly from Welsh sources became a form of address to English kings, and Gerald’s use of Wales offers another form of resistance towards Henry.¹⁰¹ This association with Wales and opposition to Angevin rule, however, is not found across all of Gerald’s works, for his relationship with Wales and prophecy is changeable, depending on his attitudes toward the Angevins.¹⁰²

Towards the end of the tale, Henry is described as sorrowful upon realising he is unable to speak further with William, and this, along with Henry’s decision to turn around, suggests the king’s interest in prophecy. This interest is limited, though, for immediately after describing Henry as sorrowful Gerald tells how the princes’ rebellion did cause Henry to suffer later that year (486-7). This idea of the princes’ rebellion as a fulfilment of prophecy occurs throughout Gerald’s works. Book III of *De Principis* tells of Henry’s request for a painting of four eaglets attacking an eagle to represent him and his four sons. Elsewhere in his *Expugnatio Hibernica*, Gerald relates a prophecy of a

⁹⁹ He positively compared the Welsh soldiers with the English. Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, pp. 164, 198-9.

¹⁰⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth, p. 148; Michael A. Faletra, *Wales and the Medieval Colonial Imagination* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), pp. 17, 34-5.

¹⁰¹ Flood, *Prophecy, Politics, and Place*, pp. 43-4.

¹⁰² Ad Putter, ‘Latin Historiography after Geoffrey of Monmouth’, in *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), pp. 85-108 (pp. 88-91).

father whose wickedness causes his sons to rebel against him ('Ex delicto geniti delinquent in genitorem'), which is nearly identical to a prophecy found in *The Prophecy of the Eagle*, an early thirteenth-century collection of prophecies attributed to Merlin Silvester.¹⁰³ These two prophecies describe the sons as rebelling against their father in order to seek vengeance against him for his crime, intimating that the father transgressed against his sons.¹⁰⁴ However, Gerald's *De Principis* suggests that the princes' rebellions are instruments of divine vengeance for Henry's crimes. This link between the princes' uprising and prophecy also appears in other twelfth century works, including Roger of Howden's *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi* (as previously discussed), though Roger simply notes the uprising is a fulfilment of Merlin's prophecy and not that it is an act of retribution.¹⁰⁵ Such discussions of the princes' rebellion link prophecy to imperial rise and fall, as does the *Policraticus*, but whereas John believes kings who blindly follow prophecy will inevitably fall, Gerald argues it is a king's failure to heed prophecy altogether that leads to his demise.

Many of the dreams, prophecies, and visions of which Gerald writes centre on men who have personal revelations of Henry's fall that come to them as a vision or dream, and some relate their prophecies to the king while others do not. In these tales, the men's virtues – whether goodness or piety – and their distance from the royal court are emphasised, showing that, like the *Policraticus*, devout men are more inclined to true predictions. This association is only found in advisory works of this period and

¹⁰³ Gerald's prophecy may have inspired the *Prophecy of the Eagle*. Victoria Flood, 'Prophecy as History: A New Study of the *Prophecies of Merlin Silvester*', *Neophilologus*, 102 (2018), 543-59 (p. 549-50).

¹⁰⁴ Gerald of Wales, *De Principis Instructione*, pp. 678-81; Ad Putter, 'Gerald of Wales and the Prophet Merlin', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 31 (2008), 90-103 (p. 94).

¹⁰⁵ Roger of Howden writes that the princes' rebellion against their father fulfilled Merlin's prophecy of bellowing pups causing great havoc ('rugientis catuli... stragem non minimam ex obstantibus facient'), Roger of Howden, p. 42.

intimates the influence of John's and Gerald's positions as secular clerks. These men's characters support Gerald's belief that foretelling future events is a divine gift (as does John of Salisbury). As such, Henry's rejection of these prophecies is a rejection of God's own voice. The emphasis on the relationship between prophecy and God is unique to advice to princes of this period and likely influenced by John's and Gerald's position as secular clerics moving between both the court and church. Gerald's interest in the divine nature of prophecy, though, is more pronounced than John's, for while John does write that true prophecies are those given by God, Gerald goes further and describes the piety of the vaticinating individuals. By doing this, Gerald criticises both Henry's irreverence for God and disbelief in prophecy (unless it is his own revelation as with his prediction that his son John would rise against him) (680-1).

In one account, Gerald tells of a 'uir quidam simplex, rectus, et iustus' ('a certain sincere, righteous, and just man') living in Ireland, who hears a voice in his sleep telling him to go to the king of England and warn him to purify his life or else "'iram Dei incurret exterminantem' ('incur the exterminating wrath of God") (488-9). The man, taking great care to travel to the king in Aquitaine, warns the king, but Henry is unmoved and dismisses the warning (489). Gerald emphasises the length of the man's journey, describing him as sailing across the Gallic and Irish Seas to France and then back across the Irish Sea only to travel through Wales before returning home. The length of the journey and pains the man took to warn Henry imply the merit of the prophecy, and the difficulty in relaying a prophecy occurs throughout *De Principis*. For instance, we are told that the knight Roger of Asterby hears voices from above telling him to warn the king that he must fulfil seven commandments. If Henry heeds the prophecy, he will live in honour and wage a successful crusade, but if not, he will die in

shame within four years. Roger himself initially dismisses the voices, but eventually he assents and travels from Lincolnshire to the royal court in Normandy. Upon hearing the man's warning, Henry initially agrees to follow the commandments; however, by the next day, Henry's breaks his oath as 'prauo consilio preualente et hesterna deuocione refrigescente' ('wicked counsel prevailed and the yesterday's enthusiasm cooled') (489-95).¹⁰⁶

Henry's dismissal of predictions is a leitmotif of Gerald's work. It appears in the tales of William and the Englishman in *De Principis* as well as in his *Expungatio Hibernica*. In the latter, Gerald writes that Henry, while visiting St David's in Wales, encounters a Welshwoman who cries for Llechlafar to avenge the Welsh people against Henry and the English. Gerald elucidates that the woman refers to the false prophecy of Llechlafar that claims that after conquering Ireland, an English king will die upon the talking stone of Llechlafar. When Henry walks upon the stone and the prophecy is not fulfilled, he shouts, "Merlino mendaci quis de cetero fidem habeat?" ("Who would have any faith in this lying Merlin from now on?").¹⁰⁷ Unlike his material on Henry and prophecy in *De Principis*, though, Gerald's tale of the Llechlafar prophecy describes Henry's failure to heed the prophecy favourably, for the king is able to correctly discern false prophecy. In denying the prophecy, Gerald shows that he is not uniformly comfortable with Welsh prophecy. Prophecy for Gerald, then, is a tool he wields to express his attitudes towards and issue warnings to Angevin rulers rather than

¹⁰⁶ The seven commandments the voices decreed Henry follow were: maintain the church, ensure just laws are observed, he should not condemn anyone to death without fair judgment, allow justice to be carried out freely, ensure services are rendered by his ministers, and that the Jewish people be banished from the kingdom.

¹⁰⁷ Gerald of Wales, *Expungatio Hibernica*, ed. by J.S. Brewer, James F. Dimock, and George F. Warner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 288; Gerald of Wales, *Expungatio Hibernica*, trans. by Thomas Forester, ch. xxxvii.

a means of predicting future events.¹⁰⁸ The Llechlafar prophecy is situated within a Welsh prophetic tradition (pre-dating Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetiae*) forecasting England's demise, including the prophecy in *Yr Oianau* ('The Ohs') in which an English king fights the Irish and after the Irish make a pilgrimage to St David's, the English suffer.¹⁰⁹ Gerald's differing treatment of Henry's engagement with prophecy (and Henry was known for his engagement with prophecy) highlights his shifting loyalties between the *Expugnatio Hibernica* and *De Principis*, for by the time he writes the latter, Henry is described as one who cannot discern between true and false prophecy. Knowing which prophecies to follow and which to ignore is a sign of good kingship – a quality that Henry does not have. This quality, or rather lack thereof, occurs throughout the advisory discourse into the fourteenth century, including, as I discuss in Chapter 3, in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.

Other prophecies are not relayed to Henry and are simply had about him. One account tells of a 'uir quidam bonus et litteratus' ('a certain good and learned man') who, while dreaming, hears God informing him that since the king has gone against God, Henry 'uenter enim uxoris eius intumescet contra eum' ('the belly of his wife will swell against him'), which Gerald interprets as vaticinating Henry's wretched end (608-9). This tale is a slightly truncated version of a prophecy Roger of Howden relates in his *Gesta Regis Henrici*, in which Roger tells of a 'quidam vir religionis' ('certain religious man') and an 'abbas vero magae auctoritatis' ('abbot of great authority') who has a

¹⁰⁸ There was an attempt in the latter part of the twelfth century for St David's to attain a metropolitan and archbishopric status independent of Canterbury, and Gerald was personally involved in this attempt. Huw Pryce, 'Gerald of Wales and the Welsh Past', in *Gerald of Wales: New Perspectives on a Medieval Writer and Critic*, ed. by Georgia Henley and A. Joseph McMullen (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018), pp. 19-45 (pp. 23-4).

¹⁰⁹ Victoria Flood, *Prophecy, Politics and Place*, pp. 53-4; Aled Llion Jones, *Darogan* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), pp. 25-6.

dream foretelling the rebellion of Henry's sons ('*venter uxoris suae intumescet contra eum*').¹¹⁰ The nearly identical prophecies suggest Gerald's familiarity with Roger's work. Gerald's version of this tale seems, however, like an afterthought as it is positioned after a detailed prophecy in which a court chaplain has a vision of Thomas Becket, and he omits certain details found in Roger's version (such as the church and the prayers he gave prior to the vision). Gerald positions Henry's wretched end alongside the vision of Becket because of the relationship between prophecies of rebellion and Becket.¹¹¹ In another account, Gerald writes of a '*uir quidam bonus et simplex*' ('certain good and sincere man') who predicts Henry will reign for nearly thirty-five years before dying an '*ignominiosus*' ('ignominious') death (702-3). In each of these stories, Gerald highlights the men's good character, tying it to their ability to predict the future as well as their belief in the dream or vision they had. By juxtaposing these men with Henry, Gerald emphasises the king's impiety and inability to listen to the counsel of good men, and he suggests that if Henry had heeded these predictions, he would have avoided a disgraceful death.

Furthermore, many men who prophesise Henry's demise are identified as religious men or men of the church with no associations with the royal court. In Book III, we are told that the archbishop Thomas Becket, while exiled and no longer a part of the court, hears a voice during prayer, telling him "*Mors capit una duos, capit sed mala patrem*" ("One death snatches away two, but an evil death snatches away the father"),

¹¹⁰ Roger of Howden, *Gesta Henrici Secundi*, II, ed. by William Stubbs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 55.

¹¹¹ Phyllis B. Roberts, 'Prophecy, Hagiography and St Thomas of Canterbury', in *Medieval Futures*, ed. by J.A. Burrow and Ian P. Wei (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), 67-80 (p. 80).

a statement which Gerald mistakenly attributes to the bible (698-9).¹¹² Gerald remarks that this quote was originally about the priest Eli and his sons – all of whom died after they forsook God – but that it now refers to Henry and his sons Henry the Young King and Geoffrey, who both predeceased their father (1 Samuel 2:30-6. 4:16-8). This reference to the story of Eli and his sons is not unique to advisory discourse of this period. Both the *Policraticus* and later advisory works feature Eli's and his sons' sins and subsequent deaths.¹¹³ Gerald, however, fails to mention Eli's goodness to better compare Eli to Henry and his description of Henry as irreverent to God. Further, attributing the quote to the bible lends greater authority and credence to Becket's vision and suggests that just as the downfall of Eli and his sons was prophesised, so too was Henry's and his sons'. Prophecies surrounding a father and his progeny are a topos of prophetic discourse.¹¹⁴ The *Prophecies of Merlin Silvester* (likely dating to John's reign though drawn from Gerald's earlier prophecies of the princes' uprising found in the *Expugnatio Hibernica*) has two prophecies that centre on a father and his sons: in one, where the sins of a father lead to the rebellion of his sons and vengeance for a crime, and in another, the white dragon's son will rule a 'uilis & uacua' ('worthless and empty') fatherland.¹¹⁵

The religious man and the abbot of Clairvaux also hear voices portending King Henry's end. The religious man is told “ad nichilum deuenient tanquam aqua

¹¹² It is not unusual for Gerald to have misquoted the bible in his works. Georgia Henley argues that this could have several implications including Gerald's use of a variation of the Vulgate we are unfamiliar with or that his misquotes are purposeful. Georgia Henley, 'Quotation, Revision, and Narrative Structure in Giraldus Cambrensis's *Itinerarium Kambriae*', *The Journal of Medieval Latin*, 24 (2014), 1-52 (p. 28).

¹¹³ Eli will be discussed in chapter two. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, p. 59.

¹¹⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, pp. 152-4.

¹¹⁵ The prophecy of the white dragon's son is itself a modified version of the 'Here Prophecy' found in Roger of Howden's *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*. Victoria Flood, 'Prophecy as History', pp. 552-3, 555-7.

decurrens” (“they shall come to nothing, like water running down”) (700-1). This line, a misquotation from the bible which reads ‘dissolvantur quasi aquae quae defluent’ (‘let them melt away as waters which continually flow’), predicts a bleak future for the Angevins, for it suggests they will lose their land and their lives (Psalms 57.8). After this account, we are told of when the abbot of Clairvaux met Henry as a boy. Upon being asked what he thought of the future king, the abbot spoke as ‘spiritu quasi prophetico respondit: “De diabolo uenit, et ad diabolum ibit”’ (‘if by a prophetic spirit: “From the devil he came and to the devil he will go”’) (702-3). The link between the abbot’s prophetic spirit and demons echoes the relationship between the two found in the *Policraticus*. Gerald’s concern lies with the demonic origin of Henry that is vaticinated rather than the demonic origination of the prophecy itself. Interestingly, this line appears two other times in *De Principis*: once when the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem speaks to Henry about his sons (“de dyabolo uenerunt, et ad dyabolum ibunt”) and another when Richard says that he and his brothers ‘de dyabolo namque eos omnes uenisse et ad diabolum... ituros esse’ (539, 689). The recurrence of this phrase emphasises the demonic nature of the Angevins as does Gerald’s references to Eleanor’s and Henry’s corrupt origins (685-9). The speakers of the prophecies all possess a sense of authority: representatives of the church and Richard with firsthand knowledge of his family’s misdeeds. In particular, noting the religious nature of these men suggests (as John openly states in the *Policraticus*) that a prophecy’s truth depends upon the worthiness of the prophet. Gerald’s emphasis on the divine nature of prophecies (in some instances overtly stating and in others implying) highlights why they are to be trusted.

In another tale, a nameless monk, who, thinking of King Henry and his sons before going to sleep, dreams of a river where four male ducks perch upon the bank. A voice tells the monk that the ducks represent the king's four sons and asks if the monk wishes to see the princes' futures. The voice tells the monk to look at the sky where a falcon, representing Philip Augustus, soars, and upon seeing the falcon, the four ducks submerge themselves underwater in fear and are not seen again (701). The tale, in addition to offering a derisive comparison between the princes and ignoble ducks, engages with prophetic discourse through its use of avian imagery (although writers often used animal ciphers to covertly critique kings, Gerald is unique in that he draws direct comparisons between the birds and the Angevins).¹¹⁶ Elsewhere in *De Principis*, Gerald mentions a painting Henry had commissioned of an eagle being assailed by four eaglets. The king remarks that the painting represents himself and his sons and that his fourth son 'michi denique longe grauius aliis omnibus et periculosius nonnunquam insultabit' ('will eventually attack me more seriously than all the rest and sometimes more dangerously') (680-1). As already noted, the use of an eagle as a cipher for Henry was a dominant image. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetiae Merlini*, for instance, tells of an 'Eagle of Broken Covenant' who will own a portion of France and will paint it gold, and John of Salisbury associates this prophecy with Henry.¹¹⁷ In using avian imagery, Gerald draws on the authority of an established trope of prophetic discourse and emphasises Henry's own engagement with avian imagery in order to show how the decline in Angevin rule had long been foretold.

¹¹⁶ Flood, *Prophecy, Politics, and Place*, p. 19.

¹¹⁷ Crick, p. 72; Geoffrey of Monmouth, p. 174.

Despite his discussions of the inevitability of Henry's fall and how the princes' uprising was revenge for their father's misdeeds, Gerald treats the princes' seditious acts negatively, placing varying amounts of culpability upon Henry the Young King, Geoffrey, and John. As with his father, Gerald understands Geoffrey's untimely death as divine punishment for his misdeeds. Throughout Books II and III, Gerald describes the princes' qualities, pairing favourable descriptions with unfavourable ones. Geoffrey is described, for instance, as *'mirabili industria, rerum omnium simulator uarius et dissimulator'* ('of wonderful energy, an unreliable hypocrite and dissembler in all things') (480-1). And although Gerald describes some of Henry the Young King and John's negative qualities, he understands them to possess many virtues and that they only rebelled because they succumbed to the wicked influence of others (475, 483). He does, however, emphasise Geoffrey's and Henry's ingratitude towards their father, writing that Geoffrey was *'in patrem semper ingratus existens'* ('always ungrateful to his father') and that it was Geoffrey's *'ingratus'* behaviour that caused God to cut the prince's life short (480-1). Prince Henry, though portrayed as possessing the martial prowess of Hector, Achilles, and Alexander, also known for the *'ingritudinis uicio et optimi patris uexacione notabilem reddens'* (vice of ingratitude... and for vexing the best of fathers') (476-7). Gerald likely chose the comparison to these men, for, despite their skill on the battlefield, all met an early death, which was followed by the breakup of a mighty kingdom. Citing Hosea 9.16, Gerald writes that *"Quod si genuerint, interficiam amantissima uteri eorum"* ("If they should have issue, I will slay the best beloved fruit of their womb") is applicable to the king's familial difficulties (480-1). When this passage is read alongside Henry's and his sons' poor behaviour, it suggests that the princes' rebellion – as well as their deaths – were acts of divine punishment.

Shifting Attitudes: Use of Exemplars

As with John, Gerald uses exemplary rulers to show how kings ought to act and the peril of lacking the power of discernment. Through his use of exemplars, we see a shift in his attitudes towards the Angevin kings. In Book I, Gerald, citing Seneca, writes that “longum enim iter est... per precepta, commodum autem et compendiosum per exempla” (“it is a long journey through precepts but through examples it is easy and brief”), and holding true to this, Gerald uses both positive and negative exemplary rulers extensively throughout *De Principis* (196-7). Many of the exemplary rulers used are also found in the *Policraticus*, which implies the readers of both works were expected to be familiar with the figures and the texts they come from. Throughout Book I, Gerald writes of exemplary biblical and ancient kings to promote virtues, such as moderation, foresight, and prudence, and he favourably compares many of these rulers to the Angevins. He also discusses tyrannical rulers and the consequences of their vices. Although Gerald does not compare these tyrants to the Angevins in Book I, many of their vices reflect the vices of Henry and his sons found in Books II and III, suggesting Gerald used the tyrants in Book I to guide his descriptions of poor Angevin governance in Books II and III. The shift in the direction of the work reflects Gerald’s growing dissatisfaction with Angevin rule both on account of his frustration as a member of the royal court and his frustration surrounding his election to the see of St. David’s.¹¹⁸

Alexander the Great is the most used exemplum in *De Principis* and, perhaps, the most used in the advisory discourse, appearing in each advisory work examined in this thesis. Gerald frequently describes both Alexander’s vices and virtues, yet, as

¹¹⁸ Robert Bartlett, ‘Introduction’, pp. xvi-xvii.

Charles Stone has noted, Gerald largely portrays Alexander as a poor ruler since most of his tales centre on the ruler's less good behaviour.¹¹⁹ In one such tale, Gerald recounts a letter King Philip wrote to Alexander, in which he faults his son for giving too freely in an attempt to gain loyalty from his people. The same tale is found in the *Policraticus*, and, in fact, the two passages, which draw on Cicero, are nearly identical (*F* 301. *DPI* 105). In another tale, however, Gerald praises the king's generosity. After Alexander gifts an entire city to one of his ministers, the recipient remarks that he is not worthy of the gift to which Alexander replies: “Non quero quid oporteat te accipere, sed quid me dare” (“I do not seek what is fitting for you to accept but what is fitting for me to give”) (102-3). Seemingly contradictory, the two tales allow Gerald to argue that rulers ought to show largesse but only with what is fitting. Such concern about moderation in a ruler's behaviour is an overarching theme throughout *De Principis* as well as in the *Policraticus*.

In another account, we are told of Alexander's cruelty. While the king was inebriated, he sentences the chief mayor of the palace (and his close friend) to death. The chief mayor makes an appeal to ‘tirannus’ (‘the tyrant’) Alexander to which the king replies, “Sed a quo et ad quem appellas?” Et ille: “Ab Alexandro,” inquit, “ebrio ad Alexandrum sobrium” (“But from whom and to whom do you appeal?” He said, “From Alexander drunk to Alexander sober”) (202-3). Softened by the reply, the king defers the execution to the next day. Once sober, Alexander is glad he deferred the execution and pardons his friend. Gerald's tale is interesting in his description of Alexander as a tyrant, for he highlights the exemplary ruler's poor governance – becoming and passing judgement intoxicated – but also Alexander's willingness to

¹¹⁹ Charles Russell Stone, *From Tyrant to Philosopher-King* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 115-8.

admit his faults and rectify them. Such a description of Alexander can be found in later advice to princes texts (as I will discuss in later chapters).¹²⁰ However, in the subsequent paragraph, Gerald writes that, despite Alexander's disavowal of his behaviour, the great man and conqueror relaxes his guard, becomes intoxicated again, and perishes from poisoned wine (203). This additional paragraph further supports the depiction of Alexander as a poor ruler, particularly one who fails to learn from his mistakes.

This negative portrayal of Alexander the Great becomes particularly useful by the time Gerald writes Books II and III when his loyalties had shifted to the French monarchy as it allows Gerald to use Alexander as a comparison to both Henry II and Henry the Young King. While the comparisons to Alexander the Great in Books II and III initially appear favourable, they actually function as a point of criticism. Like Alexander, Henry II conquers vast lands, and in Gerald's previous work, the *Topographia Hibernica*, he favourably compares Henry's conquests to those of Alexander's and copies this passage into *De Principis* (514-5). Gerald proceeds to copy the passage from the *Topographia Hibernica* in which he describes Henry as 'Alexander noster occidentalis' ('our Western Alexander'), whose courage led to the conquest of Ireland (516-7). Gerald may have drawn this comparison because Alexander is associated with conquering to the end of the world in the east while Ireland was considered the end of the world in the west. Although Gerald's loyalties had changed from when he wrote the *Topographia Hibernica* to when he wrote Books II and III of *De Principis*, Gerald's negative depiction of the Macedonian ruler in Book I allows Gerald to both affirm the *Topographia's* depiction of Henry and criticise him.

¹²⁰ Thomas Hocceve similarly describes Alexander the Great in *The Regiment of Princes* when a knight reproves Alexander's 'behaviour as bestial and miserable', Alexander apologises and says he will make amends. Hocceve, 3497-3513.

Gerald suggests that just as Henry's reputation as a successful conqueror mirrors Alexander's, so too do his tyrannical tendencies, immoderate behaviour, and failure to learn from previous poor behaviour, and these vices lead to both Henry's and Alexander's downfalls. Although Gerald and John view Alexander with admiration for his conquests, they largely focus on the king's immoral behaviour – a view we will see change in later insular advice to princes.

The issue of tyranny appears throughout *De Principis*. Like John of Salisbury, Gerald provides biblical and ancient rulers as examples of tyrants and cites these men's domination over their people as the defining characteristic of a tyrant. Unlike John, though, Gerald limits his definition of tyranny to those wielding public power, but in his tale of Herod of Ascalon, he does acknowledge there are several types of tyranny, including domestic tyranny. Gerald writes that Herod 'non una contentus aut paucis, sed tyrannidem in suos omnem exercuit' ('not content with one or several kinds of tyranny, exercised every kind against his own people') (189, 202-3). Throughout Book I, Gerald criticises the various faults and failures of tyrants – many of which reflect those of Henry II and his sons found in Books II and III (and therefore suggest Gerald utilised Book I to guide his work in the latter two books).

Like John, Gerald recounts the tale of Rehoboam, who becomes a stock figure in advisory discourse. Gerald notes how Rehoboam lost his kingdom due to his fatuity and rejection of experienced counsel, and both he and John deride Rehoboam's favour of youthful counsel (John: 'consiliis iuuenum' and Gerald: 'consilium iuuenile') and how it led to the ten tribes abandoning him, but the language in the two versions otherwise vary (*L* 227. *DPI* 85, 219). Unlike John's version, Gerald stresses the people of Judah's response to Rehoboam's oppression, writing that they abandoned Rehoboam and said he

would no longer be their ruler (85, 145). The people's rejection of Rehoboam as their king is an addition to the biblical tale and echoes Gerald's (and John's) discussion on tyranny in which he, citing Cicero, says it is acceptable to strike down a tyrant (195).¹²¹ Gerald likely chose to make these additions to emphasise the consequences of rulers governing poorly – a leitmotif he carries throughout *De Principis* and into his discussions on Angevin rule.

One example Gerald uses in Book I is Saul. Gerald writes that after King Saul failed to listen to God's command to destroy the Amalekites, the prophet Samuel told Saul that God was angry with him. When Saul fails to repent, Samuel warns Saul that God has rejected him as king. Because of this, Saul spends the rest of his days facing trials and tribulations until he and his three sons are finally killed in battle with the Philistines (199). Saul's refusal to follow God's command and repent for his actions mirrors Gerald's description of Henry in Books II and III, for Gerald stresses Henry's impious behaviour and failure to heed the messages and signs given by God (as discussed earlier). Further, like Saul, Henry is punished for his actions with the loss of his sons (initially through rebellion and then finally with their deaths): 'Exquisita namque Dei uindicta qualem se filium patri spirituali exhibuerat, tales erga se quos geuerat filios carnales inuenit' ('For it was an exquisite revenge of God that he found that fleshly children he had fathered behaved to him just as he had behaved as a son to his spiritual father'), and God inflicted revenge upon Henry through his sons (438-9, 486-9). Although John uses the tale of Saul in the *Policraticus*, Gerald's version is much more abbreviated and leaves out the Witch of Endor. The differences between the

¹²¹ John writes that it is just to kill a tyrant (*F* 211). It is possible that Gerald read the *Policraticus*, but it is more likely that both writers were influenced by Cicero's thoughts on tyranny as they both used Cicero as their source material throughout their works.

two are likely because of John's and Gerald's divergent thinking on prophecy. Eliminating the Witch of Endor allows Gerald to avoid discussing prophecy in a negative light, and, instead, stress Saul's and his sons' deaths to better align to contemporary politics.

Gerald, unlike John, also defines a tyrant as one who lives a wicked life and corrupts his people (an idea we will see repeated in Ireland's *Meroure*) (189-91). To highlight this, Gerald emphasises the iniquitous nature of tyrants and how they reached the apogee of success only to meet their demise. In his discussion of Pompey the Roman, Gerald writes how Pompey was a 'maximus et felicissimus' ('great and most fortunate') citizen of Rome, but when he conquered Jerusalem, Pompey allowed his soldiers to profane the Temple. As divine punishment, a civil war soon breaks out, and Pompey is forced to escape to Egypt where he is executed under King Ptolemy's orders (206-7). A similar tale recounts Antiochus Epiphanes's fall – once the great and 'potentissimus' ('most powerful') of Alexander the Great. Following his triumph over Judaea and Syria, Antiochus captures the city of Jerusalem and profanes the Temple by stripping it of its gold and silver. God punishes Antiochus by inflicting him with an incurable and painful disease that ultimately kills the ruler (204-7). The use of terms like 'magni' and 'potentissimus' highlights the prominent position of these rulers and shows that even successful rulers can be punished for their impiety. Gerald remarks that God 'ultores tam irreuerenciam postmodum et indeuocionem... ulciscitur' ('punishes in those avengers themselves both their lack of reverence and devotion') (208-9).

Gerald's material on Pompey and Antiochus in Book I draws on similar themes as the material on Henry found in Books II and III. Despite the depictions of Henry as successful and great man, Gerald frequently comments on Angevin tyranny. A chapter

in Book I is titled, ‘Nota De Insularibus Tyrannis Et Britannicis’ (‘A Note Concerning Insular and British Tyrants’). In the beginning of the chapter, Gerald cites Gildas, who wrote that Britain “‘fertilis est tyrannorum patria’” (“‘is a fertile fatherland for tyrants’”), and Boethius, who wrote that ‘reges insularum omnes tyranni sunt’ (‘the kings of islands are all tyrants’ (232-3). These passages are followed by many comments on Henry’s tyranny and irreverence for the church (438-9). Although Henry seems to escape punishment for a long time, Gerald warns in the preface of Book III that it is ineluctable, for impiety ought to fear the inevitability of ruin (565). Gerald writes that God punishes Henry for his behaviour in many different ways (438-9, 558-9). As with Pompey and Antiochus, God is described as seeking vengeance for Henry’s wicked behaviour: ‘Quanquam ulcione diuina in patris perniciem ita filii deseurent, tamen eodem ultore, qui “nec bonum irremuneratum nec malum relinquit impunitum”, praua postmodum eorum uoluntas est punita’ (‘Although the sons raged against the father to his downfall through divine vengeance, nevertheless, through that same avenger, “who leaves no good unrewarded or evil unpunished,” their evil will was later punished’) (682-3). The phrase ‘nec bonum irremuneratum nec malum relinquit impunitum’ is commonly used within and outwith the advisory discourse. It can be found in Radulfus Ardens’ *Speculum Universale* (c. late twelfth century) as well as in Walter Map’s *De Nugis Curialium*.¹²² Gerald’s inclusion of this quotation illustrates how an advisory writer could use material common to contemporary political literature

¹²² Peter Lombard, ‘Speculum Uniuersale’, in *Library of Latin Texts* < <https://clt-brepolis-net.bham-azproxy.idm.oclc.org/llta/pages/FullText.aspx?ctx=FCFADAJI> > [Accessed 10 June 2024]. Gerald of Wales, *De Principis Instructione*, p. 683. In the *De Nugis Curialium*, Map satirises the quotation in his discussion of courtiers’ failure to truly see and hear what occurs at court. Map writes of Eudo, in a tale that we have seen employs similar language as that found in the *Policraticus*. Map tells describes the devil, who guides Eudo to act evilly, as one who ‘nullum ei bonum impunitum, nullum malum irremuneratum’ (‘left no good deed unpunished, no bad one unrewarded’). Despite this philosophy of the devil, Eudo, like Henry II, is ultimately punished for his bad behaviour by God. Map, pp. 320-1, 330-2.

to stress the argument for his own work: in this case, that rulers ought to fear divine punishment for their misdeeds.

Gerald's treatment of tyrants' deaths is notable in that he stresses their suffering and humiliating nature. He juxtaposes the wretched and unnatural deaths of tyrants against the admirable and natural deaths of good rulers (232-3). Because he refers to Henry's tyranny (both directly and indirectly), Gerald describes Henry's death as he does Pompey's, Antiochus's, and Alexander's – ignominious and as a punishment for misdeeds.¹²³ As with the exemplary tyrants, Gerald describes Henry's death as pitiful and unnatural, noting that God's abandonment of Henry is a reaction to Henry's abandonment of God.¹²⁴ Pompey and Antiochus blaspheming the Temple is comparative to Henry questioning why he should venerate and honour Jesus Christ when he himself has been deprived of honour by Christ (615). For such words, as well as his other acts of impiety, Gerald believes Henry deserves punishment even if it occurs late into Henry's reign. Gerald details Henry's suffering.

Et a qua decubuit septima... letaliter correptus, hec ingeminando immo multiplicando uerba, que de reliquiis cogitationum uehemencia tam morbi quam doloris partier et indignacionis extorsit, quoniam 'ex habundantia cordis os loqui solet', 'Proh pudor de rege uicto! Proh pudor!' in extremis laborauit. Et sic demum inter erumpnosas huiusmodi uoces, proprie preco confusionis, expirauit, obrutusque magis et oppressus quam naturali morte finitus occubuit.

¹²³ Gerald writes of Henry's punishment by God in Book II (chapters four, eight, twelve, fourteen, and thirty-one) and Book III (chapters eleven, twenty-four, and twenty-five). Gerald of Wales, pp. 439, 703, 709.

¹²⁴ Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales 1146-1223*, p. 86.

[On] the seventh day from the beginning of his illness... [he was] struck down lethally, he laboured at the point of death, groaning out these words, or rather repeating them over and over, which the violence of the disease and likewise of his grief and indignation wrenched from him, since 'out of abundance of the heart the mouth speaks'. 'Shame, shame, on a conquered king!' And so at length, among disastrous words of this kind, the herald of his own confusion, he breathed his last and died, overwhelmed and oppressed rather than concluding with a natural death (680-3).

The emphasis on Henry's painful death ('in extremis laboravit') and his deathbed realisation of his offences ('Proh pudor de rege uicto') echoes Gerald's descriptions of the deaths of Herod and Antiochus in Book I. Inflicted with painful diseases, Herod and Antiochus are rendered putrid and are abandoned by all ('dolore correptus' and 'per momenta singula doloribus suis augmenta capientibus') (202-5). All these miserable deaths are, according to Gerald, a result of divine vengeance, and this close connection between a ruler's irreverence for God and his subsequent punishment reflects Gerald's familiarity with biblical allusions and modes of thought (200). As he does throughout the *De Principis*, Gerald depicts the present and future of Angevin rule in terms of reward and punishment for the ruler's actions, largely based upon patterns found across exempla from biblical tales. And so, Henry's fate, and the fate of his children, are much like those of Ahab and Saul, and they will suffer for their failures as rulers.

Advice to Princes in the Long Twelfth Century

The *Policraticus* is the beginning of a medieval literary tradition within England and drew upon philosophical, biblical, and prophetic models, which became conventions of

advisory discourse, and by comparing the *Policraticus* with *De Principis*, we begin to understand how the discourse began to develop in England during the High Middle Ages. John of Salisbury and Gerald of Wales both utilise topoi of advisory discourse to react to the tumultuous periods following Stephen's and Henry's reigns in the *Policraticus* and *De Principis*. In reading the two works alongside one another, we gain a better understanding of the shifting attitudes towards political prophecy and Angevin rule following years of instability during the princes' rebellion and Richard's and John's reigns. We also see early usage of conventions of the discourse in Britain, including particular exemplary rulers, phrases, and topics of discussion, by John and their continuation and adaptation by Gerald.

Both works discuss portents of the future, the concern about poor counsel, and tyranny (all relevant to the political literary culture of mid-twelfth- to early thirteenth-century England) to highlight the need for a ruler to possess keen discernment. John's emphasis on the dangers of poor counsel and tyranny may reflect lingering anxieties following Stephen's reign, but they also become tropes of advice to princes works centred around crisis periods. Additionally, John and Gerald's treatment of tyranny and use of exemplary tyrants centre on a ruler's irreverence for God, which may reflect the contentious relationship Stephen and Henry II had with the church. The two works' varying views on prophecy, however, intimates a shift in the acceptance and use of political prophecy. While the *Policraticus* expresses a cautious belief in political prophecy, it emphasises that oftentimes people engage with false prophecy, which seeks to deceive. *De Principis*, by contrast, criticises rulers' failure to heed political prophecy and highlights the disastrous results of doing so, likely because Gerald was himself an author of political prophecy. Both texts, however, contend that true prophecy must be

divine in origin (showing their position as clerics) and that a ruler must be able to discern true prophecy from false. The issue of a king's judgment, as well as tropes and exemplary rulers found in the *Policraticus* and *De Principis*, as we will see, recur throughout later advice to princes texts although the authors' treatment of them varies, depending on the political environment.

Chapter Two

Imperial Imaginings and Failures: Advice to Princes of the 1320s

This chapter explores Walter of Milemete's and William of Pagula's early thirteenth-century advice to princes, *De nobilitatibus, sapientiis, et prudentiis regum* and *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*, respectively. Positioned on either side of Edward II's deposition and death, both works react to the politically tumultuous period of the 1320s and 1330s. Both *De nobilitatibus* and the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* have received little critical attention from scholars. Milemete's *De nobilitatibus*, which was written around the time of Edward II's deposition, is best known for its many illustrations. Most scholarship has centred on its miniatures, and Michael Michael even remarked that the work is 'rightly remembered for its miniatures rather than its text'.¹ Cary Nederman and Libby Karlinger Escobedo have offered some analysis of the work (acknowledging the insight it provides surrounding the political environment of the newly crowned Edward III), but there is much more to be done.² Similarly, study of the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* is limited, and scholarship to date focuses on the text's alignment (or otherwise) with advisory discourse.³ Despite the limited study of *De nobilitatibus* and the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*, these two works are a notable intervention in advisory discourse, for in analysing them, we can see how discursive conventions evolved over time. While many of the exemplars from twelfth-century advice to princes works are used, we see changes in their treatment and function in these early fourteenth-century texts. These changes are often made so that the writer can react to contemporary politics

¹ Michael, p. 37.

² Cary J. Nederman, 'Introduction to *On the Nobility, Wisdom, and Prudence of Kings* by Walter of Milemete', pp. 22-3; Karlinger Escobedo, p. 10.

³ Nederman, 'Introduction to the *Mirror of King Edward III*', p. 69.

or engage with contemporary literature. Further, these works illustrate shifting attitudes towards royal authority with increased importance being placed upon the king's governance for the benefit of his kingdom.

In this chapter, I demonstrate how these two advisory works reacted to the tumultuous reign of Edward II. Particularly, I show how the works, in engaging with topoi of advice to princes (as well as other forms of literature), express the importance of a king's reputation, his relationship with the baronage, and the importance of effective economic management. Furthermore, I explore the cultural and textual uses of accusations of sexual indiscretion, their associations with weak rule, and their beginnings as a discursive trope. First, I will discuss the historical context in which *De nobilitatibus* and *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* were written. Then, I will explore *De nobilitatibus*' use of flattery and discussion of counsel and the king's relationship with the baronage. Lastly, I will examine the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* and the ways in which it differs from previous advice to princes, including its critical and pastoral tone.

Historical Context

Much of the advice within *De nobilitatibus* and the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* reflects the concerns surrounding Edward II's reign, in particular anxiety about his favourites. Contemporary chronicles contain several complaints about Edward's counsellors, including Piers Gaveston, Hugh Despenser the Elder and the Younger, Hugh Audley, and Roger Damory, centred on the influence they held over Edward and how they were lavishly rewarded by him; rumours that Edward had sexual relationships with them also circulated. The perceived favourites gained the animosity of the English baronage, for they were 'ad tantum decus et honorem proeuctum' ('raised to such splendour and

eminence').⁴ Most criticism centred on Piers Gaveston and Despensers the Younger, who exercised great power and particularly benefited from their relationship with Edward. For instance, in the *Chronica monasterii de Melsaa* (1396), Thomas de Burton accused Gaveston of acting 'quasi rex' ('as if a king') and in the *Chronicon* (1347), Geoffrey the Baker accused Hugh Despensers the Younger as being 'alterum regem, immo regis rectorem' ('another king, or more accurately ruler of the king').⁵ Edward's relationship with Gaveston and Despensers the Younger, along with accusations of sodomy against Edward in 1326, led to speculation of a sexual relationship between them.⁶ Such favouritism caused enmity between the king, his counsellors, and the baronage, precipitating the barons' rebellion in 1321.⁷ Frustrations with Edward's rule culminated with the invasion of England by his estranged wife Isabella of France and her lover, Roger Mortimer, and Edward was deposed in 1326 in favour of his son Edward III.

Edward II, along with his father, Edward I, and son, Edward III, undertook military campaigns in Scotland. To support the campaigns, they utilised purveyance: the seizing of goods (both victuals and animals) from the people to support soldiers. Gradually, the practice was extended to support the king and his royal household.⁸ The

⁴ *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, ed. and trans. by Wendy Childs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 8-9.

⁵ Thomas de Burton, *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa, a Fundatione Usque ad Annum 1396*, ed. by Edward A. Bond (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), p. 326; Geoffrey the Baker, *Chronicon: Falfridi Le Baker de Swynebroke*, ed. by Edward Maunde Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), p. 10. The English translations are my own.

⁶ The first accusation of sodomy against Edward II is from a 1326 sermon by the bishop of Hereford Adam of Orleton, in which he referred to Edward II as a 'tyrant and sodomite' ('tyrannus et sodomita'). Accusations of Edward's sodomy were tied to the idea that he was unfit to govern. Ian Mortimer notes that accusations of sodomy in the early fourteenth century were used for political purposes brought in at 'key points' in rulers' 'moral destruction of their subjects'. Ian Mortimer, 'Sermons of Sodomy: A Reconsideration of Edward II's Sodomitical Reputation', in *The Reign of Edward II: New Perspectives*, ed. by Gwilym Dodd and Anthony Musson (York: York Medieval Press, 2006), pp. 48-60 (pp. 50-1); W. Mark Ormrod, 'The Sexualities of Edward II', in *The Reign of Edward II: New Perspectives*, ed. by Gwilym Dodd and Anthony Musson (York: York Medieval Press, 2006), pp. 22-47 (pp. 33-4, 37).

⁷ Seymour Phillips, *Edward II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 373-4.

⁸ Boyle, p. 332.

practice, dating back to at least the reign of Henry I, was considered one of the king's privileges. And while Henry II's 1171 Irish campaign is the first time an English monarch is recorded to have used the practice to supply soldiers, it was not until Edward I's Scottish campaigns that purveyance was frequently enacted.⁹ Contemporary records note many complaints of the stress Edward I's household placed upon local communities as he travelled throughout his kingdom, and despite attempts at reform, the practice continued under his son.¹⁰ By the time Edward III ascended the throne, purveyance remained an issue, and royal use even increased during the renewal of the Scottish campaigns in 1333 and the beginning of the French campaigns in 1337.¹¹

De nobilitatibus and the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* are notable examples of the advisory discourse composed during a period understood to contain few such English texts. This dearth may be a result of both the increased use of directly petitioning the king, which became common early in Edward I's reign and developed into a literary form by the early fourteenth century, and Edward I's and Edward II's relatively limited patronage of literary works.¹² England in this period, nonetheless, still saw the circulation of works in the advisory tradition. A number of significant continental and

⁹ According to William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, Henry I sought to restrain the practice within the royal household. W.R. Jones, 'Purveyance for War and the Community of the Realm in Late Medieval England', *Albion*, 7 (1975), 300-316 (p. 301-5); Cary J. Nederman, p. 64.

¹⁰ By the end of Edward I's reign, the practice was so detested that there were attempts to reform. Both the *Articuli super cartas* (1300) and the *Statute of Stamford* (1309), which cite the abusive nature of practice, sought to limit the monarch's use of purveyance. There are two extant documents from Edward I requesting goods to be seized in Berkshire – one in particular for the visitation of his children. The practice of purveyance was a concern to writers, too, one which continued late into Edward III's reign. Phillips, pp. 49, 156, 162; National Archives, *Articuli super cartas*, 1300; National Archives, SC 1/61/33; National Archives SC 1/12/185; *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, pp. 130-1; Yun Ni, "'Wyde howses full of wolle sakkes': 'Estate of Merchants' and the Parliamentary commons in *Wynnere and Wastoure*", *Parergon*, 38 (2021), 21-39 (29-30); Gwilym Dodd, 'A Parliament Full of Rats? Piers Plowman and the Good Parliament of 1376', *Historical Research*, 79 (2006), 21-49 (pp. 36-40).

¹¹ W.R. Jones, p. 310.

¹² Matthews, pp. 4-5, 10; Karl Julius Holzknrecht, *Literary Patronage in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1923), p. 222; Janet Coleman, *English Literature in History, 1350-1400* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1981), pp. 60-3.

Arabic advisory works circulated in England between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. The *Secreta* was first translated into Latin in an abbreviated version in 1120 and then fully in 1230, and this latter version survives in roughly 350 manuscripts.¹³ Similarly, Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum* (1280), written for Philip IV of France, survives in roughly 350 manuscripts and was widely read by both lay and clerical readers from the time of its composition until the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹⁴ The influential *De Regno*, attributed to both Thomas Aquinas and Ptolemy of Lucca, was completed around 1300 and survives in many extant manuscripts.¹⁵ In addition to the large number of extant manuscripts, we see these works' structure and content utilised by later medieval advice to princes, suggesting their influence upon advisory discourse. And so, despite the limited production of original English advisory texts in the thirteenth- and early fourteenth- centuries, the discourse remained popular.

¹³ The *Secretum Secretorum* was enjoyed by a wide audience based upon its ownership by Edward III, nobility, ecclesiasts, and political figures. Cavanaugh, pp. 116, 167, 278, 393, 425, 565, 620, 711, 804; Helen Fulton, 'Vernacular Versions of the "Secretum Secretorum"', in *Prodesse et delectare*, ed. by Norbert Kossinger and Claudia Wittig (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), pp. 57-82 (pp. 59-60); Charles Schmitt, 'Introduction', in *Pseudo-Aristotle The Secret of Secrets*, ed. by W.F. Ryan and Charles B. Schmitt (London: Warburg Institute, 1983), p. 1; Mahmoud Manzalaoui, 'The *Secreta Secretorum* in English Thought and Literature from the Fourteenth to the Seventeenth Century with a Preliminary Survey of the Origins of the *Secreta*' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1954).

¹⁴ This work was largely owned by the nobility and ecclesiasts. The bishop of London Ralph de Baldock, Edward II's treasurer Walter de Stapeldon, Edward III's counsellor Henry of Grosmont, and Edward III himself all owned copies. Cavanaugh, pp. 110, 506, 647, 862, 921-2; Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De Regimine Principum*, pp. 2-3, 55-6.

¹⁵ The *De Regno* is also known as the *De regimine principum*, but I will refer to it as the *De regno* to distinguish it from Giles of Rome's work by the same name. James Blythe argues that Aquinas wrote the first book and half of the second book while Ptolemy, who studied under Aquinas, wrote the remainder of the work. James M. Blythe, 'Introduction', in *On the Government of Rulers De Regimine Principum* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 1-59 (pp. 1, 45). Given that it has the same name as Giles of Rome's work, there is uncertainty as to who owned the work. It is possible that it was owned by the rector John de Ufford and the Corpus Christi College fellow Thomas Markaunt. Cavanaugh, pp. 564, 890.

Background of *De nobilitibus*

Walter de Milemete had a close relationship with the royal court, acting as a king's clerk during Edward II's and Edward III's reigns and as a King's Hall fellow, a position nominated and funded by the king. Sometime after Edward II's deposition in January 1327 and before Edward III's coronation in February 1327 Milemete presented his advice to princes text, *De nobilitibus, sapientiis, et prudentiis regum*, along with an illuminated copy of the *Secreta*, to Edward III.¹⁶ It is possible that Milemete produced the work himself to secure a better standing within the court, for there is no evidence to suggest that the *Secreta* and *De nobilitibus* were commissioned by a patron.¹⁷

Milemete was rewarded later in his career with several ecclesiastical offices (although it is unknown as to whether they were related to *De nobilitibus*), including a prebend in Glasney in Cornwall in March 1327 and a benefice in Conington, Cambridgeshire in 1350. Later, he exchanged this position for a rectorship in Chevening, Kent where he died in 1373.¹⁸

Alterations within the manuscript suggest that it was originally written for Edward II and revised following his deposition in 1327, and it can be read as advice centred on the political failure of Edward II.¹⁹ The manuscript is known for its imagery and features numerous illustrations (six full-page and fifteen half-page miniatures) and

¹⁶ This dating is suggested by Milemete's reference to Edward III as 'venerabilis domini n[ost]ri domini ed[ward]i' ('our venerable Lord Edward') and 'h[e]redi illustris domini n[ost]ri domini edwardi' ('heir to our illustrious lord, Lord Edward'). All Latin quotations are my transcriptions from the manuscript while English ones are from Nederman's *Political Thought in Early Fourteenth-Century England*. In-text citations will be noted by 'fol.' for Latin quotations and by 'O' for the English. Oxford, Christ Church, MS 92, fol. 8r; Walter de Milemete, pp. 24-61 (p. 27).

¹⁷ Karlinger Escobedo, p. 3, 5-6.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 4-5.

¹⁹ Given the elaborate nature of the manuscript and that it is known to be a part of Edward III's library, it is likely that the work was meant for the king. That the king read the work, though, is debatable. Michael, p. 36; Ormrod, *Edward III*, p. 13.

borders on each page of text.²⁰ Both the *Secreta* and *De nobilitatibus* manuscripts share a scribe and three artists and appear incomplete. There are unfinished borders and unpainted illustrations in the works: ten miniatures of a king and his men in the *Secreta* and fifteen full-page drawings of siege warfare in *De nobilitatibus*.²¹ Milemete's pairing of the *Secreta* along with *De nobilitatibus* is unsurprising given its influence upon the advisory discourse, and Milemete himself writes that he drew inspiration for his *De nobilitatibus* from the work (O 29).

Structure and Sources

Milemete's treatise is divided into seventeen chapters. The first chapter, titled 'On the prayers and divine supplications suitable for the king; and on the histories of the deeds of our Creator for the king to behold' is merely mentioned in the manuscript's table of contents and is not actually found within the manuscript. There is no evidence that the first chapter's pages were removed as there are faint pricking of page rulings where the chapter should be, suggesting they were initially meant as text pages and not, as they currently are, a series of full-page miniatures.²² The work is illuminated and heavily illustrated. While many of the images do reflect the advice written on the page, not all do, and there are images of heraldry, beasts, and religious figures throughout.²³ The inclusion of so many illustrations, much less such heavy illustrations as are found in the manuscript of the *De nobilitatibus*, is unusual for advice to princes texts, and the

²⁰ Michael, p. 37.

²¹ Karlinger Escobedo, p. 3; London, British Library, MS 47680, fols 69r - 76v. MS 92, fol. 72r - 78v.

²² Karlinger Escobedo, pp. 7-8.

²³ Michael, p. 37; MS 92, fols 5r, 8v, 14r, 14v, 16r, 18v, 24v, 29r, 35r.

elaborate nature of the work reflects its purpose: it was made for and given to the king, not one that was merely addressed to him.²⁴

Although the treatise follows a similar pattern to the *Secreta* and many of the chapter titles are adaptations of those in the *Secreta*, *De nobilitatibus* is itself not an adaptation of the *Secreta* but rather influenced by it. Milemete focuses on offering pragmatic political advice, avoiding additional topics found in the *Secreta* such as astrology and the nature of stones.²⁵ Beyond the *Secreta*, *De nobilitatibus* draws on a mixture of other classical and medieval sources but relies less heavily on these. Such sources include Gratian's *Decretum*, the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, Martin of Braga's moral treatise *Formula honestae vitae*, Calcidius' commentary on Plato's metaphysical philosophical work *Timaeus* as well as Vegetius's *De re militari* (a Roman military guide popular in the Middle Ages), which is the source for much of the final chapter. While many of these works are not cited in the other advisory works in this thesis, portions of the *De re militari* are found in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* and Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum* within their sections on military affairs.²⁶ Such a range of sources illustrates the scope of knowledge that Milemete expected his audience to be familiar with and the breadth of topics he perceived the king as needing in order to effectively rule, such as law and justice, virtues needed to lead a moral life, and knowledge of battle strategies.

²⁴ The work was a part of Edward III's library. Cavanaugh, p. 285. M.R. James, 'Introduction', *The Treatise of Walter de Milemete: De Nobilitatibus, Sapientiiis, et Prudentiis Regum* (London: Roxburghe Club, 1913), pp. ix-lxxii.

²⁵ Nederman, 'Introduction to *On the Nobility, Wisdom, and Prudence of Kings*', p. 19; Michael, p. 36

²⁶ Edward III likely had access to *De re militari*. Ormrod, p. 13; Nederman, p. 20; Anna Somfai, 'The Eleventh-Century Shift in the Reception of Plato's *Timaeus* and Calcidius's *Commentary*', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 65 (2002), 1-21 (p. 1); Christopher Allmand, *The De Re Militari of Vegetius: The Reception, Transmission and Legacy of a Roman Text in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 84-8, 105-6.

Imperial Imagining: Milemete's Use of Flattery

Milemete advises Edward to note what his counsellors do rather than what they say, for counsellors often flatter, speaking with 'mel... in ore' ('honey in their mouths') rather than speaking the truth (fol. 41r. O 45). Despite this warning, Milemete himself flatters Edward throughout the treatise (O 38, 45). Flattery is typically used in advisory literature to temper the writer's criticism of his ruler, and this was likely the original intent given that *De nobilitatibus* was initially written for Edward II. However, because alterations were made and Edward III was the second intended audience, Milemete's flattery serves to temper his criticism of Edward III's father (whom he also flatters at one point by referring to him as 'illustris domini' – 'illustrious lord') (fol. 8r. O 27). A reoccurring point of flattery in the work is the imperial imaginings of Edward; Milemete refers to and compares Alexander the Great to Edward, implying that Edward, too, will become a successful conqueror provided he follows Milemete's advice. The associations between Edward and Alexander carry with them both overt flattery and covert critique, for Milemete illustrates Alexander as an exceptional yet flawed ruler. When highlighting Alexander's positive qualities, he compares Edward to him in some passages and distinguishes Edward from Alexander in others. Alexander holds multiple functions within the work, but his success as a conqueror is most central, and Milemete claims that if Edward follows the advice provided, he, too, will be a successful conqueror.

In the first full chapter, Milemete states his hopes for the work: 'que ad comodum tendant [et] honorem venerabilis domini n[ost]ri domini ed[ward]i arch ducis aquitannie comitis cestrie [et] pontiue cuuis amore factus e[st] tractatus iste' ('May this work redound to the profit and honour of our venerable Lord Edward, duke of

Aquitaine, count of Chester and Ponthieu, for whose love this tract was created’) and that God will grant favour to Edward (fols 7v, 8r. O 27). This address to Edward III, in part, helps date the work’s composition to his father’s reign. Effusive addresses are made throughout each chapter with Milemete frequently reafferring to Edward as ‘nobilitas’ (‘your nobility’) and addressing Edward with characteristics he believes a ruler ought to have, like ‘u[est]re industrie’ (‘your industriousness’) and ‘u[est]re sagaces’ (‘your shrewdness’) – a reference to political judgement, which he will later explain also extends to advisors (fols 16v, 24v, 27r, 36r, 39r. O, 31, 35, 36, 44). He further emphasises Edward’s eminence by employing the *humilitas* topos, highlighting the differences between himself and his king: the ‘humilis [et] devotus Walterus de Milemete clericus’ (‘humble and devoted clerk, Walter of Milemete’) (fol. 9r. O 27). In utilising this topos, Milemete flatters Edward but also distances himself from culpability if the work is ill-received, for he is simply a lowly clerk who does not possess Edward’s knowledge and discernment.

With many of the effusive addresses, Milemete appeals to Edward’s knowledge of governance (likely a remnant from when the work was intended for his father as Edward III was only fourteen and not yet king when he received the work). In one passage, he tells Edward, ‘Illustrius sublimitas u[est]re reducat memorie’ (‘Your most illustrious sublimeness should recall from memory’) how people feel about their native land and then proceeds to advise him on how to treat those he has conquered (fol. 50r. O 50). Elsewhere, he tells Edward that he will expound upon Edward’s knowledge of military tactics (fol. 61v. O 56). Further, Milemete’s advice to Edward often utilises the verb form ‘sciat’ (‘should know’) followed by his advice on governance, whether it be on how to treat his subjects or how to seek good counsel (fols 27r, 38r, 45r. O, pp. 36,

43, 47). When grouped together, these quotations are flattery: it is not that Edward ought to know this information but that Milemete is merely reminding Edward of what he already knows. Indeed, appeals to Edward's knowledge appear throughout the treatise. Milemete frequently addresses Edward as wise, using terms like 'discr[eti]o' ('discerningness') when advising him to be able to write his own documents and read in French and Latin and 'prudenti[a]e' ('prudence') when discussing what activities befitting a ruler's nobility (fols 33v, 43r. O 41, 46). By playing to the king's sense of knowledge and experience in governance, suggestions that Edward has much to learn about governance are tempered, such as when Milemete appeals to God to illuminate Edward's learning and increase his education (O 40).

Another point of flattery within *De nobilitatibus* is Milemete's use of exemplary rulers, particularly in reference to conquest. The first exemplar occurs at the beginning of the manuscript within a full-page miniature. The illustration depicts Edward III and his mother Isabella in the style of Louis IX of France and his mother Blanche of Castille from the *Bible moralisée*.²⁷ This illustration emphasises Edward's right to rule France through his mother, who, at the time of the work's composition, was one of two of Philip IV of France's surviving children. Outside of this allusion to Saint Louis, Milemete's use of exemplary rulers in *De nobilitatibus* is largely limited to Alexander, which is unique since advice to princes texts often rely heavily upon both positive and negative biblical and ancient rulers to guide rulers. In the beginning of the treatise, Milemete writes how he was inspired by Aristotle's advice to Alexander in the *Secreta* to commission a copy of it and to create his work for Edward, and given this reference and the two works' similarities in production, Milemete likely intended the two works

²⁷ Michael, p. 38.

to circulate together to foster an intertextual link (O 29). Indeed, much of *De nobilitatibus*' advice centres on Alexander's rule, and connections between Edward and Alexander are found throughout. Alexander of the *De nobilitatibus*, like that of the *Secreta*, serves as a guide for good kingship in general, and it is, perhaps, the *Secreta*'s positive view of Alexander that influences Milemete's similar treatment of the king.²⁸

Particular emphasis is placed on Alexander's role as conqueror. One of the primary concerns throughout *De nobilitatibus* is the king's relationship with his barons, and Milemete lauds Alexander's treatment of his men and how he rewarded them liberally and based upon merit. Milemete argues that by means of such policies Alexander was able to build a loyal and unmatched army and conquered many lands. He assures Edward that if he acts similarly, he will gain his subjects' loyalty. This will help ensure peace within the kingdom, for the English people will be willing to attack 'inimicos suos hostes [e]t alios sibi rebelles' ('his hostile enemies and others rebelling against him') and will say, "Adversantes [ei] opprimemus" ('We shall oppress his adversaries') (fol. 30r. O 38). This quotation shows Milemete's anxiety surrounding rebellion, which is unsurprising given the political instability of the 1320s. Edward II's reign was fraught with dissent: first, with the baron's rebellion in 1321 and then, with Isabella's and Mortimer's seizure of power in 1326. During the baron's rebellion, Edward had only some ecclesiastic and noble support, and while he was ultimately able to suppress the magnate contrarians, Edward was forced to agree to the Despensers' exile. With Isabella's and Mortimer's invasion of England, Edward was not so fortunate and, lacking support from the city of London as well as many of the kingdom's bishops

²⁸ *Secretum Secretorum*, ed. and trans. by Fratrís Rogeri (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), p. 219.

and magnates, he was captured and forced to abdicate.²⁹ In discussing how the English would support and protect the king and his kingdom, Milemete hopes to guide Edward III away from the mistakes of his father. His hope is that by a king justifiably rewarding his men, their loyalty – something essential to maintaining the kingdom’s peace – will be ensured.

References to Edward’s potential as a conqueror in the treatise are manifold and largely located within discussions on Alexander. Milemete often describes the two rulers with similar language. He frequently refers to Alexander as noble and a great conqueror (‘nobili rege alexandro de macedonia’ – noble King Alexander’ and ‘regem alexandrum de macdeonia nobilem conquestorem’ – ‘noble conqueror King Alexander of Macedonia’) (fols 11v, 36v. O 29, 42). Similarly, Milemete addresses Edward as ‘domine rex nobilissime’ (‘most noble lord king’) and ‘Domine imperator nobilissi[m]e conquestor strenuissime’ (‘Most Noble Lord Emperor, Most Vigorous Conqueror’) (fols 24v, 43r. O 35, 46). Since the work was initially meant for Edward II, these addresses are likely references to him rather than his son. However, because the references remain within the work, they represent a transferral of expectations to Edward III. Since Edward III was associated with imperial prophecies early in his majority (and during his time as an heir if we include the *Six Kings to Follow John*, discussed below), *De nobilitatibus* may serve as a bridge between the unfulfilled imperial imaginings of Edward II and those of Edward III.

The political prophecies circulating during the early fourteenth century are essential to understanding the transferral of imperial expectations to Edward III, and

²⁹ Phillips, pp. 401, 406-8, 506, 512-3.

Milemete works with these imperial projections, showing contemporary applications of Galfridian prophecy in which Alexander appears. Advisory authors incorporated prophecy as a way of guiding rulers towards or against certain actions as prophetic predictions lent authority to the advice given. Since Gerald of Wales, advisory writers used prophecy, and it became a fixture of the discourse and (as we will see in chapter 3) found across Latin and vernacular advisory works. Milemete's references to Edward II (and later III when the work was reworked to address the new king) as a great conqueror reflect the hopes that he would continue the military success of his father, Edward I, early in his reign. Many political prophecies drew upon the *Prophetiae Merlini* in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, in which English kings were portrayed as various animals, including, among others, a boar, a goat, and an ass.³⁰ One such prophecy is the *Prophecy of the Six Kings*. Surviving in eight main forms with the earliest known version, the 'Original' *Prose Version*, dating around 1312, the *Six Kings* details the six kings following King John and the events that will transpire throughout their reigns. Several versions of the prophecy were incorporated into the *Brut* during Edward III's reign, illustrating the close relationship between political prophecy and history. The 'Original' *Prose Version* incorporated both hopes for Edward II as a great conqueror and his failings as a king and conceived him as the goat, who, among other things, will lose much of his land but then regain it and more, have mastery over this enemies, but will be in misery at the end of his life before dying in pagan lands. In a later version of the *Six Kings*, the *Revised Prose Version* (c. early 1330s), which is incorporated into the Anglo-Norman *Brut*, both Edward II and the III are understood as the goat and boar, respectively. This work transposes the imperial ambitions unfulfilled

³⁰ Geoffrey of Monmouth, pp. 172, 176-7.

by Edward II onto his heir, for the boar is depicted as a great conqueror bringing prosperity to the kingdom following the disastrous rule of the goat.³¹

Another Galfridian prophecy of this period is ‘Adam Davy’s Dreams about Edward II’ (1307-8), where Edward II is depicted as the goat of Merlin’s prophecy who will conquer the British Isles. In it, we are told of Edward’s conquest over Europe: ‘We shullen þe day see,/ Emperour ychosen he worþe of cristiente’, and subsequent crusade to the Holy Land.³² Later, in Adam’s fifth dream, he sees Edward standing before the high altar at Canterbury in garments red as blood, suggesting a link between Edward and Thomas Becket.³³ This association between an English king and Becket is also found in the prophecy of the Holy Oil of St Thomas. A papal letter dated to 1318/19 records the history of the holy oil and Edward’s desire to be anointed with it. The letter suggests that Edward believed his misfortunes as king resulted from his failure to be anointed with it during his coronation ceremony in favour of customary unction.³⁴ Milemete’s interest in Becket primarily lies within his advice to the king on maintaining the church’s rights and liberties and involving himself with ecclesiastical offices only as is proper (O 30-1). The illustration that coincides with this advice is of the king kneeling before God with a cleric in red robes to the left who could be Becket as he was often depicted as wearing a red robe.³⁵

³¹ T.M. Smallwood, ‘The Prophecy of the Six Kings,’ *Speculum*, 60 (1985), 571-92 (pp. 571-2, 576, 578); Victoria Flood, pp. 87-90.

³² *Adam Davy’s 5 Dreams about Edward II; The Life of St. Alexius; Solomon’s Book of Wisdom; St. Jeremie’s 15 Tokens before Doomsday; The Lamentation of Souls*, ed. by F.J. Furnivall (London: Early English Text Society, 1878), p. 12.

³³ *Adam Davy’s 5 Dreams about Edward II*, pp. 12, 15.

³⁴ T.A. Sandquist, ‘The Holy Oil of St Thomas of Canterbury’, in *Essays in Medieval History*, ed. by T.A. Sandquist and M.R. Powicke (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 330-44 (p. 332).

³⁵ Laura Slater, *Art and Political Thought in Medieval England, c. 1150-1350* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), pp. 56, 223.

Additionally, a fishmonger and recorder of London (the imperial city of the imagined English empire), Andrew Horn, in an intermingling of biblical and Galfridian prophecy, wrote that Edward II was the goat prophesied by Merlin: ‘Edwardus filius Edwardi, mortuo patri suo, culmen regni sui susceperit, de quo Merlinus sic vaticinavit “...hircus... tota superficies insulae obumbrabitur”, etc. Et comparat Merlinus istum Edwardum regi Alexandro Macedonico’ (‘Edward, on the death of his father, took up the highest place in the kingdom, of whom Merlin prophesied thus, “the Goat... will overshadow the whole surface of the island,” etc. And Merlin compares this Edward to king Alexander of Macedon’). He goes on to predict Edward will be another Alexander the Great and another goat, and as the goat, Edward will subdue the entire world and defeat Norway, Dacia, Scotland, and France with the latter two being the focus of English military campaigns for much of the fourteenth century.³⁶ This prophecy parallels the powerful conqueror of Daniel’s prophecy – one that foretells of a ram who shall conquer the west, north, and south, but he is eventually defeated by a she-goat from the west.³⁷

Mixed with this comparison of praise is, however, critique and warning, for the goat, like Alexander, was associated with homosexuality. In the *Prophetiae Merlini*, it is predicted that the goat will restore the Castle of Venus and that the kingdom will be inundated with Cupid’s arrows, subsequently leading to the endless fornication of man.³⁸ While Edward was not associated with sexual immorality until later in his reign, by the time *De nobilitatibus* was written, such associations did exist. His relationships with Gaveston and the Despenser the Younger as well as the accusations of sodomy

³⁶ Coote, pp. 83-4.

³⁷ Daniel 8. 3-8.

³⁸ Geoffrey of Monmouth, p. 176; Flood, pp. 89-90.

against Edward in 1236 ‘generated a set of assumptions about the king’s sexual practices’. It is possible, however, that Edward II did not actually engage in homosexual acts. Accusations of sodomy were often for political purposes and were brought in at critical points during a monarch’s reign, and they often suggested immoral tendencies and lack of fitness as a ruler, rather than a specific act of sodomy with someone.³⁹ Given this and that such accusations of sodomy occurred only towards the end of Edward II’s reign, it is possible that references to Edward as a sodomite were a political strategy against the ill-favoured king. That these accusations did exist, though, intimates that Milemete’s comparisons between Edward and Alexander are a comingling of anxieties surrounding Edward’s immorality and ability to rule and of flattery and allusion to imperial prophecies.

Ultimately, Edward was unable to fulfil the imperial imaginings of the prophecies and to continue the military success of his father, and the optimism was passed onto his son. Edward III eventually became associated with the boar in the *Brut* – a valiant and fierce king who was predicted to conquer much of Europe – and the bull in John of Bridlington’s *Prophecy* (d. 1379) – a king who would rule over France.⁴⁰ Because *De nobilitatibus* was initially intended for Edward II but alterations were made for so his son would be its addressee, the work may be a link between imperial imaginings of Edward II and Edward III and is one of the earliest works to associate imperial imaginings with Edward III, who was not yet closely associated with political prophecy but soon would be.

³⁹ Mortimer, pp. 48-60 (pp. 50-1); W. Mark Ormrod, ‘The Sexualities of Edward II’, pp. 33-4, 37.

⁴⁰ Coote, pp. 105-7; A.G. Rigg, ‘John of Bridlington’s *Prophecy*: A New look’, *Speculum*, 63 (1988), 596-613 (p. 598).

Avarice and Integrity: Concern about Royal Counsel

Coinciding with Milemete's concerns on Edward II's use of royal favour are his concerns on counsel and the need for a king to select trustworthy advisors who counsel the king for the kingdom's benefit and not their own. He advises Edward to seek the counsel of many honest men who advise for the benefit of their king rather than their own, believing a prudent king will be able to discern such men. Much of the discussion on counsel is a reaction to the issues surrounding Edward II's counsellors and the frustrations that developed from the king's close relationship with and favouritism towards them, and Milemete discusses counsel, adopting the conventions of advisory literature and relying upon his source the *Secreta*.

Milemete advises Edward to follow sound counsel throughout the treatise and pay particular attention to his counsellors' intentions. He writes that the nobility 'cordibus iugiter cogitare quomodo melius possent honorem comodum [e]t p[ro]fectum suorum dominorum consilio fideli [e]t auxilio utilius augmentare' ('should reflect continually in their hearts how they may fruitfully augment the honor, profit, and advantage of their lords by their faithful counsel and aid') (fol. 9v. O 27). In part, he offers this advice because there is the danger that men counsel the king for their own benefit and not the king's, but Milemete also believes that counselling for the king's benefit will lead to the success of the kingdom and its subjects (O 27). This quotation, along with Milemete's advice to select men who desire to provide sound counsel and cherish their king's prosperity, is a comment upon Edward II's inner circle of counsellors, who included Piers Gaveston, the Depensers, Hugh Audley, and Roger Damory, among others (O 32). Complaints centred on their influence over Edward and how they were lavishly rewarded by him. They gained the animosity of the English

baronage for being ‘ad tantum decus et honorem prouectum’ (‘raised to such splendour and eminence’), and Hugh Despenser the Younger and Piers Gaveston were particularly hated for the great power they held and the land and wealth they amassed as a result of their relationship with Edward.⁴¹

Milemete warns that such men who advise to their own benefit will request continually rewards from the king, never satisfied with what they receive. These cling to gifts and the acquisition of money and do not care for their lord’s dignity and prosperity. Edward should avoid these men and seek counsellors who love him and will advise in his best interests, although Milemete does not offer specific guidance on how to determine sound counsel other than avoiding those who seek material gain (O 27, 36-7, 47, 59). This advice, along with Milemete’s belief that the king’s prudence will allow him to examine counsel and not follow it with a ‘facili credulitate’ (‘facile credulity’), suggests the king must possess the virtue of discernment (fol. 54r. O 52). Advice against having avaricious counsel is found in the *Secreta* and is a convention of advisory literature.⁴² However, Milemete places particular emphasis on counsellors needing to uphold the king’s prosperity and dignity, believing the relationship between a king, his nobles, and subjects to be mutually beneficial – the prosperity of one leads to the prosperity of the others (O 27, 36-7, 39, 59). Without the king heeding sound counsel, he risks not only his welfare but that of all his subjects. Additionally, Milemete’s anxieties concerning corrupt counsellors, whom he says cling to gifts and are never satiated, is particular to this work and is likely a reaction to Edward’s favourites. Piers Gaveston benefited greatly from his relationship with Edward, who arranged

⁴¹ Jean le Bel, *The True Chronicles of Jean Le Bel 1290-1360*, trans. by Nigel Bryant (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), p. 24. *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, pp. 8-9.

⁴² *Secretum Secretorum*, p. 237.

Gaveston's marriage to the earl of Gloucester's daughter and granted him numerous positions, including the earldom of Cornwall, constable of Nottingham castle, royal lieutenant in Ireland, and chamberlain.⁴³ The Ordinances of 1311 denounced Gaveston for advising the king badly and deceitfully and for taking the king's treasure for himself.⁴⁴ Hugh Despenser the Younger similarly benefited from his relationship with Edward. The author of the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* (1325) accused the younger Despenser of persuading the king to reclaim castles previously bestowed upon Roger Mortimer and give them to him.⁴⁵

Secrecy is another essential quality for a king to preclude deceptive acts within his counsel, according to Milemete. In times of peace and war, counsellors should only speak with the king about how he should govern, and the king himself should keep his plans secret. Milemete warns several times that counsellors and secretaries often betray their lord's confidences, accusing them of being lured by the devil to seek riches over fidelity, and so he provides several examples of how the king can ensure his intentions are private (O 41-2). One way is for Edward to be able to write in his own hand, which is how, Milemete claims, the 'nobilem conquestorem' ('noble conqueror') Alexander acted (fol. 37r. O 42). Similar advice is found in the *Secreta*, but Milemete adapts and adds to such advice. For instance, rather than discussing a ruler being able to write, the *Secreta* instructs a ruler to choose scribes who can be trusted in secret matters.⁴⁶

Another way to keep counsel private, Milemete writes, is for Edward to test his counsellors' integrity, a suggestion we see later in the *Meroure of Wysdome*.⁴⁷ Milemete

⁴³ *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, pp. 185, 7, 9, 13; Phillips, pp. 137, 173-4,

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁴⁶ *Secretum Secretorum*, pp. 232-5, 242.

⁴⁷ I will discuss this in chapter four. John Ireland, p. 113.

tells the king to see if his counsellors will reveal information about their friends' secrets: if they do, the king will know they cannot keep his secrets. It is not enough that a counsellor does not divulge his friends' secrets – he must refuse to do so because his true conscience leads him not to and not because he wants to present himself as faithful (O 44). Unfortunately, Milemete does not instruct how to determine a counsellor's intentions, which, again, intimates that a king must be able to discern this and that the responsibility for keeping good counsel lies with him. This, coupled with Milemete's emphasis on the possibility of deception and treachery within a king's counsel, reflects the criticism surrounding Edward II's favourites – some of whom were accused of being conspirators and deceivers. His warning that someone who is now a close advisor may be an adversary one day could be a reference to Thomas of Lancaster – a member of Edward's counsel only to later serve as head of the opposition to Edward's rule.⁴⁸ If Edward keeps his counsel and intentions a secret, Milemete ensures he will gain the respect and love of his magnates and uphold the peace of his kingdom: in part because he has shown himself to be a prudent ruler but also because guarding intentions allows him to be successful in war (O 42-3).

Reputation of the King and His Relationship with the Baronage

Throughout *De nobilitatibus*, Milemete argues that a king's relationship with his magnates and their views of him are integral to his ability to govern and maintain a prosperous kingdom – an emphasis unique to this work. It is not simply whether a ruler possesses princely virtues, but that he is perceived to possess them. In having a good reputation among his nobility and maintaining harmony with them, Milemete believes

⁴⁸ Milemete, pp. 41-3; *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, pp. 192-5; Phillips, pp. 164, 244.

Edward will maintain peace within England. The work further deviates from advisory *topoi* in that Milemete does not provide a negative exemplary ruler. In other advice to princes texts, we would expect to be informed of a biblical or ancient ruler who met his demise as a result of the animosity between him and his men, yet Milemete does not include one. Indeed, he fails to discuss a ruler's demise or include negative exemplary rulers in the treatise as it would have been a particularly dangerous topic so recently after Edward II's deposition. This advice shows there were anxieties surrounding the relationship between a king and his magnates stemming from the discord between the English nobility and Edward's favourites though Milemete only alludes to Gaveston, the Despencers, and other favourites.

Milemete advises Edward to be 'iustum, sapientem, uirtuosum... [e]t timere deum' ('just, wise, virtuous, and God-fearing') – virtues commonly suggested in advice to princes, but not only does Milemete believe a ruler should possess these qualities, he should be known for them (fol. 20r. O 33). Edward's reputation as such will lead his subjects, both commoners and magnates, to gladly love, fear, and obey him. While the commoners' opinion of their king is important, it is the magnates' opinions that matter most. They should view the king favourably and have a congenial relationship with him, and it is the king's responsibility to ensure this is so. Milemete advises Edward to listen to and favour the petitions of the magnates so long as they do not harm the king and his majesty and writes that 'concordia magnatii e[st] causa pacis regni per conseque[n]s discordia inter eos generat bellum [e]t conflictum' ('harmony of the great men is the cause of the peace of the kingdom; as a consequence, discord among them produces war and conflict') (fol. 23r. O 34, 36). These pieces of advice are likely a reference to the baronial revolt in 1321, which stemmed from the nobles' frustrations about the

preferences shown to Hugh Despenser the Younger. According to the *Vita* author, they threatened to revoke their homage to Edward if he did not listen to their petitions against Despenser.⁴⁹

Although Milemete never explicitly refers to Gaveston or the Despensers in *De nobilitatibus*, much of his advice surrounding counsel can be understood as allusions to them and the strained relationship between Edward and his magnates that resulted because of them. It is in this vein that Milemete cautions that it is unfitting for a king to favour one great man over another. Rather, a king should bind the nobility together, aiming to possess the love and affection of his magnates so that they will support and remain loyal to him (O 35, 60). Contemporary chronicles are filled with accounts of Edward's fraught relationship with the baronage. The king was accused of despising his magnates with a 'mad fury' and seeking to destroy them. And it was his favourites that were viewed as further destroying the relationship between king and nobility.⁵⁰ The *Brut* and *Bridlington* (1339) chroniclers alleged that Gaveston treated the barons poorly, went against their will, and even created mocking nicknames for them.⁵¹ Hugh Despenser the Elder and Younger, too, were said to have furthered the rift with the July 1321 parliamentary session accusing both of 'en compassaunt de esloigner le cuer nostre seignur le roi des piers de la terre' ('plotting to distance the affection of our lord the king from the peers of the land') in order to gain greater control over governance.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, pp. 189-93.

⁵⁰ Phillips, p. 412.

⁵¹ Roy Martin Haines, *King Edward II: Edward of Caernarfon, His Life, His Reign, and Its Aftermath, 1284-1330* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), pp. 65, 67.

⁵² *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England: 1275-1504*, ed. by Seymour Phillips, 3 vols (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2005), III, p. 427.

If ‘discordia’ (discord) does develop among the peerage, though, Milemete states that it is the king’s responsibility to resolve it. The advice that follows brings to mind the issues within Edward II’s court, for we are told that a wise king corrects the errors of his nobles and attempts to resolve any conflict between them. He does not take the side of one noble against another as it leads to enmity and tension within the kingdom. Integrated with this discussion of how to rule the magnates is a discussion on the king’s power and authority. If a king wills it, Milemete argues, he can use his strength and lordly power to force his subjects to get along and quell any iniquitous intentions of his men (O 34-5). Thus, a king ought to be powerful enough to maintain harmony within his kingdom and is culpable for any discord between the great men – this suggests that Edward II was not sufficiently powerful, for he was unable to achieve peace in England or among his nobles. Placing the king responsible for the relationship between himself and his lords coincides with other writing of the period that held Edward responsible for his preference over his nobles, but it is also a convention of advice to princes, which often hold the king culpable for most aspects of governance. And while no direct references to any specific individuals are offered, this advice can be understood as a response to Edward’s favourites Gaveston and the Despensers. The term ‘discordia’ is used by both the *Vita* author and Bridlington chronicler to describe the tensions between the magnates and Gaveston.⁵³ Similarly, Jean le Bel commented on the ‘resentment and discontent’ between the magnates and the royal council,

⁵³ The *Vita* author writes that the conflict reached the point that a council created so that the parties could reconcile: ‘Post haec videntes hii qui ex consilio regis erant ex tali discordia toti terrae imminere discrimen’. The Bridlington chronicler writes, ‘Ibidem orta est discordia inter proceres Angliæ et dominum Petrum de Gavastone’. *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, p. 159. ‘Gesta Edwardi de Carnarvan, Auctore Canonico Bridlingtoniesnsi, cum Continuatione ad A.D. 1377’, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, ed. by William Stubbs, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), II, pp. 25-92 (pp. 32-3).

particularly with Despensers the Younger and the ‘descort’ (‘discord’) he sowed.⁵⁴ Frequent use of ‘discordia’ to describe relations between the nobility shows Milemete’s engagement with political opinion of the period and the frustrations surrounding Edward’s reign. It also allows Milemete to criticise the ruler in metonymic terms by veiling advice highly applicable to contemporary events as general advice.

In addition to maintaining harmony, a king can further strengthen his relationship with the nobility by showing largesse and rewarding his subjects based upon their merits rather than favouritism. Again, Milemete utilises Alexander, commenting on the conqueror’s great liberality with his subjects and distribution of lands among his men based upon their merit. He guides Edward on how he should display largesse: not only should he extend his generosity to his men but also to those he conquers. This largesse, along with speaking pleasingly to and practising patience towards those conquered, will allow Edward to gain the loyalty, love, and respect of his new subjects. Indeed, Milemete claims that Alexander acted as such after defeating the Persians, gaining their love and respect, which then allowed him to conquer more land (O 50). If Edward fails to act as Alexander did, Milemete warns that he will gain a reputation as ungracious and will be despised. Rather than supporting this advice with a negative exemplary ruler and highlighting the downfall of a ruler who was ungracious, as advice to princes texts often do, Milemete cites ‘antiquis... historiis’ (‘ancient histories’) that say there is no punishment sufficient for the vice of ingratitude (fol. 32r. O 39). He also includes the verse:

Lex [e]t n[at]u[r]a

⁵⁴ Jean le Bel, *Chronique de Jean le Bel*, ed. by Jules Viard and Eugène Déprez (Paris: Librairie de la Société de L’Histoire de France, 1904), p. 10; Bel, *The True Chronicles of Jean Le Bel 1290-1360*, p. 24.

Christus [e]t omnia iura

Dampna[n]t ingra-

tum lamentantur fore natu[m].

(Law and nature,

Christ and every right,

Condemn the ingrate.

His birth is to be lamented) (fol. 32v. O 40).⁵⁵

Discussion of an ingrate's birth is a deviation from many of the nativity prophecies associated with Edward II, ones that predicted his conquest over Scotland and Ireland, in part because he was expected to continue to subdue Scotland as his father, the so-called 'Hammer of the Scots' did. One such prophecy remarked, 'Blissed be þe tyme þat he [Edward] was bore!'⁵⁶ The disparity between Milemete's verse and popular sentiment from early in Edward II's reign highlights the animosity felt towards Edward II in the 1320s, particularly following his deposition. That the verse is included in Milemete's discussion on reward reflects the frustrations with the lavish rewards Edward bestowed upon his favourites.⁵⁷

Part of Milemete's concerns surrounding the relationship between king and nobility centre on the king's need for the nobility's support to maintain peace and

⁵⁵ The sources of these ancient histories and verse are unknown.

⁵⁶ Most, but not all, of these nativity prophecies came from earlier in Edward II's reign and before the baronial rebellion. The *Verses of Gildas Concerning the Prophecy of the Eagle and the Hermit* (c. 1318/9) and the *Arundel Reply* (c. 1340) prophesied that an English king born in Wales would defeat his enemies and rule over the British Isles. Flood, pp. 130, 134-5; 'Adam Davy's Dreams', p. 12.

⁵⁷ Phillips, pp. 294-7, 17, 26, 129, 358, 364; *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, pp. 8-9; *Flores Historiarum*, ed. by Henry Richards Luard, 3 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1890), p. 188; *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England: 1275-1504*, p. 428.

prosperity within England, which would have been especially important because of the ongoing conflict with Scotland. Under Edward II, conflict with Scotland continued and brought threat to English holdings, such as the Scottish invasion of Ireland in 1315 and the threat of Scottish intervention in the 1316 Welsh uprising.⁵⁸ Milemete believes that rewarded men are willing to fight against and will defeat their king's enemies and cautions that unrewarded men have no desire to serve him and are unwilling to suppress those who rebel against their king (O 38-40). According to the *Vita* author, such an instance did occur during Edward II's reign. He writes how Edward lost holdings in Scotland because his enemies chose to rebel while he was at odds with the nobles and unable to rely upon them for support. The author goes on to compare this situation to that of Alexander the Great, who, he says, was poisoned by traitors in his own household.⁵⁹ Such a use of Alexander shows, as *De nobilitatibus* does, how Alexander functioned as both a positive and negative exemplar in early fourteenth-century political writings, for although he was conqueror of the world, he met his demise from someone in his inner circle.⁶⁰ And it is conquest that seems to matter most to Milemete when it comes to the relationship between a ruler and his men as he views a ruler's future success as a conqueror as dependent upon the nobility's support.

While discussions of a king's fame and repute are common among advice to princes texts, including the *Secreta*, Milemete treats them as inextricably linked to the king's imperial ambitions and essential in maintaining peace and in expanding the kingdom's lands.⁶¹ A ruler, Milemete asserts, must be known for his piety, for if he is,

⁵⁸ Phillips, pp. 253-4, 272-3.

⁵⁹ The passage says, 'Dum rex delirat cum baronibus, fiducia rebellandi datur hostibus' ('While the king raves against the barons, his enemies are given the confidence to rebel'). *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, pp. 146-7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-7.

⁶¹ *Secreta Secretorum*, pp. 182-3.

rulers of foreign lands will feel obedience and reverence towards him and will fear offending or initiating war with him. Further, with a reputation for wisdom and virtue, rulers of other nations will be less likely to move against him (O 31-2). This advice suggests there was anxiety surrounding conflict with other nations and is likely a reaction to the deteriorating political relations between England and other European nations. Further, because Flanders supported the Scottish and Edward, as a vassal to the French king, was expected to support Louis X in his conflict with Flanders, Flemish-English relations declined. Rumours of invasions also loomed during Edward's reign, including those from Portugal and one organised by Roger Mortimer, the count of Hainault, and the king of Bohemia.⁶² It seems that Milemete hopes a king's reputation as a good king will help ensure the stability of the kingdom, avoiding the dangers from other nations that plagued Edward's reign.

Yet, it seems that Milemete's anxiety is not just in regard to conflict with other nations but conquest of them, for he also argues that a good reputation will allow a king to successfully conquer and subjugate his enemies. Milemete believes that a king's fame and virtues should be *'uniuersum orbem diuulgetur'* ('spread across the entire earth') (fol. 20r. 33). If it is, Milemete assures Edward that the rulers of other kingdoms will offer their fealty and subjugation to him and that under Edward will carry out *'pluribus locis conquestum triumphalem'* ('a triumphant conquest in many locales') and *'in terris sibi aduersantib[us] conquestum acquirere [e]t omnes eius inimicos suos subicere imperio'* ('achieve conquests in the lands of his adversaries and subject all his enemies to his majesty') (fol. 20v, 21r. O 33-4). These quotations express similar sentiments found in the political prophecies of the period predicting Edward will build an empire.

⁶² Phillips, pp. 212, 253, 272-3, 340, 461.

As discussed earlier, two such prophecies are ‘Adam Davy’s Dreams’ and Andrew Horn’s prediction of Edward’s conquests. According to Lesley Coote, the former prophecy intimates a connection with biblical leaders like David and Judas Maccabeus, who led Israel to victory against its enemies just as Edward is expected to save Christendom against its enemies.⁶³ Yet, again, it is not enough that Edward is a conqueror, but his reputation as a great conqueror must be known throughout the world. Milemete asserts that Edward’s repute as a conqueror will spread ‘p[er] diversa regna’ (‘across diverse kingdoms’) and will bring ‘s[ibi] honor [e]t gloria’ (‘honor and glory upon himself’), believing that this will bring Edward further success as the growth of fame leads to more conquest and vice versa (fol. 44v. O 47). Emphasising fame and conquest echoes the story of David’s fame spreading after his defeat of the Philistines: ‘divulgatumque est nomen David in universis regionibus et Dominus dedit pavorem eius super omnes gentes’ (‘and the name of David became famous in all countries, and the Lord made all nations fear him’) (1 Chronicles 14.17). Like David, Edward should be perceived as a great conqueror and his reputation as such (with other nations viewing him with both awe and fear) is as important as him actually being a conqueror. It is not enough that Edward is perceived in a certain manner, though, for Milemete believes that a ruler should craft his image and ensure his fame is spread throughout the world. He tells Edward he must take care to fulfil and maintain his good repute and that it is spread throughout the world (O 33). In doing so, Milemete is holding the king responsible for governance – a common advisory convention – yet instructing a ruler to craft his image is unique. Milemete likely hopes that by being conscious of his image and controlling how others view him, Edward will be better able to maintain peace within England,

⁶³ Coote, pp. 84, 95-6.

following the tumult of the 1320s. Yet, as we will see in William of Pagula's advisory work, Edward III's reign was marked by a new set of frustrations in addition to those lingering from his father's reign.

Background and Structure of the *Speculum Regis*

The *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* was written further into Edward III's reign – just after he reached his majority –, and in pairing the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* with *De nobilitatibus*, a better understanding of political and literary environments of 1320s and 1330s England can be gained. Both works provide advice on governance specific to the period in which they were written: Milemete to react to the frustrations surrounding Edward II's reign and concern for the political stability and peace of England, and William to criticise Edward III's use of purveyance (the seizing of goods from the people to support the king and royal household) and the impact it had upon the English people. Despite this critique, the works do express hope for Edward III's reign, particularly in regard to his imperial ambitions and his ability to bring prosperity to the kingdom.

Unlike *De nobilitatibus* and the other works analysed in this thesis, the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* diverges in its focus and authorship. The work survives in two recensions of the same work, respectively known as the *Epistola* (1331) and the *Speculum* (1332), the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* serves as a denunciation of the practice of purveyance. Neither the *Epistola* nor the *Speculum* are found together in any extant manuscript, but they were grouped together in the late nineteenth century and, consequently, are often referred to as 'A' and 'B' versions. The *Speculum*, however, is not simply an edited version of the *Epistola* but is a separate treatise putting forth new

arguments against purveyance.⁶⁴ Both recensions were attributed to the archbishop of Canterbury Simon Islip (d. 1366), who was a likely candidate as author for his experience in the ecclesiastical and royal administration and familiarity with the royal court.⁶⁵ The works, however, are now securely attributed to William of Pagula (c. 1290-1332). Though little is known of William, we do know he received his doctorate in canon law at Oxford and served as a deacon at the vicarage of Winkfield in Windsor Forest, roughly three miles from Windsor. The *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* was not his only work and is also known for the religious works, the *Oculus Sacerdotis* (c. 1320) and *Summa Praelatorum* (c. 1320-6).⁶⁶

Like *De nobilitatibus*, the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* has received little critical attention with most scholarship to date focusing on the text's alignment (or otherwise) with advisory discourse.⁶⁷ This may be partly on account of the treatise's divergence from the typical structure of advice to princes texts as well as its overtly critical nature. While other texts in this tradition provide general advice on matters of governance and are divided according to the various virtues and vices of kingship, the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* is divided into various arguments against a single aspect of governance: purveyance. William directly criticises Edward's use of this practice, upbraiding the king for his continued use of such a 'maledictum' and 'prerogativum diabolicum' ('evil'

⁶⁴ Nederman, 'Introduction to the *Mirror of King Edward III*', p. 66.

⁶⁵ Simon Islip held a number of benefices at Lincoln, Canterbury, London, and Litchfield before becoming an official at the court of Canterbury in 1344. He served as a clerk in Edward III's court, as an envoy for peace negotiations with the French in 1342, and as keeper of the seal to Lionel of Antwerp when Lionel was the guardian of England during Edward's campaigns in France. R.N. Swanson, 'Islip [Islip], Simon', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14493>> [accessed 3 June 2022]

⁶⁶ Nederman, pp. 66-7; Leonard Boyle, 'The *Oculus Sacerdotis* and Some Other Works of William of Pagula', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5 (1955), 81-110 (p. 105).

⁶⁷ Nederman, p. 69.

and ‘diabolical prerogative’).⁶⁸ He argues how purveyance, which greatly harms the English people, may prevent Edward from achieving salvation. William uses conventions of pastoral literature, works that informed Christian practices at the parish level and was intended to help parish priests with the caring of souls, which included preaching, performing sacraments, and guiding congregants to follow Christian doctrine.⁶⁹ With these conventions of pastoral literature and William’s warnings to Edward, the *Speculum Regis* can be read as pastoral as well as advisory literature.⁷⁰

As Judith Ferster argues, advice to princes texts customarily camouflage criticism of contemporary political figures and politics, and as a result, a tension is created within the work between the advice and its pointed applicability to certain rulers.⁷¹ Yet, the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* is less coded in its criticism than the other works in this thesis. This is partly because of the multi-generic way in which the work can be read (for it incorporates aspects of complaint and pastoral literature) and partly because direct critique, though atypical of the wider discourse, is found in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century advisory literature. Works like the anonymous *Speculum Justiciariorum* (dated to the early fourteenth century) and several treatises of Christine

⁶⁸ Latin quotations come from the *De speculo regis Edwardi III* while English quotations come from Nederman’s *Mirror of King Edward III*. Moving forward, citations within parathesis will be noted by a ‘D’ and the page number from the *De speculo regis Edwardi III* first, followed by a full stop. Then, a ‘M’ and the page number from the *Mirror of King Edward III* will be listed. William of Pagula, *De speculo regis Edwardi III* (Paris: Apud A. Picard, 1891), pp. 116, 136; William of Pagula, *Mirror of King Edward III*, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman, pp. 99, 111.

⁶⁹ Deena Copeland Klepper, ‘Pastoral Literature in Local Context: Albert of Diessen’s “Mirror of Priests” on Christian-Jewish Coexistence’, in *Speculum*, 92 (2017), 692-723 (p. 692).

⁷⁰ Pastoral care and its delivery rose in importance during the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, leading to the pastoral revolution following the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. As a result, many texts were created to ensure priests were able to properly guide the laity, and they provided information on the sacraments priests needed to teach parishioners and how priests should guide parishioners to a Christian life. Sarah Hamilton, *Church and People in the Medieval West* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 8, 10; Siegfried Wenzel, *Latin Sermon Collections from Later Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 333.

⁷¹ Ferster, p. 3.

de Pizan (dated to the early fifteenth century) overtly criticise contemporary political practices.⁷² We also might speculate whether it was William's position as a deacon of the church and not as a member of the court that allowed him to be more directly critical of Edward's rule, for his position was not dependent upon royal patronage. Although William was not a member of the royal court as the other authors in this thesis were, his treatise's explicit engagement with matters of contemporary governance marks a notable intervention in a period lacking in the creation of insular advice to princes.

The *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*'s central argument is how harmful the 'diabolical prerogative' is to both the English people and to Edward's temporal and spiritual self. Throughout the work, William claims purveyance is not a sovereign's right but merely a practice established during Edward I's reign (although it, in fact, dates back at least to Henry I's reign).⁷³ Contemporary records note many complaints of the stress Edward I's and II's households placed upon local communities. The writer of the *Annales Prioratus de Dustaplia* (completed 1297) lamented that Edward's servants took items from the local market whether they were for sale or not while the author of the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* complains of how the king, while travelling throughout his kingdom, took goods and 'nil uel modicum aut male soluit' ('pays little or nothing or badly'), and both he and William mention how the English people would rejoice when the king left because of the burden he placed upon them (*M* 108).⁷⁴ By the time Edward III ascended the throne, purveyance remained an issue. Though Edward held Roger

⁷² This includes her *Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* (1405), *Le Livre des Trois Vertus* (1406), and *Le Livre de Corps de Policie* (1406). Nederman, 'The Mirror Crack'd', pp. 28-9.

⁷³ W.R. Jones, p. 301; Nederman, 'Introduction to the *Mirror of King Edward III*', pp. p. 64.

⁷⁴ Phillips, pp. 49, 156, 162; National Archives, *Articuli super cartas*, 1300; National Archives, SC 1/61/33; National Archives SC 1/12/185. I have used Wendy Child's transcription and translation of the *Vita Edwardi Secundi* for this last quotation. *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, pp. 130-1.

Mortimer culpable for goods seized for the royal household during his minority, he continued the practice, even increasing its use during the French campaigns.

The *Epistola* and the *Speculum* differ in structure. Both structures (a letter to a ruler in the case of the *Epistola* and a teacher instructing a student in the *Speculum*) are common to advisory literature.⁷⁵ These forms allow William to focus on his specific complaint, and each are divided into numerous sections, presenting different arguments against purveyance. Both recensions frequently repeat phrases – often the first line of a passage. In several sections, William addresses Edward vocatively (‘O domine mi rex’ – ‘O Lord, my king’), which is a feature of fourteenth-century complaint literature (*D* 88, 93, 96. *M* 77, 81, 83).⁷⁶ However, addressing the king in this manner does not mean that he himself read the work or, as Leonard Boyle posited, knew William.⁷⁷ Although addressed to King Edward III, there is no evidence that William, a deacon without known connections to the royal court, knew Edward. Rather, Edward was likely the imagined reader (a common rhetorical strategy), and the work was more likely written for royal officials, the educated middle class, and ecclesiasts. Addressing Edward directly serves two functions: it lends authority to William through his imagined connection to the eminent addressee, and two, it shows the ‘popular medieval thought of the unmediated access to the king which circumvents the ministers who surround him and their evil counsel’.⁷⁸

There are also several passages in the *Speculum* in which William begins with a variation of the same first line: ‘O Domine mi Rex: Utinam saperes et intelligeres ac

⁷⁵ Advisory literature often uses the form of letters and form of a teacher instructing a student, including the *Secretum Secretorum* and the *On the Consolation of Philosophy*, respectively.

⁷⁶ Scase, pp. 177-8.

⁷⁷ Boyle, ‘William of Pagula and the *Speculum regis Edwardi III*’, p. 336.

⁷⁸ Matthews, pp. 112-3.

novissima provideres' ('O Lord, my King: If only you were wise and would understand, and would discern your end'), echoing Deuteronomy 32.29 in which Moses tells how God will punish the Israelites for forsaking him.⁷⁹ By aligning himself with an Old Testament prophet, William suggests his guidance comes from divine authority (which he expressly states elsewhere in the text) and, thus, ought to be heeded (*M* 101-2, 109). The quotation, which associates England with Israel, may be a mobilisation of the New Israel topos (where the English are viewed as God's chosen people though not immune to punishment), for William warns Edward throughout the work that he may lose his kingdom.⁸⁰ Indeed, much of William's discussion throughout the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* centres on how a ruler's governance (e.g. purveyance) impacts the stability, lastingness, and imaginings of nationhood. Further, that Edward ought to 'novissima provideres' neatly exemplifies William's argument throughout the whole work – namely that Edward may not reach heaven if he continues to seize goods.

Although William uses the vocative in many of his salutations, he directly addresses the king using the second person, writing, 'mi rex... debes' ('you ought to'). Yet, at times William speaks of himself and the impact purveyance has on him: 'quandocumque audierem rumores de tuo adventu et audio vestrum cornu, totum contremisco' ('Whenever I hear rumors of your arrival and I hear your horn, I tremble all over') (*D* 101, 134. *M* 87, 110). Further, William stresses the loss purveyance causes the peasantry and emphasises their suffering. Again, these are strategies in complaint

⁷⁹ The line itself is nearly identical to Deuteronomy 32.29 except for the William's use of the second person. William of Pagula, *De speculo regis Edwardi III*, pp. 127, 129, 131, 138-9, 142, 144, 163; William of Pagula, *Mirror for King Edward III*, pp. 105-6, 108, 113, 114, 116, 118, 134.

⁸⁰ The New Israel topos was employed occasionally to describe England by authors, including Alcuin, who viewed the Viking conquest of the Anglo-Saxon as divine punishment for their sins. Conor O'Brien, 'The New Israel Motif in Early Medieval Origin Legends', in *Origin Legends in Early Medieval Western Europe*, ed. by Lindy Brady and Patrick Wadden (Boston: Brill, 2022), pp. 239-58 (pp. 250, 252).

literature as a means of expressing the injustice the person feels as a result of someone else's actions.⁸¹ Such directness in William's writing makes the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* unique among the advice to princes examined in this thesis and a notable intervention in the advisory discourse.

Culpability and Counsel

In the *Epistola* and *Speculum*, William positions himself as his king's advisor, providing advice on the governance of England and warns Edward of his current counsel. William argues that many of Edward's counsellors do not possess the qualities needed to advise, such as piety, wisdom, and loyalty and, thus, advise him poorly, encouraging purveyance. Despite his criticism of the king's advisors, William vacillates between holding the king's counsellors and Edward culpable for the seizing of goods. While warning of bad counsel and holding both counsel and king culpable for poor governance is common to advice to princes texts, his discussion emphasises the spiritual consequences of heeding poor counsel and attempts to guide Edward on the care of his soul – advice William would have been expected to provide as a deacon – and are features of pastoral writing of this period.

When discussing the king's men, William exclusively mentions those engaged in purveyance. He stresses their greed (again, a common topic within the discourse). Rather than fault them for taking advantage of the English people, William complains that their greed will lead to Edward's continued reliance upon purveyance, for Edward will be forced to rely upon seized goods to support his men's desire for reward. Edward ought to avoid those who deceive, take more than is warranted of the peasants, and

⁸¹ Scase, p. 31.

request excessive gifts and donations. Such men, William argues, are like dogs who love bones when they have meat but abandon them once they are bare, and they do not have the king's best interests at heart (*M* 108, 115). This advice reflects the issues surrounding Edward II, who was criticised for making 'promises of reward to various unworthy men', as well as the heavy debts that Edward III incurred through purveyance while heir apparent.⁸² Additionally, William's admonishments against corrupt counsel and continued employment of purveyance are an engagement in advisory- and complaint-literature conventions, for it allays some of his criticism of the king. Despite William's overt criticism throughout the work, this is one of several places where William tempers it.

By engaging in purveyance, Edward's men show their impiety. Throughout the treatise, William equates the seizing of goods with wickedness and accuses royal servants of being followers of the devil throughout the treatise. He tells Edward these men are 'garciones diaboli' ('servants of the devil') and 'servi ejus' ('his [the devil's] slaves') who have either had their souls seized by the devil or have sold themselves to him and become a member of his household (*D* 94. *M* 81-2). Elsewhere, William claims that these thieves are, in fact, worse than the devil because, unlike the devil who only torments those who are evil, they torment both the good and bad (*M* 78, 84). Aligning Edward's men with the devil emphasises the impact purveyance has upon the soul, for only those who associate with evil would engage in stealing from others. The torment that these men place upon the English people also supports the work's argument that purveyance places Edward's salvation and the kingdom's peace and stability at stake.

⁸² Phillips, p. 349. Ormrod, *Edward III*, p. 17.

Further demonising these servants, William uses a prophetic register by describing these men as ‘decursores, immo, [sed] precursores Antichristi’ (‘not men, [but forerunners]... of the Antichrist’) (*D* 94. *M* 81-2). Not only does this quotation align with the concept of purveyance, in which the servants would travel ahead of the king to collect goods for him and his household, but in referencing, Antichrist it also highlights William’s concern about the consequences of immorality and bad governance. This apocalyptic register that draws upon biblical prophecy reflects William’s clerical position, and it stresses the role morality plays in a ruler’s fate. Such an intersection between morality, governance, and prophecy is used by clerical authors and can be seen in Gerald’s works, too. Indeed, it is also found in the imperial prophecy ‘Adam Davy’s Dream’ that ties the end of times to a holy king’s conquest of Europe.

William’s reference to Antichrist also shows an engagement with the late-thirteenth and early fourteenth-century eschatological beliefs on the apocalypse. The end of times and last judgement was a common topic of Middle English sermons and literature of the period, including allegories, alliterative poems, political prophecies, and advice to princes. According to Robert Lerner, there were two lines of thought: post-Antichrist chiliasm, which held that there would be a long period of bliss between Antichrist’s arrival and the Last Judgement, and pre-Antichrist chiliasm, which held that a period of bliss would come before Antichrist’s arrival.⁸³ Interest in apocalypticism during the fourteenth century was due to a combination of factors, including the Great Famine from 1315 to 1322, the wars with Scotland and France, and the ever-present

⁸³ Robert E. Lerner, ‘The Black Death and Western European Eschatological Mentalities’, *The American Historical Review*, 86 (1981), 533-52 (pp. 440-1).

figure of Death, who dominated medieval art and literature.⁸⁴ Antichrist, in particular, featured heavily in this literature. Fourteenth-century political prophecies mentioning Antichrist often included references to the pope. This stemmed from the hermit-pope Celestine V's election (and subsequent abdication less than six months later) in 1294 with some viewing him as the Angelic pope who arrived following Antichrist's arrival.⁸⁵

Some works merely warned of the end of time and the last judgement while others actively predicted the circumstances that will lead to them. In this vein, 'Adam Davy's Dreams' presages that Edward and the pope would unite the church and go on a crusade before the Last Days. This concept echoes the 'Tiburtine Sibyl' (c. fourth century) and 'Pseudo-Methodius' (c. seventh century): two political prophecies that became popular in England during the twelfth century. The prophecies speak of the last great Christian emperor who would conquer the pagans prior to the end of the world. He will be confronted with Gog and Magog and Antichrist and will ultimately defeat them.⁸⁶ Other works, such as *The Simonie* (1321), and the *Piers Plowman* (c. 1377), employed apocalyptic allusions.⁸⁷ In Latin sermons, allusions to the Last Judgement like William's were a common feature meant to guide listeners towards piety and away from

⁸⁴ John Aberth, *From the Brink of the Apocalypse: Confronting Famine, War, Plague, and Death in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (New York City: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-5; Phillips, pp. 83, 494.

⁸⁵ Coote, pp. 57, 90.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 46-8, 87, 90.

⁸⁷ Martin Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1961), p. 6; James Dean, 'Poems Against Simony and the Abuse of Money: Introduction', in *Medieval English Political Writings*, ed. by James Dean (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), pp. 179-88 (p. 180). Ties between the Antichrist and theft occurs in fourteenth-century pastoral literature. A Wycliffe sermon warns that the 'Antichristus gradatim invaluit' ('the Antichrist has gradually become strong') because thieves are begging rapaciously and taking more than they need. John Wyclif, *Iohannis Wyclif Sermones*, ed. by Johann Loserth (London: Trubner and Co., 1887), p. 228.

worldly interests.⁸⁸ The *Speculum Regis Edwardi III's* reference to royal servants as precursors of Antichrist, however, is, a way for William to 'assert... a broad imperative in a local situation' – that is, William uses Antichrist and the (implied) judgement that follows to encourage justice and motivate Edward to end purveyance.⁸⁹ William's comparison, then, links personal and apocalyptic eschatologies, for Edward's associations with such men will lead to his damnation as well as ruin for England but is also a way for William to respond to social unrest.

To guide Edward away from such disaster, William instructs him to find better men, particularly 'timentes Deum' ('God-fearing') men (*D* 123. *M* 103). By doing so and following the counsel of God-fearing men, William assures Edward that there will be peace and happiness within the kingdom. In addition to being God-fearing, William enumerates other qualities counsellors ought to possess: wisdom, truthfulness, and freedom from avarice – all qualities that frequently appear in advisory works.⁹⁰ These characteristics, according to William, are not currently found within the royal court where 'falsitas' ('falsehood') is rampant instead (*D* 97. *M* 84). These men are like dogs that are too ill to bark because they are too frightened to speak the truth lest they lose favour with the king (*D* 97. *M* 77). Instead, Edward should surround himself with 'viro sapientes... in quibus sit veritas' ('wise... men... in whom there is truth') although

⁸⁸ Michael Mecklenburg and Thom Mertens, 'The Last Judgement in Medieval Sermons', in *The Last Judgement in Medieval Preaching*, ed. by Thom Mertens, Maria Sherwood-Smith, Michael Mecklenburg, and Hans-Jochen Schiewer (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. ix-xxxiv (p. xxvi).

⁸⁹ Steven Justice, 'Prophecy and the Explanation of Social Disorder', in *Prophecy, Apocalypse, and the Day of Doom*, ed. by Nigel Morgan (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2004), pp. 139-59 (p. 148).

⁹⁰ The *Secretum Secretorum* says that counsellors should 'sit verax in verbis, diligens veritatem' and 'aurum et argentum et cetera accidentalia hujus mundi sint contemptibilia apud ipsum'. *Secretum Secretorum*, p. 142.

William does not mention how to determine which men are forthright, intimating that the king should be able to discern this (*D* 123. *M* 103).

Concern about truthful advisors may be a reaction to Edward II's reign, for Edward II was known for being heavily influenced by his ministers and favourites and substantially rewarding them.⁹¹ The writers of the *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II* (1307-26), the Ordinances of 1311, and the *Flores historiarum* (1306-326) all criticise Edward II's circle of advisors. The *Chronicles* writer tells how Edward listened to the 'nugis' ('frivolities' – a term increasingly used to describe the triviality of the royal court) of his counsellors rather than the sound advice of his barons.⁹² Similarly, the Ordinances note Edward as having 'evil and deceptive counsel' and the *Flores historiarum* as being 'led on by false counsel'.⁹³ Given how recent Edward II's deposition was and how soon into Edward III's majority the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* was written, William's anxieties surrounding counsel were understandable. And while criticism of rulers who surround themselves with poor counsel and flatterers is typical of advice to princes texts, William does not discuss the dangers of flatterers, nor, as many authors do, provide examples of biblical and ancient rulers who lost their throne because they followed advice of flatterers. He merely stresses the importance of truthful advisors and does not discuss the danger of flattery – an omission likely due to the specific nature of the text rather than providing general advice to rulers.

⁹¹ Natalie Fryde, *The Tyranny and Fall of Edward II 1321-1326* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 66-7.

⁹² 'Nugis' was initially used by John of Salisbury and later by Walter Map and is often used to highlight the inadequacy of the king's ministers. Phillips, pp. 178, 221; *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, II, p. 238; John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of courtiers and footprints of philosophers*, pp. 127-8; Walter Map, pp. 319-21.

⁹³ Phillips, pp. 178, 221.

In addition to warning Edward of the dangers presented by current officials, William suggests that Edward needs the ability to discern good counsel from bad and provides him with examples of the types of men with which to surround himself. Like John of Salisbury and Gerald of Wales, William recommends heeding the counsel of old and prudent men. To lend credence to this, he writes that Aristotle himself advised, “‘Credendum est senibus ut auctoritati’” (“‘One should believe in old men as authority’”) (*D* 123. *M* 103-4).⁹⁴ Rather than provide biblical or ancient exemplars of rulers who met their demise by heeding bad advice, William uses recent historical figures: Gaveston, the Despencers, and Mortimer (*D* 120. *M* 101).⁹⁵ All four men are demonised. William accuses Gaveston of guiding the king to do whatever he wished, echoing the chroniclers who said Gaveston acted as if the king, and he accuses all four men of oppressing the English people (*M* 101).⁹⁶ Whereas most tales of bad advisors in advisory works end with the ruler’s demise, William emphasises the counsellors’ demises, noting how these men, abandoned by the Holy Spirit, ‘malum habuerunt finem’ (‘had a bad end in this world’) and were seized and killed for their poor counsel (*D* 120. *M* 101).⁹⁷ William suggests these men’s downfalls were a result of divine punishment, and although they met a bad fate in this world, ‘quantum ad salvacionem animarum suarum’ (‘perhaps they nevertheless had a good end as to the salvation of

⁹⁴ This is not verbatim but rather a paraphrase from the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It is possible that William mentions Aristotle as a source of authority because of his association with the *Secretum Secretorum*. Given the popularity of the work and the various Latin translations of the work available by the end of the thirteenth century, William may have been familiar with the work. William himself heeds this advice in his source material for the treatise, often citing the Gratian, St. Augustine, Seneca, St. Gregory the Great, and Cassiodorus among many others. Michele Campopiano, ‘Secret Knowledge for Political and Social Harmony’, in *Prodesse et delectare*, ed. by Norbert Kossinger and Claudia Wittig (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), pp. 39-56 (pp. 47-53).

⁹⁵ Kathryn Warner, *Edward II: The Unconventional King* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing, 2014), pp. 27, 36, 96.

⁹⁶ *Vita Edwardi Secundi*, p. 35.

⁹⁷ Warner, pp. 27, 36, 96.

their souls’) (*D* 120. *M* 101). It is not that these men offered poor counsel that concerns William, though, but the ramifications of their poor counsel. Gaveston, the Despensers, and Mortimer, through their influence of Edward and Isabella, were all closely associated with Edward II’s deposition, and as Edward shows, there is the possibility that poor counsel can lead to a ruler’s loss of kingdom.

References to these men may also be a comment on the anxieties surrounding their sexual relationships with Edward and Isabella. William writes that prior to Edward III’s ascension the royal court committed numerous evils against the English people and that, like the people of Sodom, they were punished for their actions by God. In the subsequent section, William mentions how Gaveston and the Despenser the Younger were punished rightfully with death (*M* 100-1). Similarly, Mortimer, Isabella’s lover and co-conspirator in Edward II’s deposition, is punished.⁹⁸ William cites Ephesians 5 – a chapter which discusses the dangers of fornication– and cautions Edward to “‘Nemo inanibus verbis vos seducet’” (“‘Let no one seduce you by inane words’”) unlike his parents, a conflation of bad advice and sexual seduction (*D* 120. *M* 101).⁹⁹ Discussing these men and intimating about their speculated sexual relationships, shows William’s interest in the relation between sexual immoderation and divine punishment (both of the individuals and of the nation) and, consequently, gives a pastoral tone to the treatise. Anxiety surrounding sexual deviancy and the destruction of the kingdom can be found in other early fourteenth-century works, such as the *Prophecy of the Six Kings*. In it, the goat, understood to be Edward II, is predicted as bringing ‘graunt damage famine et

⁹⁸ Phillips, p. 112.

⁹⁹ Ephesians 5:3 says, ‘fornicatio autem... nec nominetur in vobis’ (‘but fornication... let it not so much as be named among you’), and Ephesians 5:5 says, ‘omnis fornicator... non habet hereditatem in regno Christi et Dei’ (‘no fornicator... hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God’).

mortalite des gentz et perte de terre' ('great harm, famine and death of people and division of land' [literally, 'loss of land']), which is itself a reworking of a tale from the *Prophetiae Merlini*. The prophecy further predicts that during the reign of the goat, who comes from the camp of Venus, the kingdom will be inundated with Cupid's arrows, which will lead to the endless fornication of man.¹⁰⁰ The hope of the *Prophecy of the Six Kings* as well as the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* is that this period of immorality and devastation will be reversed during the reign of king following Edward II (understood as the boar in the *Six Kings*) and that the kingdom will become stable.

Interestingly, after warning Edward of Gaveston's, the Despensers', and Mortimer's fates, William breaks his address to Edward and instead addresses the king's advisers: 'Ideo, moneo vos, ductores regis, ex parte Dei, ut ipsum bene et sapienter ducatis... Ducatis ergo eum caute non quasi insipientes sed ut sapientes, redimentes scilicet animas vestras' ('I warn you, guides of the king, on behalf of God, that you should lead him well and wisely.... guide him cautiously, not as fools but as wise men, thereby redeeming your souls') (*D* 120. *M* 101). The inclusion of a direct address to counsellors is (to my knowledge) unique to this advice to princes text. Additionally, his use of 'ductores', which can mean leader as well as commander or general, intimates that William refers to magnates, in particular, the group of men most likely to exhibit influence over the king as was the case with the Despensers and Mortimer. This address, along with the emphasis on the counsellors' demises, suggests that the intended audience of the treatise is wider in scope than it initially claims (most likely intended for members of the royal court, those of middling rank, and ecclesiasts). This is supported, in part, by the manuscript evidence, for the *Speculum Regis Edwardi*

¹⁰⁰ Flood, pp. 89-90.

III was owned by bureaucrats and a clergyman.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, by addressing the counsellors in such a manner, William holds them culpable for poor governance, a common strategy in advisory literature. Condemning bad counsel allows William to mitigate direct critique of Edward, and this is one of the few places in the work in which he does.

William further espouses Edward's inculpability surrounding purveyance by proclaiming the king to be unaware of his men's use of it. In several passages, William proclaims Edward's innocence. He writes, 'O domine mi rex, audi nunc cujusmodi iniquitas et falsitas fit hiis diebus per garciones tue curie' ('O Lord, my king, hear now the kind of iniquity and falsehood that exists in these days through the servants of your court'), implying Edward is unaware of what his servants are doing (*D* 96-7. *M* 84). Elsewhere, William claims that purveyors are not of the same mind as Edward and, thus, not truly members of the royal household. At one point, he even says that God has not yet punished Edward because of his innocence (*M* 83, 131). However, in other passages, William blames Edward for purveyance, and he vacillates between whether Edward is intentionally causing harm to his subjects or not. His accusations of blame against Edward, which includes warnings of the potential loss of kingdom and

¹⁰¹ One likely owner of the work, Edmund Stafford (1344-1419), was a king's clerk, the bishop of Exeter, and eventually chancellor. Of the three extant manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, one was donated by the soldier Robert Stamford around 1609, another by courtier and diplomat Kenelm Digby in 1634, and the other by clergyman and manuscript collector Richard Rawlinson in 1755. In the manuscript owned by Digby, the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* is found alongside several religious works, Aesop's fables, and a Prester John letter to Manuel I Komnenos (emperor of Greece). The *Speculum*'s position among these works suggests that it was perceived as a religious work in addition to its political nature. Cavanaugh, p. 806; 'Islip, Simon, -1366', in *Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries* <http://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/work_4555> [accessed 27 March 2022]

damnation, appear to be a strategy to correct Edward's behaviour – a key aspect of pastoral care.¹⁰²

To highlight Edward's blame, William compares him to King Rehoboam – a stock figure in advisory discourse – who, ignoring the counsel of old men in favour of the counsel of young men, tells his people, “Pater meus aggravavit jugum vestrum, ego addam jugo vestro” (“My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke”) (*D* 106. *M* 91).¹⁰³ This reference to Rehoboam is striking for several reasons. Firstly, both Edward III and Rehoboam were accused of burdening their subjects: Edward by stealing provisions from his people, and Rehoboam by maintaining the harsh taxes established by his father, Solomon.¹⁰⁴ Secondly, Rehoboam was accused of allowing his subjects to become ‘effeminati’ and commit ‘omnes abominationes’ (‘all abominations’) – complaints similar to those made about Edward II – and Rehoboam, like Edward II, lost his kingdom from bad governance and heeding poor counsel (1 Kings 14. 21-6).¹⁰⁵ William warns that Edward III's failure to discern trustworthy advisors may cost him as it did with Rehoboam:

Dicerent forte aliqui de consilio tuo, tibi applaudentes, inimici Jesu Christi et inimici anime tue, de quibus dicitur in psalmo: “Deus dissipavit ossa eroum, qui hominibus placent”; ergo tu non eris rex in terra tua, nec invenies esculenta et poculenta et alia tibi necessaria.

¹⁰² According to the Robert Grosseteste, the Bishop of Lincoln (d. 1253), pastoral care involved ‘the terrifying condemnation of vices, the severe and stern correction and strict castigation of vices where this is necessary’. Robert Swanson, ‘Pastoral Care, Cares, and Carers’, in *Pastoral Care in Medieval England*, ed. by Peter Clarke and Sarah James (New York City: Routledge, 2020), pp. 123-141 (p. 124).

¹⁰³ 1 Kings 12.8-14

¹⁰⁴ John Van Seters, ‘Solomon’, in *Encyclopedia of Religion* <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX3424502901/GVRL?u=bham_uk&sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid=ab20195d> [accessed 12 August 2022]

¹⁰⁵ Ormrod, ‘The Sexualities of Edward II’, p. 34.

Perhaps some of your counselors, enemies of Jesus Christ and enemies of your soul, applauding you would say what is said in Psalms: “God has dispersed the bones of those who please humanity.” Therefore, you will not be king in your land, nor will you find food and drink and other things necessary for you. (*D* 136. *M* 111)

This quotation may be an inversion of a *Prophetiae Merlini* quotation about the boar whose ‘pectus... cibus erit egentibus, et lingua eius sedabit sicientes’ (‘his breast shall be food for the needy and his tongue drink for the thirsty’) and intimates that, unlike the boar who saves England following the disastrous rule of the goat, Edward may lead the country to further ruin.¹⁰⁶ The implication of this would be the loss of the throne, an apt warning given his father’s fate.

William accuses Edward of behaving like an ‘imperator’ (‘emperor’) by acting as though purveyance is a ruler’s right (*D* 112. *M* 96). The concept of emperor in medieval western Europe centred on the emperor’s divinely given authority and supremacy (which, according to William, permits the emperor to create laws that allow him to purchase items for a lesser price) – neither of which William believes Edward to have (*M* 96).¹⁰⁷ By maintaining this custom of purveyance and being aware of and failing to correct his servants’ behaviours, Edward is implicitly agreeing with it and will be punished (*M* 82-3, 95-8). This claim of Edward’s implicit agreement and rightful punishment is supported by passages with similar claims from the bible and from Gratian’s *Decretum*. References to these works occur more frequently throughout the

¹⁰⁶ Flood, p. 90.

¹⁰⁷ William reminds Edward that his temporal authority is inferior to the church’s and that since the time of King John, the English monarch has held the kingdom in fealty from the church. Robert Folz, *The Concept of Empire in Western Europe from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century* (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1969), pp. 42, 73.

Speculum Regis Edwardi III than those to English law and both emphasise the pastoral focus of the work and reflect William's background in canon law.¹⁰⁸ Members of the court, William alleges, often do not provide their men with enough money to purchase goods legitimately and are unwilling to keep servants unless they are able to live off stolen goods (*M* 76, 92). Indeed, lords prefer their servants to steal as it allows the lords to live well, and 'nam talis dominus qualis familia' ('for as is the lord, so is the household') (*D* 95. *M* 82). These arguments, while placing culpability for the onus of purveyance on Edward, do, at the same time, temper some of the direct critique of Edward. Rather than using the direct address 'tu' as most of the treatise does, they use general terms, like 'rex' and 'domini' (*D* 94-5). While refraining from directly addressing the king in this passage and blaming bad counsel for purveyance shows William's modulation of his critique, his references to Rehoboam and Edward acting like an emperor ultimately suggest that William holds the king responsible for using purveyance. This critical view of imperial ambition is one that is found in advice to princes written near periods where the monarchs have failed in their attempts to expand their own kingdoms, like Edward II and, as we will see, Richard II.

Because William views royal counsel as inadequate, he places himself as Edward's counsellor, hoping to guide the king to govern in such a way that he will achieve salvation. In both the *Epistola* and the *Speculum*, William frequently writes 'te consulo' ('I counsel you') followed by instructions on how Edward can end the onus placed upon his English subjects (*D* 117, 122, 133. *M* 99, 103, 109). At the forefront of much of William's advice is religion, and he tells Edward, 'Te regem consulo, ob

¹⁰⁸ William cites the *Decretum* eighteen times throughout the treatise while he cites English civil law once in reference to how Edward paid labourers less than what the Magna Carta decrees he must. William of Pagula, *Mirror of King Edward III*, pp. 66, 76, 78, 79, 81-2, 84-5, 93-5, 97, 99.

salutem anime tue' ('I advise you, King, for the health of your soul') and to have faith 'tantummodo in Dominum Deum tuum' ('only in the Lord your God') (*D* 117, 144. *M* 99, 118). Placing oneself as a king's counsellor is common for writers of advice to princes, but William places himself as Edward's advisor on both governance and spiritual matters. He claims his authority derives from the church, from which Edward holds England in fealty, and the English people: 'ex parte Dei omnipotentis et sancte ecclesie, et ex parte populi anglicani' ('on behalf of Almighty God and the Holy Church, and on behalf of the English people') (*D* 112, 122, 133. *M* 96, 102, 109).¹⁰⁹ By claiming authority from the people as well as the church, William positions his counsel as worthy of his king's attention and conflates his political advice with pastoral advice.

If his own authority was not sufficient, William introduces a new source of authority in the *Speculum*: the exemplar Louis IX. William uses Jean de Joinville's advisory work *Histoire de Saint Louis* (1309) to relate the teachings Louis gave his son on his deathbed (*M* 123).¹¹⁰ He likely chose Louis as an exemplar both because of Louis' reputation as a pious ruler and interest in Edward's French descent as we saw in *De nobilitatibus*. Louis's advice centres on the relationship between a king and God and how a ruler must govern in a manner pleasing to both God and the church, and William ties each piece of Louis's advice to the issue of counsel and purveyance in England. Louis advises not only to confess often but to 'honestos et discretos eligas confessores, qui sciant te docere, a quo sit cavendum tibi, et quod oporteat te facere' ('choose honest and discreet confessors who know how to teach you what you ought to look out for and

¹⁰⁹ William writes, 'Sed tu es rex Anglie, tenes totum regnum Anglie, in feodo ab ecclesia Romana' ('But you are King of England, holding the whole kingdom of England in fealty from the Roman church').

¹¹⁰ The quotations specifically come from the 'Les enseignements de Saint Louis à son fils' portion of the *Histoire de Saint Louis*. William likely translated this French text into Latin himself.

what you should do') (*D* 152. *M* 124-5). Whether Phillip seeks out a confessor or some other worthy men to discuss matters with, Louis says they ought to correct him and tell him what he needs and not simply what he wants to hear. Following this advice is William's conflation of confession and counsel, for he says that a good confessor or advisor will tell Edward how he ought to govern – that he should end purveyance, for example – in ways that align with God's commandments (*M* 124-5). This emphasis on confession highlights the pastoral nature of the work; William frequently enjoins Edward to confess, an integral part of administering to a congregation (and one which features heavily in William's pastoral work, the *Oculus Sacerdotis*, c. 1320).¹¹¹ Whether advisors are members of the clergy or laity, Louis tells Philip that they should be good men who seek to uphold justice. Such advice suggests that rulers must be able to discern a good advisor from a poor one, and William, by relating this advice to the issues of purveyance, provides a method for discernment: if he seizes the goods of others against their will, he is a poor counsellor (*M* 126-7). Providing guidance on needing to discern is typical of advisory works, but providing how a ruler should discern good from bad counsel is unusual. It is the specific focus of the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* and William's pointed argument against purveyance that allows him to provide advice on the discernment of counsel.

In addition to being a source of authority as an exemplar, Louis is also treated as an alternative father figure of Edward III. This may be because William viewed Edward II, a deposed monarch whose reign was fraught with controversy, as inadequate to

¹¹¹ Confession was one of the sacraments William would have been expected to perform as a priest, and in the *Oculus*, he stresses how often and when priests should encourage their parishioners to confess so that the parishioners will achieve salvation. Hamilton, p. 164. William of Pagula, *Oculus Sacerdotis*, in *Broadview Anthology of British Literature* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2006), pp. 555-8 (pp. 556-7).

provide guidance. William often mentions how the advice he is writing comes from Louis's advice to his son Philip, and he frequently praises Louis's wisdom and governance (*M* 123, 130). Although Louis may serve as an allusion to political prophecy and imperial imaginings of Edward popular during this period, for it was through Louis and Philip, Edward's maternal ancestors, that Edward claimed his position as rightful heir to the French throne, William's discomfort with Edward's imperial imaginings throughout the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* make this unlikely. Instead, William likely uses Louis because of his status as an ideal Christian king, who was canonised less than thirty years after his death.¹¹² Given his piety, he would be better equipped to provide the guidance Edward III needs than Edward II was. By using Louis, William diverges from other advice to princes, for he uses a recent historical king as an exemplar rather than a biblical or ancient one. Louis adds to the pastoral nature of the work as William stresses the king's moral qualities (in addition to his kingly ones), and because this and his other points of discussion on counsel, the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* provides a notable addition to the advice to princes tradition.

Divine Punishment: Exemplars in the *Speculum Regis*

As is typical with advisory works, William relies upon exemplary rulers to show Edward how he should and should not govern. The source material for his exemplars is conventional, largely drawing upon the bible but also from the works of Saint Gregory, Saint Augustine, Isidore, Seneca, and, less frequently, Aristotle.¹¹³ However, William predominately uses negative exemplary rulers who were punished for their poor governance, much like Gerald does in Books II and III of *De Principis Instructione*.

¹¹² Elizabeth M. Hallam, 'Philip the Fair and the Cult of Saint Louis', *Studies in Church History*, 60 (1982), 201-14 (p. 204).

¹¹³ Nederman, 'Introduction to the *Mirror of King Edward III*', p. 69.

Despite William's use of this conventional material, his treatment of it is not. Rather than relaying extended tales of exemplary rulers' actions and implying that the tales relate to the addressee's own actions, William briefly refers to tales (likely because he expected his readers to be familiar with them) and then explicitly compares them to Edward.

Throughout the *Epistola*, William argues that purveyance is not the right of the king but an act of theft which greatly burdens the people. He warns Edward of the consequences of continuing its practice by using Alexander the Great. Unlike Milemete, who describes Alexander as a flawed but exceptional conqueror, William uses tales of the ruler that show his avaricious and mortal nature.¹¹⁴ Earlier medieval portrayals of Alexander were negative, and the first Alexandrian legend William uses is borrowed from St Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* (c. early 5th century).¹¹⁵ The tale, which is also found in the *Policraticus*, tells of the king's capture of a notorious pirate.

Alexandro Magno, quidam comprehensus, respondit, cum ab eo interrogaretur quare fecerat latrocinium in mare et ipse respondit ei: "Quia tu facis latrocinium per orbem terrarum. Sed quia ego facio uno navigio, vel duobus, latro vocor, sed tu facis, quasi per omnem locum, ideo, tu vocaris magnus imperator."

A certain man who had been apprehended replied to Alexander the Great when he was asked by him why he robbed on the sea; and this man replied to him:

"You rob throughout the world. But because I do it with one ship or two, I am

¹¹⁴ As previously discussed in the section on *De nobilitatibus*, there were associations between Alexander the Great and Edward II early in his rule. Coote, pp. 84, 91.

¹¹⁵ Stone, p. 113.

called a robber, but you do it everywhere, therefore you are called a great emperor.” (*D* 103. *M* 89)

In other advisory works, this tale continues and includes Alexander’s acceptance of the pirate’s reproach and, thus, functions to show readers how a king might respond well to admonitions. William’s version, however, is more similar to his source, Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*, in its ending, brevity, and function within the work. In the *De Civitate Dei*, this tale is placed within a discussion on justice, and its argument is that if justice is not served, then kingdoms are ‘nisi magna latrocinia’ (‘nothing but great robberies’).¹¹⁶ William ends the tale immediately after the pirate’s response, which emphasises how a ruler’s behaviour is often interpreted differently than their subjects’ behaviour even if it is the same, and then asserts that purveyance is still theft even if it is sanctioned by the king.

In another tale of Alexander, one which appears later in *The Regiment of Princes*, the emperor functions as a comment on the impact Edward’s actions will have upon his soul. William tells how the emperor was placed in a golden tomb upon his death. At the funeral, several philosophers remarked upon the king’s declined status, saying, “‘Heri Alexander premebat terram, hodie ab ea premitur ipse ’” (“‘Yesterday, Alexander pressed upon the earth; today, he is pressed upon by it’”) and “‘Alexander potuit multos a morte liberare, hodie ipsius mortis jacula non potuit evitare’” (“‘Alexander could free many from death; today he cannot avoid the darts of his death’”) (*D* 148-9. *M* 122). The philosophers’ comments show that like Alexander,

¹¹⁶ The tale is found in Augustine’s *De Civitate Dei*, which William cites within the larger context of the tale and also in Cicero’s *De Re Publica*. Aurelius Augustinus, *De Civitate Dei*, ed. by Bernhard Dombart, 2 vols (Stuttgart: De Gruyter, 1993), I, pp. 150-1; John of Salisbury, *Frvolities of courtiers and footprints of philosophers*, p. 204.

Edward, no matter what heights he reaches, will return to the earth and without riches. The source for this tale is likely the *Gesta Romanorum* (compiled at the turn of the fourteenth century), and William's version remains largely true to the *Gesta*, only adding a line about Alexander no longer leading an army but having an army lead him to a tomb.¹¹⁷ As well as further emphasising the transient nature of life, the addition may be a nod to one the reasons purveyance was an issue: its use to support soldiers during military campaigns. Purveyance was used as a wartime expedient under Edward I and II, and William likely worried Edward III would continue to do so (which he did at the renewal of the Scottish war in 1333).¹¹⁸ Such an addition and discussion of Alexander's death overall attempt to convince Edward to focus on salvation rather than worldly goods and fame. William chooses tales of Alexander that centre on the emperor's poor qualities because they better align with the critical nature of the work. They allow William to directly compare Edward III and Alexander as they were both considered strong rulers but possess undesirable qualities.

Many of the other exemplary rulers William relies upon, though, are biblical, and he chooses kings whose poor governance resulted in the loss of their kingdoms. Because William believes it is ultimately Edward's responsibility to rectify the issue of purveyance, William references several Old Testament rulers who were able to amend abuses of power but failed to do so and, consequently, lost their kingdoms and their lives. Rather than providing full stories of these exemplary rulers and having the reader interpret the coded warnings as with many advice to princes texts, William quotes directly from biblical passages to warn Edward. He initially cites how Ecclesiasticus

¹¹⁷ *Gesta Romanorum*, ed. and trans. by Charles Swan (London: George Routledge and Son, 1905), p. 65; *Gesta Romanorum*, ed. by Hermann Oesterley (Berlin: Weidhannsche Buchhandlung, 1872), p. 329.

¹¹⁸ W.R. Jones, pp. 301, 307-10.

10.8 warns that “Regnum a gente in gentem transfertur propter injurias, injusticias, contumelias et diversos dolos” (“Kingdoms pass from people to people on account of injuries, injustices, contumacy and diverse harms”) (*D* 95. *M* 83). Then, he writes that we can see this is true from the books of Saul, Samuel, and Jeroboam, and ‘etiam de multis magnis dominis quondam in Anglia gubernantibus regnum istud’ (‘also from many great lords formerly governing the kingdom in England’) (*D* 93. *M* 83). These quotations illustrate William’s anxiety surrounding the stability of kingdoms – an anxiety found throughout the treatise – and by going against God’s commandments (as Saul and Jeroboam did), Edward risks losing England.¹¹⁹ There is also the danger that Edward’s actions will impact his heirs. William mentions rulers, like Ahab and Ahaz, whose descendants were punished with the loss of Israel and Judah because of the sins of their ancestors (*M* 89-90). The concern about loss of kingdom due to sin serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it shows an engagement with common themes. *The Brut* (completed sometime after 1272 and likely during the early fourteenth century) similarly expresses concern about broken succession and impact a king’s sins have on the nation: ‘Ne mie pur ceo homme countera ici vn des rois que donqe furent, par qi pecche e surfet graunz damages e destrucciouns auindrent en ceste terre’ (‘here, however, will be told of one of the kings who lived then, by whose sin and excess great damage and destruction befell this land’).¹²⁰ Secondly, it reflects the pastoral nature of the work, for William hopes to guide Edward away from sin and possible retribution. And thirdly, it reflects the political instability of 1320s England in which Edward II was

¹¹⁹ These biblical books discuss the falls of Jeroboam and Saul, who both strayed from God’s commandments. Jeroboam led the nation of Israel into idolatry while Saul disobeyed God’s order to annihilate the Amalekites. 1 Kings 12.28-33; 1 Samuel 15.2-11.

¹²⁰ Julia Marvin, ‘Narrative, Lineage, and Succession in the Anglo-Norman Prose *Brut* Chronicle’, in *Broken Lines*, ed. by Raluca Radulescu and Edward Kennedy (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2008), pp. 205-37 (p. 216).

portrayed as sexually immoral and unfit to rule. These anxieties may be a reflection of the lasting effects of Edward II's deposition and suggest there were worries if Edward III's reign would be fraught with similar troubles.

Eli – a ruler punished because he failed to correct his sons who used their positions as priests to steal from others – is used to warn Edward of the dangers of inaction (1 Samuel 2.12-17). In several passages, William warns Edward that he may be punished like Eli if he does not correct his servants' behaviours, for 1 Samuel 12.25 says, “Si perseveraveritis in malicia vestra; vos et rex vester pariter peribitis” (“if you do things wickedly, [literally, ‘if you persevere in your wickedness’] you and your king will equally be swept away”) (*D* 95. *M* 83). Eli is also found in Gerald of Wales's *De Principis Instructione*, and, like Gerald, William fails to mention Eli's goodness, more befitting of his characterisation of Edward III in the treatise. Instead, he discusses how the Israelites lost their kingdom because Eli did not correct his sons' abuses of power, and he further cautions that sons are often punished for the sins of their fathers (*M* 89). While William may be intimating that Edward III may suffer for the sins of his father, he directly warns that Edward's son, Edward of Woodstock, will be punished eternally if the injustices of purveyance continue.¹²¹ These pieces of advice highlight William's concern about the passage of the kingdom from father to son and the continued impact Edward II's 'fatuitatem et negligenciam' ('foolishness and negligence') may have on England's stability (*D* 116. *M* 98).

William is similarly concerned with the divine punishment of rulers in his account of Ahab. As with William's portrayal of Edward II, Ahab forsook God, enjoyed

¹²¹ By the time the treatise was written, Edward III only had one son, Edward the Black Prince, who was still an infant. Because of this, the warning for Edward III's son is likely general one rather than in response to a specific incident.

seized goods from his subjects, and ignored the advice of good counsel. In one passage, William writes, ‘Achab peccante, posteri ejus regni solium amiserunt’ (‘by the sins of Ahab, his descendants lost the throne of the kingdom’) (*D* 104. *M* 89). Elsewhere, William relates Edward’s behaviour to the tale of Ahab and Naboth. This account differs from the others in the treatise, for it is lengthier than the other tales (although it is still condensed from the biblical version), and a few lines are directly (or nearly) copied from the Vulgate. Highlighting the demanding and avaricious nature of Ahab, William writes, ‘Rex Achab locutus est ad Naboth dicens: Da michi vineam tuam’ (‘King Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying: give me your vineyard’) (*D* 114. *M* 96). He also illustrates Queen Jezebel’s cunning in her manipulation of official documents (‘‘Misit uxor ejus litteras ad opinatos, qui habitabant cum Naboth’’, ut eum per falsos testes interficerent’ – ‘‘And the wife sent his documents to the great men who dwelt with Naboth’’, so that he would be destroyed by false testimony’) (*D* 114. *M* 97). William’s inclusion of Jezebel’s manipulation of documents aligns with the biblical tale; however, this detail is not found in other advisory works’ retellings of the story (1 Kings 21.8). It likely reflects William’s complaint that Edward granted letters of protection to his officials who engage in purveyance – documents that William believes are unlawful. Further, these lines, coupled with William’s assertion that Edward’s presence brings sorrow to his people (for they fear he will take their food and livestock), suggest that Edward behaves in the same way as Ahab by seizing goods from his subjects.

The *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*’s tale, however, elides certain parts of the biblical version to better support William’s argument. Although William includes God’s threat of punishing Ahab (‘‘in loco, in quo linxerunt canes sanguinem Naboth lambent tuum sanguinem’’ – ‘‘In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs

lick your own blood”’), he fails to mention that Ahab repents and is forgiven by God (*D* 114. *M* 97).¹²² Referencing Ahab’s death shows an engagement with other advisory texts, as John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus* includes both this quotation and a discussion of sons punished for their fathers’ sins.¹²³ It also may function as a further comparison between Ahab and Edward, for the greyhound was one of several royal beasts attributed to Edward (as well as the boar, the bull, and the leopard). Found on the obverse of Edward’s fifth Great Seal and throughout St. George’s Chapel at Windsor, the greyhound symbol was used by all his sons and his grandson Richard II.¹²⁴ In telling the story of Ahab and Naboth, William draws comparisons between Ahab and both Edward II and Edward III and creates a particularly apt warning of how Edward III ought to fear for his life and the Plantagenet dynasty.

Another exemplar common to the discourse found in the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* is Nebuchadnezzar, and William’s use of the ruler is simultaneously conventional and unconventional.¹²⁵ However, William does not use the most common tale of the king – that of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. Rather, he references the story of the king’s decree for his subjects to worship an idol he created in his warning for Edward to ‘diligenter vide, et intellige quid accidit regi Nabugodonozor et filio ejus Balshasar, Dan. Capitulis iij et v’ (‘look diligently, and understand what happened to King

¹²² Later, though, Ahab angers God again for his reliance upon false prophets and the prophecy of his death comes true. I Kings 22.17-38.

¹²³ The *Policraticus* reads, ‘In quo loco linxerunt canes sanguinem Naboth, ibi lingent sanguinem tuum’. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* (Lyon: Apud Franciscum Raphelengium, 1595), p. 99.

¹²⁴ On his fifth Great Seal, used between 1360 and 1369, the obverse side features Edward’s effigy paired with two shields and two greyhounds. H. Stanford London, ‘The Greyhound as a Royal Beast’, *Archaeologia*, XCVII (1959), 139-163 (pp. 143, 151-2, 154).

¹²⁵ Edward II was even compared to Nebuchadnezzar. In a passage dated to 1318, the writer of the *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II* discusses how Nebuchadnezzar did not become a good leader until the twelfth year of his reign just as Edward II had not proved himself to be a great ruler in his eleven years of ruling. *Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and Edward II*, p. 237.

Nebuchadnezzar and his son Belshazzar (Daniel 3 and 5)' (*D* 96. *M* 84). Daniel 3 tells how Nebuchadnezzar demands all Babylonians to worship an idol, and all his officials and subjects acquiesce except three Babylonian officials: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. In response, Nebuchadnezzar orders his servants to toss the three men into a blazing furnace, but when the men exit the furnace unscathed, Nebuchadnezzar believes they must worship a true God and promotes the men (Daniel 3.1-97). This tale and its placement within William's discussion of royal theft links William's concerns for Edward's men to his belief in divine punishment. In surrounding himself with impious men, Nebuchadnezzar risks divine punishment, and William draws comparisons between him and Edward, who similarly surrounds himself with men who seize goods (which William argues shows they do not revere and fear the Lord) (Daniel 5.1-31).

Despite seeing this, Belshazzar commits the same follies as his father, and Babylon is conquered by the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5.20-23, 28-31.).¹²⁶ William's interest in this tale is in the potential for kings to be punished by God with loss of their kingdoms – an interest similar to that of John of Salisbury's use of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel – and including it allows William to further stress his argument that sons may repeat the same follies as their fathers. Given this story and other pieces of advice William has offered, William seems anxious that Edward III will not only make the same mistakes as his father but that he will lose England, too. Additionally, the story, as well as the others of exemplary rulers, allows William to craft advice with pointed applicability to Edward II and III while engaging with conventions of the discourse. His failure to elucidate the circumstances surrounding the loss of the kings' throne suggests

¹²⁶ Belshazzar is technically the son of one of Nebuchadnezzar's successors, but he is often referred to as Nebuchadnezzar's son.

William expected his readers to be familiar with the stories themselves. It also allows him to focus on the overall argument of the treatise, for he just briefly refers to the tales and then directly compares the exemplar's situation to Edward III's use of purveyance. This direct comparison and criticism with exemplars is unique to this text, and although many of these exemplars are found in other advisory works within this thesis, they are often used to provide coded critique.

The Limited and Covert Flattery in the *Speculum Regis*

Unlike many advice to princes texts, the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* engages in the flattery of its addressee in a more limited manner. Instead, William engages more with complaint literature, stressing the injustices to which the poor are subjected.¹²⁷ William directly addresses King Edward throughout the work, offering advice on governance and warnings on what will happen if his advice is ignored, yet he does not address Edward in the sonorous manner conventional to advice to princes – not even in the introductions of the *Epistola* or the *Speculum*.¹²⁸ Even the exemplary rulers he uses to compare Edward to are used in a critical way and function as a warning of what may befall Edward if he does not end the practice of purveyance.

Some of William's allusions, however, intimate covert praise. His references to Edward's English and French ancestry throughout emphasise Edward's position as rightful heir to the English and French thrones, for it was through his mother's side that Edward III claimed he should be the French king. And although William does not exalt Edward III, he does so with Edward's ancestors. William writes how much the people loved Edward III's great-grandfather Henry III because he did not seize goods from

¹²⁷ Scase, p. 35.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

them and how the ‘nobilis regis Edwardi’ (‘noble King Edward’) ensured peace and joy within England by not using purveyance for much of his reign (*D* 115. *M* 98). Similarly praised is Edward III’s great-great-grandfather Louis IX, who William notes for his wise and holy teachings and refers to as the ‘christianissimus rex’ (‘most Christian king’) (*D* 150. *M* 123). This genealogical interest along with the frequent references to fathers and sons are covert flattery, for they laud Edward’s ancestors as effective, wise rulers who, according to William, brought peace and great happiness for much of their reigns. Doing so has a double and contradictory function. One, it intimates that Edward, given his long line of great rulers, too could be one. Two, it highlights William’s failure to extol Edward III and the overall critical tone of the work.

The limited and indirect flattery may be a reflection of both the purpose of the treatise and the period in which it was written. The work is meant not to offer general advice on governance but to specifically admonish Edward for purveyance and encourage him to be a better Christian. Further, the work was written soon after Edward’s accession to the throne, which William believes resulted from the English people’s support. He intimates that because of this, the throne can be taken away: ‘Considera etiam diligenter... quam humiliter, quam graciose, quam devote, quam letanter populus anglicanus te admisit et in omnibus factis tuis contra rebelles tuos, tecum astitit et iuvavit’ (‘Likewise, consider diligently... how humbly, how graciously, how devoutly, how joyously the English people admitted you, and stood by and aided you in everything you did against your rebels’) (*D* 128. *M* 105-6). Edward should desire to be loved by both God and the people, and William cautions that while Edward may be king today, he may not be king tomorrow. Because he viewed Edward as beholden to

his subjects, William may have believed he could write more directly and critically of the king and only employed flattery in a limited manner.

Concern for the English People

Central to the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* is the effect purveyance has upon the English people. Appeals for Edward to consider his people's needs are found throughout the treatise and, coupled with William's assertion that Edward ascended the throne only through the support of the English people, suggest William believes rulers are beholden to their subjects and their subjects' wellbeing – a trope common to the discourse. William's concern for the common people and the impact governance has on them, though, is unique. Advice to princes texts typically focus on how poor governance may result in the loss of the kingdom, but William's focuses on how it results in the loss of the kingdom and the people's suffering. At the centre of this argument is William's belief that the king ought to care for his subjects by upholding the laws and by ensuring their physical wellbeing. He argues that, despite what Edward's use of purveyance suggests, he, too, is subject to the laws of England and should ensure they are maintained – an idea common to high and late medieval political theory (*M* 96, 99, 103). In both the advisory works of John of Salisbury and Thomas Aquinas, they posit that, along with his subjects, a prince must abide by the law, and Aquinas argues further that a true king voluntarily subjects himself to the law.¹²⁹ We see this theory in practice by the early fourteenth century in England, for at his coronation in 1308, Edward II gave his consent to uphold and follow the law, and for Edward III's coronation in 1327, a medal was cast that read 'Voluntas populi dat jura' ('the will of the people gives

¹²⁹ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman, p.47; Henry A. Myers, *Medieval Kingship* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1982), p. 270.

law’).¹³⁰ And so, William’s argument that Edward ought to abide by the law and not seize his people’s goods was rooted both in theory and in practice.

Not only does William believe Edward is accountable to uphold and abide by common law but also that he is accountable for his people’s temporal and spiritual welfare. In the late medieval period, pastoral care was not limited to the clergy but was the responsibility of all members of society, including the ruler. It was believed that the king had the ‘foremost responsibility for the welfare of his subjects, a welfare both spiritual and temporal. His obligation to preserve justice was a duty to repress sin... which would allow his subjects to work to secure their salvations’.¹³¹ William claims that by seizing goods from his subjects, Edward is failing to care for the English people’s bodies and souls. Instead, Edward ought to care for the wellbeing, particularly the financial wellbeing, of others – something he emphasises in his *Oculus Sacerdotis*. He writes that priests ought to tell their congregation not to lend money ‘sub usura’ (by usury), hold onto goods so he may sell for ‘tantam pecuniam’ (so much money), or protect anyone who has committed robbery, acts he believes harm others financially. Echoing his advice to Edward in the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*, William instructs priests to warn parishioners to pay their tithes from goods they have legitimately acquired and those who do not will be cursed by God.¹³²

He accuses Edward of ill-treating paupers and taking what little they have, when, instead, he should give to them. As Wendy Scase has noted, William ‘mobilizes the complaints of the poor against servitude’ to argue against the legality of purveyance,

¹³⁰ Walter Ullmann, *The Individual and Society in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1966), pp. 79-80.

¹³¹ Swanson, p. 135.

¹³² Latin transcriptions are my own. MS Holkam, Misc. 21, fol. 52v; William of Pagula, *Oculus Sacerdotis*, pp. 557-8.

but William goes further and, in several places, likens purveyance from the poor to murder.¹³³ He argues that the poor are not left with enough to survive and die in misery. In burdening his people, Edward places not only his salvation at stake (as God punishes such actions) but that of his subjects (*M* 97, 99, 111). William warns that unless he makes restitution, God will punish with hastened death and damnation for he listens to the moans and cries of the paupers just as he did to those of the Israelites burned by the Egyptians: “Clamor filiorum Israelis ascendit ad Deum quos gravabant Egyptii sub labore et audivit Deus gemitus eorum... et Deus inultum abire non patitur”) (“The cry of the Israelites, who have been weighted down under burdens by the Egyptians, ascends to God, and God hears their groans... and God does not allow them to go away unavenged”) (*D* 84. *M* 74). This quotation incorporates aspects of pastoral and complaint literature. Such language of biblical lament and reference to the enslaved Israelites is common to complaint literature used to emphasise the poor treatment of the king’s people and is similarly found in the *Lamentations of Jeremiah* in the *Song of the Church* (1255).¹³⁴

This emphasis on divine punishment as well as his demonising of those who engage in purveyance (particularly their treatment of the poor) are established conventions of pastoral literature, both Latin and vernacular, and are shared by those engaged in the spiritual wellbeing of the king and in popular preaching.¹³⁵ William’s frustrations lie with Edward’s failure to uphold the Christian concept of charity, for

¹³³ Scase, p. 24.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-3, 98.

¹³⁵ Joseph Goering, ‘Pastoral Texts and Traditions: The Anonymous *Speculum Iuniorum* (c. 1250), in *Texts and Traditions of Medieval Pastoral Care*, ed. by Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), pp. 89-99 (p. 95); Mishtooni Bose, ‘Prophecy, Complaint and Pastoral Care in the Fifteenth Century: Thomas Gascoigne’s *Liber Veritatum*’, in *Texts and Traditions of Medieval Pastoral Care*, ed. by Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), pp. 149-62 (p. 157).

Edward ought to provide for the paupers rather than take from them (*M* 75, 79, 83).¹³⁶ William's reprobation of sinful behaviour and divine punishment can be found in contemporary and late medieval pastoral literature. For instance in Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne* (begun in 1303), he admonishes those who do not care for the poor and writes that they will go 'to þe deuyl', which parallels William's references to purveyors as 'angelos diaboli' ('angels of the devil'), who will be 'demonibus rapiuntur' ('seized by demons') and 'rapietur a diablo' ('seized by the devil') (*D* 90, 93. *M* 79, 81, 112).¹³⁷ Frustrations with the treatment of the poor continues into pastoral literature of the fifteenth century and can be seen in the *Liber Veritatum* of Thomas Gascoigne (1404-1458) and, as we will see in chapter 4, in the *Meroure of Wyssdome*.¹³⁸

In addition to purveyance's impact on the poor, William stresses its impact on all English subjects and the nation as a whole. He tells Edward that if he ends the 'maledictum prerogativum' ('evil prerogative'), will save the souls of Edward and those involved in the practice, for they will no longer act contrary to God's commands. Further, ending purveyance will lead to peace (likely a comment on the tumultuous years of Edward II's reign and Edward III's minority) and prosperity within England (*D* 136. *M* 111, 113). Discussion on the impact a king's economic management had on the people was a trend in high and late medieval Western thought with writers, including John of Salisbury and Thomas Aquinas, believing rulers were responsible for ensuring their subjects' physical wellbeing. Aquinas even writes that a king must 'provide for

¹³⁶ This is considered part of the Seven Corporal Works of Mercy, which included feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and sheltering the homeless, among others. Swanson, p. 126.

¹³⁷ Wenzel, p. 336; Robert Hasenfratz, 'Terror and Pastoral Care in *Handlyng Synne*', in *Texts and Traditions of Medieval Pastoral Care*, ed. by Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), pp. 132-48 (p. 133); Robert Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne*, ed. by Frederick Furnivall, 2 vols (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, & Co., 1901-3), I, p. 176.

¹³⁸ Bose, p. 157.

necessities to be at hand for individuals' to live well.¹³⁹ What is unique to the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*, though, is the specificity with which William tells Edward how to provide for his people's wellbeing: ending purveyance, limiting expenses, such as decreasing his number of war horses (a common focus of complaint literature), returning the goods he has stolen, and restoring the lands he has unjustly acquired.¹⁴⁰ If Edward follows this advice, Edward will earn the love of the English and achieve peace throughout his kingdom. However, if he does not, Edward will not only face tumult within England but also the damnation of his soul.

Despite William's attempts to guide Edward from the use of purveyance, the practice continued to be an issue throughout Edward's reign and even increased with the renewal of the war with Scotland in 1333 and the beginning of the Hundred Years War in 1337. By the mid- to late-fourteenth century, the so-called 'diabolical prerogative' became a major issue in English politics. Various laws and statutes were enacted to limit its use, and some attempted to reinstitute the requirement for parliament to approve purveyance. Frustrations with the practice seemed to have reached their height by the 1360s, and although complaints continued, the outcry seems to have diminished by the late-fourteenth century.¹⁴¹

Conclusion

When reading the *De nobilitatibus* and *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* together, we gain a greater understanding for the lingering frustrations of Edward II's rule. Though both

¹³⁹ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, pp. 33, 58; Thomas Aquinas, *On the Government of Rulers: De Regimine Principum*, trans. by James M. Blythe (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), p. 97.

¹⁴⁰ William's concern about war horses is because their need for food and stables placed a burden upon the countryside. William of Pagula, *Mirror of King Edward III*, pp. 114, 116; Scase, p. 34.

¹⁴¹ W.R. Jones, pp. 302, 310.

works were heavily influenced by the political upheaval of the 1310s and 1320s, the works use conventions of advisory discourse to express markedly different views on the same monarch: Milemete expresses hope for Edward III's reign and William to deride Edward's use of purveyance. Examining these works reveals the shifting attitudes towards royal authority in which the monarch was expected to work alongside the baronage and govern in the interest of his subjects rather than his own – a perception that (as we shall see) continues into the late medieval period. Additionally, they show the practices of textual engagements of advisory authors. These authors relied upon multiple sources across genres and discourses, borrowing syntax and vocabulary to draw upon the authority of these sources but also to broaden the appeals of their own work. Notably, the *De nobilitatibus* and *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* are the first insular advice to princes texts to be influenced by the *Secreta*, a work that influences the advice to princes works analysed in chapters three and four. Ultimately, the *De nobilitatibus* and *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* reveal how advisory discourse was used to react to the change in regime in England.

Chapter Three

Advisory Texts and the Lancastrian Revolutions, 1390s-1410s

This chapter explores both John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (1390-1393) and Thomas Hoccleve's *The Regiment of Princes* (1410-1411), produced on either side of the Lancastrian Revolution. The *Confessio* has been read as prescient of Richard's deposition, but *The Regiment* is rarely read in relation to this event. In analysing these works together, I deepen the understanding of the uses of advice to princes across this long period and the complex way in which political literature operates before and after crisis periods. Specifically, I examine how these works utilised tropes of the advisory discourse to react to the period of political crisis in England between the late 1380s and early 1400s, and what strategies these poets used to engage in a form of writing fraught with risk. Ferster proposes that English advice to princes works of this period, as with many examples in the advisory discourse, act 'as camouflage for political commentary. Advice can become critique.'¹ Because of the dangers inherent in criticizing policy and governance, writers, such as Gower and Hoccleve, sought to limit their direct criticism of rulers, and this 'political pressure encouraged and indeed necessitated indirection in writing about matters of public concern.'² In this chapter, I examine how Gower and Hoccleve employed advisory discourse to respond to the political frustrations in turn-of-the-fifteenth-century England and the strategies they used to palliate their criticism in order to craft works that were overtly supportive but covertly subversive. Additionally, I will analyse how the political events of Richard II's and Henry IV's reigns are essential to our understanding of these texts.

¹ Ferster, p. 4.

² Astell, p. 4.

I have selected the *Confessio* and *The Regiment* because – situated as they are on opposite sides of Richard II’s usurpation – they are inextricably linked to the events of 1399. These texts comment on Richard’s favouritism, his attempt to exert royal authority past notions of traditional English kingship, and his lack of success in military campaigns. His defeat by Henry Bolingbroke ushered in a new regime and a new set of financial and political challenges for England. As Henry IV sought to establish the House of Lancaster as the rightful heir to the throne, literary culture saw a rise in anti-Ricardian literature (though pro-Ricardian writers continued to produce).³ Reading the *Confessio* and *The Regiment* in light of the changes England underwent during this twenty-year period helps to elucidate the ways in which advice to princes texts developed during the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries and how writers utilised the advisory discourse to react to this period of political turmoil and shape political conversations. Gower’s and Hoccleve’s works are subversive, for, despite their derision of spurious advisors and use of flattery, they hold the ruler culpable for the ills of governance. Both texts highlight the anxieties surrounding the English monarchy in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which include the influence of flatterers in the court, but they diverge in other concerns that are particularly relevant to the climate of the specific period in which they were written. Gower explores of the mutability of political prophecy, a concern during Richard’s reign as Richard was known for his engagement in prophecy.⁴ By the 1410s, however, prophecies relating to royal self-imagings were no longer of interest, and Hoccleve complains of Lancastrian finances, for financial concerns were particularly acute during early Lancastrian rule.⁵ These texts

³ Paul Strohm, *Hochon’s Arrow*, p. 75; Fonzo, p. 71.

⁴ Flood, *Prophecy, Politics and Place in Medieval England*, p. 139.

⁵ Strohm, *England’s Empty Throne*, p. 173; Chris Given-Wilson, *Henry IV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 176-9, 205-6, 283-5.

are securely situated within the advice to princes tradition, yet they offer commentary unique to their period in which they were written.

Furthermore, both the *Confessio* and *The Regiment* were a part of a growing vernacular literary culture. By the late-thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries, we increasingly see English used in poetry and chronicles although much of the material that survives from this period are pastoral materials. Its use grew throughout the latter half of the fourteenth century and became a ‘medium for national expression in literature, devotion, and politics’. By the beginning in the first half of the fifteenth century, English begins to supplant French and Latin as the language of government records.⁶ It is during this growing popularity of the vernacular that we see Gower’s and Hoccleve’s works, positioned near other advisory vernacular works, for instance Chaucer’s ‘Tale of Melibee’ (1387-1390) and John Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* (1431-1439). Gower’s and Hoccleve’s works are notable part of this tradition as they are some of the earliest advisory works written in the vernacular. They rely heavily upon Latin sources, drawing upon the authority of them, and adapt the rhetoric and conventions found in Latin advisory works into Middle English.⁷

This chapter is composed of two sections. In the first section, I examine the *Confessio Amantis* and Gower’s treatment of counsel and prophecy. In the second section, I examine *The Regiment of Princes* and Hoccleve’s conflation of advisory

⁶ Wendy Scase, ‘Late fourteenth-century poetry (Chaucer, Gower, Langland and their legacy)’, in *The Cambridge History of English Poetry*, ed. by Michael O’Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 43-62 (pp. 44-5); Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 14; Gwilym Dodd, ‘The Rise of English, the Decline of French: Supplications to the English Crown, c. 1420-1450’, *Speculum*, 86 (2011), 117-50 (pp. 117-8, 122).

⁷ Matthew Giancarlo, *Parliament and Literature in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 221; Jenni Nuttall, *The Creation of Lancastrian Kingship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 41-3; Mary C. Flanery, *John Lydgate and the Poetics of Fame* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2012), pp. 39, 42-4, 48-9; Strohm, pp. 181-2, 260 n. 16; Minnis, pp. 1-3.

discourse and complaint and his anxieties surrounding counsel and truth. Throughout the chapter, I explore the ways in which both writers placed the issues of governance upon the ruler while also attempting to disguise their criticism of him. I also examine the use of their use of the vernacular and the ways in which Gower and Hoccleve drew upon Latin literary culture.

John Gower and His *Confessio Amantis*

Less is known about John Gower than other contemporary writers, such as Geoffrey Chaucer, but he likely held a legal or civil office and had ties to the royal court. A trilingual author, Gower's known work consists of Latin, French, and Middle English poetry and spans both Richard II's and Henry IV's reigns. Some of his most famous works are the *Mirour de l'omme* (c. 1376-9), the *Vox Clamantis* (completed after 1381), and the *Confessio Amantis* (the focus of this chapter), which offer critical examinations of society or governance.⁸ The work has long been viewed as a consolation drawing on a series of stock exemplary tales although scholars, like Russell Peck, R.F. Yeager, Ann Astell, and Amanda Walling, have all nodded to the political nature of the *Confessio* (indeed, in a Latin gloss, Gower himself suggests that the seventh book of the *Confessio* is a '*Principis Regimen*').⁹ I build upon their work by situating the *Confessio* within the advisory discourse and within a longer historical context of Richard II's and Henry IV's reigns.

⁸ John Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), pp. 61, 67-9.

⁹ R.F. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), p. 9; Russell Peck, *Kingship and Common Profit in Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), pp. 9-10; Astell, p. 73; Amanda Walling, 'The Authority of Impersonation: Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and the *Secretum Secretorum*', *Viator*, 47 (2016), 343-64 (p. 343); Gower, 7.1715.

The *Confessio* has three parts: the prologue, the narrative framework, and the individual tales. The prologue outlines the poem's conception and perceived failings of the three estates while the narrative framework follows the lover, Amans. Frustrated with his mistress, Amans complains about love while falling asleep. He is awakened by Venus, who is displeased with his complaints. Venus orders Amans to confess his sins to her chaplain Genius, who is referred to as a 'prest', a 'clerk', and 'Dominus,/ Min holi fader' (193, 196, 215-6). These varied descriptions establish Genius as a secular and religious authority and create a distinct, advisory relationship between him and Amans. Through his use of exemplars, Genius attempts to guide Amans' behaviour, a fictive version of what we find in earlier advice to princes in which the writer claims to be an authority on governance and attempts to provide instruction on it. Despite Genius' position of authority, he, much like the narrators of advice to princes texts, understates his authority at points. While Walter de Milemete and William of Pagula did so by engaging in the *humiltas* topos or stressing the ruler's knowledge and intelligence, Genius states that he is merely Venus' priest and love's servant and is speaking with Amans at their bequest (233-51). The characters Amans, Genius, and Venus, then, establish a way for Gower to utilise some of the same conventions of advisory discourse while engaging with literary techniques and forms, like dream visions and narrative frameworks, that were popular in the late-fourteenth century.

Genius tells Amans that he will advise him through stories on love and 'othre things/ That touchen to the cause of vice' (240-1). It is this last subject that is Genius' primary focus, for he organizes and moralizes his tales based on the seven deadly sins. At the end of each tale, Genius summarises the lesson that is to be learned from it. In conjunction with this explicit moral, though, is often an implicit one. As I will argue,

many of the stories in the *Confessio* provide lessons on governance even though they may be organised, for instance, under the sin of pride or gluttony. Genius, in relating stories of biblical and classical rulers, warns of their follies, shortsightedness, and virtues, and many of these individual tales centre on the danger of prophecy, poor counsel, and their effects on rulers and their kingdoms – issues common to advisory discourse. This understanding these tales to be a part of advisory discourse is furthered with the Latin marginalia, which offer glosses that support the tales' political nature. We see this in, among others, the 'Tale of Virgil's Mirror' and 'The Tale of Nectanabus' (as discussed below).

It is through these tales that Gower first critiques and warns Richard and then advises Henry Bolingbroke. Specifically, I examine five of the *Confessio*'s allegorical tales: 'The Tale of Paris and Helen', the 'Tale of Virgil's Mirror', 'Tale of Ahab and Micaiah', 'The Trump of Death', and 'Tale of Nectanabus'. These tales are not placed next to each other in the *Confessio* but in different books, and I have analysed the tales thematically rather than by order in which they appear in the *Confessio*. Each tale deals with prophetic dreams and prophecies. While the first three tales I examine, 'The Tale of Paris and Helen' (Book V), 'Tale of Virgil's Mirror' (Book 5), and 'Tale of Ahab and Micaiah' (Book 7), centre on the imperial imagings and demise of the ruler, the last two tales I examine, 'The Trump of Death' (Book 1) and the 'Tale of Nectanabus' (Book 6), centre on the importance of good counsel. I will examine these tales and Gower's departure from his source material, positing how these departures may be politically motivated.

Additionally, I will analyse Gower's anxieties surrounding a ruler's reliance upon prophecy and dreams, with which Richard was known to engage. Chroniclers

remarked upon Richard's use of prophecy and prophetic dreams to support his military campaigns and hold on the English throne.¹⁰ Gower's concern with them lies largely with the tendency for them to be misinterpreted – a concern found in turn-of-the-fifteenth-century literature. *Mum and the Sothsegger* (1403-6) remarks upon the danger of believing in prophecy.

Yit is there a poynt of prophecie how the peuple construeth

And museth on the mervailles that Merlyn dide devyse...

Thus thay muse on the mase on mone and on sterres

Til heedes been hewe of and hoppe on the grene.¹¹

This quotation shares one of the main concerns Gower has with prophecy: it can be interpreted in different ways. And according to both the *Mum* poet and Gower, misinterpretation may prove fatal. Similar is Chaucer's 'The Knight's Tale' although less obviously politically engaged and moving beyond what we would directly think of as political poetry. In the tale, Mercury comes to Arcite in his sleep and tells the young lover that "to Atthenes shaltou wende,/ Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende."¹² Because of his dream, Arcite believes that he will win and marry his love, Emelye, upon

¹⁰ I will discuss these instances later in this chapter, but both Thomas Walsingham and Adam Usk remark upon Richard's engagement with prophecy and prophetic dreams. Thomas Walsingham, *Chronica Maiora*, ed. and translated by John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs, and Leslie Watkiss, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), II, pp. 132-3, 238-41; Adam Usk, *The Chronicle of Adam Usk 1377 – 1421*, ed. and trans. by Chris Given-Wilson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 82-3.

¹¹ Scholars have understood *Mum and the Sothsegger* as a warning against the earls of Northumberland, who rebelled against Henry IV early in his reign. *Mum and the Sothsegger*, in *Richard the Redeless and Mum and the Sothsegger* ed. by James Dean (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), 1723-4, 1731-2; Flood, p. 163; Caroline D. Eckhardt, 'Another Historical Allusion in *Mum and the Sothsegger*', *Notes and Queries*, 27 (1980), pp. 495-7 (p. 496); Diane A. Facinelli, 'Treasonous Criticism of Henry IV: The Loyal Poet of *Richard the Redeless* and *Mum and the Sothsegger*', *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval & Renaissance Association*, 10 (1989), 51-62 (p. 59).

¹² Geoffrey Chaucer, 'The Knight's Tale', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (New York City: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 44.

returning to Athens. His interpretation of the dream seems valid but proves otherwise. We find the same issue of interpretation beyond poetry, as, for instance, in Robert Holkot's influential commentary on the *Book of Wisdom* (1334-1336). The philosophical work dealt with a broad array of topics, such as family, education, society, governance, and dreams and circulated widely throughout Europe.¹³ In it, Holkot expressed doubt about the interpretation of dreams (oneiric interpretation), and his views helped shape medieval thought on the subject. The work was a medieval best-seller, and there are at least one hundred and seventy-five extant manuscripts.¹⁴

Doubt that humans can gain true knowledge from portents of the future permeates several tales in Gower's *Confessio*.¹⁵ These tales show that while dreams and prophecies can hold truth, determining which dreams and prophecies are true is difficult, and the failure to do so correctly can have serious consequences. Through Gower's discussions on predictions of the future, we again see a relationship between advisory works written around crisis periods and prophecy. During these times, we would expect an interest in prophecy, and we do see advisory authors engaging with pessimistic prophecy, jingoistic prophecy, or both. Gower's use of prophecy aligns most with John of Salisbury, for both writers are sceptical of royal engagement with prophecy and employ a mix of pessimistic and jingoistic prophecy. While John's *Policraticus* is an example of early interest in secular prophecy, by the time of the *Confessio*'s

¹³ Jenny Swanson, 'Holcot, Robert', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi-org.bham-ezproxy.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13485>> [accessed 1 May 2024]

¹⁴ John T. Slotemaker and Jeffrey C. Witt, *Robert Holcot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 10.

¹⁵ Neil Cartlidge, "'Scientia vera?' Holcot and Chaucer on Astrological Determinism, Magic, Talismans, and Omens', *The Chaucer Review*, 55 (2020), 279-97 (pp. 281, 284). It is possible that Holkot read the *Policraticus* as the work remained popular throughout the Middle Ages. It was owned by several ecclesiasts who attended Oxford, like Holkot did, and was translated into French in 1372 and copied in Kraków in 1435-6. Susan Cavanaugh, pp. 298, 582, 705; Frédérique Lachaud, 'Filiation and Context: The Medieval Afterlife of the *Policraticus*', in *A Companion to John of Salisbury*, ed. by Christophe Grellard and Frédérique Lachaud (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 375-438 (pp. 408, 419).

composition, the use of prophecy was an established part of advisory discourse and of cultural interest, for Richard's reign was marked by frustrations surrounding his governance but also by imperial expectations carried over from the reigns of Edward II and Edward III.

The *Confessio*'s Prologue

The *Confessio* is notable for its different recensions – the work originally was dedicated to Richard II and later to Henry Bolingbroke. It is generally understood that the first recension of the poem, dedicated to Richard, was completed in 1390 while a third version, dedicated to Henry, was completed around 1392 or 1393. However, Ann Astell argues that what is believed to be the first recension was in fact completed around the same time as the third, supporting her argument that the work was written for a 'complex, heterogeneous audience with multiple circles inclusive of Henry and others, at the centre of which Richard is imagined as the primary addressee'.¹⁶ Indeed, the nobility and royal bureaucrats were likely the intended audience of the *Confessio*. There is no evidence to suggest that the work was owned by Richard or Henry IV though it was owned by scholars and members of the nobility.¹⁷

In the first version of the text, Gower writes that while on the Thames, he met Richard, who requested Gower create a collection of tales on love. In the third recension, however, Gower simply states that he has written the work in hopes of

¹⁶ Astell, p. 74. Most scholars, however, cite the timeline I have mentioned above, including Lynn Staley and Kimberly Fonzo. Lynn Staley, 'Gower, Richard II, Henry of Derby, and the Business of Making Culture', *Speculum*, 75 (2000), 68-96 (p.78); Kimberly Fonzo, 'Richard II's Publicly Prophesied Deposition in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*', *Modern Philology*, 114 (2016), 1-17 (p. 1).

¹⁷ Cavanaugh, pp. 408-11, 725-33. 'MS. Fairfax 3', in *Medieval Manuscripts in Oxford Libraries* <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_4864> [Accessed 3 September 2024]. 'R.3.2', in *The James Catalogue of Western Manuscripts* <<https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/Manuscript/R.3.2>> [Accessed 3 September 2024]

offering advice for England's sake.¹⁸ Both versions of the text remained popular and continued to be copied well into Henry's reign, and the two recensions have complicated our understanding of the work with readers often viewing the work as predicting Richard's downfall. Kimberly Fonzo argues that the lingering popularity of the Ricardian recension was likely as a form of Lancastrian propaganda because its use of exemplary rulers who met their downfalls suggested that Richard's own downfall was foretold.¹⁹

Although the first and third recensions differ in their dedications and stated purpose, Gower utilises similar strategies in both drawn from now well-established features of earlier Latin advisory literature, here invoked in Middle English. One such feature is the writers' calling attention to their translation of an authoritative and canonical text to lend authority to their own work. Another is the use of exegetical structure, in which the writer frames their work with a prologue and articulates their arguments in defined and cohesive sections.²⁰ Common to both recensions is Gower's use of flattery and *humilitas* – key topoi of advisory discourse. In the dedication to Richard, Gower writes that he must create a poem that matches 'his [Richard's] hihe worthinesse' and explains that the work will ultimately be 'wisdom to the wise'; in the dedication to Henry, Gower similarly writes that the poem is intended for 'hem that now be grete' and that 'The wyse man mai ben advised./ For this prologe is so assised'²¹ As with other advice to princes texts, Gower's use of flattery, particularly the notion that the addressed ruler is wise and already knows the wisdom presented in the text,

¹⁸ John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, ed. Russel Peck (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), lines 39-56 (Richard recension), line 24 (Henry recension).

¹⁹ Fonzo, p. 96.

²⁰ Rita Copeland, pp. 94, 202-4.

²¹ Gower, lines 50 and 84 in the Ricardian recension and lines 78 and 65-6 in the Henrican recension.

provides him with a way to temper the criticism found within the *Confessio*. To further protect himself, Gower presents himself as a simple writer, suggesting that if his advice is not well-received, it is because he is but a ‘burel clerk’ and because of ‘the symplesece of my wit’.²² As will be seen, Gower continues to use these conventions throughout the *Confessio*, and they become essential strategies in palliating his critique of counsel, prophecy, and prophetic dreams.

Tale of Paris and Helen

In the ‘Tale of Paris and Helen’ Gower engages with the Trojan legend, which had a long literary tradition across medieval European and insular literature. English retellings of the Troy legend were based upon the French romances, namely the *Roman d’Enéas* (c. 1160) and *Roman de Troie* (c. 1165) by Benoît de Sainte-Maure, and Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britanniae*, and were often used as a way for writers to explore political and cultural issues.²³ Gower’s tale is no exception. Scholars Ann Astell, Sylvia Frederico, and Amanda J. Gerber have all explored Gower’s use of the Trojan myth in the *Vox Clamantis* and associations between Troy and London (sometimes referred to as ‘New Troy’ in Ricardian England).²⁴ In the ‘Tale of Paris and Helen’, Genius asserts that the tale cautions against sacrilege, for Paris committed this sin by stealing Helen while she worshipped in a temple. I argue, however, that Gower

²² Gower, 52 (Henrican recension), 76 (Richardian recension).

²³ Timothy D. Arner, ‘Trojan Wars: Genre and the Politics of Authorship in Late Medieval and Early Modern England’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 2007), pp. 1, 3. The Trojan legend’s use in medieval literature has been the subject of much scholarship, including works by Sylvia Frederico and Emily Wingfield. Sylvia Frederico, *New Troy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Emily Wingfield, *The Trojan Myth in Medieval Scottish Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014).

²⁴ Astell, p. 113; Amanda J. Gerber, ‘Earthy Gower: Transforming Geographical Texts and Images in the *Confessio Amantis* and *Vox Clamantis* Manuscripts’, in *John Gower in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books*, ed. by Martha Driver, Derek Pearsall, and R.F. Yeager (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2020), pp. 89-112 (pp. 106-7); Frederico, pp. 1, 7-9.

uses the tale and the conflict between Troy and Greece to illustrate the ideal relationship between a monarch and his parliament and the danger of choosing to believe (and disbelieve) dreams and prophecies. During the 1380s and 1390s, there was concern about Richard's attempt to exert and extend his royal authority and his engagement with portents, and Gower alters his source material (the *Roman de Troie*) to highlight questions on English governance that arose in this period: What should the limits of princely authority be? What should the relationship between a ruler and parliament be? Should a ruler engage in political prophecy? The 'Tale of Paris and Helen' explores such questions through King Priam's considered response to the threat of war.

Late medieval English kings were expected to work in tandem with parliament – a belief that is depicted in Gower's 'Tale of Paris and Helen' as well as in other fourteenth-century texts.²⁵ In a scene in William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (c. 1370), where rats discuss an issue with a cat in parliament, all the rats are described as having 'assented' to one of the rat's solutions before they implement the plan. As many critics have noted, the fable is an allegory commenting on the nature of English parliament in the late 1370s with some arguing that the fable represents the pro-parliamentary point of view in which the rats represent the Good Parliament and its attempts at reform a government that was viewed as no longer representing the interests of its people.²⁶ Similarly, Chaucer emphasizes the need for parliamentary consent in the *Parliament of Fowls* (1381-1382) shown by Nature gently commanding the fowls to heed her

²⁵ Phil Bradford, 'The English King in Parliament in the Fourteenth Century', *Historical Research*, 84 (2011), 189-211 (pp. 198-9).

²⁶ Gwilym Dodd, 'A Parliament Full of Rats? *Piers Plowman* and the Good Parliament of 1376', *Historical Research*, 79 (2006), 21-49 (pp. 23, 31).

judgment but later saying that the decision must be the choice of everyone present.²⁷

This emphasis on the need for parliament's consent and the need for counsel in general is explored in the 'Tale of Paris and Helen' through King Priam's debate about warring with the Greeks. Additionally, the tale warns of the dangers of excessive authority and the mutability of prophecy through Paris's desire for war.

As Winthrop Wetherbee has noted, Gower's version of Paris and Helen, unlike Benoît's *Roman*, is told in an imbalanced way with almost half of the story centring on the Trojan parliament and fewer than a hundred lines centring on Paris' journey to Greece and abduction of Helen.²⁸ This imbalance is politically motivated, for it stresses a balanced relationship between king and parliament: one in which the king seeks out the counsel of his lords, and parliament's decisions are upheld. Gower's tale begins during King Lamedon's reign with the Greek attack on Troy and the abduction of the king's daughter, Hesione. When Lamedon is killed, his son Priam becomes king and begins rebuilding the city all while ruminating on the destruction of Troy and the dishonour of his sister. Unlike the *Roman*'s Priam who wishes to reconcile with the Greeks by sending an embassy, Gower's Priam first wishes to wage war on the Greeks, a change that allows for the subsequent discussion between king and parliament over matters of governance. To determine what action to take, Priam:

Sette anon a parlement,

²⁷ William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, ed. by Elizabeth Robertson and Stephen H. Shepherd (London: W.W. Norton, 2006), pp. 10-2; Geoffrey Chaucer, 'Parliament of Fowls', in the *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), pp. 383-394 (p. 390). Astell views the *Parliament of Fowls* as an allegory in which Richard II is portrayed as the eagle. Astell, p. 95.

²⁸ Winthrop Wetherbee, 'Rome, Troy, and Culture in the *Confessio Amantis*', in *On John Gower: Essays at the Millenium*, ed. by R.F. Yeager (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), pp. 20-42 (pp. 34-5).

To which the lordes were assent.

In many a wise ther was spoke,

Hou that thei mihten ben awroke,

Bot ate laste natheles

Thei seiden alle, ‘Acord and pes’. (5.7265-70)

The lords’ assent to attend parliament and their debate is not found in the *Roman*. In fact, in Benoît’s version, parliament does not discuss a course of action at all but simply agrees with Priam’s proposal of sending an embassy to Greece first and then, if it fails, go to war. We do, however, find emphasis on parliament’s agreement and authority to make decisions in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1387). In the story, parliament decides to exchange Antenor for Criseyde by ‘oon assent’ with exchange later taking place.²⁹ Such phrasing intimates that late fourteenth-century English literature conceptualized parliament as possessing the ability to make and have its decisions upheld. In the ‘Tale of Paris and Helen’, Gower’s addition, coupled with Priam’s acceptance of parliament’s decision, suggests that the king’s authority is not boundless, for he relies upon the counsel and upholds the decisions of others. This portrayal of Priam is unique to Gower, for although works like Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* and Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* cast Priam as an exemplary ruler, they emphasise Priam’s wisdom and familial bonds rather than his political role.³⁰ Gower’s changes to his

²⁹ Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (New York City: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 542.

³⁰ Chaucer, pp. 540-1; Harold C. Zimmerman, ‘Kingship, Fatherhood, and the Abdication of History in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*’, *Neophilologus*, 98 (2013), 129-44 (p. 130); John Lydgate, *Fall of*

source suggest his view of the ideal relationship between monarch and parliament and is a comment on the fraught relationship between Richard II and his own parliament, notably during the late 1380s with the Wonderful and Merciless Parliaments. These parliaments sought to control membership to Richard's council and his spending, which was met by outspoken resistance by Richard.³¹ Critics have noted the parallels between portrayals of parliament in Middle English poetry of this period and the Merciless Parliament, yet they have not discussed how these portrayals speak of the political environment the writers wish to see.³² By writing of Priam seeking and heeding his parliament's counsel, Gower shows how a ruler ought to share decision making with his lords and be influenced by their counsel.

Although parliament decides upon peace, Priam nevertheless requests that Antenor is sent to Greece to ask for Hesione's return. Priam's acceptance of parliament's decision illustrates his willingness to work with them, but this amendment also implies his power to revise such decisions and have those changes accepted. As such, the Trojan king demonstrates the balance a ruler needs in governing – a concern throughout Richard II's reign when relations between king and parliament were strained. The young king's intransigence illustrated his desire (as well as his inability) to assert the amount of control he wanted as a leader, and conflicts with parliaments led to legal challenges to his rule.³³ Such rule is in direct opposition to Gower's Trojan king who expresses his desire for parliament's approval and his ability to assert his own

Princes, ed. by Henry Bergen, 4 vols (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1923), I, pp. 166-7.

³¹ Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 157-64, 169-75.

³² Astell, pp. 87-9, 98, 118; Brantley L. Byrant, 'Talking with the Taxman about Poetry: England's Economy in "Against the King's Taxes" and *Wynnere and Wastoure*', *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 5 (2008), 219-48 (pp. 224-5).

³³ Saul, pp. 157-8, 388.

power, suggesting that a king should be influenced by counsel and share decision making with their magnates.

Upon discovering the embassy's failure to retrieve Hesione from the Greeks, Priam again seeks the lords' counsel in determining if Troy should campaign against the Greeks. Following this second call for parliament, Gower again makes several changes from his source. While Benoît's parliament opens with an impassioned speech by Priam arguing for war, Gower's begins with the lords debating the best course of action and each voicing his opinion:

Thei seten alle stille and herde,

An tho spak every man aboute...

Bot for the moste part as tho

Thei wisten noght what was the beste,

Or for to werre or for to reste. (5.7324-5, 7328-30).³⁴

It is only when they are unable to reach a decision that Priam speaks, assuring them that, though he wishes to fight, he will follow whatever their decision may be (5.7330-72). Gower's emphasis on the debate between the members of parliament is in opposition to many of the descriptions of Richard's relationship with his parliament. He was often described as attempting to wield complete control over parliament or chaffing against their decisions. According to Adam Usk, in Richard's last parliament, the king sought to

³⁴ Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Roman de Troie*, trans. by Glyn S. Burgess and Douglas Kelly (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017), pp. 87.

limit others' decision-making authority by commanding the prelates to appoint a proctor selected by the king who would speak on the prelates' behalf.³⁵ Gower's depiction of the Trojan parliament is likely a reaction to such attempts to limit parliamentary authority and, instead, casts Priam as a ruler willing to allow his parliament to determine what they believe is the best course of action.

After the members of parliament begin their initial debate, the Trojan princes Hector and Paris speak. The *Confessio's* version of Paris' speech initially follows the *Roman's* closely, but Gower extends the speech to caution against imperial ambition and the malleability of prophecy. Unlike Hector, Paris' speech is an appeal to fight: he argues for war, listing the grievances the Trojans have suffered at the hands of the Greeks. He also relates a prophetic dream he had experienced, one in which he selected Venus as the most beautiful goddess. Because he chose Venus, Paris believes he has secured the goddess's favour (5.7373-7435). In Benoît's tale, Paris expresses this in one line, but in Gower's, he does so in two separate passages:

'Bot Venus seide, if that sche mihte

That appel of mi gifte gete,

Sche wolde it neveremor forgete' (5.7422-4)

And

'Sche for me wol so ordeine,

³⁵ Usk, pp. 8-9, 76-7, 24-5.

That thei matiere for to pleigne

Schul have, er that I come agein' (5.7431-3).³⁶

Such eagerness for war and confidence in his prophetic dream is perhaps a reflection of the imperial imaginings of fourteenth-century prophecy. Since relations with France had been improving under Richard's policy of rapprochement (a policy that caused strife between king and parliament as war with France had been profitable for the magnates and the soldiers themselves), Richard looked to Ireland for a chance to expand his kingdom.³⁷ As Lesley Coote and Victoria Flood have noted, during Richard's reign, there was an interest in crusading prophecy, which may have partly inspired Richard's goals for territorial expansion. It has been suggested that Richard's interests in Ireland were framed by wider reaching imperial ambitions, read in relation to distinct points of prophetic engagement.³⁸ In a 1395 letter to Richard, Philippe de Mézières compared Richard to Charlemagne, the French king who united much of Western Europe, and King Arthur, the English king who united Britain.³⁹ Richard campaigned in both Scotland and Ireland in attempts to expand or reaffirm English control, which had been waning over the last hundred years. The idea that the king and his forces would campaign in Ireland was conceived by a council in Dublin in 1385, but a series of domestic problems put the idea on hold until 1394 when Richard decided to travel to Ireland in order to assure 'punissement et correccioun de noz rebelx illoequ, come pour

³⁶ Benoît de Sainte-Maure, p. 90.

³⁷ Continuing the war with France had the potential to increase English holdings on the continent and the wealth of soldiers. As such, many English wished to continue the war with France, and to do so was one of the Appellants' policies. Saul, p. 204.

³⁸ Coote, pp. 153-4; Flood, p. 145.

³⁹ Philippe de Mézières, *A Letter to King Richard II*, ed. and trans. by G.W. Coopland (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1975), p. 70.

bone governance et juste reule' ('the punishment and correction of our rebels there and to establish good government and just rule').⁴⁰ Many prophecies of the period linked English conquest of Scotland, Ireland, and territories in France to securing the Holy Land. One of these prophecies, the *Eulogium historiarum*, which continued to circulate during Richard's reign, tells of an English king who would restore English continental holdings and subdue the land of the pagans while the *Verses of Gildas*, foretold of an English king would conquer Ireland and Scotland and ultimately restore the Holy Land.⁴¹ Another centred on the Holy Oil of St Thomas in which the king of England who was anointed with the oil would be a protector of the church and take back the Holy Land and Normandy and Aquitaine.⁴² During his second and ill-fated expedition to Ireland, the chronicler Thomas Walsingham accounts that Richard brought the Holy Oil of St Thomas along with other royal regalia. Richard was never anointed with the oil, despite his appeals to the archbishop of Canterbury, but Henry IV was.⁴³ Like such contemporary prophecies, Paris' prophetic dream in Gower's *Confessio* offers the promise of expanding Trojan lands by conquering the Greeks in addition to the hand of Helen.

Contrasting starkly with Paris' interpretation of his prophetic dream is Cassandra's pessimistic prophecy, which predicts the fall of Troy if a Trojan fleet goes

⁴⁰ *Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions*, ed. M.D. Legge (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1941), p. 48; Saul, pp. 270 – 274.

⁴¹ These prophecies all date to the early fourteenth century but continued to circulate during Richard's rule. T.A. Sandquist, 'The Holy Oil of St Thomas of Canterbury', in *Essays in Medieval History*, ed. by T.A. Sandquist and M.R. Powicke (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 330-344 (p. 332-4); Flood, p. 145; G.B. Stow, 'The Continuation of the *Eulogium Historiarum*: Some Revisionist Perspectives,' in *The English Historical Review*, 119 (2004), 667-81 (p. 667); Helen Fulton, 'Arthurian Prophecy and the Deposition of Richard II', *Arthurian Literature*, XXII, (2005), 64-83 (p. 72); Saul, pp. 273-6, 279-81; Federico, p. 106.

⁴² Walsingham, II, pp. 236-7.

⁴³ Walsingham, II, pp. 340-1,

to Greece. In the *Roman*, Cassandra says that Troy will be reduced to ashes if a Trojan fleet goes to Greece. Gower expands upon Cassandra's prophecy, adding, 'That if Paris his weie take,/ As it is seid that he schal do,/ We ben forevere thanne undo' (5.7448 – 7450). The phrase 'if Paris his weie take' intimates the prince's culpability in Troy's eventual destruction and offers a warning of the danger that results in the engagement with and interpretation of prophecy. Cassandra's brother, Helenus, also expresses doubts about the expedition and predicts disaster for Troy if Paris travels to Greece (5.7461-2). Unlike Benoît's version, in which Helenus gives a long speech before parliament about his prophecy, Gower limits Helenus' concerns to two lines and does not include Troilus' subsequent condemnation of Helenus' prophecy.⁴⁴ By removing Troilus from his version, Gower centres the blame for the campaign to Greece on Paris alone, thus, emphasizing the culpability a ruler has in his kingdom's fate – an argument Gower makes throughout the *Confessio*. Further, Benoît's Troilus diminishes Helenus' prophetic abilities, but Helenus' prophetic abilities are not the argument Gower wishes to make. By condensing Helenus' speech and eliminating Troilus', Gower refocuses the tale on the issue he perceives with prophecy: the difficulty in correctly interpreting it.

However, both Cassandra's and Helenus' prophecies are all 'holde bot a jape', and the Trojans set off on their voyage (5.7463). The siblings' concerns about Paris' prophetic dream alongside their own true but disbelieved prophecies expresses anxieties surrounding prophecy and their slipperiness. Such prophetic pessimism can also be found in the Erceldoune tradition, whose tales vary from pessimism to jingoism. One such prophetic text is *Thomas de Essedoune's Reply* (c. 1340), which looks back to the conflicts in the English-occupied borderlands of Scotland in the early fourteenth

⁴⁴ Benoît de Sainte-Maure, pp. 90-1.

century. In it, the Countess of Dunbar questions Thomas as to when the Scottish wars will end. He responds with the conditions that will signal the end of the Scottish wars, remarking that it is a generation or more away and will only occur when great calamity befalls the land.⁴⁵ Like Thomas' prophecy, Cassandra's and Helenus' prophecies on a desired outcome centre on the destruction of the kingdom. Unfortunately, Paris' imperialistic prophecy gains more traction than Cassandra's or Helenus' misgivings.

Gower's 'Tale of Paris and Helen' uses the Trojan king and his son Paris as exemplars to illustrate two characteristics rulers ought to possess: the willingness to heed counsel and discernment with prophecies. Although Gower relies upon Benoît's version of the tale, he adapts the tale in a manner that reflects and speaks to the frustrations surrounding Richard II's relationship with his magnates and engagement with political prophecy. Accusations of favouritism and a contentious relationship between king and parliament proliferated in the 1380s and 1390s, and Gower's portrayal of Priam is in opposition to this. Rather, Priam serves as a positive exemplum, for he is a king who listens to and accepts the decisions of his parliament. Paris, meanwhile, is a negative exemplum. Paris's prophetic myopia reveals a concern for the unreliability of political prophecy, for the issue is not that prophecies cannot predict the future but that they can be misinterpreted. This can constrict rulers' political vision and eclipse the wisdom of seeking counsel. Gower uses these concerns about prophecy to highlight his view of the ideal relationship between ruler and parliament: the relationship ought to be symbiotic and allow for a ruler's requests to be questioned and denied.

⁴⁵ Flood, pp. 130, 124-5.

Tale of Virgil's Mirror

The 'Tale of Virgil's Mirror' is set in Rome during the rule of Emperor Crassus, a greedy and wealthy ruler whose vices lead to his downfall. Rome's enemies, seeking to destroy Rome, send three philosophers to ingratiate themselves with the emperor in hopes of deceiving him and ruining Rome. It is against this backdrop that Gower discusses the issues of portents of the future and counsel. Gower here approaches prophetic dreams in a manner different from the 'Tale of Paris and Helen': he expresses hesitancy in their validity and expresses how belief in them can allow others to manipulate and deceive rulers. He also expresses anxiety about poor advisors and the destruction they can cause with unfettered access to the ruler.

The tale opens with a description of a mirror Virgil placed upon a pillar, so that the wealth and splendour of Rome could be seen throughout the Mediterranean. The mirror incites jealousy among Rome's enemies, and the kings of Carthage and Apulia conspire to destroy both the pillar and Rome. They send three philosophers to Rome with coffers of gold and have them bury the treasure throughout the city. The philosophers then meet with Emperor Crassus (a name Gower derived from the Latin for 'dense'), a wealthy and greedy ruler who may serve as a comparison to Richard, who was himself accused of great wealth at the cost of impoverishing his subjects.⁴⁶ The philosophers tell Crassus of their desire to serve him. When Crassus enquires in what manner, they inform the king that each one of them has a spirit that comes to them at night with revelations. Recently, these dreams have been of gold hidden throughout the city (5.2031-2104). Crassus asks few questions of the philosophers and their dreams,

⁴⁶ Other Middle English versions of the tale appear to conflate Crassus with Croesus, the king of Lydia. Russell A. Peck, 'Explanatory Notes', in *Confessio Amantis*, 3 vols (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004-13), III, pp. 387-490 (pp. 404-5); Walsingham, I, pp. 144-5.

for they support his covetous nature. He readily accepts the philosophers and fails to ask where they come from and their motivation for helping him. He even goes so far as to allow them to lodge near his own room. This trust is supposedly proven to be good when Crassus follows one of the purported prophetic dreams and discovers a coffer of gold. From there, Crassus quickly comes to rely upon the philosophers and their dreams.

Throughout the tale, Gower emphasises the trust Crassus has placed upon these unknown men. The men gain the faith of Crassus so much so that they can tell the emperor their dreams ‘riht in his ere’, access that Gower portrays as unfitting and which allows the philosophers to continue with their subterfuge (5.2145). The emperor places ‘al his trist and al his feith’ in the philosophers and believes them completely even though he knows little about the men (5.2133). Indeed, this is the moral noted in the Latin gloss of the passage, which reads, ‘Hic ponit exemplum contra magnates cupidos’ (‘Here he poses an instructive example against the covetous magnates’) and tells of the Emperor Crassus, who, ‘dolosa circumuentus cupiditate’ (‘tricked by treacherous cupidity’), brought destruction upon himself and Rome (5.2031 ff). Such trust in unknown men may reflect frustrations with Richard’s inner circle, many of whom were men from ignoble backgrounds.⁴⁷ Further, the exclusivity of Richard’s inner circle prevented him from heeding the advice of his magnates and we may see something of this in the absence of Roman advisors in Gower’s tale.⁴⁸ Crassus limits himself to the council of three relatively unknown men and increasingly relies upon them. It is his avaricious nature that leads him to believe in these philosophers’ dreams and to select

⁴⁷ Adam Usk remarked that ‘Dicti regis Ricardi condicio talis fuit nobiles deprimere ac ignobiles exaltare’ (‘It was in King Richard’s nature to debase the noble and to exalt the ignoble’). He also remarked upon other men who came from common backgrounds and were unsuited for their roles in government, such as Roger Walden. Usk, pp. 61-3, 80-3.

⁴⁸ Simon Walker, ‘Remembering Richard’, in *Political Culture in Later Medieval England*, ed. by Michael J. Braddick (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 183-97 (pp. 189, 193).

similarly avaricious philosophers as his advisors – follies that ultimately undo him and his kingdom.

Like Crassus, Richard was accused of believing in prophetic dreams. Adam Usk writes that Richard so believed a prophecy concerned with the survival of the executed earl of Arundel that he ‘continue in sompnis habuit caput comitis Arundel corpori fore restitutum, unde funus fecit detegi’ (‘continually dreamed that the earl of Arundel’s head would be rejoined to his body, so he ordered the tomb to be uncovered’).⁴⁹ Gower himself wrote of Arundel’s death in his *Tripartite Chronicle* (c. 1399-1400), and Astell has noted the parallels between descriptions of Arundel’s beheading, such as that found in the *Tripartite Chronicle*, and the description of the Green Knight’s beheading used by the *Gawain* poet (fl. late fourteenth century). The problem that Richard and Crassus both faced is that prophetic dreams are ‘position[ed] between truth and falsehood’, and their ambiguities allow them to be subject to manipulation and misinterpretation.⁵⁰ Crassus is so determined to find more gold and Richard so determined to prevent the Arundel prophecy from coming true that they are unable to think sceptically about either dream or prophecy.

We find hesitancy of belief in dreams elsewhere in fourteenth-century poetry and philosophical texts. As noted above, Robert Holkot expresses doubts on oneiric interpretation, warning ‘that in certain dreams there is some certainty, but in few of them’ and that dreams appeal to the ignorant and unwise, an issue Gower centres in his tale.⁵¹ Chaucer’s narrator in *House of Fame* (c. 1379) wonders, ‘Why th’effect folweth of somme [dreams],/ And of somme hit shal never come’ and believes that it is for

⁴⁹ The source for this prophecy is unknown. Usk, pp. 82-3; Astell, p. 120-3.

⁵⁰ Kruger, p. 135.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 93-4. Holkot’s treatment of dreams is influential with Chaucerian dream lore as well.

‘grete clerkys’ to sort out the true nature of dreams.⁵² Indeed, a feature of medieval dreams visions is the duality of dreams – authors question the reliability of dreams while simultaneously engaging with the possibility of their revelatory nature.⁵³ However, the specific issue for Gower, as well as for John of Salisbury in his *Policraticus*, is not dreams’ ability to predict events but that their ability to do so is so reliant upon the person having (or in this case purporting to have) the dream. A prophetic dream is valid only when the person having the dream is of moral character, and so it is up to the ruler to discern who is of proper character to have valid dreams – something that Crassus is unable to do because he himself has moral failings.

Ultimately, the philosophers have so secured Crassus’ trust that they are able to convince him to risk Virgil’s mirror. The third philosopher tells Crassus his dream that gold is located beneath Virgil’s mirror, and Crassus immediately orders a tunnel be dug beneath the mirror. Great pains are taken to ensure the mirror is protected while digging the tunnel but at night the philosophers start a fire, destroying the mirror. Upon hearing of its destruction, the people of Rome, previously subjugated, begin to rebel and Rome is ultimately sacked by Hannibal. As punishment, the Roman people pour molten gold into Crassus’ eyes and mouth (3.2154-2224). Rome’s and Crassus’ violent falls from power, then, are the result of the emperor’s belief in prophetic dreams and his trust in their untested interpreters. Crassus’ dramatic change in fortunes shows how a ruler is culpable for not only his fate but that of his kingdom, an argument we see throughout the *Confessio*’s tales and advice to princes texts. Gower, however, lessens this blame at

⁵² Geoffery Chaucer, *House of Fame*, in *Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 348-9; Frederick Carl Riedel, ‘The Meaning of Chaucer’s House of Fame’, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 27 (1928), 441-69 (p. 443).

⁵³ Kruger, pp. 124, 127, 129-30.

the end of the tale. The confessor cautions that covetousness in a king causes harm, but covetousness in the king's council will bring 'more adversité' and 'commun harm' to the country (3.2232, 2235). The latter phrase may be a play on 'commun wele', a phrase used to describe the general welfare of a country and whose usage grew throughout the fifteenth century (which we will see in the following chapter).⁵⁴ This addition at the end of the tale places the power to destroy a kingdom with the bad advisors – a common characteristic of the advisory discourse, for it allows the writer to palliate his criticism of the ruler by placing blame elsewhere.

The 'Tale of Vigil's Mirror' serves as a warning to rulers who heed the counsel of unknown men and stresses the importance of discerning with whom they surround themselves. While Gower cautions against the dangers of oneiric predictions, the consequences that resulted from Crassus' belief in the philosophers' dreams could have been prevented if he had taken the counsel of more trustworthy men. And so, the tale is ultimately about the emperor's failure to discern: to discern good from bad counsel and to discern true from false prophetic dreams. As we have seen in chapter one and two, such emphasis on discernment is a major theme in advisory texts, but the importance of discerning true from false prophetic dreams is a concern we only see in the *Policraticus* and *De Principis Instructione*. This suggests that prophecy and portents of the future more generally were topical to certain periods, whether because of the ruler's known engagement with prophecies or the popularity of prophecy as a literary discourse.

⁵⁴ The phrase is found in Robert Mannyng's *Chronicle* (c. 1338). The other uses of the phrase date to the mid-fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries. This is the definition listed for 1a. Middle English Compendium <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED8633/track?counter=3&search_id=69879758> [Accessed 3 June 2024]

Tale of Ahab and Micaiah

As with the ‘Tale of Virgil’s Mirror,’ the tale of Ahab and Micaiah centres on the manipulation of portents and the duplicitous motivations of counsellors. Gower, leaning upon the authority of the biblical tale, reworks the story, using Israel as a cipher for England, to discuss the issue of prophecy and a ruler’s desire to surround himself with flatterers – two concerns relevant to Ricardian rule and frequently addressed in Ricardian literature. He explores these issues and warns of the dangers that may result from them, unlike earlier advice to princes texts, which emphasised God’s punishment of Ahab and Jezebel for their treatment of Naboth. Although Gower blames the flatterers and false prophets, he ultimately places culpability for Israel’s downfall with the ruler, King Ahab, as in the tales of ‘Paris and Helen’ and ‘Virgil’s Mirror.’

This tale is interesting in that it is an adaptation of a biblical tale into the vernacular. On one hand, it allows Gower to use the textual authority of the bible to advance his claims on flattery and prophecy. On the other hand, it is a potentially problematic strategy as there were concerns about English translation of the bible in his period.⁵⁵ While Gower’s version is close to the biblical one, its aim appears different. The biblical tale begins with King Ahab’s wish to war with Benadab, the king of Syria, and his request of support and advice from Josephat, the king of Juda (1 Kings 22:2-5). The *Confessio*, however, begins by describing Ahab as a king who easily succumbs to flattery and punishes the truth, and it is his reputation for this, which, in part, leads to his downfall. Gower writes of who benefits from Ahab’s rule:

Bot who that couthe glose softe

And flatre, suche he sette alofte

⁵⁵ Minnis, pp. 25-6.

In gret astat and made hem riche
 Bot thei that spieken wordes liche
 To trouthe and wolde it noght forbere,
 For hem was non astat to bere (7.2531-6).

Beginning the tale with this passage makes clear Gower's purpose: it is to warn against the rulers who listen to and reward flattery while punishing those who tell the truth. Concerns for flatterers is also found in other contemporary works, like *Mum and the Sothsegger*, which comments how flatterers fare best in society and falseness roams free:

And yfulled undre foote while falsenes goeth aboute
 With cautelle and with coigne forto caste deceiptz
 Hough trouthe might be traverssid and tournid of the weye.
 Thenne fareth fals fourth and flatereth atte beste (55-8).

Both writers stress the financial benefits flattery holds, and such references to rewards of wealth and social status bestowed upon flatterers holds particular applicability to Richard's rule, for chroniclers, including Thomas Walsingham and Jean Froissart, noted the king's susceptibility to flattery. They also commented upon the control the king's favourites seemed to hold over him and the rewards given to them, such as gifts, titles, and positions in the royal court.⁵⁶ These were also complaints lodged towards Richard's great-grandfather Edward II. That both kings were subject to this kind of criticism in multiple sources and were ultimately deposed is interesting and shows the expectations political writers had for monarchs. Indeed, throughout the *Confessio*, we see critiques similar to those in *De nobilitatibus* and the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*.

⁵⁶ Walsingham, II, pp. 81, 262-3; Strohm, p. 24; Saul, pp. 112-8.

In the Bible, Ahab assembles hundreds of prophets, and one, Zedekiah, foretells that war with Syria will be a success, and the other prophets agree (1 Kings 22.11-2). Gower expands upon this scene, detailing both Zedekiah's elaborate dress and actions while telling the prophecy (7.2569-79). To support the king's desire for expansion, Zedekiah crafts a tale of Benedab's ineluctable defeat:

Tofore him cam, and be a sleyhte
 He hath upon his heved on heyhte
 Tuo large hornes set of bras,
 As he which al a flatour was,
 And goth rampende as a leoun
 And caste hise hornes up and doun,
 And bad men ben of good espier,
 For as the hornes percen th'eir,
 He seith, without resistance,
 So wiste he wel of his science
 That Benedab is desconfit (7.2569-79).

In this passage, Gower describes Zedekiah as a fraud and flatterer, who cares more about the production of prophecy and how it appears than the truth of it, a description not found in the biblical tale. Thus, Gower creates an archetypical false advisor who is to blame, in part, for Ahab's subsequent demise. Following Zedekiah's prophecy, many other prophets come forward 'to bere up oil' and agree that Syria will fall (7.2584). At the same time, Gower shows Ahab to be a poor ruler, for, unlike the biblical Ahab, Gower's rewards the false prophets for their optimistic prophecy (7.2586-7). This emphasis on Ahab's preference for and the addition of his generosity towards flatterers

creates a ruler who is easily manipulated and favours those who tell him what he wishes to hear rather than the truth. Such emphasis finds parallel in a near-contemporary historical counterpart as Walsingham complained that Richard was deceived by false prophets, who foretold that Richard would become an emperor and great conqueror.⁵⁷

Ahab interprets Zedekiah's vision as the truth, emphasising what he can see (Zedekiah's production) and that the vision supports his jingoistic aspirations. Ahab's support of imperialistic prophecies reflects Richard's engagement with imperial prophecies as shown in his campaigns in Scotland and Ireland and associations with the Holy Oil of St Thomas. Like Richard, Ahab hoped to expand his kingdom's boundaries and was willing to engage in prophecy to help support that aim. Gower's alterations to his biblical source thus reflect and speak to contemporary policy. Juxtaposed against Zedekiah's prophecy is that of Micaiah, a prophet who never portends Ahab's success. Despite his dislike of Micaiah, Ahab sends for him, and it is here that we see Ahab choose to believe only prophecies that presage his success. In an expansion of the Bible account, Gower stresses the truthfulness of Micaiah's prophecy. Upon being asked by the king's men to agree with the other prophets because it will benefit him and the others, Micaiah demurs, for his heart is set 'upon trouthe' and says he will only speak what God has told him (7.2614-20). Micaiah reiterates this prior to giving his prophecy, telling Ahab, 'I schal nocht glose/ Of trouthe als fer as I suppose' (7.2631-2). Relating his prophecy, Micaiah warns that Ahab will lose if he attacks Syria. Unlike Zedekiah, his appearance and physical movements are not described – only the prophecy's provenance (through a vision with God) and the result of Ahab's battle with Benedab

⁵⁷ Walsingham, II, pp. 124-5.

(7.2628-63). His vision focuses more on the people of Israel and what will happen to them in battle than on the king, and it is decidedly more pessimistic than Zedekiah's, stating that the battle will be the ruin of the Israelites.

Micaiah's prophecy is received poorly: Zedekiah accuses him of inventing it to provoke the king. Ahab, siding with Zedekiah, has Micaiah returned to prison as though 'the trouthe myhte noght ben herd' (7.2673). Such emphasis on Micaiah's truth and subsequent punishment – when coupled with Ahab's rewarding the false prophets and the influence Zedekiah holds over the king – show Ahab as a king easily manipulated and whose court is overrun by falsehood. Content with surrounding himself with flatterers, Ahab's discomfort with the truth leads him to punish the one person willing to tell him it, tying into Gower's introduction to the tale, which speaks of how those who tell the truth are not well-received: 'Bot thei that spieken wordes liche/ To trouthe and wolde it noght forbere,.../The court of suche tok non hiede' (7.234-7). We see this theme in *Mum and the Sothsegger*. The *Mum* poet laments how truth is discouraged, and *Mum and the Sothsegger* goes further, complaining how truth is downtrodden: 'Thus is trouthe doune ytroode and tenyd ful ofte' (173). In fact, many writers of this period, including Langland and the *Pearl* poet, emphasised truth, so much so that Richard Firth Green referred to it as the 'archetypal keyword in English' and John Alford as 'the dominant, one might almost say the characterizing, concern' of Ricardian England. For Gower, 'trouthe' was the 'highest moral good' and is featured heavily in the *Confessio Amantis*.⁵⁸ The frequency with which poets of this period discuss truth and its absence

⁵⁸ Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 4, 17, 18-9, 22; John Alford, 'The Design of the Poem', in *A Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. by John Alford (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 29-66 (p. 33).

from the court and society coupled with the chronicler's accounts of Richard's favour towards and belief in those who flattered him suggest such frustrations were reflective of contemporary events.⁵⁹

In choosing to believe the prophecy which aligns with his imperialistic ambitions, Ahab shows not only his preference for flattery but, like Paris, his myopia. Interestingly, in comparison to his expansion of the Bible source elsewhere in the tale, Gower provides a truncated version of Ahab's fall, omitting the part where Ahab attempts to disguise himself on the battlefield. This omission emphasises Ahab's conviction in Zedekiah's prophecy and allows Gower to centre the blame for the king's death and loss of kingdom upon his susceptibility to flatterers. Indeed, immediately following Ahab's death, Gower makes a further addition that directly advises against flattery: 'For ate laste it wol be sene/ That flaterie is nothing worth' (7.2688-9). This quotation and its placement shift the emphasis from the fulfilment of Micaiah's prophecy and God's will to Ahab's failure to discern between both true and false prophecy and true and false advisors. The phrase 'Ate laste it wol be sene' suggests that it was inevitable that Ahab was brought down by the advisory culture he developed despite successfully ruling for many years. Other contemporary writers often described rulers' demises as a warning against certain behaviours. In his chronicle, for instance, Adam Usk claims that Richard's downfall was predicted by his mother, Joan of Kent. He wrote that she told her son, 'Doleo quia tui ruinam uideo imminere per maledictos adultores tuos tibi causatam' ('I grieve, for I foresee your downfall, on account of these accursed flatterers of yours').⁶⁰ Here, like in Gower's tale, flatterers and a ruler's demise

⁵⁹ Walsingham, II, pp. 64-5, 78-81.

⁶⁰ Usk, pp. 10-1.

are directly linked and intimate the inevitability of a ruler losing the throne because of his decision to listen to flattery.

Although the false advisors are culpable, Gower places ultimate responsibility on the ruler. Though he shows wisdom in seeking counsel from Josephat and the prophets, Ahab only listens when the advice bolsters his self-conceit. Following the end of the tale, Amans says, ‘So sit wel a king therefore/ To loven hem that trouthe mene’ (7.2686-7), placing the ruler responsible for the acceptance and prevalence of truth within his court. Similarly, Chaucer places culpability with the king (albeit in a more explicit manner) in ‘Lak of Stedfastnesse’ (c. 1389/90). He directly addresses Richard in its last stanza, providing him with advice on how to lead his people: ‘Cherish thy folk and hate extorcioun.../ Dred God, do law, love trouthe and worthinesse,/ And wed thy folk agein to stedfastnesse’.⁶¹ Both Chaucer and Gower believe it is ultimately the ruler’s responsibility to accept truth, but a key element in Gower’s version of ‘Ahab and Micaiah’ is the importance of a king surrounding himself with those who speak the truth. Thus, one of the key powers a king possesses is determining who he surrounds himself with and what type of advisory culture is developed around him.

The Trump of Death

The idea that the king is ultimately responsible for governance, both good and bad, is also explored in the ‘Trump of Death’. Like Priam in ‘Paris and Helen’, the king in the ‘Trump of Death’ is a good ruler who takes on the role of counsellor to provide his brother with much needed guidance on humility and presumption, thus illustrating two points: a king must be able to discern between good and bad advice, and counsellors

⁶¹ Geoffrey Chaucer, ‘Lake of Steadfastness’, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), p. 654.

should but do not always provide wise and effective counsel. Gower's source material is Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum historiale*, and he follows the general outline of the tale in Vincent's work with some adaptations.⁶²

The tale begins with a Hungarian king traveling to the countryside with his lords. Two old and haggard pilgrims come upon the party and approach the king, asking for charity. Despite their base appearance, the king embraces them, kisses their hands and feet, and gives them what he can (1.2048-53). The king's humility and generosity are displayed through his treatment of the pilgrims, for he does not perceive himself as above others and expresses gladness in welcoming the pilgrims. And so, the Hungarian king is shown to be an exemplary ruler. Juxtaposed against him are the lords, particularly his brother, who disapprove of the king's treatment of the pilgrims because they view it as degrading his regality. Though no one speaks immediately to the king about their misgivings, the king's brother says he will discuss the issue with him later (1.2048-79). Although the lords lack the virtues the king possesses, they are at least willing to control their speech and unwilling to provide unsolicited and poor advice. The brother, however, is not. He chastises the king, telling him that he should only demonstrate 'such simplese/ Agein th'astat of his noblesce' and that he 'mot himself excuse/ Toward hise lordes everychon' (1.2099-2100). The brother's concern, then, is not for the people in need but for the king's projection of the royal image. Richard's reign was marked by such concerns for the royal image. He sought to increase the reverence of English kingship and instituted new policies surrounding his image; as Elliot Kendall observes, he 'cultivate[d] a persona so out of reach of all his subjects', a

⁶² Judith Shaw, 'John Gower's Illustrative Tales', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 84 (1983), 437-47 (p. 443).

persona that Henry IV later rejected.⁶³ Phrases such as ‘your highness’ and ‘your royal majesty’ began to be used before ‘my lord’ in parliamentary petitions and letters.

Additionally, there was an increased emphasis on ceremony. According to the writer of the *Continuatio Eulogii* (c. 1413), during Richard’s crown-wearing ceremonies, Richard would not speak to anyone but merely observe.⁶⁴ Like Richard, the Hungarian king’s brother views image as an expression of regal authority and seeks to draw a distinction between the king and everyone else. However, Gower criticises such belief, using words ‘desdeign,’ ‘compleignte,’ and ‘pride’ to comment on the contrast between the lords and the king’s ‘gret humilité’ (1.2050, 2058-60).

The problem, then, lies with the king’s inner circle and his brother, who all lack the wisdom necessary to advise the king, yet the brother takes the role upon himself anyway. He uses his access to the king to provide unsolicited advice by waiting in the king’s chamber and ensuring the king’s sole attention when speaking with him (1.2092-3). Once alone, the brother is described as giving ‘such conseil/ Toward his king that was nocht heil’ (1.2121-2). Not only is the advice he gives ‘nocht heil’, or sound, but so is the brother's presumption of providing unsolicited counsel. ‘Heil’ in this context is used to describe counsel specifically, but it can also mean sound in a physical or mental sense, and so, the line can also be read as a brother, or counsellor, who is of unsound mind.⁶⁵ Such behaviour quite likely reflects the trouble experienced with Richard’s circle of advisors in the 1380s and 1390s. Chroniclers frequently complained about Richard’s favourites, especially the access and the influence they had over Richard and

⁶³ Kendall, p. 49; Chris Given-Wilson, *Henry IV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 392.

⁶⁴ *Continuatio Eulogii*, ed. and trans. by Chris Given-Wilson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 84-5

⁶⁵ This is the definition listed for 1a and 3. Middle English Compendium

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED20262/track?counter=3&search_id=66137360> [Accessed 5 May 2024]

Richard's willingness to follow their poor advice – complaints we see lodged towards other rulers during crisis periods.⁶⁶ Unlike Richard, the Hungarian king is able to discern good counsel from bad and decides to ignore his brother and to teach him a lesson. While Gower is critical of how the brother places himself as the king's counsellor, it is the very thing that Gower himself is doing in the *Confessio* (indeed, what all writers of advice to princes do in their works): providing unsolicited advice to rulers. Although ironic, Gower's issue seems to lie less with the presumption of providing unsolicited advice and more with the quality of the advice provided and the king's response to it. The king's ability to recognize the advice as unsound and choose not to follow it is of paramount importance. Furthermore, by providing advice without the ruler's request himself, Gower suggests that as long as the advice provided is sound, then it does not matter whether or not it was requested.⁶⁷

Despite his brother's presumption and poor advice, the king carefully listens to him and demonstrates the acumen his brother lacks:

The king stod stille as eny ston,
 And to his tale an ere he leide,
 And thoghte more than he seide.
 Bot natheles to that he herde
 Wel cortaisly the king answerde,
 And tolde it scholde be amended (1.2104-9).

⁶⁶ Henry Knighton, *Knighton's Chronicle 1337 – 1396*, ed. and trans. by G.H. Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 500; Walsingham, I, pp. 852-3. Simon Burley, who became vice-chamberlain in 1377, gained access to the king through this role but also the ability to control others' access to the king. Another counsellor, Robert de Vere, was accused of bearing 'all the rule around the king' while Simon Burley and Michael de la Pole 'exercised a degree of influence over the king that no other officer in the 1380s could match'. Saul, pp. 120-1.

⁶⁷ Although Gower claims King Richard requested he write the *Confessio* in the Ricardian recension of the prologue, it is unlikely this is true. Even if it was true, Gower purports that Richard requested he write a poem but did not dictate the work's content or purpose. Gower, 46-56 (Ricardian recension).

Gower depicts this king as prudent with his willingness to listen and restraint in speech, illustrating that he possesses the qualities of good kingship his brother claims he lacks. When the king informs his brother that it will be amended, his brother misinterprets this and assumes the king refers to the issue he has brought up. However, it is the king's intention to amend the issue he sees – his brother's pride and lack of humility – for he rejects the idea that his station makes him superior to others. He, then, reverses the traditional role found in advisory tales and seeks to guide the moral behaviour of others rather than receive such guidance himself. Although this reflects Gower's source material, his choice to include a tale that reverses roles supports one of his primary arguments throughout these tales in the *Confessio*: that the ruler ought to know good counsel from bad and be able to guide and serve as an example to his people.

To teach his brother, the king orders the trumpet of death to be blown outside his brother's gate. There is a law in their kingdom that tells that whoever hears this will be sentenced to death without forgiveness. Upon hearing the trumpet, the brother believes he is surely dead and his fate inescapable. The brother and his family walk through the town, appearing dishevelled, 'with sobbinge and with sory teres' (1.2182). The elaborate scene the brother and his family create leads all those in town to grow upset, for the lord, once proud and noble, is now abased. Gower places more emphasis on the family's appearance (and those of the pilgrims earlier) than Vincent does in his version of the tale, which further stresses the importance the brother places on appearance and ceremony – again reflective of the descriptions and complaints of Richard's court in the chronicles.⁶⁸ Furthermore, the brother is left to ask for the humility that he told the king not to give anyone who projects such an image. When the brother reaches the king, the

⁶⁸ Shaw, p. 445.

king admonishes him and acts as his brother's counsellor, a role his brother asserted himself earlier. The king says, "'Mi brother, after this,/ I rede [advise]... that thou... Dred God'" more than man and chastises his brother's foolishness (1.2243-6). Unlike his brother, the king provides good counsel: 'The king hath with hise wordes wise/ His brother tawht and al forgive' (1.2252-3). Thus, the king adopts the role of advisor effectively, providing good advice and successfully guiding his brother to be more moral.

Whereas several of the *Confessio*'s tales discussed here centre on bad counsel and the subsequent fall of the ruler, the 'Trump of Death' illustrates how a prudent king can discern bad counsel and avoid potential follies that may have resulted from such advice. It is the Hungarian king's wisdom and humility that leads him to ignore his brother and lords, and because of this, Gower places more authority upon the ruler, implying that he must be the ultimate purveyor of good governance. In this manner, the 'Trump of Death' is the most overt of Gower's tales in placing authority on the king.

Tale of Nectanabus

The 'Tale of Nectanabus' is set in the court of Philip II of Macedonia and centres on the relationship between Nectanabus and Queen Olympia and, later, her son Alexander. As we have seen, the use of Alexander the Great as an exemplar in advice to princes texts was common, but Gower is the only writer in this thesis to include this particular tale of Alexander and the false prophet Nectanabus. This story was, however, common to Alexander romances.⁶⁹ The fourteenth century in particular witnessed a growth in the

⁶⁹ Nectanabus is also featured in Gilbert Hay's *Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror*, a fifteenth-century Scottish advisory work discussed in chapter 4. John Cartwright, 'Textual Introduction', in the *Buik of King Alexander the Conqueror*, ed. by John Cartwright, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1986), I, pp. vii-xx (pp. xix-xx); Stone, p. 45.

use of Alexander narratives across genres and discourses, and they grew so common that Chaucer's 'Monk's Tale' (completed 1400) even remarked that the story of Alexander is so well-known that every person of worth knows it.⁷⁰ Most medieval Alexander narratives were used to 'highlight the eponymous king's ethical possibilities,' but Gower focuses more on the downfall of the false advisor and prophet Nectanabus.⁷¹ Gower uses deviations from literary tradition to critique the ruler and remark upon the dangers of false advisors, prophecies, and royal representation.⁷²

In the tale, Nectanabus (an Egyptian king displaced from his kingdom) secrets away to Macedonia with a few loyal servants. Soon after arriving in Macedonia, he sees Queen Olympia during her birthday celebration. Struck by her beauty, he orchestrates an encounter with her where he assumes a different identity. He greets her:

Ma dame, a clerk I am,

To you and in message I cam,

The which I mai nocht tellen hier;

Bot if it liketh you to hier,

It mot be seid al prively,

Where non schal be bot ye and I. (6.1875 – 1880).

⁷⁰ Venetia Bridges, *Medieval Narratives of Alexander the Great*, (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2018), p. 196; Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), p. 440.

⁷¹ Bridges, p. 240.

⁷² The exact source material that Gower was using is unknown. He may have been working from Thomas of Kent's Anglo-Norman *Roman de toute Chevalerie*, the Latin *Historia de Preliis Alexandri*, Valerius' *Res Gestae Alexandri*, or some version of the *Alexandreis* by Walter of Châtillon. *Confessio Amantis*, p. 432.

His initial introduction to Olympia establishes two recurring concepts: 1) Nectanabus' fabrication of his identity and, eventually, prophecy, and 2) his establishment of himself as sole and spurious advisor to Olympia. During their private meeting, Nectanabus makes a great show of his source of predictive power, showing her a golden astrolabe and astrological book, before telling her that he was advised by a god to warn Olympia that the god Amos will visit her at night and lie with her. He tells her that she will conceive a child from this relationship (6.1889-1940). As in the tale of Zedekiah, the production of the prophecy is here just as important (if not more so) as the validity of the prophecy, and the elaborate production is partly why these false prophets are able to fool the rulers. Elaborate relaying of prophecies may reflect the production within Richard's court and the ways in which Richard expected others to address him. Walsingham accused one of Richard's favourites John Bushy of extreme adulation of the king and recorded how he 'extentis brachiis, supplicibus manibus eum adoraret' ('would extend his arms, and prostrate himself before him [Richard], his hands in suppliant mode').⁷³ In addition to predicting that Olympia will give birth to a son, Nectanabus foretells that the son will be a great conqueror. He says that the son 'schal winne and gete/ The wyde world in lengthe and brede' and 'the god of erthe he schal be hote', a prophecy that ultimately is fulfilled (6.1936-7, 1940). Nectanabus' prediction of Alexander's greatness and status as 'the god of erthe' may itself tie into Richard's imperial ambitions (as discussed earlier).⁷⁴

⁷³ Nigel Saul, *The Three Richards: Richard I, Richard II, and Richard III* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), p. 60; Henry Knighton, *The Chronicle of Henry Knighton*, ed. and trans. by G.H. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 402-3.

⁷⁴ Prophecies centring on crusading and empire-building circulated widely during Richard's reign. These include Geoffrey of Monmouth's prophecies of Merlin and the Brut, which remained popular in the late-fourteenth century, and the 'Cesaris imperium' (c. early fourteenth century), all of which depicted the king's success and formation of an empire. Coote, pp. 148-9, 249.

Amos (who is really Nectanabus disguised with magic) comes to Olympia at night, and afterwards, Olympia tells Nectanabus his prophecy came true. She asks if she can see Amos while awake to which Nectanabus says yes but advises her to keep the matter private. He uses the phrase ‘I you consaile’ and ‘prively’ and ‘privé’ to describe their interactions, thus, establishing himself as Olympia’s sole advisor and preventing her from seeking counsel elsewhere (6.2042-3, 1911). Limiting Olympia’s access to other sources of counsel helps Nectanabus deceive and take advantage of her in sexual terms as well as advisory terms and might well be reflective of the issue of exclusivity and influence of Richard’s favourites, whose counsel he was known to take over that of the magnates.⁷⁵ By following Nectanabus’ advice, Olympia is taken advantage of and her royal image and the succession put in jeopardy.

Nectanabus’ subterfuge is rooted in his creation of a false prophecy and false identity. Although he uses the first two false identities as a clerk and as Amos to ingratiate himself with and use Olympia, this third identity is used to manipulate events to make the prophecy come true. Knowing the outcome of his true relationship with Olympia, Nectanabus transforms himself into a fowl and flies to Olympia’s husband Philip. With sorcery, Nectanabus sends Philip a prophetic dream about Olympia’s pregnancy with a demigod son, and when Philip returns to Macedon, Nectanabus disguises himself as Amos in front of the king, thus, ensuring that Philip will recognise the child as his heir (6.2125-2218). In doing so, he both protects Olympia and her child and makes his prophecy appear true. This creates a twofold problem. Firstly, Nectanabus vacillates between truth and lies (and later between wisdom and folly).⁷⁶ In

⁷⁵ Saul, pp. 58-9; Usk, p. 9; Knighton, pp. 402-3.

⁷⁶ Bridges, p. 160.

this regard, Gower uses the magician to explore the dangers of false counsel – men may advise rulers for their own individual interests rather than those of the ruler. Secondly, Nectanabus is actively manipulating those around him to ensure his prophecy comes true, which presents the issue frequently approached in the *Confessio*'s tales: How can prophecy be trusted when it is easily manipulated? It is not that prophecies cannot accurately predict the future but that they do not do so consistently, or without negative consequences. Nectanabus' actions allow Gower to explore these issues and guide his readers to display a healthy scepticism towards counsellors and prophecies.

Though his relationship with Olympia ends, Nectanabus remains in Macedonia and serves as a teacher to Alexander. While stargazing together, a young Alexander asks Nectanabus how he thinks Nectanabus will die to which the teacher replies that Fortune is either mistaken and the stars have lost their place, or he will be slain by his own son (6.2300-4). Alexander, believing Nectanabus to be a lying fool, pushes him off the tower they are sitting on. He then says to Nectanabus, ““Wherof nou serveth al thin art?/ Thou knewe alle othre mennes chance/ And of thiself hast ignorance”” (6.2312-4). His remark ‘thou knewe alle other mennes chance’ shows Alexander does believe in prophecy yet does not believe in Nectanabus' final prophecy. He thus displays the selective belief in prophecy shared by other rulers in the *Confessio*. Alexander's actions, however, do make Nectanabus' prophecy true, and this is one of his primary functions in the tale. Although typically the focus of a narrative, in this tale, Alexander is not introduced until the last seventy-five lines, and his only actions involve his interactions with Nectanabus: asking questions and pushing him off the tower. In addition to ensuring Nectanabus' prophecy comes true, Alexander's actions also shed light on his

own questionable morals – a common theme in Alexander narratives.⁷⁷ If we are to read Alexander as Richard, it is both a favourable and unfavourable comparison.⁷⁸ Alexander was a great conqueror, paralleling Richard's attempts to expand his kingdom, and his actions do free his family from a duplicitous adviser, suggesting that rulers do have the ability to remove false advisors. However, his willingness to kill to prove a point shows his capricious nature (accusation that followed Richard during the latter part of his reign).⁷⁹ Gower's use of a tale that does not place Alexander as an exemplar (whether positive or negative) is unusual in the advisory discourse. Alexander's role is largely as the instrument that ends Nectanabus' influence over his family and allows the prophecy to come true. This deviation from advice to princes tradition allows Gower to caution against believing advisors and prophecy at face value.

Though the tale is placed in the book on gluttony, the tale's focus on the downfall of a spurious advisor and prophet, which is stressed in the Latin marginalia ('Et sic sortilegus ex suo sortilegio infortunii sortem sortitus est' – 'And thus the sorcerer was fated to an ill fate by his own sorcery') (6.1793). This focus creates a warning that is largely applicable to the actual readership of advisory works: those who advise the king. Although the tales previously discussed centre on the fall of rulers at the hands of spurious advisors, the 'Tale of Nectanabus' shows the potential consequences of counsellors seeking to deceive rulers, for Nectanabus' fabrication of identity and prophecy leads to his downfall. However, his prophecies appear to be ineluctable whether because he designed them to appear true or because they *are* true.

⁷⁷ Bridges, p. 240.

⁷⁸ Gower refers to Alexander and his instruction on how to be a good ruler throughout the *Confessio's* seventh book, which, as noted earlier, was referred to as a '*Principis Regimen*'. Gower, 7.5, 7.718, 7.950, 1715.

⁷⁹ Saul, *Richard II*, p. 447.

The problem faced, then, is how to discern which prophecies are true – something that Alexander and his parents are unable to do. This gives rise to the question: How can a ruler tell whether a prophecy is true? We will see, however, that such a question, explored by Gower throughout the *Confessio*, is not found in *The Regiment* (although we see many of Gower's other concerns on governance appear in it, including the importance of discerning good counsel). However, we also see a new concern arise under Lancastrian rule: financial stress

Advisory Works after Richard's Reign: *The Regiment of Princes*

Completed nearly twenty years after the *Confessio*, *The Regiment of Princes* is an advice to princes text addressed to Henry, Prince of Wales (later Henry V). When read along with the *Confessio*, we see how Ricardian rule continued to impact advisory literature late into Henry IV's reign and how *The Regiment* was informed by earlier vernacular advisory works and was a continuation of the tradition. *The Regiment* was written by Thomas Hoccleve, a clerk in the Office of the Privy Seal for over thirty-five years, likely between July 1391 and June 1425. Although Hoccleve did not prosper financially from his role within the office, he likely held a senior position. Based on the large volume of documents requesting payment for supplies and payment to men of high rank, Linne Mooney argues that Hoccleve was one of four chief Clerks of the Privy Seal although that was the highest post he attained.⁸⁰ His work, *The Regiment*, is tied to the events of 1399, for he provides advice reflecting the lingering frustrations of Ricardian rule and the issues surrounding Lancastrian rule. Hoccleve approaches matters in a similar manner to Gower, providing critique of governance through the use

⁸⁰ Linne R. Mooney, 'Some New Light on Thomas Hoccleve', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 29 (2007), 293-40 (pp. 297-300).

of ancient and biblical exempla while attempting to temper such critique with various advice to princes conventions. Like Gower's *Confessio*, Hoccleve's *Regiment* expresses concerns for the king's counsellors, deriding spurious advisors and flatterers, and it ultimately holds rulers culpable for poor governance. Indeed, Hoccleve expresses his debt to Gower:

Hastow nat eek my maistir Gower slayn,

Whos vertu I am insufficient

For to descryve? I woot wel in certayn,

For to sleen al this world thow hast yment (1975-8).⁸¹

The relationship that Hoccleve claims between himself and Gower is clearly hierarchical: Gower is the master with Hoccleve as his lowly student. While Hoccleve uses the *humilitas* topos here, placing himself below Gower, this connection to Gower also boosts his credentials as a writer, for it suggests he is the student of a literary authority.

The *Confessio* and *The Regiment* share many similarities, yet the works diverge in several key areas. Foremost, *The Regiment* serves two related functions: one, as advice to his prince, and two, as a complaint.⁸² Throughout this section, I will highlight how Hoccleve engages with both the advice to princes tradition and contemporary literary culture as a reaction to the political atmosphere of Ricardian and Lancastrian England. Furthermore, I will analyse how Hoccleve utilises conventions of the advisory

⁸¹ Additionally, Hoccleve eulogizes Chaucer, referring to him as 'my maistir Chaucer, flour of eloquence' and 'my worthy maistir Chaucer' on lines 1962 and 4983, respectively.

⁸² Perkins, p. 1.

discourse to further emphasise his own, personal complaint against Lancastrian rule, which, in turn, is used to disguise his political critique. By analysing *The Regiment's* double purpose and pairing alongside the *Confessio*, I will elucidate how advisory works adapted and responded to the change in royal power.

Hoccleve relies upon multiple sources for *The Regiment*, including the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secreta*, Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum*, and Jacob de Cessolis's *Liber super ludo scaccorum*. He also cites Chaucer and Gower as models for Middle English poetry, lamenting that he is merely an epigone unable to write in a manner as eloquent as theirs (1962-88). This is the first instance of an insular advice to princes text that references an earlier insular advisory work. The earlier advice to princes writers Walter de Milemete and John Gower, wrote of the *Secreta* and its influence upon their work, but Hoccleve is the first to acknowledge the influence of earlier Middle English writers on his advisory work. Indeed, during this period, vernacular writing grew in influence in England and became a language considered elevated enough to address a ruler. Though English kings were not known to promote a 'state' literary production as the French kings did, instances of the vernacular used in high culture increased throughout late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century England.⁸³ The expectation that Latin and French were the preferred languages of a courtly writer shifted towards the vernacular, and instances of the vernacular used in high culture increased throughout the late fourteenth century. Such laudations of English poets writing in the vernacular, Chaucer in particular, become more common as the fifteenth century progresses and are found in John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* and John Ireland's *Meroure of Wyssdome*

⁸³ Minnis, pp. 2-3, 12.

(which I will discuss in chapter four). Praising earlier vernacular writers shows how later writers explicitly drew upon other works of literature to craft their own work.

Prior to the rise of new historicism, scholarship on Hoccleve largely focused on the biographic elements in *The Regiment* with little emphasis placed on the literary merits of his work.⁸⁴ More recently, however, scholars like Paul Strohm and Judith Ferster have begun to situate Hoccleve and his work within the literary and political culture of the early fifteenth century. Scholars have taken primarily two approaches to *The Regiment*. Some have viewed the work as Lancastrian propaganda, conforming to the Lancastrian ideals of monarchic authority and image while others align themselves to the belief that Hoccleve's work is highly critical and contains elements of resistance.⁸⁵ It is with this latter view that I align my argument, believing *The Regiment* is not Lancastrian propaganda but a commentary on both Ricardian and Lancastrian rule, often times a highly critical commentary. In reading the work alongside Gower's *Confessio*, we see that how crisis periods inform political writing well into the new regime and how changes in regimes can result in a new set of issues affecting the kingdom. Like Ferster, I detail how Hoccleve employs advisory discourse to respond to his personal complaints and criticism of Lancastrian rule and how Hoccleve interweaves passages of direct criticism with conventions of advisory discourse to mitigate his critique. Additionally, I show how Hoccleve's personal complaints are an engagement with complaint literature – a strategy we have seen in earlier advisory works and redolent of William of Pagula's *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*. Further, I will examine

⁸⁴ J.A. Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1994), p. 6; Malcolm Richardson, 'Hoccleve in His Social Context', *The Chaucer Review*, 20 (1986), 313-20 (pp. 313-4).

⁸⁵ Paul Strohm positions Hoccleve as a fully complicit in legitimization of Lancastrian rule while Derek Pearsall believes Hoccleve was employed by Prince Henry to portray the prince as a righteous ruler and further legitimize the Lancasters. Strohm, p. 141; Derek Pearsall, 'Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*: The Poetics of Royal Self-Representation', *Speculum*, 69 (1994), 386-410 (pp. 389-391).

how Hoccleve draws upon and adapts topoi of advisory discourse and his purposes for doing so, whether political or as a manner to palliate his critique.

Authorial Persona and *The Regiment's* Prologue

The Regiment's prologue, which is original to Hoccleve, is notably long – roughly 2100 of the poem's nearly 5500 lines. It establishes the framework for the body of the text as a dialogue between a confessor and a bureaucrat: Hoccleve's literary persona and a fictionalized version of himself (a Chaucerian literary strategy seen in *The Canterbury Tales*).⁸⁶ It begins with this fictive Hoccleve walking to the outskirts of London early one morning when he is unable to sleep, and in a field he meets a feeble and aged man, whom Hoccleve simply refers to as Father. When Father asks Hoccleve why he appears so distressed, Hoccleve begins to tell Father how his job as a clerk in the Office of the Privy Seal has led to financial distress (801-26). Much like the brother in the 'Trump of Death', Father has the role of Hoccleve's counsellor, hoping that he will provide guidance to Hoccleve (a dialogic framing evocative of the *Confessio*). This action in placing himself as Hoccleve's advisor, though, is the same presumption of writers of advice to princes, for they assert themselves as their addressee's advisor whether or not their advice was requested. The authorial persona that Hoccleve presents then is dichotomous: he is both the fictive Hoccleve, a poor, sullen bureaucrat and the wise and experienced Father willing to provide guidance to the fictive Hoccleve. This approach allows the writer Hoccleve to express the issues faced by those working within the royal court through the fictive Hoccleve and instruct Henry on good governance while distancing himself from this criticism and advice. It is through this interlocutory

⁸⁶ Burt Kimmelman, 'The Poetics of Authorship in the Later Middle Ages', (unpublished doctoral thesis, City University of New York, 1991), p. 261.

interaction that the purpose and impetus for *The Regiment* is established: to complain of Henry IV's failure to recompense his administrators and to provide counsel on governance to Prince Henry, whom Father believes will listen to Hoccleve's complaints and advice.

Counsel and Truth in *The Regiment*

As we have seen, the need for the English monarch to heed good counsel is a common point of discussion in the advisory discourse. Failure to do so was the 'third great dereliction of which English kings could be guilty' as well as a common complaint levelled against rulers during crisis periods.⁸⁷ And so, counsel is central to Hoccleve's advice to Prince Henry. In *The Regiment*'s prologue, Father tells the narrator that "if thow go fereless/ Al solitarie and counseil lake and reed', then 'thow likely art to bere a dotid heed'", and although he is less derisive when directly addressing Henry, Hoccleve reiterates the adjuration, telling Henry that "Whan good conseil is geven yow,/ What yee do wole, keepe it cloos ynow" (197-8, 200, 4871-2). With the need for kings to seek advice explicitly made, *The Regiment* emphasises the need for counsellors who are wise and free from greed – advice typical of the discourse. The emphasis Hoccleve places on truthfulness, though, is found in many but not all advice to princes texts, and because truthful counsellors are stressed in certain crisis periods but not all, the topic is of particular interest in literature of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and is a reflection of contemporary political events. For Hoccleve and even Lydgate, who asserts that the king's men ought to keep and preserve the truth for their rulers, it

⁸⁷ Simon Walker, 'Civil War and Rebellion, 1200-1500', in *Political Culture in Later Medieval England*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 246 - 262 (p. 252).

reflects the lingering frustration from Richard's reign where the king's inner circle of favourites dominated the court.

Appeals for truthful counsellors and the praise of truth in general dominate Ricardian and Lancastrian writing.⁸⁸ The chroniclers Thomas Walsingham and Adam Usk accused Richard of surrounding himself with sycophants whose greed and lasciviousness overwhelmed the royal court.⁸⁹ Hortatory remarks that press for truth are found throughout *The Regiment*, the *Confessio*, *The Fall of Princes* (1431-1439), and *Mum and the Sothsegger* (c. 1403-6 and produced after Richard's deposition like *The Regiment*).⁹⁰ In each of these works, the writers express the anxiety that advisors are afraid to speak the truth to their king and its resulting impact on governance. 'Courtiers and the Fool', one of the *Confessio*'s tales, centres on King Lucius' fool who tells the king what his advisors were too afraid to – the truth. The tale enjoins speaking honestly to rulers while recognising the dangers involved in doing so, for it is only the fool who is willing to do so (7.3945-4026). The concern for truthful advisors continues into Lancastrian rule. Writers emphasised the need for advisors to speak against the king if necessary. In *The Fall of Princes* (1431-1439), John Lydgate asserts that the king's men ought to be true to their word but also preserve the truth for their rulers.⁹¹ The *Mum* poet complains that there is not a soothsayer who will 'conseilleth hym [the king] the contrary and construeth the doutes/ And poynteth hym the perillz and pleyhely telleth' (1184-5). Like these works, *The Regiment* stresses the need for truth within the court, encouraging counsellors to speak the truth and the king to develop a conciliar culture that enables them to do so.

⁸⁸ Green, pp. 4-6, 163.

⁸⁹ Walsingham, I, 849, 865; Usk, pp. 9, 13.

⁹⁰ Lydgate, I, pp. 129, 221.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 415.

In *The Regiment*'s prologue, Father tells the narrator that great lords rely upon counsellors, for they are only human and may err. Yet, they lack counsellors who tell them the truth (1927, 4862-65). Their counsellors are expected to offer advice and speak truthfully when they oppose the king's opinion: 'Thogh men contrarie eek your opinioun,/ They may par cas conseilte yow the beste' (4894-5). Upon initial examination, it seems as though Hoccleve is placing the responsibility for speaking the truth upon the counsellors; however, this advice implies that the environment of the court is such that men can express the truth without fear of repercussions – an intrinsic part of the ruler and counsellor relationship. Hoccleve's use of the word 'opinioun' is noteworthy, for the word, which can mean a person's belief or an authoritative view, was relatively new (first appearing in 1340 in the *Ayenbite of Inwyt* but not becoming common until the 1380s) and afterwards was regularly employed in advisory works.⁹² The need for truthful counsel is common to advisory works and found in the *Policraticus* and the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*.⁹³ However, only writers in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, including Gower, Hoccleve, the *Mum* poet, and Lydgate, emphasise the need for the king to create an environment in which the truth is accepted by disparaging rulers' punishment of truth and commenting how rulers are surrounded by those who do not speak the truth.

Hoccleve illustrates such an environment with two exempla: Alexander the Great and Duke Pisistaris. Like earlier depictions of Alexander in the advisory

⁹² This is the definition listed for 1a and 1b. 'Opinioun', in *Middle English Compendium* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED30758/track?counter=1&search_id=70003448> [Accessed 4 June 2024]; Also see its usage in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, specifically 2a. 'Opinion', in *Oxford English Dictionary* <https://www.oed.com/dictionary/opinion_n?tab=meaning_and_use#33170417> [Accessed 4 February 2025].

⁹³ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman, pp. 18, 20-1, 23; John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of Courtiers*, pp. 166-7; William of Pagula, *Mirror of King Edward III*, pp. 103, 123.

discourse, Hoccleve's is complex and casts the Macedonian king as one who vacillates between moral and amoral actions. In one tale, Hoccleve relates the reprobation of Alexander by one of his knights, but rather than react punitively, Alexander responds, "I have offendid,/ I woot it wel, and it shal been amendid" (3511-2). Hoccleve's source for this tale is the *Chessbook*, but in *The Regiment*, the knight's reprobation is lengthier and more vitriolic, which further stresses Alexander's patience and willingness to listen to his men.⁹⁴ In another tale, the Duke Pisistaris is publicly insulted by his friend Arispus (3543-47). Not only does the duke remit punishment of Arispus, but he also prevents his sons from killing Arispus and then prevents Arispus from killing himself once he (Arispus) understands his poor behaviour. Hoccleve praises the duke's restraint, describing him as being too righteous and of good bearing to order Arispus' death. Again, Hoccleve's source is the *Chessbook*, and he adapts the story to reflect back upon his own work. In both versions of the tale, Arispus does not mean the words he said, but whereas the *Chessbook* describes Arispus speaking such words in anger, Hoccleve writes that Arispus spoke 'hastily' (3546).⁹⁵ This change offers an excuse for those speaking ill of rulers moving away from the hostility of Jacob's Arispus to the misspeaking implied by 'hastily'. It also allows Hoccleve to extend an excuse for his own critical speaking, for if the prince does not approve of his work, Henry will hopefully believe Hoccleve did not mean what he wrote and gave his advice in haste.

These changes to the source and Hoccleve's selection of the tales illustrate how a court should allow people to speak freely and without fear of retaliation. This may

⁹⁴ Such a depiction of Alexander is found in Gerald of Wales' *De Principis Instructione*, which was discussed in chapter 1. Sister Marie Anita Burt, 'Jacobus de Cessolis: Libellus de Moribus Hominum et Officiis Nobilium Ac Popularium Super Ludo Scachorum' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Texas, 1957), p. 66-7.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

speak to the Lancastrian sensitivity to criticism and the regime's willingness to punish perceived calumnious remarks. Lancastrian propaganda sought to explain Henry IV's position as king with the 'Record Process', a document that described Richard's usurpation as a willing abdication for his failings as king. There were also attempts at controlling speech to strengthen Henry's tenuous position and limiting tales of Richard's return.⁹⁶ This can be seen both in the case of William Clerk and in the statute of 1406.⁹⁷ In 1401, William Clerk was charged with treason by words, for, according to Adam Usk, he had spoken disrespectfully of the king, and his tongue was cut out, his right hand cut off, and he was beheaded.⁹⁸ Stories of Richard's return were common early in Henry's reign. According to the *Continuatio Eulogii*, in 1402, a friar prophesied Richard's return and the war he would wage against Henry, and upon hearing of this, Henry had the friar arrested because he 'false dixistis quod Rex Ricardus uiuit' ('falsely stated that King Richard was alive').⁹⁹ The following year, the abbot of St John's Abby was similarly accused of preaching about the fulfilment of a prophecy in which Richard returned.¹⁰⁰ Later, the statute of 1406 condemned those who prophesized Richard was still alive, accusing them of 'diverses fauxes pretenses prophecies' ('diverse false and pretend prophecies'). As Paul Strohm has noted, one significance of this statute is the Lancastrian attempt to establish a sense of social order.¹⁰¹ It also is an attempt to control speech (the very thing Hoccleve writes against) and imagings of an alternative political

⁹⁶ David R. Carlson, *John Gower, Poetry and Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2012), pp. 1-4, 110-1, 117-8.

⁹⁷ Strohm notes that while medieval monarchs were not fond of criticism, Henry IV's and Henry V's response to criticism had an innovative aspect to it, and they regularly sought to limit criticism by attempting 'pre-emptive intervention at the imaginative, geographical, and discursive places of insurrectionary possibility'. Strohm, p. 26.

⁹⁸ Usk, p. 123.

⁹⁹ *Continuatio Eulogii*, pp. 108-9.

¹⁰⁰ Coote, p. 165.

¹⁰¹ Strohm, pp. 29-30.

order. Henry's inclination to punish those predicting Richard's return may explain, in part, why Hoccleve, though influenced by Gower, was reluctant to write about prophecy. Avoiding references to political prophecy was a safer avenue in a discourse already fraught with risk although production of political prophecy did continue under Lancastrian rule.¹⁰²

Aligning with Henry's attempts to control speech in *The Regiment* is the king of Lysemak who has the citizen Theodorus Sireene crucified for telling the king his faults. As he is dying on the cross, Theodorus proclaims he dies defending righteousness and indicts the king's false advisors for his death, believing "“This peyne, or othir lyk therto, moot falle/ Upon thy false conseiloures alle”" (2575-6). Hoccleve's version of this tale is again an expansion of Jacob de Cessolis'. One addition to the tale is Theodorus' condemnation from the cross of the king's 'flaterers enhaunced in richesse' (2581). Although restricting speech occurred under Henry, it is likely that this addition is a comment on the lingering concerns of flatterers from Richard II's reign, for susceptibility to flatterers was a complaint lodged against Richard rather than against Henry IV. Hoccleve establishes the need for a ruler to create an environment within the court in which contradicting the ruler is accepted and free from punishment. In these tales, Hoccleve intimates it is the ruler's responsibility for developing such a culture, for if he welcomes the truth and accepts different opinions, then his advisors may be better able to deliver the truth.

The type of advice a ruler receives, whether good or bad, is a result of the king's actions and willingness to support truth. Hoccleve expresses this responsibility in several other places in *The Regiment*. While highlighting the falseness of advisors in the

¹⁰² Coote, p. 164; Simon Walker, 'Remembering Richard', p. 189.

prologue, for instance, Father stresses that those listening to the advice do so indiscriminately: 'They [flatterers] stryven who best rynges shal the belle/... And swich deceit lordes blyndly receyve (1929, 1932). The author's depiction of flatterers' who want to beguile their lords paints the lords as victims of false advisors. However, the phrase 'lordes blyndly receyve' in the last line suggests that the lords accept their counsellors' tales without regard to reason and implies that if lords were better able to determine sound advice and wise advisors, then deception would be limited. Hoccleve also writes that if a counsellor advises Henry contrary to his opinion, then Henry ought to decide what he will do with it.

To do or leve it as yourselfen leste.
 If it be good, impresse it in the cheste
 Of your memorie and executith it;
 If it nat be, to leve it is a wit (4897-4900).

Directing Henry to 'to do or leve' the advice he receives places the ruler responsible for governance, for regardless of the quality of the advice he receives, a ruler ought to know what to follow and what to ignore. While Gower held rulers responsible for the culture of counsel in 'Ahab and Micaiah' and the 'Trump of Death', the overt nature with which Hoccleve places the responsibility for this upon the king echoes that of William of Pagula and adds to the subversive nature of the poem.

Yet, at times, Hoccleve removes such responsibility from the ruler. He writes that kings are held guilty, often unjustly, for the actions of unrighteous ministers.

That for the wrong and the unrightwisnesse
 Of kynges ministres, that kynges been
 Holden gilty; whereas, in soothfastnesse,

They knowen nothyng of the wikkidnesse;
 Unjust ministres ofte hir kyng accusen,
 And they that just been, of wrong hem excusen (2529-34).

These lines position the ruler as innocent and as a victim of counsellors, using them as scapegoats for any wrongdoing. By including such a passage, Hoccleve attenuates the criticism he has given to rulers elsewhere in his work by seemingly shifting blame from the king to his counsellors. However, Hoccleve reestablishes his position of princely culpability three stanzas later: ‘Excuse shal him nat his ignorance;/ He moot enquere of wrong and it redresse’ (2549-50). Vacillating between blame and innocence is a strategy of the advisory discourse meant to attenuate critique. Holding the king responsible for any poor counsel he receives, though, is tempered by the primary focus of the poem: the danger and falseness of the king’s advisors.

Poverty, Avarice, and Counsel

Henry IV’s reign was plagued by financial troubles. Household expenses for the first year of Henry’s reign totalled £53,000, and the exchequer frequently had trouble paying annuities to administrators like Hoccleve.¹⁰³ As Jenni Nuttall has shown, reference to and criticism of Henry IV’s poor fiscal management can be found throughout literature produced during his reign. Works, including *The Regiment*, speak of the king’s literal treasure and symbolic treasure (his people’s love and loyalty) and often conflate the two.¹⁰⁴ Hoccleve claims that this symbolic treasure is the most valuable and that this symbolic treasure suggests an important relationship between ruler and citizen (4826).

¹⁰³ By 1406, parliament sought to terminate the war treasuries and establish a council similar to the one created by the Wonderful Parliament in 1386 to monitor and curtail excessive royal spending. Given-Wilson, pp. 206, 283-4.

¹⁰⁴ Nuttall, pp. 95, 99-101.

He stresses this relationship between himself and Prince Henry, but he complains about how it has become unbalanced because of the royal administration's failure to properly pay him and his fellow clerks throughout *The Regiment* (920-80).¹⁰⁵ To discuss this reciprocal relationship and its potential to become unbalanced, Hoccleve writes extensively on poverty and greed. While these passages are highly critical, Hoccleve employs several strategies to temper his complaint, including praising the nobility of poverty and placing blame upon the lords rather than directly upon the king.

In the prologue, much of the narrator's conversation with Father is dedicated to his impoverished state and his lack of regular payment for his work. The fictive Hoccleve worries that Fortune's wheel will turn, leaving him at the nadir.

I thoghte eek, if I into povert creepe,
 Than am I entred into sikirnesse;
 But swich seurtee mighte I ay waille and weepe,
 For povert breedith naght but hevynesse (43-6).

Describing poverty as a sickness highlights how poverty can easily infect others and suggests how it is pandemic among those of the narrator's class. Indeed, Hoccleve says it is common among royal clerks to be taken advantage of by unscrupulous servants of lords, who insist the lords will pay for the clerks' work another day but never pay. Such descriptions parallel those found in the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*, for both works complain of how the lords' and king's men take advantage of the people, the impact this has upon the people, and the widespread nature of this behaviour.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 110-1.

He tells Father that while he knows he can file a complaint with the court, it will only serve to bring him shame (1485-1545). He claims, ‘The lord nat woot of al this sotiltee’, again reducing the culpability of the lords and placing it with their servants (1524). Hoccleve’s reference to filing a complaint illustrates not only his familiarity with the court system as a member of the royal court but also the commonality of complaints following their rise in the late thirteenth century. And so, rather than write a judicial complaint, Hoccleve engages in the tradition of literary complaint, a genre he experimented with both prior to and after writing *The Regiment* in his translation of ‘L’epistre de Cupide’ (1402) and his ‘Complaint’ (1421-1422).¹⁰⁶

Although the fictive Hoccleve frequently bemoans his impoverished state, he tempers these complaints by including a debate between the narrator and Father as to whether poverty is an issue or not. Discourse on poverty in late medieval England varies; poverty was viewed by some as a form of spiritual perfection and by others as a sign of idleness.¹⁰⁷ The former view is utilised by Father in *The Regiment* and can be seen in the *Confessio* and *The Canterbury Tales*. The pilgrims in Gower’s ‘Trump of Death’ are noted for their humble appearance and manner, and similarly Chaucer’s Parson, of whom the narrator claims that there is no better priest, is described as ‘povre’, living simply and orderly.¹⁰⁸ Father argues both that Hoccleve is not

¹⁰⁶ In his ‘L’epistre de Cupide’, Hoccleve offers a translation of Christine de Pizan’s *L’epistre au Dieu d’Amours* (1399) yet uses the form of English royal letters, increasing the use of first person plural and replacing Christine’s use of a dative address with Cupid’s first name. His ‘Complaint’, which details his friends’ responses to his mental illness, is highly personal and uses first person singular throughout. This is a strategy frequently employed in complaint literature. Scase, pp. 9, 30-2, 179-80; Thomas Hoccleve, ‘Complaint’, in *Hoccleve’s Works: The Minor Poems*, ed. by Frederick Furnivall, (London: Early English Text Society, 1892), pp. 95-8, 108-10. Hoccleve does directly address God twice in the poem on lines 194 and 368.

¹⁰⁷ Kate Crassons, *Claims of Poverty* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2010), pp. 6 -7.

¹⁰⁸ Chaucer, ‘General Prologue’, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (New York City: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), p. 31.

impoverished and that those who live simply and ascetically should be admired. He tells Hoccleve that ‘the strook of poverty art thow fer fro’ and that he ‘who holdith him content hath souffissance’ (1118), a phrase commonly found in fifteenth-century literature.¹⁰⁹ To convince Hoccleve of this, Father enumerates examples of wise men who lived and believed in a sparing life, such as Jesus Christ and King Solomon, who advised his men to only desire what is necessary and nothing more (1079-85, 1198-1211). Although the conversation between Hoccleve and Father draws attention to the issue of ill-paid bureaucrats, Father’s arguments that administrators should live simply and that Hoccleve’s grievances are not justified tempers them and mitigates the narrator’s (potentially dangerous act of) criticism.

Hoccleve also pairs the ideal of poverty against the avarice of the king’s counsellors. Hoccleve’s concern with them largely lies with their dissimulative nature and use of their positions to further themselves financially – a pervasive concern in advisory works and turn-of-the-fifteenth-century English literature. Yet, of the advisory works in this thesis, this concern is found only in the *Policraticus*, the *Confessio*, and *The Regiment of Princes*.¹¹⁰ Hoccleve’s choice to include such advice reflects two recent trends. Firstly, it speaks to the lasting impact of the reputation that Richard’s influential inner circle had for the rewards they gained through their relationship with

¹⁰⁹ Variations of this phrase are found in one of Lydgate’s minor poems (c. 1450) and ‘The Donet’ (c. 1475) by Reginald Pecock. ‘Holdith him content hath souffissance’, in *Middle English Compendium* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/quotations?utf8=%E2%9C%93&search_field=quote_quote&q=holdith+him+content+hath+souffissance> [Accessed 23 April 2024]

¹¹⁰ Both Lydgate and the *Mum* poet warn against rapacious counsellors. Lydgate instructs princes to seek counsel ‘Off olde expert nat blent with couetise’, remarking how failure to do so can lead to their demise while the *Mum* poet complains of how counsellors are rewarded for not speaking the truth and so constrain their speech in hopes for monetary gain. Lydgate, 221; *Mum and the Sothsegger*, 817-20; John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of Courtiers*, p. 166

the king.¹¹¹ Secondly, it allows Hoccleve to highlight his complaint about his annuity and to his desire to advance himself within the court.

Throughout the prologue, the narrator Hoccleve bemoans this lack of advancement and his poor financial situation.¹¹² He says that early in his career he sought a benefice but finally married when none came (1451-3). Although Hoccleve wished to advance himself through his work in the royal court, he also frequently disparages those who do so, often accusing them of covetousness and deception as well as of offering poor counsel to the king (1401-14). He claims that flatterers and avaricious counsellors provide counsel for their own interests:

Hir reed and conseil is envenymous;

They bothe been of gold so desyrous.

They rekke nat what bryge hir lord be ynne,

So that they mowen gold and silver wyne (4918-21).

He juxtaposes these criticisms against his own positive qualities and poverty. In his direct address to Henry following the prologue, Hoccleve writes that he is devoted and solicitous servant to the prince, and Hoccleve often mentions his own poverty (934-75, 2019-21). When read together, these passages intimate that Hoccleve is not one of the

¹¹¹ Many of Richard's favourites, including Simon Burley and Michael de la Pole, were substantially rewarded by Richard because of their close relationships with him. Saul, pp. 112 – 118. Because of issues relating to Richard's favourites, parliament required Henry to choose his councillors publicly, ensuring the council had input on new members and prevented royal favourites from dominating English governance. Unlike Richard, the accusations against advisors were limited during Henry's reign, but the memories of frustrations surrounding councillors still remained and loomed over Henry's reign. Given-Wilson, pp. 403, 408, 410.

¹¹² The writer Hoccleve had access to avenues to advance himself as a clerk in the Office of the Privy Seal, for they could make additional income by moneylending, peddling their influence in the court, or serving as bail bondsmen, but it does not appear that Hoccleve participated in any of these activities. Richardson, pp. 317-8.

flatterers he disparages and can provide effective counsel. Hoccleve's concern that the desire for wealth will guide these men to give poor counsel is redolent of Gower's in the *Confessio*. That this anxiety is pervasive to advisory works of the late-fourteenth and early fifteenth-century is telling and suggests the lingering frustrations over Richard's reign and the current frustrations over Lancastrian finances.

Hoccleve, uniquely, provides a method for kings to determine whether an advisor supplies good counsel. He writes that if the king is in need of gold and his counsellor 'redith yow your people oppresse,/ He hatith yow certeyn – it is no lesse' (4906-7). Providing a method of discernment is infrequent in advisory works, though it does appear periodically, but Hoccleve's description of the effect counsellors can have on the English people is more unique. The counsellors' willingness to oppress the people parallels William of Pagula's complaints in his *Speculum* as he often derides the king's men for stealing the people's food and victuals, and both writers stress the consequences that poor governance has on both the king and his people rather than just the king as most advice to princes do.¹¹³ The word 'oppress' was a fairly recent term, and in this passage means to deprive of or overburden. Its first known use is in *The Canterbury Tales*, where Chaucer uses it to describe personal burdens and political subjugation, and was increasingly used in the 1390s, often by Gower and Lydgate. Hoccleve centres his use of the term on a particular type of political subjugation, one in which the people are oppressed financially. That advisory writers frequently employed the term, often in discussion of the poor, intimates an increased awareness for how

¹¹³ William of Pagula, pp. 101, 108, 115.

monarchs treated the people.¹¹⁴ Further, this passage's use of direct address, in which Hoccleve uses a respectful version of the second person, connotes that the issue is pressing enough for Hoccleve to directly address the prince, which he does only periodically throughout the poem.

Largesse and Avarice of the King

Hoccleve's advice on avarice in counsellors aligns with his comments on avarice in kings, and he provides advice typical of the discourse, suggesting the king should possess *largesse*, which Hoccleve defines as 'liberalitee' or a willingness to give freely and is a virtue of particular interest in Middle English literature concerned with kings' behaviour (4655).¹¹⁵ However, Hoccleve specifies that royal *largesse* should extend only to those who deserve it and not to flatterers. He intertwines the advice with political and personal concerns so that he is able both to engage with public issues under Ricardian and Lancastrian rule and to further emphasise his personal complaint.

In his advice against avarice in kings, Hoccleve engages with a broader tradition of political and social complaint literature. Poetic complaints such as Hoccleve's were not unusual during the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries.¹¹⁶ In Chaucer's 'The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse' (written after Henry IV's coronation), the first part of the poem is addressed directly to his purse, and he laments its impoverishment and

¹¹⁴ This is the definition listed for 1e and 1f. 'Oppressen', in *Middle English Compendium* <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED30776/track?counter=1&search_id=70045974> [Accessed 4 June 2024]; Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 1215-9, 1405-13.

¹¹⁵ This is the definition given for 1a. Middle English Compendium <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED24697/track?counter=1&search_id=70137182> [Accessed 5 June 2024]. Discussion on the importance of royal *largesse* is found in the *Confessio Amantis* and *Fall of Princes*. Gower, 5.409; Lydgate, p. 339.

¹¹⁶ Scase, pp. 185-6.

believes he will die unless it is filled. At the conclusion of the poem, however, the address shifts to the king. He tells the king that he sends his supplication for payment by way of his poem.¹¹⁷ Both Chaucer's poem and Hoccleve's *The Regiment of Princes* serve (or in the case of Hoccleve partially serve) as a petition for Henry IV to pay the annuities due to them, and utilising poetic form likely made their complaint less abrasive as they could distance themselves from the complaint: instead of petitioning under their own names, they could use a speaker to express the complaint in a fictive construct of poems. Unique to Hoccleve is his scope, for his mix of complaint and princely education creates a petition not only for himself but for staunch royal administrators as a whole.

In the section 'De vitio avaritie', Hoccleve provides advice on how rulers should eschew avarice. Interestingly, he personifies Avarice as a female who shapes the world with her unending desire for more. Much of this section appears to be original to Hoccleve, and his choice to use allegorical personification in an advice to princes text is unusual (although it was used by Langland and Gower in other forms of literature).¹¹⁸ By portraying Avarice as a female, Hoccleve distances himself from directly criticizing a particular counsellor or group of counsellors as William of Pagula does in the *Speculum*. And though we do not see such personification of Avarice in advice to princes in medieval Britain, it is a part of medieval literary and artistic tradition with Avarice often depicted as a haggard, old woman, most notably in Prudentius'

¹¹⁷ Geoffery Chaucer, 'The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse', *Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 636, 656

¹¹⁸ Katharine Breen, *Machines of the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021), p. 4; Astell, p. 73.

Psychomachia (c. 405), the *Romance of the Rose* (completed 1280), and Albrecht Dürer's *Vanitas* (1507).¹¹⁹

Hoccleve describes Avarice as one whose 'nature is to keepe and nat despende,/ And hir desyr of good ne hath noon ende' (4493-4). The use of 'despende' can denote two things: 1) to spend, and 2) to pay out.¹²⁰ Both meanings fit contextually, for Hoccleve was frustrated with Henry's inability to pay his administrators, which was tied to Prince Henry's policy of curtailing spending around the time *The Regiment* was composed.¹²¹ Avarice's effects, according to Hoccleve, are most strongly felt by the common people: she causes them to go hungry and without proper clothes (4510, 4523, 4530).¹²² These accusations reflect Hoccleve's previous discussion of his own impoverished state. In the prologue, Hoccleve tells Father that he has an insufficient coat, and while he is not yet unclothed he suggests that he is not far from the 'nakid menne' from whom Avarice has stolen (940, 4524). He warns that 'Whoso that fro the poore mannes cry/ Stoppith his eres' will not himself be heard, citing a passage from Proverbs 21.13 that also appears twice in the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* (4530-1).¹²³ This, again, reflects the narrator's state in the prologue as he says he cannot help but

¹¹⁹ Richard Newhauser, *The Early History of Greed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 81-2; Lori Walters, 'A Parisian Manuscript of the *Romance of the Rose*', *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 51 (1989), 31-55 (p. 36); Antje Grötzsch, 'Avarice as an Old Woman,' in *Narratives of Life: Mediating Age*, ed. by Heike Hartung and Roberta Maierhofer (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2009), pp. 129-48 (p. 133).

¹²⁰ This is the definition listed for 1a. 'Despenden', in Middle English Compendium <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED12012/track?counter=1&search_id=4807530> [30 November 2020].

¹²¹ Henry sought to impose restrictions on payments to royal servants when he was the head of council in 1410. Pearsall, p. 387.

¹²² Given the relatively high wages and low prices, poverty was not a major issue in most of England during the period 1388-1465. However, the financial burden placed upon the people from taxes remained a continued point of contention throughout Henry IV's reign. Majorie K. McIntosh, 'Local Responses to the Poor in Late Medieval and Tudor England', *Continuity and Change*, 3 (1988), 209-45 (p. 213); Given-Wilson, p. 403.

¹²³ William of Pagula, pp. 110, 131.

‘mourn and waille’ because missing annuity has left him so destitute (938). When the passage on Avarice is paired alongside the prologue, it creates a more cohesive and acrimonious picture of Hoccleve’s concerns – failure to be paid his annuity lies with the monarch’s greed. The ‘De vitio avaritie’ section, then, allows Hoccleve to reflect upon the effects of Avarice mentioned in the prologue and emphasise her effects on both a personal and general level.

Although Hoccleve utilises the personification of Avarice to temper his criticism of the sin, he does write directly too of the dangers associated with royal greed. As with Avarice, Hoccleve expresses how the king’s greed affects his people, believing that it will lead to tyranny, peril, and villainy (4019-25). He follows this with both positive and negative exemplars: Marcus Curcius, who disdained wealth, and Alexander the Great, who desired it. When he tells of Marcus, an ancient Roman acclaimed for his loyalty to Rome, Hoccleve describes him as one who ‘may with gold nat be corrupt ne blent’ (4043). Alexander, however, is cast as an avaricious ruler. In a tale borrowed from Valerius’, Hoccleve tells of a knight who cautions Alexander that man can meet his downfall no matter how high his estate:

“Ther is noon hy estat so sad and stable,
 Remembre wel, let it nat be forgete,
 But he to falle in peril is ful able.
 By deeth a leon maad is briddes mete,
 And beestes also his flessch gnawe and frete” (4068-72).

Hoccleve follows his source closely, only adding the last line. His choice to incorporate the tale suggests it is a nod to Richard’s demise and warning to Prince Henry, reminding

him of the potential consequences of poor governance. And his addition, particularly the word ‘frete’ (devour), further stresses to completeness of the king’s demise.¹²⁴ The passage can also be paired with another on Alexander in which, following the conqueror’s death, philosophers visited his richly-wrought tomb and remarked, “‘This Alisaundre made yistirday/ Of gold his tresor, but gold makith now/ Tresor of him, as yee beholde may’” (5356-8). With this tale, Hoccleve emphasises how even the greatest and wealthiest rulers can meet their downfall. It is also a tale we see in the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* yet in no other advice to princes examined in this thesis.¹²⁵ The tale, a fall of princes used as advice to princes, is a highly poignant warning to Edward III and Prince Henry. Its use in a period following the deposition of a monarch reminds the reader that no matter their success, whatever they attain will be stripped away at death. It is also a highly poignant warning to a ruler during a period of, what the writer perceives, financial difficulties for the people, for it reminds the ruler that wealth will no longer mean anything in death. Furthermore, by using an Alexander narrative, Hoccleve draws comparisons between Alexander and Henry IV and V, who desired to embark on military campaigns and to maintain their reputation as warriors throughout their reigns.¹²⁶

Not only is the monarch expected to avoid greed, he is also expected to show *largesse*. Whom the king is generous towards is, however, of paramount importance. Hoccleve advises that the king should give to those who are deserving (‘Geve in mesure unto the indigent/ And the worthy’) and that it is a ‘verray folie... To geve the

¹²⁴ Sister Marie Anita Burt, p. 10.

¹²⁵ William of Pagula, p. 122. The source for this story is likely the *Gesta Romanorum*. *Gesta Romanorum*, p. 329.

¹²⁶ Given-Wilson, p. 398; Walsingham, II, pp. 666-7, 678-9.

unworthy' (4129-30, 4135-6). When this advice is read alongside Hoccleve's complaints around his financial position it suggests that the 'worthy' men include bureaucrats like Hoccleve, whose loyalty and impoverished status have been highlighted throughout the work. Although Hoccleve does not outline how a king should determine who is worthy, he does stress that flatterers are unworthy:

But it nat longith to the liberal
 To geve him good that usith flaterie;
 His menyng and entencioun final
 On fals plesaunce is set for briberie;
 He is the verray cofre of treccherie;
 His doublenesse his lord down overthrowith;
 The seed of his confusion he sowith (4677-83).

Hoccleve's warning of what may befall a ruler who relies upon flatterers likely speaks to memories of the deposition of Richard II and his propensity to succumb to flattery. Such a passage would be particularly important in the early years of Lancastrian rule, for it serves as a warning to Prince Henry that rules can be deposed if they fail govern properly. It also echoes Hoccleve's earlier frustrations about lords' servants deceiving clerks as he complains that the clerks are unable to file suit 'Lest our conpleynte ourselven overthrowe' (1526). His concern for the system of flattery and reward is likely twofold: lingering frustrations with Richard's inner circle of favourites who were heavily rewarded and Hoccleve's failure to be rewarded himself. It is this intermingling of political and personal anxieties that makes *The Regiment* unique among advice to princes texts. While William of Pagula's complaints in the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* have a personal tone to them, he never mentions the impact purveyance has on him

directly as Hoccleve does with the crown's financial policies. This personal aspect serves as a way to hide the broadly political under the guise of the personal and further tempers Hoccleve's advice, for the reader could assume the issues presented are not universal but merely the frustrations of one individual and can be ignored.

Favel: Flattery and Duplicity

Advice against flatterers and duplicitous advisors, which is found in most of the advice to princes analysed in this thesis, is an integral part of *The Regiment*, likely because of the heightened anxiety following Richard's reign. Obloquies of flatterers and false counsellors are especially common in Ricardian and Lancastrian literature. As we have seen, Gower and the *Mum* poet wrote disparagingly of them, and Gower and Lydgate provide exemplary rulers who met their downfalls due to the influence of flatterers.¹²⁷ Discussing the ills of flattery allows these writers to engage with the politics of the time when there was concern over the advice rulers received. Hoccleve's exploration, however, is distinct in his use of personification, for as he does with Avarice, Hoccleve personifies flattery and duplicity as Favel. First used in Middle English literature in Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Favel has limited usage in medieval insular literature and does not appear again until a John Audelay poem in 1426).¹²⁸ As with Avarice, employing personification allows Hoccleve's criticism to be diverted from specific individuals, thus limiting potential negative responses to his work.

¹²⁷ The *Fall of Princes* tells of the downfall of a ruler, King Sardanapalus, who 'cherisse [folk] that koude flatre & lie'. Lydgate, p. 264; 'Mum and the Sothsegger', 160, 162.

¹²⁸ Langland drew upon the earlier French tradition of Roman de Fauvel. Nancy Freeman Regalado, 'Allegories of Power: The Tournament of Vices and Virtues in the *Roman de Fauvel*,' *Gesta*, 32 (1993), pp. 135-146 (p. 136); 'Favel', in Middle English Compendium <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED15380/track?counter=1&search_id=4786508> [30 October 2020]. According to the Middle English Compendium, Favel can be found in the *Piers Plowman*, *The Regiment*, and just one other work prior to 1450, the poems of John Audelay. John Bowers, 'Thomas Hoccleve and the Politics of Tradition', *Speculum*, 4 (2002), 352-369 (pp. 361-2).

Hoccleve discusses Favel and flattery in multiple sections in *The Regiment* and expresses frustration with how Favel has overrun the court (2941-5). His hold is so complete that all men abide him and consequently have no consideration for their lords' reputations, resulting in the lords failing to receive truth and good counsel (2944, 3042). There are two reasons for Hoccleve's unease with Favel. First, Favel speaks for his own interest and, thus, gives poor counsel to the king.

To what thyng it be, if it his lord lyke,
 He him conformeth. He nevere denyeth
 His lordes resons, but a thank to pyke,
 His lordes wil and wit he justifieth.

Whyl Favel lyveth, no fals conseil dieth (3046-50).

Favel is willing to say whatever will please the ruler rather than the truth, and in this regard, Favel is reflective of Gower's Zedekiah, who, like Favel, 'nevere denyeth' what King Ahab wished to be said. Second, Favel merely desires to gain favour and fill his coffers (3058-9). Here again, Hoccleve seems to be conflating political and personal concerns, echoing lingering concerns about Richard's favourites being heavily rewarded because of their relationship with the king as well as Hoccleve's own failure to be rewarded. Hoccleve calls for Favel's banishment from court, believing it to be the only way for virtue to reign.

Yet, despite his derision of flattery, Hoccleve actively engages in flattery himself. As discussed earlier, both recensions of Gower's prologue use flattery when referring to Richard and Henry. Following his own prologue, the *Mum* poet also describes Henry IV in unctuous terms, writing that he is 'the graciousist guyer goyng

upon erthe' and 'ful of al vertue that to a king longeth' (215, 222). Similarly, Lydgate address Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, as 'ful hih prudence' and records that 'he doth excelle/ In undirstondyng alle othir off his age' (379, 384-5). The florid language these authors use in their addresses to their noble readers is a common strategy for mitigating critique in advice to princes and other forms of literature addressed to the king.

In positioning their flattery in or near the prologues of their works, these poets present their guidance (and subsequent critique) in a more palatable way. Hoccleve's prologue is, however, uniquely positioned within the conversation between the fictive Hoccleve and Father and so located towards the middle of the work. Here, Hoccleve establishes the motivation for his work (to inform Henry of the issues occurring within the court) and his direct address to Henry throughout the poem, using words like 'yee' and 'your' (2160, 2165). Doing so creates a familiar relationship (albeit a fictitious one) of advisor and advisee between the writer and king, but this is offset by Hoccleve's effusive and lofty addresses to Henry elsewhere. Henry is referred to as "'my good gracious lord'" and 'worthy Prince' (1836, 4390). Hoccleve now writes in the same manner, telling Henry, 'Me recommande unto your worthynesse', despite his earlier complaints of Favel and how 'words plesant in hony al bewrappid', a common way of referring to flattery in the advisory discourse (1920, 2022).¹²⁹ He further exalts Prince Henry by using the *humilitas* topos, referring to himself as having a 'symple conceit' and 'lewde speeche' (1956, 1982). At one point in *The Regiment*, Hoccleve briefly acknowledges that he, too, is a part of the system of flattery and mendacity when Father tells the narrator that 'yee courteours, ful often yee deceyve/ Youre soules for the

¹²⁹ John of Salisbury and Walter de Milemete both refer to flattery as honey. John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of Courtiers*, p. 161; Walter de Milemete, p. 45.

desirous talent' (1403-4). A similar admission of guilt is found in *De Principis* where Gerald laments his time spent as a member of the royal court that is filled with deceit, ambition, and flattery (3-7). Father's disdain for courtiers' false and deceitful characters, as well as his inclusion of the narrator in this group, shows Hoccleve's awareness of his role as and his engagement with flattery. However, Hoccleve quickly elides this acknowledgement by remarking that he has since been freed from this burden of cupidity (1450-6).

Hoccleve transitions his discussion of Favel into one on the importance of peace within the kingdom and with other kingdoms. He accuses Favel of being a 'destourbour,' or who causes disorder and strife, and disrupting peace (5258). Interestingly, midway through this discussion, Hoccleve directly addresses Prince Henry and the prince of France, beseeching the two princes to end the discord between their two realms (5412-4).¹³⁰ This is the only text examined in this thesis that includes a direct address to two different monarchs in the same recension. These changes in direct address throughout the final section and the unlikelihood that the French prince would be reading an advisory work in Middle English show how the expressed audience of advice to princes is a strategy writers employ to give their work a sense of authority through the very address to the ruler.¹³¹ And while Henry did own a copy of *The Regiment*, the work was also owned by John, duke of Bedford.¹³² In the final three stanzas of *The*

¹³⁰ Given that King Charles VI suffered from bouts of mental illness that rendered incapable of ruling, Hoccleve is likely referencing Prince Louis was the dauphin until his death in 1415 though Hoccleve does not name him. Tracy Adams, *The Life and Afterlife of Isabeau of Bavaria* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), pp. 15-6, 196.

¹³¹ Matthews, p. 112.

¹³² Cavanaugh, pp. 415, 473.

Regiment, Hoccleve ends by wishing his 'litol book' will effectively instruct 'kynges ympe and princes worthynesse,' further expanding the audience of his work (5440-3).

Ricardian and Lancastrian Advisory Works – Continuity and Change

Gower's *Confessio* and Hoccleve's *The Regiment*, situated on opposite sides of Richard II's deposition, are notable interventions in the advice to princes tradition. There is overlap between the advice provided and areas of discussion found in them, for both texts espouse the need for the king to work in tandem with parliament and for the good of his people and inculcate rulers for any failings in governance. However, the works diverge in several key areas. Many tales in the *Confessio* examine the ambiguity of prophecy and prophetic dreams and the dangers associated with a ruler's engagement in predictions of the future. *The Regiment*, however, deals little with prophecy and, rather, focuses its advice on the suffering finances of the English exchequer under Henry IV. Placed within the literary-political culture of Ricardian and Lancastrian England, these advisory works to put forth their own perceptions of and craft an image of English politics in the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries. We also see how political writers used prophecy, complaint literature, philosophy, and theology to express concerns for royal rule, including (current and later lingering) concerns for Richard II's rule and Henry IV's. We see how these advisory authors use and adapt the Latin rhetoric of their sources and earlier advisory works into the vernacular. In doing so, they engage in the growing vernacular literary culture and allow for a broader audience of their work. Such strategies continued to be used by writers of vernacular advisory works, and writers of Middle English become models for later advisory writers as we will see in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

The *Meroure of Wyssdome* and the Advice to Princes Tradition in Scotland

The focus of this chapter is the *Meroure of Wyssdome*, a work by the Scottish diplomat and theologian John Ireland (c. 1440-1495). With its preoccupation with youthful kingship, justice, and the common profit, among other topics, the *Meroure* complements a broader body of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Scottish advisory works and was influenced by both English and French advisory material. Some of these works are standalone texts belonging to the advice to princes tradition, like Sir Gilbert Hay's (d. after 1465) translation of the *Secreta*, the *Buke of the Gouvernaunce of Princis* (1456), and the vernacular *De Regimine Principum* (c. 1450s) (which was also incorporated within a mid-fifteenth-century Latin chronicle). Many, however, belong to other discourses and genres. Such works include Hay's *Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour* (c. 1460) and the large advisory passage within the romance *Lancelot of the Laik* (1460s).

Ireland's work deviates from medieval Scottish advice to princes tradition in several, key ways. Firstly, it is directly addressed to James IV (having originally been intended for James III), rather than making veiled allusions to a monarch as we have seen in some English advisory works or proffering general advice on kingship common to Scottish works of this period. Secondly, in contrast to many advisory works of the period, we can be confident of who wrote it and when. The conclusion of the work names Ireland as the writer and provides biographical details as well as the year in which he completed the work, 1490. From this and other textual evidence, we can date the composition of the *Meroure* to the last years of James III's reign and the beginning

of James IV's. It is this dating on either side of James III's deposition that influences the advice Ireland provides on kingship.¹

Born around 1440 in Scotland, the Scottish theologian and royal bureaucrat John Ireland attended the University of St Andrews but left before obtaining his master's degree. In 1459, he enrolled at the University of Paris, graduating with his master's in 1460. For the next fifteen years, Ireland taught at the University of Paris, but, by the early 1480s, he had begun a career as a public servant. Initially, Ireland entered the service of Louis XI (1423-1483), serving as a member of the French king's 1480 delegation to Scotland, which attempted to reconcile the Scottish king, James III, with his brother Alexander, the duke of Albany (c. 1454-1485). Ireland remained in Louis' service until the king's death in 1483, after which Ireland returned to Scotland and entered the service of James III. Quickly becoming one of James' trusted counsellors, Ireland served the Scottish king in several capacities, including as a lord of council hearing civil cases, ambassador, and confessor. During his years as a public servant, Ireland also wrote several books. Under Louis XI, Ireland composed the theological treatise *Tractatus de immaculata conceptione virginis Mariae* and a commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* that attempts to guide the king spiritually and on governance, much like he does for the Scottish king in the *Meroure*.² He also wrote vernacular treatises on penance and confession and the (now lost) treatise *De speciali auxilio*, which Ireland, in his extant works, purports to have made at the request of James III. It was during his service to James III that Ireland began writing the *Meroure*

¹ Mapstone, pp. 2-4.

² Anna McHugh, "I hec in verbo regio": images of the learned king in Scottish literature 1375-1490' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford University, University College, 2008), p. 213.

(likely in the mid-1480s), but it was not completed until 1490.³ When read as a text composed largely during James III's reign, Ireland's advice can be viewed as instruction, guiding the king on expectations of good kingship in Scotland. However, when reading the *Meroure* in light of its completion under James IV's reign, Ireland's advice can be viewed as both instruction and warning, providing advice on good kingship and cautioning James IV against the actions of his deposed father.

As with the other works in this thesis, the *Meroure* was written during a period of crisis. Between 1406 and 1567, every Stewart monarch ascended the throne as a minor, and the implications of this led to political frustrations within the kingdom, although not always as extensive or serious as we might expect.⁴ We do nevertheless find repeated reference to the dangers of minority governance within the advisory literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁵ At the age of eight, James III ascended the throne, and from the outset, his rule was marked by political division with different political factions vying for control over the young king. His majority proved no more stable, and the last decade of his reign proved especially tumultuous because of conflict with England, the Lauder crisis in 1482 (in which James lost the support of the nobility during an English invasion), and his temporary imprisonment by his own nobility. Complaints of James' young and unworthy counsellors, his use of black money

³ Mapstone, p. 364; J.H. Burns, 'Ireland [Ireland], John', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), <<https://doi-org.bham-ezproxy.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14456>> [accessed 14 June 2023]

⁴ Jenny Wormald, 'Taming the Magnates?', in *Essays on the Nobility of Medieval Scotland*, ed. by K.J. Stringer (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1985), pp. 270-80 (pp. 270, 277-8); Jenny Wormald (née Brown), 'The Exercise of Power', in *Scottish Society in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. by Jenny Wormald (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), pp. 33-65 (pp. 33-5); Alexander Grant, 'Crown and Nobility in Late Medieval Britain', in *Scotland and England, 1286-1815*, ed. by Roger Mason (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987), pp. 34-59 (p. 40).

⁵ Kate McClune, "'He was but a Yong Man": Age, Kingship, and Arthur', in *Premodern Scotland: Literature and Governance 1420-1587*, ed. by Joanna Martin and Emily Wingfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 85-98 (p. 85); Alexander Grant, *Independence and Nationhood* (London: Edward Arnold, 1984), pp. 3. 184-7. Jenny Wormald, 'Taming the Magnates?', pp. 271-2.

(copper coins that were minted and then issued at inflated values), and his failure to go on justice ayres plagued his reign. Frustrations with James' reign culminated with his eldest son's rebellion and usurpation of the throne in 1488.⁶ It was during these fraught years that Ireland began writing the *Meroure*. However, because he did not complete it prior to James III's deposition and death, Ireland had to adapt his work to reflect the change in political power, and the *Meroure* was ultimately dedicated to James IV – a change redolent of Gower's prologue in the *Confessio*.⁷ Ireland was able to navigate this change, in part, by including material conventional to advisory discourse but also because both kings ascended the throne as youths, a topic central to the *Meroure*. It is, perhaps, a result of these troubles that Ireland argues simultaneously for 'the need for the king's pre-eminence' and for 'a number of checks on his untrammelled enjoyment of power.'⁸

In this chapter, I will show how Ireland uses and builds upon topoi of advisory discourse and explore how his advice, while highly conventional, is adapted to react to the political events of late-fifteenth-century Scotland. Overall, in the context of this thesis, Ireland's work is most similar to William of Pagula's *Speculum Regis*, in part because both works are pastoral in nature. In the *Meroure*'s prologue, Ireland notes that his intention is to create an 'A.B.C. of cristianite', and this is seen in books I through VI, which centre on the analysis of faith, free will, and predestination.⁹ The *Meroure*'s

⁶ The sources for this include Bishop Lesley, Geovanni Ferreri, Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie, and George Buchanan. Because they were all writing nearly fifty years after James III's deposition, their accounts should be treated with a degree of scepticism. Norman MacDougall, *James III* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2009), pp. 40, 183.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 270-1.

⁸ McHugh, p. 261.

⁹ In Craig McDonald's edition of the *Meroure of Wyssdome*, he does not add punctuation or capitalisation to conform with modern English. If he added letters to a word to complete its meaning, he denotes the additions with italicised letters. I have maintained the capitalisation of McDonald's transcription, but to

use as a pastoral work can also be seen in the marginalia of the sole surviving manuscript copy (National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS.18.2.8), where the reader limited their comments to book VI's sections on the sacraments and the authority of the church and clergy.¹⁰ Though royal readership of the *Meroure* is debatable, James III and James IV would likely have had some interest in the work's pastoral nature, for they were both known for their piety, making or planning various pilgrimages to shrines throughout Scotland and the continent.¹¹

In the final book, the focus of this chapter, Ireland continues to provide guidance on salvation and good personal governance, adopting the same religious lexis as in the first six books, but his concern lies more with the good public governance of a king. In this first half of this book (VII), Ireland closely follows his sources, Giles of Rome's *De Regimine Principum*, Jean Gerson's sermons, and a version of *Melibee*, likely Chaucer's.¹² In what little critical attention it has received, the *Meroure* has been viewed as derivative, for Ireland often copies his sources verbatim. However, Ireland in fact weaves his sources together and integrates them with his own, original work to produce a coherent text written, crucially and quite deliberately, in the vernacular. By reevaluating Ireland's so-called literary translation, we gain an understanding of how

give clarity to the passages I have included in this chapter, I have added modern punctuation and have not italicised the letters added by MacDonald. I have denoted my additions with square brackets. John Ireland, *The Meroure of Wyssdome*, ed. by Charles Macpherson (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1926), I, p. 14; Mapstone, p. 366.

¹⁰ Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS.18.2.8, fols 262r, 271r, 282r, 287r, 287v, 296r, 301r

¹¹ MacDougall, *James III*, pp. 100-1, 121; Norman MacDougall, *James IV* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2006), pp. 196-8.

¹² For a detailed description of which portions of the *Meroure* are borrowed, I have relied upon Craig McDonald's, Sally Mapstone's, Roger Mason's, and Rod Lyall's work, which is found in the introduction to the *Meroure*'s books VI and VII. Craig McDonald, 'Introduction', in *The Meroure of Wyssdome*, ed. by Craig McDonald (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1990), pp. xxiv-xlviii; Mapstone, p. 360; Roger A. Mason, 'Kingship, Tyranny and the Right to Resist in Fifteenth Century Scotland', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 66 (1987), 125-51 (p. 132); Craig McDonald, 'John Ireland's *Meroure of Wyssdome* and Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee*', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 21 (1986), 23-34 (p. 24).

Scottish writers adapted and continued the advisory tradition as well as the concerns felt during and immediately following James III's reign.¹³

Notable, albeit limited, work on the *Meroure* includes Sally Mapstone's unpublished doctoral thesis 'The Advice to Princes Tradition in Scottish Literature, 1450-1500' and Craig McDonald's edition of it for the Scottish Text Society. In her thesis, Mapstone argues that because of Ireland's reliance upon his sources, passages that appear applicable to contemporary historical events were most probably general advice rather than pointed at specific events or rulers.¹⁴ McDonald, also acknowledging Ireland's heavy use of sources, views the *Meroure* more as an amalgam of political theory, describing it as a 'research project into contemporary political thought, liberally sprinkled with Ireland's own observations and interpretations'.¹⁵ Close use of sources need not, however, prevent a work from being topical, and the significant composition and/or copying of Scottish advisory material around the time of the transfer of power from James III to IV suggests that even earlier material was seen to be of contemporary concern. Many of the Scottish works composed and copied in this period, including *Lancelot of the Laik* and Hay's *Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*, discuss the importance of royal maintenance of justice and the common profit.¹⁶ In this chapter, I argue that Ireland's choice to include and adapt material from his sources should be read in the direct context of the turbulent reign of James III and the transition to the early years of James IV.

¹³ Evans, et al., p. 317.

¹⁴ McDonald, 'Introduction', p. xxv; Mapstone, pp. 360-1.

¹⁵ McDonald, p. xxx.

¹⁶ MacDougall, *James III*, pp. 183, 301, 308-9, 323; Mapstone, pp. 45, 145.

Address to the King

As is typical of advice to princes, the *Meroure*'s audience comprises both its likely actual audience (of clerics and other bureaucrats connected to the Scottish court) and its ideal or implied audience (the Scottish king). Some passages in book VII also acknowledge a broader audience than the king. At one point, Ireland addresses, 'þi hieness & lecouris and auditouris of þis werk' and at another that he submits his work to be corrected by the church and any others who may find errors within it: 'þis werk I haue studiit and maid w^t gret laubour and submittis it to þe correccioun of þe halykyrk and me alsua and to þe correccioun of þe kyrk of rome and all vthir þat the correccioun of fautis pertenis to'.¹⁷ Appealing to an audience more expansive than the expressed audience is an aspect of the Scottish (and, as we have seen, English) advisory tradition. Because of Ireland's position within the church and court, it is likely that the audience for the *Meroure* included clerics and royal bureaucrats, many of whom would have also been clerics. Indeed, we can see the *Meroure*'s appeal to royal bureaucrats through manuscript evidence. One of the manuscript's early owners Sir Alexander Guthrie (who died at the Battle of Flodden along with James IV) was the son of David Guthrie, a prominent royal administrator serving as treasurer, comptroller, and ambassador under James III.¹⁸ However, the composition of an advisory text in such close proximity to the royal court is unusual in the fifteenth-century Scottish advisory literature tradition.

Other advisory authors, like Robert Henryson and the authors of *The Thre Prestis of*

¹⁷ A 'lecouris' means reader (but can also refer to a cleric). Because of Ireland's position as a cleric and that literacy was not common among the laity at this time in Scotland, it is most likely that a reader would have had some ties to the church. Mason, pp. 6-7; Ireland, III, pp. 143, 165.

¹⁸ "'Meroure of Wyssdome,'" by John Ireland', in *National Library of Scotland* <<https://manuscripts.nls.uk/repositories/2/resources/15169>> [Accessed 9 September 2023]; Hector L. MacQueen, 'Guthrie, Sir David, of that ilk', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi-org.bham-ezproxy.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11784>> [Accessed 9 September 2023].

Peblis (composed after 1490), *The Talis of the Fyve Bestes* (c. 1470s), and *Lancelot of the Laik* (c. 1460-1479) were likely churchman with no known ties to the court, and even Sir Gilbert Hay, Ireland's closest authorial parallel, wrote his advisory material for members of the nobility rather than for any of the royal figures at whose court he worked.¹⁹ It is Ireland's ties to the court that place him in a unique position to comment upon the reign of James III and advise James IV of good kingship.

Ireland limits his direct address to the king primarily to the *Meroure's* prologue and conclusion. In the rest, Ireland writes generally of kings and princes, thus avoiding direct critique of the Scottish king. The prologue also uses the generic terms 'souuerane lord' and 'þi hieness', and it is not until the last chapter of book VII that Ireland includes descriptions applicable only to James IV, referencing the 'tendir age' of 'þi hienes'.²⁰ This shift between generic terms and specific references to James IV is likely reflective both of the general addresses to royal readers often used in advisory literature as well as of the change in power from James III to his son. The final chapter was likely adapted when James IV succeeded his father, and it allowed Ireland to dedicate the *Meroure* to James IV without having to make substantial changes to the rest of the text. Tellingly, Ireland explains book VII's purpose in both the prologue and the final chapter as being for the love of the king but also for the profit of the people and the realm (I, 16. III, 164). This concern for the common profit forms the basis for much of Ireland's argument in book VII (and is one which I will discuss further later in this chapter) and can be linked to Ireland's use of the vernacular.

¹⁹ Mapstone, p. 6.

²⁰ The focus of this chapter is book VII, which is found in volume III of the *Meroure*, and in-text citations will refer to this volume unless otherwise noted. Any quotations from volume I or from both volumes I and III will be noted with the volume, a comma, and the page number. John Ireland, *Meroure of Wyssdome*, I, pp. 11-3; John Ireland, *Meroure of Wyssdome*, III, p. 161.

Ireland's direct address is similar to those we have seen in previous advisory works: he engages in flattery and emphasises his status as both a humble servant and an authority on good governance. Appealing to his reader's exalted position, Ireland frequently addresses James as 'souuerance lord' and describes him as both a 'hie and mychttty' and 'hie and noble' prince (164-5). Further highlighting the king's majesty is Ireland's employment of the *humilitas* trope, a strategy we have seen used by most advisory writers, writing of his devotion to the king and his humble prayer that James will accept his work. Ireland also reminds James of his work within the court. He notes the many years he loyally served James' father, the French king (who was married to Margaret, eldest daughter of James I of Scotland), and other princes (though there is no evidence of Ireland directly serving other rulers) and refers to his tenure as James III's, Queen Margaret's, and James IV's confessors (164). While these comments signal Ireland's subordinate status, they also emphasise his position as an authority on governance by noting his extensive experience in pastoral matters and as a royal bureaucrat. To advance this sense of authority and position himself as the ideal kingly instructor, Ireland recalls that he studied and taught at the University of Paris. His career and experience contrast with descriptions of James IV as being of 'tendir age' (164). The simultaneous appeals to Ireland's humility and experience thus enable him to show deference to his king while also establishing himself as a suitable teacher.

Matching this comingling of *humilitas* and authority is Ireland's use of the emendation invitation and simultaneous insistence that his work is free from errors. Ireland requests the king's correction twice – in one passage, writing, 'Gif I haue falȝeit[,] I submyt me to þe correccioun of þi hieness' (152). Further on, Ireland writes, 'Gif þi hienes accepis þis laubour & werk þat has bene gret to me[,] Considerand þat I

was thretty 3er nurist in fraunce and in the noble study of paris in latin toung and knew nocht the gret eloquens of chauceir na colouris þat men vsis in þis Inglis metir' (164). This particular request for correction, where Ireland points towards his limited knowledge of and experience in writing in the English and Scottish vernaculars, serves several functions. Firstly, openness to emendation allows Ireland to anticipate any criticism. At the same time, though, Ireland furthers his authority by stressing his position as an experienced and well-trained scholar. These points are further pressed towards the end of the chapter when Ireland writes that he submits the *Meroure* to the church and all others for the correction of any faults, but he follows this emendation invitation with 'bot I traist and it [the *Meroure*] be correk', stating that he will 'defend it gif ony man will argvne or condampne þe thingis writtin in it' (165). Such comingling of authority and emendation invitation is common to advisory discourse because of the uniqueness of its audience: a sense of authority is needed for the actual (and implicit) audience of royal bureaucrats and an admission of possible errors is needed for the explicit audience of monarchs.

By including a reference to the vernacular and to Chaucer within his request for correction, Ireland also shows his perception of and indebtedness to Chaucer and his engagement with Chaucerian literature (Indeed, Ireland utilises Chaucerian themes throughout the *Meroure* as we will see).²¹ Chaucer was known for his political and advisory writings that include his 'Lak of Stedfastnesse' (c. 1390s), the 'Tale of Melibee' (1387-1390), and *Boece* (c. 1380-1387).²² Throughout the *Meroure*'s seven

²¹ We see similar laudations of Chaucer in William Dunbar's (d. between 1513 and 1530) poem 'The Goldyn Targe', in which he writes, 'O reuerend Chaucere, rose of rethoris all'. William Dunbar, *The Poems of William Dunbar*, ed. by John Small, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Early Scottish Text Society, 1893), II, p. 10.

²² Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, pp. 143, 145-6.

books, Ireland makes several references to Chaucer, acknowledging his skill and craft. These references and Ireland's employment of several Chaucerian tropes in his work suggest he viewed Chaucer as a prestige writer of both vernacular literature and political and advisory literature. Although used prior to Chaucer, emendation invitations became a common feature of Chaucer's work and those he influenced, including John Lydgate, Thomas Norton, and John Ireland himself.²³ Additionally, Ireland's apology for his unfamiliarity with vernacular writing and potential roughness of his writing is common to Chaucer and his successors, who apologise for their command of the language or for the unworthiness of the English language as a whole.²⁴ It appears, then, that Ireland perceives Chaucer as an *auctor* and one who has shaped the English literary language – a view found throughout fourteenth- and fifteenth-century literature. Chaucer's popularity and influence extended outside of England with Scottish writers Robert Henryson (d. 1506) and Gavin Douglas (d. 1522) referring to him as 'worthie Chaucer glorious' and 'venerabill Chaucer, principal poet', respectively.²⁵ His fame and repute also extended to writers of advisory literature as we see with Ireland and Thomas Hoccleve's references to and praise of him in their advice to princes.²⁶ These references intimate both that Chaucer was viewed as an advisory writer and that the vernacular was appropriate for providing advice on governance.

Despite this praise for vernacular authors, Ireland expresses concern about how it has been used in the transmission of Christian precepts: 'Considerant þat mony Errouris agane the faith and haly doctrine of ihesu and of the kyrk ar writtin in þis

²³ Blatt, p. 29.

²⁴ Evans, et al., p. 320.

²⁵ Walter Scheps, 'Chaucer and the Middle Scots Poets', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 22 (1987), 44-59 (p. 45).

²⁶ Hoccleve, 4983-4.

tounge and in inglis at a part of the pepil of þi realm ear infekit w[ith] it' (165). This is interesting for several reasons. First, it reflects concerns many had with translating scripture and church doctrine into the vernacular and the growth of that very practice.²⁷ Secondly, Ireland positions Old Scots alongside 'Inglis', showing that they are distinct but related languages, and thirdly, he conceptualises the English and Scots vernaculars as rough in nature and with potential failings in effective communication. Prior to the sixteenth century, such a distinction between English and Scots was not prevalent. Ireland's is an early distinction although he does not refer to the Scots language by name. The earliest references to Old Scots as the language 'Scottis' are found in *The Book of the Ordre of Chyualry* (1494) and 'The Porteous of Nobleness', (1508), both of which note that they were translated from French and into 'Scottis'.²⁸ In Gavin Douglas' *Eneados* (1513), his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, Scots, too, is conceptualised as its own language, distinct from English. Douglas writes that rather than compose his work in Latin, French, or English, he chose 'Scottis' and distinguishes himself from writers of English, like Chaucer and Caxton.²⁹ Ireland seemingly views the vernacular as inferior to Latin, commenting on its limitations in effectively communicating church doctrine, and Douglas expresses a similar view, writing of his translation: 'Sa haue I doyn abufe, as 3e may se,/ Virgillis volum of hir son Enee,/ Reducit, as I cowth, intill our tong'.³⁰

The simultaneous use and criticism of the vernacular is like the *humilitas* topos, excusing the writer from any errors or lack of clarity in his own writing but quite

²⁷ Vincent Gillespie, 'Chichele's Church: Vernacular Theology in England After Thomas Arundel', in *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England*, ed. by Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), pp. 3-43 (pp. 24-5).

²⁸ 'Scottis', in *Dictionaries of the Scots Language* <<https://dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/scottis>> [accessed 4 October 2023]

²⁹ Gavin Douglas, *The Aeneid of Virgil: Translated into Scottish Verse* (Edinburgh: T. Constable Printer, 1839), pp. 6-7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 913.

possibly suggesting very much the opposite. The vernacular, in fact, would have increased the clarity of the text, for it allowed for a wider audience to understand the work and its guidance on living a Christian life and ruling effectively.

Ireland's use of Scots given his self-reported unfamiliarity with the language and his superior knowledge of Latin requires further assessment. In part, Ireland's use of Older Scots relates naturally to the growing use of the vernacular as a literary language in both Scotland and England, both in general terms and for specifically advisory material. As we have seen, insular political literature in the vernacular began to appear in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries with Chaucer and Gower and with the advisory works of Hoccleve and John Trevisa's translation of *De Regimine Principum*.³¹ A vernacular advisory tradition developed, and the use of the vernacular in advice to princes continued and supplanted the Latin advisory tradition. Indeed, insular advice to princes were rarely written in Latin after the first half of the fourteenth century. Given Ireland's reference to the eloquence of and literary style used by Chaucer and others writing in English, Ireland's use of the vernacular seems to be a way to engage with contemporary literature (I, 164-5, VII, 164). As Mapstone has noted, however, Ireland only mentions English vernacular writers and not Scottish vernacular ones.³² Though it is possible to argue that there was not much of a Scots tradition to draw upon, it may be that the English vernacular tradition, which was more established than the Scots, held a higher prestige than that of the Scots vernacular and, thus, lent more authority to Ireland's own work.

³¹ Ronald Waldron, 'Trevisa, John', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://www-oxforddnb-com.bham-ezproxy.idm.oclc.org/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-27722>> [accessed 27 June 2023]

³² Mapstone, p. 371.

Using the vernacular allows Ireland to reach the widest audience for his work (even if the intended audience is relatively narrow) and creates access to the sources he uses, breaking down barriers to the academic culture of Latinity and French of Gerson's and Giles of Rome's works.³³ And yet, at the same time, we are exposed to what is in fact privileged knowledge, for Ireland fails to acknowledge his sources in the *Meroure*. As a result, some readers would not have been aware that many passages of the *Meroure* were not original to its author, and so Ireland becomes a mediator of knowledge, determining what information is disseminated, its form, and its apparent author. The vernacular also serves as a way for Ireland to bolster his own authority. He remarks how religious misinformation has been spread previously in the vernacular and that he hopes, as a clerk trained at the University of Paris, he will be able to correct these 'mony Errouris agane the faith... writtin in þis tounge and in inglis' (165). With this quotation, as well as the one on the eloquence and literary style of Chaucer and other writers of English, Ireland appears to desire the substantiation of his authorial authority. Unlike earlier advisory writers of the vernacular who attempted to establish their *auctoritas* by creating a literary persona, one in which they presented themselves as the receiver of counsel eagerly listening to the corrections of a wise counsellor, Ireland presents himself as the correcting counsellor himself. In doing so, he attempts to elevate Old Scots from a language unable to transmit knowledge correctly to a literary language that can.

³³ Evans, et al., p. 325; Copeland, pp. 182-3.

Youthful Kings: The Need for Experienced Counsel

As do other writers in this thesis, Ireland places himself as James' counsellor, but he does so in more couched terms. Rather than use phrases such as 'I counsel' or 'I advise', Ireland instructs James to learn doctrine on the governance of a kingdom and frequently refers to the king's youth (136, 164-5). When these passages are coupled with Ireland's reference to his extensive royal service and his promise to provide James with the doctrine needed to rule (161), Ireland is more implicitly casting himself as the advisor James desperately needs. Throughout the *Meroure*, Ireland discusses council and provides James with guidance on membership, focusing in particular on this topic in the final chapter. He offers conventional advice, instructing James to choose wise, experienced, and virtuous counsellors and touting the success of exemplary rulers who did just this, but Ireland also stresses that counsellors must be pious, lending a pastoral bent to his advice, in line with the broader pastoral focus of the whole *Meroure*.

The importance of the king seeking counsel is central to the *Meroure*, and Ireland stresses the need for the king's ability to discern good counsel. To do so, Ireland suggests a king test his men, recalling how Constantine tested judges' integrity after converting to Christianity himself (113). Anna McHugh notes how this advice was borrowed from Gerson but also parallels the earlier narrative in Walter Bower's the *Scotichronicon* (1440-1447) of Malcolm III testing the integrity of Macduff.³⁴ We also see the need for a king to devise tests in Milemete's *De nobilitatibus*. Impressing the importance of testing underscores the importance of royal discernment, especially when it comes to the motives of royal counsellors. Ireland, as well as earlier advisory writers

³⁴ McHugh, pp. 258-9.

like John of Salisbury and Gerald of Wales, believed the power of discernment is one of the king's most essential virtues, impacting his ability to rule his kingdom.

Ireland emphasises the need for many and quality counsellors. Twice Ireland cites an adage by Solomon, not used in his source material: 'Ibi salus vbi consilia multa' ('There is safety where there is much counsel') (119, 162. Proverbs 11.14). This quotation is found in many advisory works in the late Middle Ages (though none discussed in previous chapters), including John Gerson's letter to the French dauphin's tutor (1417), Dominican friar Vincent of Beauvai's *Tractatus de morali principis institutione* (1263), and John Fortescue's political treatise *The Governance of England* (1471-1476).³⁵ The quotation's use in two French sources suggests Ireland's familiarity with the advisory use of the proverb. Ireland bookends his discussion on counsel with this proverb, and its placement at both the beginning and end of that discussion intimates the importance Ireland placed upon such advice and is possibly a reaction to frustrations surrounding James III's small group of close advisors.

While Ireland writes that James IV will grow to become a strong monarch ('In þe age þat þi hienes is in and growis to[,] for sic wekis and operaciounis wil caus þi hienes to grow and increas to hie honour and worschipfull name and gret nobilite'), he expresses concern about inexperienced kings throughout book VII (136). The importance of counsel for Ireland largely centres on the youthfulness of the king, whom Ireland frequently describes as being of tender age (136, 161, 164). It is in these

³⁵ Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by P. Glorieux, 10 vols (Paris: Desclée, 1960), II, p. 211; 'Vincentius Beluacensis - De morali principis institutione', in *Library of Latin Texts* <<http://clt.brepolis.net/LLTA/pages/TextSearch.aspx?key=MVIBEC137>> [accessed 19 May 2023]; John Fortescue, *The Governance of England*, ed. by Charles Plummer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 144. John of Salisbury does mention the first half of the proverb in the *Policraticus* ('Vbi non est gubernator, populus corruet') but not the portion Ireland includes. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus* (Apud), p. 233.

discussions that we see passages original to Ireland, which suggest Ireland was writing about contemporary political concerns. Ireland writes that a ruler should have experience governing, believing young rulers lack the wisdom and prudence necessary for effective rule. However, if a young king comes to the throne, the realm and the law should ensure he is wisely and tenderly governed until able to rule in his own right, advice we also see in *Lancelot of the Laik*.³⁶ And it is in this scenario in which sound counsel is most essential. Ireland instructs the king to surround himself with wise, ‘auld’, and experienced men, for ‘in senibus viget sapiencia et in longo tempore addicitur prudencia’ (‘wisdom is strong in old age and prudence is awarded a lot of time’) (145, 162).³⁷ It is in Ireland’s citation of Ecclesiastes 10.16 that we best see Ireland’s anxieties for an adolescent ruler: “‘Ve tibi terra cuius rex puer est’” (“‘Woe to thee, land, when thy king is a child’”) (145). Neither found in his source material nor in other advisory works in this thesis, these quotations highlight the frustrations within Scotland under multiple minor kings, for (as noted above) by the time the *Meroure* was completed all Scottish kings since the beginning of the fifteenth century ascended the throne as a child. Concern about the Scottish throne under the rule of young kings is therefore not exclusive to the *Meroure* and permeates Scottish literature of the fifteenth century.

Scottish writers addressed the failings of juvenile monarchs in coded ways, which include portrayals of King Arthur, a king who ascended the throne as an adolescent. Writers, including Walter Bower in his *Scotichronicon* and the author of the

³⁶ Ireland, pp. 145, 153; *Lancelot of the Laik*, ed. by Margaret Muriel Gray (Edinburgh: The Scottish Text Society, 1912), 1657-76.

³⁷ This is a reference to the quotation ‘in antiquis est sapiencia et in multo tempore prudentia’ from Job 12.12.

romance *Lancelot of the Laik*, cast King Arthur as a youthful ruler and used Arthur to emphasise the potential danger of a child-king, such as the misgiving of law, usurpation, and regal competence.³⁸ Ireland's concerns are, thus, a continuation of those found in Bower's and the *Lancelot* author's works. At one point, Ireland even writes that no one chooses young rulers as they are not yet certain of their wisdom or prudence (145). The dating of the *Meroure* to both James III's and IV's reigns allows for two interpretations of Ireland's treatment of young monarchs. If read as being written during James III's reign, it provides advice to a king who ascended the throne as a child and presently had issues with counsel. However, if read as being written during James IV's reign, it serves as advice on the potential dangers that can result from young monarchs and guidance on how they can be avoided.

Echoing Ireland's anxieties surrounding an inexperienced ruler are his concerns about inexperienced counsellors. As is expected in advisory works, Ireland provides positive and negative exemplary rulers, some of whom are found in other advisory works in this thesis and others who are unique to the *Meroure*. One exemplar used by and previously discussed in William of Pagula's *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* is Rehoboam. Ireland, like William of Pagula, remarks how Rehoboam heeded the counsel of young men and heavily taxed his people for his own benefit, warning that these actions resulted in Rehoboam losing his kingdom (128). The passage in Ireland is a borrowing from Gerson's extended discussion on the fall of kings and the destruction of their kingdoms in the 'Vivat Rex', but Ireland selects only the one example of Rehoboam.³⁹ By selecting only Rehoboam from his source, Ireland creates a warning

³⁸ McClune, pp. 85, 88-94.

³⁹ Jean Gerson, 'Vivat Rex', in *Œuvres complètes*, VII, pp. 1156-7.

with contemporary applicability in fifteenth-century Scotland. The 1480s were marked by complaints of James III heeding the counsel of young men and coupled with the threats of war with England, the Lauder Bridge Crisis in 1482, and James IV's usurpation of the throne in 1488, yet deeper political turmoil was a very real threat.⁴⁰ Rehoboam allows Ireland to warn both James III and James IV of the dangers that may befall them if they heed the counsel of inexperienced men.

Within his discussion on counsel, Ireland also uses a ruler not found in other advisory works in this thesis: Ulysses, the king of Ithaca and hero of the Trojan War. He introduces Ulysses after instructing James to surround himself with counsellors who are true, wise, and old, but rather than portraying Ulysses as a king who followed such advice, Ireland portrays him as one of the most trusted Greek counsellors in the Trojan War. Borrowing from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, Ireland describes the Ithacan king as an experienced and wise man responsible, in part, for the Greek's defeat of Troy and whose prudence and wisdom was preferred over Ajax's strength (162, 197). By casting Ulysses as a counsellor, Ireland is able to situate Ulysses within his discussion on counsel and engage with the Trojan legend, as do other advisory authors. As we have seen in previous chapters, Troy had a rich history in medieval literature and was popular in both England and Scotland in the late fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. The myth served a variety of functions. In England, it functioned as a foundation myth, for Brutus (the great-grandson of Aeneas) settled Britain and established New Troy on the Thames. Yet, it also functioned as a cautionary tale of a kingdom's downfall by its external enemies and own people. It is in this latter, more negative light that we see Troy in Scottish literature. Scottish interpretations of the legend were often wielded for political

⁴⁰ MacDougall, pp. 121, 183, 200, 335-44.

purposes, and Ulysses, in particular, was associated with falsehood and his failings as a ruler. *The Scottish Troy Book* (1414-1420) is one work with such associations. In its passages featuring Ulysses, the writer focuses not on Ulysses' wisdom and prudence but on his banishment of and ultimate murder by his legitimate son Telegonus.⁴¹ Ireland deviates from this Scottish tradition of the Trojan legend, associating Ulysses with imperial ambitions and victory of the Greeks over their enemies. In doing so, Ireland links wise and experienced counsel to the possibility of territorial gains – pertinent advice during James III's reign. Attempts at expanding insular and continental holdings as well as complaints of youthful counsel marked James's rule, and Ireland's Ulysses provides an example of an advisor whose competence allowed for the very thing James desired: expansion of his kingdom and establishment of its dominance. When read as advice for his son, whose youth precipitated the need for experienced counsel, Ulysses serves as a model for royal counsel and how James can continue his father's ambitions, which he attempted to do through his campaigns in northern England during the 1510s.⁴²

In addition to experience, Ireland stresses that counsellors, as well as ministers, should show reverence for and follow the law of God – unsurprising advice given the pastoral nature of the *Meroure* – and it is within this discussion on counsellors' piety that we see how Ireland interweaves his source material with conventions of Scottish advisory literature. Advisors must follow God's commandments, and a good advisor both 'lufis' and 'dredis god', advice Ireland also provides James in the dedication of the *Meroure* (I, 12. III, 108-9, 113, 119). Ireland, in an original passage, even claims that

⁴¹ Emily Wingfield, *The Trojan Myth in Medieval Scottish Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014), pp. 6-7, 9, 11, 15, 19, 108-9, 113-4.

⁴² MacDougall, *James IV*, pp. 267-74.

Jesus ordained a king and his counsellors to be virtuous and holy and mimic Jesus and his apostles (108). This advice that king and council model themselves on Christ and his disciples is not seen in the other advisory work examined in this thesis. In part, Ireland argues that the king's men should be pious because he believes it is essential to maintaining justice, and ministering to justice is one of the king's primary responsibilities to the people (113). We have seen this emphasis on pious counsellors in William of Pagula's *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*, a work, as I have noted, with a pastoral tone. Yet, a call for pious counsel appears to be a particular feature of fifteenth-century advisory literature in Scotland. Sir Gilbert Hay, a prolific writer during the mid-fifteenth century and whose works Ireland was likely familiar with, in his *The Gouvernaunce of Princis* (1456), instructs counsellors to 'be vertuous and lele [faithful] and trewe, lufand god & lautee [truth]', advice unique to Hay's translation.⁴³ *The Thre Prestis of Peblis* and the *Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*, too, advise rulers to appoint ministers who 'lufis God'.⁴⁴ Thus, stressing the need for counsellors and ministers to love God, while initially appearing to be related to just the pastoral nature and source material of the *Meroure*, is actually a specific characteristic of fifteenth-century Scottish advisory literature. This may, in part, be because church clerics were those primarily reading (and writing) advisory works in Scotland during this period. They would have had a greater interest in the king surrounding himself with men who were devout Christians.

⁴³ Gilbert Hay, *The Gouvernaunce of Princis*, in *The Prose Works of Sir Gilbert Hay*, ed. by Jonathan A. Glenn, 3 vols (Aberdeen: Scottish Text Society, 1993), pp. 54-127 (p. 116).

⁴⁴ *The Thre Prestis of Peblis*, ed. by T.D. Robb (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1920), p. 23; Gilbert Hay, *Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*, ed. by John Cartwright, 3 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1990), III, p. 18.

In addition to the qualities James should seek in his advisors, Ireland warns against certain types of men who make poor advisors. Like all advisory authors in this thesis, Ireland warns of young men (as discussed above), drunks, fools, and flatterers (130, 162). However, another type of man mentioned by Ireland does not appear in other advisory works. Ireland advises the king against taking a reconciled former enemy into his ‘tendyr and sacret counsale[,] for þar remanis 3it ane euil rute in his mynd[,] and mony thingis that he dois to þe prince he dois be dissimilacioun’ (162). This quotation is an adaptation of Chaucer’s ‘Tale of Melibee’ where Prudence instructs Melibee to “‘Ne trust nat to hem to whiche thou hast had som tyme werre or enemytee, ne telle hem nat thy conseil’”.⁴⁵ The changes Ireland made, notably his use of the phrase ‘sacret counsale’, were likely made to reflect the political environment during the last years of James III’s reign. ‘Sacret counsale’, in particular, was a term for the Scottish king’s privy council, and it was used in parliamentary records by the late fourteenth century.⁴⁶ Employing this term in his adaption of the *Melibee* advice makes the *Meroure* more applicable to Scottish governance, and the advice itself may be a reference to James III’s reconciliation with his half-uncles, James, earl of Buchan, and John, earl of Atholl. After their conspiracy against him during the Lauder Bridge Crisis, the king restored his uncles to favour, and they became his close counsellors. Reconciliation between James and his uncles was, moreover, one particular source of frustration during the latter period of James’ rule, for the king tended to ignore the advice of his loyal magnates in favour of his half-uncles.⁴⁷ By employing the term secret counsel, along with the other

⁴⁵ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, p. 223.

⁴⁶ ‘Secret Counsell’, in *Dictionaries of the Scots* <https://dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/secret_counsell> [Accessed 8 July 2024]

⁴⁷ MacDougall, pp. 338, 343.

additions and changes Ireland makes to his source material in his discussion on counsel, Ireland thus makes his advice especially applicable to late fifteenth-century Scotland.

Alexander, Caesar, and Scipio: Exemplars in the *Meroure*

To guide James on good governance, Ireland uses an array of exemplary rulers from history and biblical and classical tales. Most of those he selects are common to advisory discourse and include Alexander the Great, Nebuchadnezzar, and Scipio Africanus. Like William of Pagula, Ireland does not provide extended tales of these rulers and, instead, briefly mentions them – sometimes offering little to no explanation of their relation to his advice. Although some of these rulers are found in the *Meroure*'s sources, Ireland's adaptations of and additions to his sources appear to be politically motivated by the events of James III's reign.

As is expected of advisory discourse, Ireland frequently uses Alexander the Great as an exemplary ruler, and he uses many of the same tales we have seen in earlier advisory works. As noted earlier, medieval conceptions of Alexander varied between the continent and Britain with insular writers often highlighting the political discord within the Macedonian empire.⁴⁸ However, characterisation of Alexander did develop throughout the Middle Ages, moving from the pejorative conceptions of the king in early medieval monastic writings to more complex ones starting in the twelfth century. We have first seen this view in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* where Alexander is cast as a tyrannical king, overcome by ambition and a lack of inhibition, as well as an admirable ruler and great conqueror. As the Middle Ages progressed, writers of advisory discourse continued to portray Alexander as simultaneously embodying good

⁴⁸ Bridges, p. 149.

and bad kingship.⁴⁹ In the early fourteenth century, for instance, Jacques de Longuyon's *Les Vœux du Paon* (1312-3) introduced the concept of the Nine Worthies. The worthies were composed of three Christian rulers (Charlemagne, Arthur, and Godfrey of Bouillon), three Hebrew (Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabeus), and three pagan (Alexander, Hector, and Julius Caesar), and this tradition was utilised by many medieval Scots texts, including Barbour's *Bruce*, Blind Harry's *Wallace*, and the c. 1438 octosyllabic *Buik of Alexander* (not to be confused with Hay's *Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*).⁵⁰ With the introduction of this conception of Alexander, we begin to see Scottish works cast the ruler in a more positive light though still presenting some of his follies. It is in this light that Ireland portrays Alexander as a great conqueror with significant faults.

One tale of Alexander common to much advisory literature is the tale of Alexander and the pirate, which appears in *Policraticus*, the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*, and the *Confessio* as well as in Hay's *The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*. Ireland positions this tale within his discussion on maintaining justice and the importance of a monarch's clemency. His version is similar to those we have seen in other advisory works: the pirate Diomedes is captured by Alexander, and when asked why he plunders ships, Diomedes compares his plundering to that of the emperors. He highlights how, simply because he does it on a smaller scale than Alexander, he is called a pirate rather than a great emperor and conqueror. Unlike in other versions of the tale, however, Ireland does not have Alexander respond to Diomedes' assessment and, instead, remarks that Alexander granted Diomedes clemency for the truth that he spoke.

⁴⁹ Stone, pp. 113, 118-9, 126.

⁵⁰ David Ashurst, 'Alexander Literature in English and Scots', in *A Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Z. David Zuwiyya (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 255-90 (pp. 282-3).

Ireland also writes that men who have done less than Diomedes are punished and executed and suggests that instead a king must minister justice truthfully (132). While Alexander's treatment of the pirate is touched upon in other versions of the tale, Ireland's positioning of the tale within a discussion on justice and his addition to the tale stress one of Ireland's overarching arguments in the *Meroure*: the need for a king to uphold justice. Because of this, the *Meroure* reflects *The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*, which dedicates nearly a quarter of the story to the pirate's accusations of injustice against the emperor who is portrayed as young, unjust, and negligent king.⁵¹ Interpretating the tale in this manner is a shift from English advisory works, which used it to discuss how a ruler should react to criticism.⁵² Such a shift in the *Meroure* and *Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour* suggests a particularly Scottish use of Alexander to demonstrate that the establishment and execution of justice was paramount among the king's duties, concerns also found in *Lancelot of the Laik*.⁵³ Such emphasis on justice coincides with frustrations surrounding the administration of justice under James III, for parliament records often addressed the king's failure to travel on justice ayres.⁵⁴ The tale of Alexander and the pirate, then, shows how writers like Ireland and the *Alexander the Conquerour* author adapt tales conventional to advisory literature to serve their arguments and align with contemporary political and cultural expectations.

Beyond this tale of Alexander and the pirate, Ireland's portrayals of the Macedonian king are brief and often vacillate between his negative and positive qualities. In a passage borrowed from Gerson which warns against the dangers of

⁵¹ Mapstone, pp. 107-8.

⁵² Gilbert Hay, *The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*, III, pp. 215-6; John of Salisbury, *Frivolities of Courtiers*, pp. 204-5; Gower, 1295-1311.

⁵³ Mapstone, p. 80; *Lancelot of the Laik*, 1644-56.

⁵⁴ MacDougall, p. 137.

flatterers in the royal court, Ireland writes how kings such as Alexander were led to believe they were a ‘maner of diuinite’ by the adulation of flatterers (130). Yet, Alexander is also used as the ideal of imperialism. When advising on the importance of battle and soldiers’ obedience to their prince, Ireland laments how there are no men now with the martial prowess of men like Alexander, Scipio, King David, and Achilles (141). Elsewhere, in a discussion on the dangers of division within the realm, he mentions how after Alexander’s death the realm was divided in many parts and much evil followed, suggesting that Alexander possessed the authority to keep his empire together during his life but not after his death (116) – something we also see articulated at the end of Hay’s *The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour* and in the *Original Chronicle* of Andrew Wyntoun (c. 1420).⁵⁵ Ireland does not elucidate why the Macedonian Empire fell after Alexander’s death, but he does cite the book of Maccabees, Psalms, Horace, and Lucan – all of which warn of the great danger that will befall future generations if the king allows division to occur (116).⁵⁶

Although these passages are largely derived from Gerson’s ‘Vivat Rex’, their inclusion within the *Meroure* as well as the biblical and Latin quotations Ireland added suggest their applicability to late fifteenth-century Scottish political events. Fractious relations between prominent families marked the period. Some feuds, such as those in Angus, Ross, Caithness, Sutherland, Nithsdale and Annandale, and in Teviotdale, remained unsettled due to James’ refusal to travel on justice ayres. Other feuds were

⁵⁵ Gilbert Hay, *The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*, III, pp. 254-255; Andrew of Wyntoun, *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun*, ed. by F.J. Amours, 6 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1904), III, pp. 96, 131.

⁵⁶ Ireland provides the quotations within his work. I Maccabees 1.10: ‘Tunc mala multiplicati sunt in terra’. Lucan’s *Pharsalia* 1.92-3: ‘Nulla fides regni sociis omnisque potestas impaciens Consortis erit’. Psalms: ‘Effusa est contencio inter principes et errare fecit eos in inuio et non in via’. Horace’s *Epistles* 1.2.14: ‘Quicquid delirant reges plectuntur achiui’.

made worse by James' involvement. On 20 March 1474, James granted the position of Steward, Coroner, and Forester of the earldom of Strathearn to John Drummond. In doing so, James only furthered the longstanding feud between the Drummonds and Murrays, for he had granted the same position seven months earlier to William Murray. James also caused friction when he granted rents from the earldom of Lennox to his loyal follower, Andrew Stewart, over the rightful heirs.⁵⁷ Knowledge of such feuds may lie behind Ireland's concern about the division of the kingdom and why he mentions Alexander's vices and failure to leave behind a stable empire. And so, the myth of Alexander allows Ireland not only to look towards the (potential) positive future of James IV's reign but also to look back and warn of the negative aspects of James III's. In highlighting Alexander's vices and virtues, Ireland aligns with medieval traditions of the Alexander myth that portrayed the ruler as both a successful warrior-king and a violent tyrant.⁵⁸

As with Alexander, Ireland also casts Julius Caesar as a complex ruler. Unlike Alexander, though, the figure of Caesar had little impact in early medieval English literary tradition. Interest in Caesar, however, began to grow in French literature in the early thirteenth century with the creation of two vernacular prose works: the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'a Cesar* (1208-1230) and *Li Fet des Romains* (1213-1214). It is this latter work that depicts Caesar as a powerful politician and skilled military commander, and Nigel Mortimer argues that *Li Fet des Romains*' portrayal of Caesar's 'motivations, achievements, and flaws went on to influence conceptions of Caesar in the subsequent

⁵⁷ MacDougall, pp. 137-9, 161.

⁵⁸ Stone, p. 113-4; Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox, 'Introduction: Alexander the Great in the French Middle Ages', in *The Medieval French Alexander* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 1-16 (pp. 5-8).

three centuries'.⁵⁹ *Li Fet des Romains* proved popular, and there are fifty-nine extant manuscripts, one of which can be found in Charles V's library and another fourteenth-century copy found in the English Royal Library in the first half of the sixteenth century.⁶⁰ Given the works' influence and place in the French king's library as well as the impact of French literature on Scottish, it is possible that Ireland would have been familiar with the work. Caesar is also a part of the Nine Worthies tradition and can be found in the Old Scots poem the 'Balletis of the Nine Nobles' (terminus ad quem 1447), which situates Caesar amongst eight other rulers known for their martial prowess and notes Caesar's conquests over much of the known world.⁶¹ It is within *Li Fet des Romains*' and the Nine Worthies scheme that Ireland casts his Caesar.

One area Ireland highlights is Caesar's role as an archetypal conqueror, a characterisation common in medieval portrayals of Caesar, such as Wyntoun's chronicle.⁶² In a passage original to him, Ireland describes Caesar as a subduer of great nations throughout the world and a builder of an empire all while showing great love to his people and those he conquered (122). Ireland's emphasis on Caesar's and Alexander's success as conquerors may reflect Scottish imperial ambitions in the latter half of the fifteenth century. James III made efforts to expand Scotland's insular and continental territorial holdings and to craft an image of a Scottish empire. The border town Berwick was a particular focus of Scottish expansion, and possession of it

⁵⁹ Jeanette M.A. Beer, *A Medieval Caesar* (Geneva: Librairies Droz S.A., 1976), pp. 135, 143; Nigel Mortimer, *Medieval and Early Modern Portrayals of Julius Caesar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 18, 87.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20; 'Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César; Li Fet des Romains', *British Library* <https://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=IAMS_VU2&docid=IAMS040-002107229&context=L> [accessed 30 July 2023]

⁶¹ 'Balletis of the Nine Nobles', in *Six Scottish Courtly and Chivalric Poems*, ed. by Emily Wingfield and Rhiannon Purdie (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018), p. 21.

⁶² Andrew of Wyntoun, pp. 167, 175.

vacillated between English and Scottish hands throughout the fifteenth century. Both James III and James IV sought to maintain or gain control over the county (though after its loss to the English in 1482 it was to remain permanently in English hands). James III also sought to expand his influence over the Orkney and Shetland Islands by annexing them in 1472.⁶³ He further sought to expand Scottish territory on the continent in Brittany through a tenuous claim centred on his aunt Isabella, widow of an earlier duke of Brittany. Along with Louis XI, James planned (but never went on) a campaign to Brittany, and in preparation for it, parliament ordered the removal of the double tressure from Scottish royal arms. The double tressure, purportedly a gift to the Scottish King Achaius from Charlemagne, was a symbol of the Franco-Scottish alliance and suggested Scotland's inferiority. In ordering its removal, parliament intimated that Scotland (through its planned joint campaign with France) was no longer inferior to France but on more equal level.⁶⁴ Yet, perhaps most telling of James III's imperial ambitions is an act of parliament in 1469. The act, which allowed the king to appoint notaries public within his realm, states that the king 'has ful jurisdictione and fre impire within his realme'.⁶⁵ These attempts to establish the perception of Scotland as an empire and expand territorial holdings are reflected Ireland's portrayals of Alexander and Caesar as great conquerors, and these figures in turn allow Ireland to instruct James IV on how to achieve and maintain an empire.

Yet, as we see in Ireland's tales of Alexander, Caesar, too, is associated with the demise of an empire. Ireland is again concerned about possible division within the

⁶³ MacDougall, *James III*, pp. 34, 92; MacDougall, *James IV*, p. 119.

⁶⁴ MacDougall, *James III*, pp. 113-4.

⁶⁵ *Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland* <<https://www.rps.ac.uk/trans/1469/15>> [accessed 26 July 2023]; Leslie Macfarlane, *William Elphinstone and the Kingdom of Scotland, 1431-1514* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1995), pp. 40-7.

realm, advising that the king should hold the greatest power so that no others will cause ‘diuision, discension, and battale and finally þe tynsale [forfeiture] of þe realme’ – a fate he said befell Caesar in the civil war with Pompey (130). This passage is original to Ireland and may allude to James III’s relationship with his brother Alexander, duke of Albany. In 1479, for reasons not fully known, James took action against Alexander and requested the duke’s forfeiture (although the Three Estates refused to comply). Albany fled to France where he was welcomed by Louis XI. Three years later, Albany gained the support of Edward IV, who promised military aid if Albany would become Scottish king and paid homage to him. Albany and the duke of Gloucester marched to and seized Berwick, which, in part, led to the Lauder Crisis and James’ imprisonment, for the Lauder Lords wanted to prevent James from attempting to meet Albany and Gloucester on the battlefield.⁶⁶ Once James was imprisoned, Albany and Gloucester tried to install Albany as king. Though this endeavour failed and despite Albany’s treason, Albany was able to gain power in Scottish government during James’ imprisonment. Six years later James’s throne was threatened again, and he eventually was usurped by his eldest son, James. Thus, factions posed a very real danger to the position of Scottish monarch. Advice of the king holding the greatest power, then, could serve as a warning to both James III and IV. If written prior to 1488, it cautions James III against letting an incident like the Lauder Crisis occur again. Written after 1488, it cautions James IV to beware of the power play that beset his father.

Further stressing the dangers of the loss of kingdom are the exemplars Nebuchadnezzar, Ahab, and Rehoboam. In a passage that initially follows Gerson’s ‘Vivat Rex’, Ireland writes that Rehoboam lost the throne because he followed the

⁶⁶ MacDougall, pp. 155, 164, 191-8.

counsel of young men and oppressed his people while Ahab lost his on account of his theft of Naboth's vineyard. Unlike Gerson's 'Vivat Rex', however, Ireland emphasises the divine punishment of these acts, adding the phrases 'god punyst achab' and 'god tholit [allowed]... þe punicioun of the pepil þat wrangwisly & incontrar to þe plesaunce of god' (128-9). Such emphasis on divine punishment is found in other advisory material, for instance, the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*. It no doubt reflects the pastoral nature of the *Meroure* and Ireland's position as a royal confessor, for it serves to guide the king's soul toward salvation by warning what may happen if he fails to abide by God's wishes. Additionally, it suggests that the highest power actually belongs to God and not the king.

In addition to these exemplars, which we have seen in other advisory works in this thesis, Ireland uses the Roman general and statesman Scipio Africanus, an exemplar infrequently used by advisory writers and not found in Ireland's sources. Contrasting with Ireland's complex depictions of Caesar and Alexander, who represent great yet flawed conquerors and rulers, Scipio is cast in a seemingly positive light: he is the ideal knight, ruler, and conqueror, who cares for those he rules and even those he subjugates. Andrew of Wyntoun, too, casts Scipio in this manner in his chronicle and focuses on Scipio's battles with Hannibal.⁶⁷ Ireland's passages on Scipio centre on his status as a great warrior, and he describes Scipio's chivalrous nature and valiant deeds. Within two passages on the importance of young nobles training for battle and the need for soldiers to obey their prince in battle, Ireland compares Scipio to Hector, Achilles, and Troilus as well as Charlemagne, Alexander, and Arthur (139, 141). As noted above, comparisons with Trojan heroes are not unusual to Scottish literature. Many works

⁶⁷ Andrew of Wyntoun, pp. 113-43.

favourably compared their heroes to Hector's moral and physical prowess, Achilles' status as a fierce warrior, and Troilus's loyalty, such as Bower's comparison between Achilles and Robert Bruce in his *Scotichronicon*.⁶⁸ Yet, when positioned within the tumult of James III's reign and his death and limited support among his lords at the Battle of Sauchieburn, Ireland's choice to include these three warriors functions as a warning to James IV. Though these men were great warriors, they ultimately met tragic ends with the fall of Troy, and they suggest James ought to be a cautious ruler lest he suffer the same fate.⁶⁹

The reference to Arthur is suggestive of concern for James IV's (and possibly James III's) youthfulness as a ruler. As discussed earlier, Arthur was frequently depicted negatively (or at best ambivalently) in Scots literature, often portrayed as an illegitimate usurper and as a young and inexperienced king.⁷⁰ *Lancelot of the Laik* emphasised Arthur's youth, referring to his 'tender ag' (a phrase used numerous in the *Meroure* to refer to James IV) and juxtaposing his age against his need for an 'agit' counsellor. Similarly, the Arthurian romance *Golagros and Gawane* (c. 1478-1508) raises issues of youthful rule and characterises Arthur as a ruler whose capriciousness and ambitions to expand his territory led to instability within his kingdom.⁷¹ Accordingly, Ireland's reference to Arthur might serve as a coded critique. In placing Arthur among other exemplary rulers known for their prowess in battle, it seems as though Ireland views the king in a positive light. However, since the Old Scots literary tradition often casts Arthur as a young and inadequate ruler, the comparison may

⁶⁸ Ireland references Chaucer's 'buk of troylus' and 'persounis tail' in *The Meroure of Wyssdome*. Wingfield, pp. 58-9, 117, 121, 152. Walter Bower, *Scotichronicon*, ed. and trans. by A.B. Scott and D.E.R. Watt, 8 vols (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1996), VII, p. 46-7.

⁶⁹ MacDougall, pp. 346-7.

⁷⁰ McClune, pp. 92-5.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-5.

actually refer to James IV and serve to caution him against dangers that can face minor kings.

Not only does Ireland group Scipio with these historical and mythical kings, but he also refers to him as the emperor of Rome in several passages – a historically inaccurate distinction (118, 140, 157), which may gesture towards Scottish imperial ambitions in the period. Despite this emphasis, however, we only learn of one of Scipio's conquests: his conquest over Spain. In two passages, Ireland relates different versions of how Scipio conquered Spain: one in which he laid siege to a walled town previously unbreeched and won it and the realms of Spain, and another in which he gained much of Spain through his nobility and authority rather than through battle (140, 142). Although these two versions vary greatly (despite both coming from Livy's *Historiae*), they both reinforce Scipio's rightful status as a ruler. He has the military skill and might Ireland often stresses are needed as a king, but he also has the dignity and bearing of a king – qualities that Ireland argues are inherent to kings with royal blood in his argument advocating for hereditary kingship (153, 194).⁷² Scipio's Spanish conquest may further be tied the Scottish foundation myth of Scota, the daughter of Moses' pharaoh. The legend has Scota settling in Spain after fleeing Egypt upon her father's death, and her descendants ultimately settle Ireland and Scotland.⁷³ And so, Ireland's use of Scipio may be a reference to Scotland's mythical foundation and illustrious past.

With Ireland's use of exemplars, we see him working within the broad literary tradition of advisory works. Though some rulers he chose are conventional to the

⁷² Andrew of Wyntoun refers to Scipio as conqueror of Spain but does not go into further detail. Andrew of Wyntoun, p. 126.

⁷³ Wingfield, pp. 9-10.

discourse, Ireland adapts and positions them to better reflect concerns he held for Scottish governance, such as youthful kingship, imperial ambitions, and a king and kingdom's downfall. We also see Ireland navigate the change in power between James III and IV. He provides exemplary rulers plagued by the same woes that James III faced, and as a result, they function as either a call for James III to change his style of governance or as a cautionary tale for James IV.

Justice and the Common Profit

A substantial aspect of the *Meroure* is the need for a monarch and his ministers to uphold justice and act for the 'common proffit', a phrase meaning for benefit of the realm's subjects and one which, as I discuss below, was used in many forms of Scottish literature in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (119). Ireland explores these issues throughout the *Meroure* both within sections dependent upon his sources and his own, original material. Administering the law was an expectation of the monarch, and both insular and continental advisory works as well as biblical and classical texts stress its importance.⁷⁴ We can see this in Andrew of Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle*, Hay's *Buke of the Gouveraunce of Princis*, and in *De Regimine Principum Bonum Consilium* (c. 1461).⁷⁵ Additionally, the idea that kings and ministers should act for the common profit of the realm can be found in both medieval Scottish political literature and legal documents. The idea is especially significant to Hay's and Ireland's writings as well as many other anonymous poems of the era. Roger Mason notes that 'Government was divinely ordained, not for the aggrandisement of the ruler, but for the welfare of the

⁷⁴ Roger A. Mason, *Kingship and the Commonweal* (East Lothian, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 1998), p. 11.

⁷⁵ Emily Wingfield, "'Qwhen Alexander our Kynge was Dede": Kingship and Good Governance in Andrew of Wyntoun's *Original Chronicle*', in *Premodern Scotland: Literature and Governance 1420-1587*, ed. by Joanna Martin and Emily Wingfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 19-30 (pp. 21, 24-5); Mapstone, pp. 13, 23, 45, 63-4.

ruled... through, that is, the maintenance of the bonum commune' (common good).⁷⁶

The prevalence of such material suggests that there was a need to stress the importance of governing for the common good – possibly James' failure to administer justice.

Parliamentary records feature complaints on James' failure to travel on justice ayres (as seen in parliament records for 1473, 1478, 1484, and 1485), and this prevented him from being able to settle feuds, which were allowed to fester in the king's absence.⁷⁷

Ireland navigates such issues throughout his discussion on justice, providing guidance on how the Scottish king ought to best serve his people and God by ministering the law.

Much of Ireland's discussion of justice is framed within a religious context. On initial analysis, this conceptualisation of justice appears to reflect the pastoral nature of the *Meroure* and its source material, but it is again a topos of advisory literature. Ireland argues that a ruler is ordained by God to ensure justice is administered, and though Ireland differentiates between divine and human created justice, he often intertwines the two. Justice, Ireland argues, is the foundation of rule and the exercise of authority. Because God commands justice be administered, it is the king's duty (in fact, his most essential duty) to ensure the law is upheld (105, 155, 158-9). Ireland writes that a king will only know how to rule in such divinely-ordained justice by being knowledgeable of scripture and theology (106). In support of this, Ireland relies heavily upon biblical evidence. He cites Proverbs 8.15, 'Per me reges regnant et legum conditores iusta decernunt' ('By me kings reign, and lawgivers decree just things') and notes how David and Solomon were knowledgeable in law and holy scripture, the latter of which he describes as the foundation and fountain of justice (106). Yet, Hay also frames justice as

⁷⁶ Mason, p. 33.

⁷⁷ MacDougall, p. 137.

a monarch's divinely given duty in two of his works. His *Gournaunce of Princis* expresses the divine nature of justice.

Hevyn & erde was maid and ordanyt throu justice. And be justice the kingis and princis ar ordanyt to gouerne realmes and peple... ffor justice is the forme and the foundement yat god the glorious has sett to gouerne all his creaturis to drawe thame till him at the last. And tharfore suld all princis and kings folow his steppis.⁷⁸

Meanwhile, his *Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour* expresses the monarch's obligation to divinely-given justice.

“Na hecht sould keptit be
 Agane gud faith, law, richt, and weretie,
 Gud thewis, honeste, na richt iustice,
 For all this to the croun is preiudice.
 The king first [takis] ane aith to God and law –
 The first ainth to be keptit first aw” (II, 7073-8).

This conceptualisation is not limited to Scottish literature, though, for the *Secreta* similarly argues that a king is like God and must resemble him in his mercy. It says, ‘In justicia exiterunt celi creati et constituti sunt super terram: in justicia eciam missi fuerunt prophete sanctissimi. Justicia autem est forma intellectus quam creavit Deus gloriosus, et perduxit creaturam suam ad ipsum’ (It is through justice that the heavens

⁷⁸ For the sake of clarity, I have utilised modern punctuation for quotations from *The Gouvernaunce of Princis*. Hay, *The Gouvernaunce of Princis*, III, p. 111.

stand over the earth, and it was for justice that the holy prophets were sent. And justice is the form of the reason which God gives to those most beloved of Him).⁷⁹ Because of the *Secreta*'s influence on advisory discourse since its translation into Latin in the thirteenth century and because we see the king's duty to justice as divinely mandated in other advice to princes texts, Ireland's treatment of justice is not simply a result of his sermon source or book VII's position within a pastoral treatise but rather a topos of the discourse. Ireland, however, puts it to novel use by directing the king to abide by church doctrine to govern justly.

In several passages, Ireland notes that it is the king's duty to uphold justice because he is the God's servant on earth, using the phrases 'gouverneur' and 'louetennand of god' (105, 155, 158-9). All of Ireland's uses of the phrase 'louetennand of god' are in reference to the king's responsibility to administer justice within the realm, which are tied to the Scottish idea of lieutenancy, a position given in an effort to help govern the kingdom, often with the role of executing justice. This view of the monarch as God's servant on earth, particularly in regard to ensuring justice, is also found in Hay's *Gournaunce of Princis*. He writes, 'A king lyknyt to god ffor he is as depute and mynister to god and suld folow him - and be lyke him & conforme him till him jn all his dedis of justice vertu and veritee ffor all the gouernaunce and ordinaunce of the warld' (111). 'Depute', or deputy, sometimes denoted the position under a lieutenant in medieval Scottish government, and other times deputy and lieutenant were used interchangeably.⁸⁰ Lieutenancies could be used in the case of minorities, as with James II, during a king's absence, as with David II upon his imprisonment in England,

⁷⁹ *Secretum Secretorum*, pp. 123, 224.

⁸⁰ 'Depute, Deput', in *Dictionaries of the Scots Language* < https://dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/depute_n > [accessed 7 August 2023]

or due to the king's infirmity, as with Robert II.⁸¹ In fact, after James III's imprisonment in 1483, parliament recommended that his brother, the duke of Albany be given a lieutenancy with the purpose of guarding the borders.⁸² Yet, by the sixteenth century, the phrase God's lieutenant to describe the Scottish king was stretched to justify his authority and the people's submission to him. The first instance of this is found in James VI's treatise, *The True Law of Free Monarchies*.⁸³ References to lieutenancies and deputies also shows an adoption of and preoccupation with legal language that appears in Scottish advisory literature, which, Mapstone notes 'heighten the sense of the application of this advice to the Scottish monarchy'. It is likely that Hay and Ireland gained familiarity with such language through their work. Hay would have learned such language in his work transcribing legal and parliamentary materials and Ireland in his attendance in parliament as James III's counsellor and advisor.⁸⁴

The king is not only expected to maintain justice himself but also to ensure his ministers do the same. Ireland tells James that it is his duty as king to ensure judges and counsellors attend to justice (advice also found in *Lancelot of the Laik*), and James should do so by selecting men who, among other things, love God, submit themselves to justice and reason, and strive for the augmentation and conservation of the king's authority (113).⁸⁵ Ireland writes that a good minister 'lufis god and his law and obeyis to

⁸¹ Norman Reid and Michael Penman, 'Guardian-Lieutenant-Governor: Absentee Monarchy and Proxy Power in Scotland's Long Fourteenth Century', in *Absentee Authority across Medieval Europe*, ed. by Frédérique Lachaud and Michael Penman (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017), pp. 191-218 (pp. 212-4).

⁸² Anna McHugh, 'The Aberdeen Articles', in *Premodern Scotland: Literature and Governance 1420-1587*, ed. by Joanna Martin and Emily Wingfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 99-111 (p. 100).

⁸³ James VI, 'The Trew Law of Free Monarchies', in *The Political Works of James I* <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.03.0071:section=4:subsection=2>> [Accessed 7 July 2024]

⁸⁴ Mapstone, pp. 6, 74, 79.

⁸⁵ *Lancelot of the Laik*, 1611-7, 1969.

it/ þan is þa gret takin þat he is iust' and 'lufis þe king[,] he lufis his law and kepis it' (113). This quotation matches advice Hay provides in the *Gouernaunce of Princis*: 'leue euill vicis and flee euill company; lufand law & justice and draw to wys men' (116). Though Hay emphasises what one should avoid and Ireland emphasises obedience to God, both writers conflate justice with Christian morality. In doing so, they provide a manner in which the king can discern good advisors. According to Hay, a king should select advisors by observing what vices they avoid and what kind of company they keep while Ireland believes a king should select advisors who are pious and administer the law. Such advice on how to select members of council is more explicit than is often found in advisory works, which tends to advise that a king ought to have good counsel but does not provide how to determine it.

In addition to upholding justice because of divine obligation, Ireland argues that a king must do so for the sake of his subjects and realm. Partially, this is because a king ought to serve as protector to his subjects, preventing their oppression, but it is also because he relies upon the support of his people. He expresses this in a passage adapted from Gerson's 'Vivat Rex' (121):

And þe king is oblist to þe peple to kepe þame in iustice and in þar defence[,] for as we se þat þe heid in þe natural body be wit ledis and gouernis the vthir membris[.] And it may nocht indur w^tout þe laif of the membris[.] Richtsua the king w^tout his peple may nocht indur[.] And betuix þe king and his pepill is double obligacioun of apir syd for a gudnes requiris ane vthir[...] the lord and prince oblist to god (127).

The body politic metaphor was popular in Western political thought in the high and late Middle Ages. In Scottish literature, it can be found in Arthur's dreams of the dismemberment of his body in *Lancelot of the Laik*.⁸⁶ It is perhaps best known, though, through John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*: 'Pedibus vero solo iugiter inhaerentibus, agricolae coaptantur; quibus capitis prouidentia tanto magis necessaria est, ... qui totius corporis erigunt, sustinent, & promouent molem' ('Furthermore, the feet coincide with peasants perpetually bound to the soil, for whom it is all the more necessary that the head take precautions... and those who erect, sustain and move forward the mass of the whole body are justly owed shelter and support') (L 214. P 67). Cary Nederman has argued that the *Policraticus* recasts the classical analogy as a physiological model to stress the cooperation of the body's various parts for a common purpose.⁸⁷ This interpretation aligns with Gerson's and Ireland's use of the body politic metaphor, for they use the metaphor to describe the mutualism that should exist between a king and his subjects, in which individuals and groups are expected to collaborate with one another. John of Salisbury stresses the importance of the peasants, for all other parts of society rely upon them. He frames the metaphor more positively than Ireland or Gerson and argues that when all parts of the body politic work together, the kingdom will endure. Instead, Gerson and Ireland put a different emphasis on the metaphor. They use it to warn rulers that their kingdoms will not last if they fail to understand and appreciate the important role their subjects play in the health of the kingdom. A more negative cast of the advice aligns with the pastoral nature of the *Meroure*, which

⁸⁶ Joanna Martin, *Kingship and Love in Scottish Poetry, 1424-1540* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 44

⁸⁷ Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 199; Cary J. Nederman, 'The Physiological Significance of the Organic Metaphor of John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*', in *History of Political Thought*, 8 (1987), 211-23 (p. 214).

underscores the adverse consequences of actions in order to guide its readers towards salvation.

And although Ireland adapts his passage from ‘Vivat Rex’, his choice to include it and his additional instruction that a king is obligated to keep his people in justice (and his emphasis on upholding justice throughout the *Meroure*) is most likely a response to James III’s reign. The inclusion of the body politic metaphor and the described reciprocal relationship between ruler and the ruled is likely because of James’ failure to gain the support of many of his magnates and ecclesiasts. As the 1480s progressed, James began to lose supporters and gain powerful enemies among the church and his magnates, and this, in part, led to his usurpation. Conflict developed during the elections for the bishoprics of Glasgow and Dunkeld when James’ nominations, George Carmichael and Alexander Inglis, did not receive papal approval, and tensions between the newly appointed bishops and the king developed. During the uprising in 1488, James’ reliance upon the earl of Buchan, a former Lauder lord, lost him support of some of his loyal magnates.⁸⁸ By using the body politic metaphor to delineate the king’s duty to provide justice (and his emphasis on this duty throughout the work), Ireland underscores a common complaint of James’: his failure to travel on justice ayres. Following the Lauder Crisis, parliament presented a series of articles in December 1482, including one which ordered justice ayres to be held. James squashed the articles, but the issue was brought forth again by parliament in February 1484. James’ failure to govern as expected and for the sake of his people and those who supported him, then, were key concerns of Ireland’s, and because of Ireland’s phrase ‘the king w^tout his

⁸⁸ MacDougall, pp. 175-7, 287-91-2, 337-8.

people may nocht indur', the passage becomes both a description of the king's duties and a warning to James IV of what befell his father.

Coinciding with the belief that a king should uphold justice to gain his people's loyalty is the need for a monarch to govern not for himself but for his people. Common to medieval political theory is the idea that a king is responsible for his subjects' physical wellbeing, and we have seen this in the *Policraticus*, the *Speculum Regis*, and *De Regimine Principum*.⁸⁹ But to describe this idea, Ireland employs the aforementioned phrase 'common profit'. The phrase is specifically linked to the Scottish legal system where it offered a conception of Scottish rule in which governance was for the benefit of the subjects and appears in a variety of government documents and literature of the period. Its earliest appearance is from an act of parliament in 1399 in which certain magnates swore to help David, duke of Rothesay, govern for the 'comoun profite' while his father was unwell.⁹⁰ A 1472 letter under James III's privy seal and a 1517 court record from the burgh of Selkirk referred to the term when discussing the building of a new town for the community. In addition to these government documents, 'common profit' was frequently used in fifteenth-century Scottish advisory literature that asserted that governing on behalf of the common profit was a sign of good kingship.⁹¹ Hay's *The Buke of the Law of Armys* (1456) and the *Gouvernaunce of Princis* argue that a good ruler, whether king or lord, holds the common profit of the realm over

⁸⁹ John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. by Cary J. Nederman, pp. 33, 58; Aquinas, p. 97.

⁹⁰ *Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland* < <http://www.rps.ac.uk/mss/1399/1/3> > [accessed 22 October 2023].

⁹¹ *Charters and Other Documents Relating to the City of Edinburgh, A.D. 1143-1540* (Edinburgh: John Greig and Son, 1871), p. 134; Peter Symms, *Social Control in a Sixteenth-Century Burgh: A Study of the Burgh Court book of Selkirk 1503-1545* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1986), p. 101.

his own profit.⁹² Because it is not used in English advisory works, ‘common profit’ appears to be a uniquely Scottish phrase, and by using it, Ireland assimilates a concept key to Scottish legal and advisory material into his work that was largely based upon French advisory material.

Oftentimes, Ireland uses ‘common profit’ rather than following his source material. In one passage, for instance, Ireland asserts that a tyrant is a king who ‘is iniust, vicius, lufis his self and nocht the commoune proffit’ and one who wishes his people to lack ‘substance’ (129). This language largely mimics Gerson’s ‘Vivat Rex’, although it differs in two, key ways. First, Ireland adds that a tyrant desires his people to lack ‘substance’, and this desire echoes William of Pagula’s complaints in his *Speculum Regis*. Second, Ireland writes ‘commoune proffit’ rather than Gerson’s ‘son propre prouffit’ (‘his own profit’).⁹³ The change, then, echoes passages from Hay’s *The Buke of the Law of Armys* and the *Gouernaunce of Princis* which have equivalent passages. In the *Gouernaunce of Princis*, Hay writes that an unworthy king rules for his ‘singlere prouffit before the commoun prouffit[,] and syk a king may nocht lang lest’ (61). In *The Buke of Law of Armys*, he writes that ‘a verray noble prince is ay enclynit to the commoun prouffit, and takis ever payne and travail for the commons, and mare for the profit of the commons of his contree na for his profit singular. Bot ay the grete tyrane lukis till his awin prouffit’.⁹⁴ The closeness in Gerson’s/Ireland’s and Hay’s messages and language are notable. It is possible that Hay was familiar with Gerson’s sermons, for Hay would have had access to his works from his time as a member of

⁹² Gilbert Hay, *The Buke of the Law of Army*, in *Gilbert of the Haye’s Prose Manuscript*, ed. by J.H. Stevenson, 2 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1901), I, pp. 67, 70, 126; Gilbert Hay, *Gouernaunce of Princis*, p. 61.

⁹³ Gerson, ‘Vivat Rex’, p. 1158.

⁹⁴ Hay, *The Book of the Law of Armys*, p. 70.

Charles VII's royal service.⁹⁵ Although Hay's and Ireland's passages have the same meaning as Gerson's, their choice to use 'common profit' is deliberately Scottish. Given Hay's early use of the phrase and his work as clerk transcribing legal documents, his use of the phrase is likely an adoption of Scottish legal language. Ireland's use of the phrase, however, may be an engagement with Scottish advisory literature; we can speculate that Ireland was familiar with Hay's work though we do not have evidence to support this.

The phrase common profit highlights the importance of a king's obligations to his subjects and the need for him to govern on their behalf, which was an expectation for Scottish monarchs. Supporting this idea is Ireland's use of two exemplary rulers: Nebuchadnezzar and Scipio Africanus. With Nebuchadnezzar, Ireland uses the tale of the Babylonian king's dream, but he interprets the king's dream not simply as a prophetic dream but as a sign of his care as a ruler:

Be gret king of babilone and cauld Nabugodonsar liand in his bed had gret consideracioun of the thingis pertenant to his realme for þe tym tocum and þat was a gret takin of wertu[.] Þat a king thinkis of þe state of his realme and to put it in gud reule and wertu for þe tym tocum als weill as for his tyme for þat is perfit luf and amor of the realme and common proffit (156).

While Ireland then continues with the traditional version of the tale in which Nebuchadnezzar dreams of a statue and Daniel interprets the dream as representing the fall of subsequent kingdoms (also used in the *Confessio Amantis*), his initial description

⁹⁵ Hay likely travelled to France in the early 1420s and spent twenty-four years in France. J.H. Stevenson, 'Introduction', in *Gilbert of the Haye's Prose Manuscript*, ed. by J.H. Stevenson, 2 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1901), I, pp. vii-cvii (pp. xxvi-xxvii).

of the dream (a description not found in Gerson's retelling of the tale) as a sign of Nebuchadnezzar's love for his realm and common profit is unique (156).⁹⁶ Nebuchadnezzar's dream is most often used to comment on prophetic dreams. For instance, John of Salisbury uses the tale in the *Policraticus* to stress the mutability of prophetic dreams. However, Ireland's version of the tale serves a different function. It is a warning of the potential loss of kingdom (a warning prevalent throughout the *Meroure*), for even great kingdoms will inevitably fall. Unlike John of Salisbury and William of Pagula, however, Ireland presents Nebuchadnezzar as a thoughtful ruler concerned about his people, and Ireland does so to support his argument that a king should think of his realm and the common profit to provide effective governance (156).

Scipio Africanus is also portrayed as ruling for the common profit. According to Ireland, Scipio spent each morning on matters of governance and took counsel of 'quhat thingis he had a do for þe commone proffit' (157). Again, Ireland translates the 'le bien comun' of his source, Gerson's *Rex in sempiternum vive*, with the common profit.⁹⁷ With both Nebuchadnezzar and Scipio, Ireland shows the rulers to be purposeful and deliberate in governing on the behalf of the common profit. They do this either with (Scipio) or without counsel (Nebuchadnezzar), but it is the act of allotting time to solely think about the common profit that makes these men good rulers to Ireland.

Despite the reciprocal relationship between ruler and the ruled, Ireland remains silent on the people's right to extract themselves from a ruler who fails to uphold his obligation to them. Ireland describes such a king as a tyrant who is unjust and loves

⁹⁶ Given Ireland's familiarity with Chaucer and his reference to English authors, it is possible that Ireland was familiar with Gower as well. Gower, I, Prologue, 585-662; Gerson, 'Rex in sempiternum vive', in *Œuvres completes*, VII, p. 1012.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1012.

himself but neither the common profit nor his people (123, 129). A tyrant can ascend the throne if he ‘vsurpis þe office of the place of the king’ or is placed there by God as punishment for the people’s wickedness (129). This explanation of tyranny appears original to Ireland and may be a reaction to Alexander, duke of Albany’s attempt to become king, but the definition also reflects medieval political thought. Such conceptions of tyranny can be traced to the early medieval figures St. Gregory and Isidore of Seville.⁹⁸ John of Salisbury notably built upon the conception of tyranny in the *Policraticus*, in which he warns of the consequences of tyranny and argues that a tyrant’s subjects can rebel against him.⁹⁹ How a people may extract themselves from a tyrant, though, is missing from the *Meroure*. At first this seems unusual because Gerson’s ‘Vivat Rex’ includes a passage justifying resistance to tyranny – a passage Ireland glosses over in the *Meroure*. Roger Mason argues that, although the right to resist and depose a tyrant was familiar to Scottish political thought and history in the fourteenth century, political thought of the fifteenth century actually shied away from sanctioned resistance to a ruler.¹⁰⁰ Such avoidance of political radicalism can be seen in James III’s deposition. First, the rebels did not disavow the Stewart dynasty but, rather, aligned themselves with the king’s son. Second, none of the rebels admitted to killing the king. Instead, various accounts exist of who murdered James III, including one tale of an unknown assassin claiming to be a priest, and the murder was ultimately explained away early in James IV’s reign.¹⁰¹ In addition to Mason’s argument, Ireland’s avoidance of how the people may resist tyranny is common to advisory discourse. Beyond the

⁹⁸ Cary J. Nederman, ‘Three Concepts of Tyranny in Western Medieval Political Thought’, *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 14 (2019), 1-22 (pp. 5-9).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Mason, p. 9.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-5, 30-1; MacDougall, *James III*, p. 261; McHugh, pp. 108-9.

Policraticus, no other advisory texts in this thesis discuss how the people may depose a tyrant and instead allude to the potential ramifications a tyrant might face, such as the loss of kingdom. Ireland employs this approach in his discussion of various exemplars, intimating applicability to James III's reign. Though there is limited contemporary evidence, James came to be described as a 'a most insatiable tyrant' by the chroniclers Pitscottie, Lesley, Ferreri, and Buchanan.¹⁰²

Ireland expects the king's ministers, like the monarch, to work on behalf of the common profit, and in doing so, Ireland is providing advice applicable to both the monarch and his advisors. This link suggests that the advisory work was intended for royal advisors, which is supported by the manuscript's ownership (as discussed earlier). Ireland advises that a king should choose counsellors that 'lufis þe common proffit... for his luf & seruice and þe gud of þe haill pepil' (119). This advice is found in the 'Vivat Rex' as well, but Ireland again uses 'common proffit' instead of Gerson's 'le bien commun' and adds the phrase for 'þe gud of þe haill pepil'.¹⁰³ The changes emphasise the need for counsellors to act according to Scottish standards of governance and in alignment with the conduct expected of the king. Counsellors and the common profit are indeed linked elsewhere in fifteenth-century Scottish political literature. In the *Gouernaunce of Princis*, Hay writes that counsellors who 'grape gredily to thy gudis' should not be trusted as these men desire to keep neither their lord's honour nor the 'commoun prouffit' (118). Paralleling this warning, *De regimine principum bonum consilium*, a poem centring on the reformation of the justice system and the relationship

¹⁰² MacDougall, pp. 283-5; George Buchanan, *History of Scotland*, 6 vols (Glasgow: Blackie, Fullarton, & Co., 1827), II, p. 202.

¹⁰³ Jean Gerson, 'Vivat Rex', p. 1165.

between king and counsel, advises against covetous counsellors lest the king wishes to forsake the ‘commone profet’.¹⁰⁴

Ireland’s, Hay’s, and *De regimine* poet’s advice, then, suggests the desire for counsellors who minister for the people and not their own benefit, a common complaint in advisory works but no less applicable to James III’s reign. Perceived favourites, such as Thomas Cochrane and John Ramsay, were believed to have received their positions and been heavily rewarded through their relationship with the king rather than on their own merits.¹⁰⁵ And although Ireland, Hay, and *De regimine* poet provide characteristics that counsellors should or should not possess, Hay is the only one who provides an explicit way in which the king can discern false advisors from true: avoid those who openly covet your wealth. Ireland’s choice not to offer a specific way to discern who the king ought to trust is, as we have seen, a topos of advisory discourse and draws attention to the king’s need to be able to discern, an essential quality of an effective ruler and one espoused in the *Policraticus*, *De nobilitatibus*, and the *Confessio*.

With the *Meroure*’s passages on justice, we can see the intermingling of conventions of advisory discourse and fifteenth-century Scottish political thought. Ireland underscores the need for the king to administer justice and the expectation that he rule on behalf of the people rather than himself. Although much of the *Meroure* is heavily indebted to its sources, Ireland selects particular passages and adapts them in meaningful ways to craft an advisory work specific to the political environment of late fifteenth-century Scotland.

¹⁰⁴ *De regiminie principum bonum consilium*, in *The First Scottish Books*, (2006) <<https://digital.nls.uk/firstscottishbooks/page/?folio=105>> [accessed 2 July 2023]

¹⁰⁵ MacDougall, pp. 178, 298-9.

Criticism and Use of Flattery

As we have seen in this thesis, advisory works simultaneously engage in and warn against flattery – a strategy that tempers criticism against the king while providing advice on kingship – and the *Meroure* is no exception to this. Ireland cautions James, ‘The flatterour is lik ane ymage in a merour [.] For as þou will inclyn or move þe sa dois incontinent þe ymage[,] sa þe flatterour euir applies him to say quhat euir plesis þe lord’ (130.) This is one of many warnings against flattery that Ireland provides, but unlike other advisory works, Ireland’s treatment of flattery takes on a pastoral tone, for he stresses the effect flattery has upon the soul and the demonic nature of flatterers.

Advice against flatterers in the first half of book VII is primarily a truncated version of Gerson’s ‘Vivat Rex’. The advice Ireland provides is directed at both the actions of the king and his ministers. He writes that a good judge does not engage in either flattery or adulation, for if he does, he may convince the king that he is not given to tyranny even if he is (113). To avoid such men, the king must surround himself with those who speak the truth. Ireland warns that failing to do so ‘slais his [the king’s] saule be tressoune [.] it causis presumpcioun[.] it causis þat he gif his hert and luf to euill people... it slais and distroyis þe mast noble counsalour’ (121). Original to Ireland, this quotation is striking for several reasons. Firstly, Ireland’s use of treason casts the relationship between a man and his soul in a political light and intimates that a king’s care for his private soul is important to his ability to govern others. It also shows how flattery can lead to a king surrounding himself with evil people over noble counsellors, who would, as Ireland has written throughout the *Meroure*, minister on behalf of the common profit. This concern about the royal soul and attempt to guide the king towards salvation is also found in the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III* and highlights the pastoral

nature of the *Meroure* and its theological framework. Ireland further develops this pastoral tone by demonising flatterers, much like William of Pagula demonised the king's ministers engaged in purveyance. Flatterers, Ireland writes, are 'seruandis of þe deuill and begylis þe prince and garris [causes] him trow [trust] þat falshed is verite' (130). This quotation is largely similar to Gerson's, which says, 'C'est l'enchanteur du diable qui charme les seigneurs et fait apparoir de faulsete verite'.¹⁰⁶ Though nearly identical, Ireland's version uses the phrase 'þe prince' rather than Gerson's 'les seigneurs', a change that directs his advice specifically to the king. It is likely that the change to 'þe prince' reflects the change in audience from Gerson's sermon to Ireland's advisory work addressed to James IV.

Ireland's anxieties surrounding flatterers lie with the influence they hold over the court, for they not only convince the king that lies are truth but also put good and virtuous men out of the king's grace (130). This comment, Ireland's addition, reflects the concerns surrounding James III's circle of advisors, whose counsel was believed to be favoured over that of James' loyal magnates.¹⁰⁷ Ireland further cautions that flatterers cause rulers to believe they are of great dignity without reason, citing Juvenal's 'Nil est quod credere de se non possit cum laudatur diis equa potestas' ('There is nothing of which it [power] cannot believe itself capable when it is praised as equal to that of the gods') (130). To support his claim against flatterers, Ireland, like Gerson, mentions several exemplary rulers who believed they were divinely favoured, including the familiar Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander the Great and the unexpected Persian king Khosrow and Adam and Eve (130). Beyond this brief explanation and allusions, Ireland

¹⁰⁶ Gerson, 'Vivat Rex', p. 1161.

¹⁰⁷ MacDougall, p. 338.

and Gerson do not elucidate and quickly continue with their discussion on flatterers. Ireland and Gerson likely believed their readers to be familiar with the biblical, classical, and historical references – an assumption likely true since literacy in Scotland in the fifteenth century was still primarily limited to clerics/bureaucrats (who were Ireland’s intended though unexpressed audience) and members of noble families.¹⁰⁸

Despite these warning against flattery, Ireland engages in flattery himself, which we have seen is typical of the discourse. It is, however, more limited than we have seen in other works with most of his flattery centring on the king’s position and lineage: ‘Souuerane lord þi hienes þat is maist Souuerane and heist in this realme’, ‘tak tent [attention] to þi heritage and to þi realme’, ‘þi noble linage & crovne’ (134, 142). If we interpret these comments as being written under James IV’s reign, they help establish James IV’s legitimacy by emphasising his exalted position and status as legitimate heir to the Stuart monarchy. They also relate to Ireland’s later argument that the greatest realms are those whose rulers are chosen through succession (150). Further, these quotations serve two functions. Firstly, they are an employment of *gentillesse* that often ties virtue and morality to high birth and is a concept used by Chaucer to examine social positions and gender roles.¹⁰⁹ Secondly, they align with propaganda of the late 1480s and early 1490s that attempted to legitimise James IV and mitigate his associations with James III’s death. The October Parliament of 1488 claimed that the late King James lost the throne on account of heeding bad counsel and that his death was not intentional but

¹⁰⁸ Mason, ‘Kingship, Tyranny and the Right to Resist in Fifteenth Century Scotland’, p. 137.

¹⁰⁹ This is one of several definitions for *gentillesse* in Chaucer’s work. He also defines *gentillesse* as a true morality unrelated to social position. This definition can be seen in the *Wife of Bath’s Tale* and *Clerk’s Tale*. Bernard S. Levy, ‘*Gentillesse* in Chaucer’s “Clerk’s” and “Merchant’s Tales,”’ in *The Chaucer Review*, 11 (1977), 306-18 (pp. 306-7). Donald C. Baker, ‘Chaucer’s Clerk and the Wife of Bath on the Subject of *Gentillesse*’, *Studies in Philology*, 59 (1962), 631-40 (pp. 632-4).

merely “‘happened’”.¹¹⁰ Propaganda like this was frequently used following a transition in political authority to cement the new king’s position as the rightful ruler. For instance, the transition from Ricardian rule resulted in many Lancastrian-sponsored poems aimed at establishing Henry IV’s rightful place as king, such as the ‘Record and Process’ (1399) and Gower’s *Confessio* (as discussed in the last chapter) and *Cronica tripartita* (1400).¹¹¹ Support for James IV’s reign would have been particularly important for Ireland, who was one of the few loyal advisors of James III that continued to work in the royal court following the usurpation.¹¹²

At other points, Ireland appeals to the king’s power, referring to James as ‘mychti prince’ and ‘hie and mychty prince’ (108, 142, 164). While these addresses vary in context, one is positioned within Ireland’s description of ‘Empriour Scipio’ as a noble and worthy ruler who had domination over the world (142). Given Scottish imperial ambitions, Ireland’s use of the phrase ‘mychti prince’ following his story of Scipio may be a reference to and a way to encourage further Scottish expansion.¹¹³ Beyond these examples, much of Ireland’s praise towards the king take the form of appositives directed at his reader: ‘þe noble king and prince’ and ‘all noble princis’ (123, 136). Such limited use of flattery is unusual to the discourse, and it, as well as the emphasis placed upon the dangers of flatterers, reflects the *Meroure*’s overall purpose. The work’s aim is to be an ABC of Christianity that includes a book on good governance rather than to be strictly an advisory work. Because of this purpose, there was less of a need to flatter the addressee of the work, for the need to guide the king on

¹¹⁰ MacDougall, p. 347.

¹¹¹ Carlson, pp. 1-4, 110-1, 117-8.

¹¹² MacDougall, p. 272.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 80, 92.

religious matters was more important than tempering any criticism stemming from the instruction on kingship.

The Meroure and Its Position in Advisory Discourse

Understanding the political environment of late fifteenth-century Scotland is essential in understanding *The Meroure of Wyssdome*. As a work begun during the reign of James III but redirected to his young son, James IV, it serves as instruction on good governance as well as a warning on the dangers that may befall a king. Although the *Meroure* is noted for its reliance upon its sources and the derivative nature of its advice, John Ireland, in fact, wields his sources and adapts them in order to respond to the tumultuous political environment of late fifteenth-century Scotland. Ireland's advice highlights the anxieties and concerns that proliferated towards the end of James III's and beginning of James IV's reigns. For example, in Ireland's discussions on counsel and justice, he shifts the focus from the general advice of his sources to the specific conciliar needs of a youthful and inexperienced king and the emphasis on upholding justice. In support of this advice, Ireland utilises topoi of advisory discourse, including the use of exemplary rulers with pointed applicability to James III (some of which are common to the discourse but others unique to the *Meroure*). It is through these elements and topics that we can see Ireland's engagement with contemporary Scottish advisory literature as well as with the discourse as a whole. Ireland's reliance upon advisory conventions, such as the use of exemplary rulers and discussion on counsel and flattery, shows how advice to princes texts remained the same across national borders and the types of issues that commonly affected kingdoms in crisis periods. However, in many instances, Ireland adapted these conventions to align with the late fifteenth-century Scottish political system and environment. With these adaptations and departures from

his source material, we see how Ireland's work aligns with Scottish advisory works and the issues specific to the time and place in which the *Meroure* was written.

Conclusion: Advice to Princes Texts in Medieval Britain

A long-lived and flourishing form of literature in medieval Britain, advice to princes texts were used to comment on contemporary politics. In part, this was due to the discourse's flexibility, for writers were able to adapt its conventions to provide guidance on governance applicable to the political environment in which they wrote. Individually, these advice to princes texts, written in different languages and across borders, reveal the specific concerns writers held for their kingdom and the traditions of the literary culture they formed. By analysing these works across space and time, we are able to see the development of the discourse, how it was transmitted, and how its discursive conventions were adapted in relation to specific moments. Together, the advisory works reveal the expectations monarchs were held to, perceptions of royal authority, and the types of political concerns that befell medieval England and Scotland and were reflected in contemporary literary culture.

Often seen as compilations, in which the authors combined advice, adages, and tales from ancient and medieval European literary traditions, advice to prince texts drew upon advisory discursive conventions but used them in different ways, for different purposes, and with different effects. In manuscripts, these works were often paired with texts of other genres, including pastoral literature, fables, and manuals on household management and military tactics. The discourse was so pervasive that advisory material can even be found in romances. Such is the case with *Lancelot of the Laik* – a romance in which the middle section, an address by the clerk Amytans to King Arthur, provides guidance on good kingship. The discourse's versatility is apparent, and it is this versatility that allows advisory authors to use it to react to periods of political crisis.

Together, these works show medieval conceptions of history. In advisory works, history was used as a way to predict the future – by drawing comparisons between contemporary rulers and biblical and ancient ones, writers were able to predict what would occur. And so, they used history to guide rulers towards or away from a particular style of governance. Many exemplary rulers appeared in each advice to princes text examined in this thesis. Some, like Ahab and Saul, were used exclusively to guide monarchs against certain behaviours. Others, however, were portrayed differently based on when and where the work was composed. This is the case with Alexander the Great, who, in earlier works, was cast simultaneously as a capricious ruler and a great conqueror. However, beginning in the fourteenth century, he was cast in a more positive light. In England, the Trojan legend served as a part of the kingdom's foundation myth, and English advisory authors often associated Troy with good kingship and empire building as seen in Gower's depiction of Priam in the *Confessio*. In Scotland, though, the Trojan legend served as a cautionary tale of a kingdom's downfall, yet Ireland's use of the legend aligns more with English advisory tradition than Scottish literary tradition. This departure encourages us to view literature in a transnational way, for John Ireland (a writer who lived in Scotland and France) drew influence from English and French advisory tradition in addition to that of his own country.

Advisory authors also created history, forming perceptions on current and recent kings, their counsel, and their manner of rule as well as what they wished to see. The need to write in such a manner, particularly on future imaginings of the kingdom, was particularly important during the crisis periods, in which we see many advice to princes composed. It is these periods where royal authority was questioned that advisory writers presented advice on how to effectively rule the kingdom, discussing the purpose of

royal authority and when and how it should be asserted. Though advice to princes texts offered advice reflective of the specific unstable political environments they were created in, they repeatedly express many of the same anxieties about governance, and so many of the same discussions appear across all texts examined in this thesis. Advisory writers did not view royal authority as absolute and, instead, frequently stressed that monarchs ruled for the common profit of the kingdom. Rulers were expected to work with the nobility and to seek the advice of wise and experienced counsel, and there were great concerns about the quality of counsel kings received. From the *Policraticus* to the *Meroure of Wyssdome*, each author discussed the qualities an advisor ought to possess, such as piety, experience, and truthfulness, and the king's need to discern good counsel from poor. A notable concern about counsel was the proliferation of flattery in the court and the danger that resulted from a king's susceptibility to praise and false words. Advisory authors portrayed flatterers as sycophants acting in their own best interest – depictions that often mirrored complaints lodged against monarchs in other forms of literature, specifically against Edward II and Richard II.

Advisory writers also discussed the ways in which rulers should to engage with prophecies and portents. In the *Policraticus*, the earliest advice to princes text examined, John of Salisbury expressed a hesitant belief in prophecies, dreams, and omens. However, as secular prophecies grew in influence, there was a greater acceptance of their ability to predict the future, and by the end of Angevin rule, Gerald of Wales showed a belief in their predictive power. As the Middle Ages wore on, advisory writers increasingly included allusions to political prophecies alongside biblical ones in an effort to guide rulers towards or against certain actions. Yet, anxieties surrounding royal engagement with prophecies and portents remained, and rulers were critiqued for (what

was perceived as) an overreliance upon them. This is apparent in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, in which several tales centred on the fall of a monarch who blindly believed in predictions of his future success and fortune.

This interest in prophecy meant that advisory authors often included prophecy within their works, but it was by no means the only form of literature they drew upon. Indeed, advice to princes texts were multigeneric and multidiscursive by their very nature. In addition to biblical, imperial, and apocalyptic prophecies, they drew upon pastoral and complaint literature, which were used to warn against certain actions, like purveyance, and express frustrations with governance in a formalized style. By the Late Middle Ages, advisory works were influenced by earlier insular advisory works. For instance, in the *Meroure of Wyssdome*, John Ireland utilised ideas on tyranny and the organic metaphor of the state, which were found in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*. Such engagement with other forms of literature and earlier advisory works shows that transmission of advice to princes texts was not limited to a particular kingdom but occurred across Britain and, in the case of the *Meroure of Wyssdome* and its reliance upon French sources, the continent.

The works that advisory writers drew upon also reveal medieval perceptions of textual authority. Relying upon biblical and ancient Latin texts that were already viewed as authorities, advisory authors borrowed and built upon these sources to give credence to their own works. Eventually, with the vernacularisation of the discourse, we see late medieval advisory authors referencing and using vernacular writers and their texts. Latin advisory conventions were translated into English and Scots, such as the simultaneous use and derision of flattery towards monarchs. There is also, in the case of the *Meroure of Wyssdome*, a translation from the vernacular (French) to the vernacular

(Scots). This increasing use of the vernacular suggests a change in advisory literary culture, for although Gower, Hoccleve, and Ireland wrote in the vernacular, they knew Latin. Their choice to write in English and Scots was deliberate and likely due to a change in audience for advisory works. The audience for these works was likely composed of those with a vested interest in governance (bureaucrats and the nobility), and with the growing secularisation of literacy and the increasing use of the vernacular in the royal administration, these men were more likely to be familiar with English and Scots than Latin.

Although the discourse continued to be used after the Middle Ages, only a few works were produced in Britain during the Renaissance. This includes the lost work the *Speculum principis* (1501) by John Skelton addressed to the future Henry VIII. A royal tutor, Skelton wrote the *Speculum principis* in Latin prose and during a period of relative stability in England, a departure from what we have seen of advisory discourse in the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.¹ We may speculate as to the reasons for the return to Latin and Skelton's impetus for writing it – perhaps it was Skelton's position as Henry's tutor and aligned with the scholarly expectations he held for the prince, or perhaps Skelton was influenced by humanist interest in Greek and Latin languages. Whatever the reasons, the *Speculum principis* shows us the flexibility of the discourse and its ability to be used in a variety of languages and for a variety of purposes. Despite this, it is after this work that we see a decline in composition of original advisory works in England and, by the seventeenth century, in Scotland.

¹ John Scattergood, 'Skelton, John', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* < <https://doi-org.bham-ezproxy.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25661> > [Accessed 24 September 2024]

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