

THE POLITICAL APPROPRIATION OF LYDGATE'S *FALL OF PRINCES*:  
A MANUSCRIPT STUDY OF BRITISH LIBRARY, MS HARLEY 1766

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis offers the first extended study of British Library, MS Harley 1766 (c. 1450-60), an illustrated and much abridged version of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (c. 1431-1438/39). Offering a holistic analysis of text, image, and paratextual features, it argues that the manuscript was the product of a Lydgate specialist and a team of associated artisans operating within Bury St. Edmunds during the 1450s and 1460s. Individual chapters explore the manuscript's concern with promoting both Lydgate and Bury and identify a distinct rhetoric of idealised and stereotyped kings and queens, developed by the rearranged text and amplified through the design of the visual scheme. This thesis reads these motifs against Yorkist propaganda which fêted Edward IV and condemned both Henry VI and his queen, Margaret of Anjou. The connection between Yorkist propagandist themes and Harley 1766 is a direct result of the probable patronage of the manuscript by the Tyrell family, an East Anglian gentry family whose names repeatedly appear on the manuscript's flyleaves. Commissioned as a direct response to their position as supporters of a deposed regime, Harley 1766 represents a political re-envisaging of the text designed for patrons seeking to realign themselves politically and ensure their safety in Yorkist England.

*In memory of my Grandad*

*Kenneth Trogenza*

*1925-2010*

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“One of the great things about books is sometimes  
there are some fantastic pictures”

George W. Bush

*U.S. News & World Report*

3 January 2000

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## ABBREVIATIONS

BN	Bibliothèque Nationale de France
BPU	Geneva, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire
EETS	Early English Text Society
ES	Extra Series
NS	New Series
OS	Original Series
ÖNB	Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek
SS	Supplementary Series

## INTRODUCTION

Lydgate was one of the most prolific fifteenth-century poets and was highly esteemed as an accomplished craftsman who wrote for kings and the nobility, for courtly patrons, the gentry and mercantile classes and the church with equal ease. His corpus of works ranges from epic classical works such as the *Troy Book* and the *Fall of Princes*, through documentary versification for Bury Abbey's charters (*Cartae versificatae*, British Library, MS Add. 14,848, ff. 243r-254r), courtly poetry, satires, mummings, didactic poetry, coronation pageants for Henry VI and even a 'Tretise for Lavandres' which reads as a set of versified instructions for washerwomen.<sup>1</sup> Lydgate was, if anything, more popular than either Chaucer or Gower during their respective lifetimes. Certainly, he was patronised and disseminated in a way that Chaucer and Gower never quite achieved, as can be seen from the variety of patrons he worked for and the volume of extant manuscripts. Christopher Cannon notes that 'he certainly surpassed his "master" in his "centralness", and acquired the *de facto* status of an official poet', composing poems for public occasions and repeatedly securing noble patronage.<sup>2</sup>

The volume of extant Lydgate manuscripts, many of them beautifully decorated and illustrated, testifies to the popularity of Lydgate's works to patrons in the fifteenth century. The *Index of Middle English Verse* records twenty extant complete or nearly

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<sup>1</sup> *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate: Part II: Secular Poems*, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS, OS 192 (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), p. 723. See also: Rita Copeland, 'Lydgate's Worst Poem', in *Lydgate Matters: Poetry and Material Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, eds. Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Cannon, 'Monastic Productions', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 341-3; Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 160, 298.

complete manuscript versions of Lydgate's *Troy Book* (c. 1412-20) as well as three fragments, twenty-eight manuscript copies and one fragment of the *Siege of Thebes* (c. 1421-22) and twelve manuscript copies and two fragments of his *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund* (c. 1433).<sup>3</sup>

Judging from the number of extant copies, Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (1431-1438/39) was a particularly popular text in fifteenth century England. Part of a tradition retelling the lives of classical, biblical and historical personages and their fates, Lydgate's text begins with the Fall and Expulsion of Adam and Eve, moving through classical and biblical history to the capture of King John of France by the English at Poitiers in 1356. This text was based on Laurent de Premierfait's *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* (c. 1409), itself a translation of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* (c. 1355-1360). Thirty-eight complete or nearly complete manuscript copies survive, as well as nine fragments and numerous extracts and selections in other manuscripts.<sup>4</sup> Amongst this group, one manuscript stands out both in terms of its textual content and its illustrative scheme: British Library, MS Harley 1766 (c. 1450-60). Described as the 'most enigmatic manuscript of the *Fall*', the text has been much abridged at 21,865 lines, a little over three-fifths of the

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<sup>3</sup> *Index of Middle English Verse*, <<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/host/imev>> [accessed 15<sup>th</sup> September 2010].

<sup>4</sup> *Index of Middle English Verse* <<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/host/imev/record.php?recID=1168>> [accessed 12<sup>th</sup> September 2010]. Previous counts have recorded thirty-three or thirty-four manuscripts. See Rossell Hope Robbins and John L. Cutler, *The Index of Middle English Verse: Supplement* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965) and Nigel Mortimer, *John Lydgate's 'Fall of Princes': Narrative Tragedy in its Literary and Political Contexts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005). Two of the fragments have been identified as missing leaves or quires from extant manuscripts. British Library, MS Sloane 2452 has been identified as a missing quire from San Marino, Calif., Huntington Library, MS HM 268. Philadelphia, Free Library of Philadelphia, Plimpton MS 15/487 is a single leaf from New York, Columbia University Library, Plimpton MS 255. See: A. S. G. Edwards, 'A Missing Leaf from the Plimpton *Fall of Princes*', *Manuscripta*, 15:1 (1971), 29-31; A. S. G. Edwards, 'The Huntington *Fall of Princes* and Sloane 2452', *Manuscripta*, 16: 1 (1972), 37-40; A. S. G. Edwards, 'Selections from Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*: A Checklist', *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, ser. 5, 26: 4 (1971), pp. 337-342.

original text.<sup>5</sup> Further, it has been condensed from nine books into eight, most notably by the omission of the majority of Book V and all of Book VI. The remaining text has been subject to alteration and frequent transposition of material particularly from f. 124r onwards, with the content of the ensuing eight books resulting in a text unique to this manuscript.<sup>6</sup> In addition to its distinctive textual content, Harley 1766 is amongst the most elaborately decorated of the *Fall* manuscripts, containing a prefatory presentation miniature depicting Lydgate and another monk kneeling before St. Edmund enthroned (f. 5r) and a splendid series of 156 marginal paintings which accompany and illustrate narrative episodes. Many of these depict the unpleasant and untimely deaths of the characters and maimings, stabbings, suicides, hangings and disfigurements of all kinds feature heavily in the illustrative scheme.

The scribal hand in Harley 1766 has been identified by A. S. G. Edwards and Kathleen Scott as the Edmund-Fremund, or Lydgate scribe, known to have been at work in Bury St. Edmunds in the 1450s and 1460s. This scribe was responsible for the copying and production of a further eight Lydgate manuscripts in conjunction with a team of local illustrators and decorators.<sup>7</sup> This workshop's output is striking as,

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<sup>5</sup> A. S. G. Edwards, 'The McGill Fragment of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*', *Scriptorium*, 28: 1 (1974), p. 75.

<sup>6</sup> Appendix A contains a full description of the textual layout of Harley 1766. It should be noted that the four leaf fragment, Montreal, McGill University Library, Rare Books and Special Collections Division, Medieval MS 143 (also written by the Lydgate scribe), shares Harley 1766's textual variations. However, Harley 1766 is the only complete extant manuscript to contain this version of the text. See Chapter Two for descriptions of both manuscripts.

<sup>7</sup> A. S. G. Edwards, 'Lydgate Manuscripts: Some Directions for Future Research', in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), pp. 15-26; Kathleen L. Scott, 'Lydgate's *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund*: A Newly Discovered Manuscript in Arundel Castle', *Viator*, 13 (1982), pp. 335-366. Edwards refers to the scribe as the Lydgate scribe whilst Scott (and others) prefer the Edmund-Fremund scribe. I use Edwards' designation as the scribe worked on a variety of Lydgate manuscripts, not just copies of the *Lives*. The manuscripts are: four *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund* (British Library, MS Harley 4826, British Library, MS Yates Thompson 47, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 46, and the manuscript belonging to His Grace The Duke of Norfolk, at Arundel Castle, West Sussex (no shelfmark)), two *Secrees of Old Philosophes* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud. Misc. 673 and British Library, MS Sloane 2464), one *Troy Book* (British Library,

unlike the majority of vernacular manuscripts of the period, many of their productions were designed with lengthy visual sequences.<sup>8</sup> Harley 1766 is one of its most distinctive commissions as few of the extant copies of the *Fall* contain illustration, with those that do usually featuring much shorter sequences. For example, Philadelphia, Rosenbach Museum, MS 439/16 (c. 1465-75) contains seven images on ff. 4r, 74r, 105r, 126r, 146v, 169v and 198r which function as visual bookmarks, denoting the opening of seven of the nine books. There is a gap for a miniature on f. 44r at the beginning of Book II, whilst two folios at the beginning of Book VIII have been lost, presumably having contained another miniature.<sup>9</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 263 (c. 1450) has a single full-page composite miniature on p. 7; a four-folio fragment, Montreal, McGill University Library, Rare Books and Special Collections Division, Medieval MS 143 (c. 1450-60), contains two miniatures and may have had a much fuller sequence in its complete state.<sup>10</sup>

Only one other *Fall* manuscript includes a comparably lengthy visual scheme: now split into San Marino, Calif., Huntington MS HM 268 and British Library, MS SloaneS 2452 (fragment), this mid-fourteenth century copy contains fifty-six and two images respectively. The manuscript is missing four quires at the beginning, four at the end and fifty folios within the text itself, but it is estimated that in its complete state it would have contained around ninety-five miniatures, coming closest to rivalling

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MS Arundel 99) and one fragment of a *Fall of Princes* manuscript (McGill 143). Of these, all four of the *Lives* manuscripts and the McGill fragment are illustrated.

<sup>8</sup> Few vernacular manuscripts survive with over ninety miniatures. Aside from the output of this workshop, there are two copies of Mandeville's *Travels*, British Library, MS Royal 17 C xxxviii and British Library, MS Harley 3954 with 113 and 135 images respectively and one copy of Lydgate's *Troy Book*, Manchester, John Rylands Library, English MS 1. See Kathleen L. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts 1390-1490* (London: Harvey Miller, 1996), II, p. 231.

<sup>9</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 320.

<sup>10</sup> It is likely that Huntington HM 268/Sloane 2452 and Bodley 263 are also earlier products of Bury St. Edmunds as they share stylistic similarities with British Library, MS Harley 2278, the original copy of the *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund*. See Chapter Two.

Harley 1766 in length.<sup>11</sup> Yet the design and content of these images are markedly different. In contrast to Harley 1766's marginal images, HM 268 features bordered miniatures within the body of the text. Many of these combine multiple narrative episodes, unlike Harley 1766's depiction of one episode per image. Significantly, the visual scheme of HM 268/Sloane 2452 is apparently partially based on an earlier *Des cas* manuscript with which it shares iconographic similarities: British Library, MS Royal 20 C iv.<sup>12</sup> No direct source has been identified for the Harley 1766 paintings, although over sixty French manuscripts survive and are renowned for an impressively rich visual tradition, most recently and eloquently discussed by Anne D. Hedeman.<sup>13</sup>

For such an important visual witness of Lydgate's poem, the existing scholarship on the manuscript is meagre: catalogue entries in Scott's *Later Gothic Manuscripts: 1390-1490*, references in a single volume of Bergen's four-volume edition of the *Fall*, and brief notes in articles by E. P. Hammond, Catherine Reynolds, and A. S. G. Edwards. In terms of the relationship between text and image, many commentators confine themselves to comments on the manuscript's aesthetic "worth" without substantiating discussion of the function of the images and their role in the transmission of the text.<sup>14</sup> In 1983 A. S. G. Edwards noted that the volume of extant

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<sup>11</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 231.

<sup>12</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, pp. 231-32.

<sup>13</sup> Anne D. Hedeman, *Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and Boccaccio's 'De casibus'* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2008). For the most recent list of extant *Des cas* manuscripts see: Laurent Brun, 'Laurent de Premierfait', *Archives de littérature du moyen âge* <[http://www.arlima.net/il/laurent\\_de\\_premierfait.html#cas](http://www.arlima.net/il/laurent_de_premierfait.html#cas)> [accessed 17<sup>th</sup> September 2010]. See also: Patricia M. Gathercole, 'Paintings on Manuscripts of Laurent de Premierfait: Manuscript Collections Found in Specific Libraries', *Studi sul Boccaccio*, 4 (1967), pp. 295-316; Patricia M. Gathercole, 'The Manuscripts of Laurent de Premierfait's *Du cas des nobles* (Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*)', *Italica*, 32:1 (1955), pp. 14-21; Patricia M. Gathercole, 'The Manuscripts of Laurent de Premierfait's Works: Additions and Changes', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 23 (1962), pp. 225-228; Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 304.

<sup>14</sup> *Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, ed. Henry Bergen, 4 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), IV, pp. 30-51; Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, no. 110; Catherine Reynolds, 'Illustrated Boccaccio Manuscripts in the British Library (London)', *Studi sul Boccaccio*, 17 (1988), pp. 141-151; E. P.

Lydgate manuscripts provides the opportunity for a detailed and systematic study of the palaeography, codicology and art history of this corpus, as well as issues of 'manuscript production, audience and the range and nature of Lydgate's popularity'.<sup>15</sup> Almost three decades later – despite a range of short articles on *Fall* manuscripts, many by Edwards himself – scarcely anyone has risen to the challenge.<sup>16</sup> Little, therefore, is known about how the different *Fall* manuscripts relate to each other, how those with miniatures came by their illustrative schemes or why comparatively so few *Fall* manuscripts were illustrated. Neither do we know for whom many of these manuscripts were produced or for what purpose.

This thesis, then, presents the first in-depth study of a deluxe version of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*: Harley 1766. Since the manuscript has no direct sources or comparable analogues, this thesis firstly contends that, rather than being copied from an earlier *Des cas* or *Fall* manuscript, the unusual visual scheme of Harley 1766 was designed specifically for the manuscript to work in conjunction with its equally unusual edited and abridged text. Further, both were the product of someone who was familiar with Lydgate's works and had a clear vision of how that material should be repackaged and represented for a particular set of readers. That person is likely to be the Lydgate scribe himself whom Kathleen Scott has described as a 'pivotal figure' in the production of the Bury manuscripts, 'a receiving and designing agent

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Hammond, 'Poet and Patron in the *Fall of Princes*: Lydgate and Humphrey Duke of Gloucester', *Anglia*, 38 (1914), 121-136; A. S. G. Edwards, 'The McGill Fragment'; Edwards, 'Lydgate Manuscripts'.

<sup>15</sup> Edwards, 'Lydgate Manuscripts', p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example: Edwards, 'A Missing Leaf from the Plimpton *Fall of Princes*'; A. S. G. Edwards, 'Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*': A Lost Manuscript Found', *Manuscripta*, 22: 3 (1978), 176-178; Edwards, 'Selections'; Edwards, 'The Huntington *Fall of Princes* and Sloane 2452'; Edwards, 'The Influence of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*'; Edwards, 'The McGill Fragment'; Simon Celine Marshall, 'Notes on Cambridge University Library MS Ff.1.6', *Notes and Queries*, 49: 4 (2002), 439-42.

who both initiated production and accepted commission [and who] possessed a special talent for book design'.<sup>17</sup>

It is this figure who is most likely responsible for the textual rearrangement and the design of the manuscript's visual programme, directing the work of the artists in the Bury workshop. Although not copying directly from a source manuscript, these artists could have based their images on other sources: models and *moduli* and other books they had worked on. They may also have seen books from the Bury Abbey library which was in a unique position to support the work of this locally based scriptorium by providing exemplars.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, as will be demonstrated, the scribe utilised a wealth of other literary and visual materials in his production of this striking manuscript. Harley 1766 exhibits iconographic similarities to other manuscripts produced by the scribe and his team, most notably in the image of St. Edmund on f. 5r which appears in three other Bury manuscripts. The origins of this image may be traced to earlier manuscripts held in the library of Bury Abbey. The re-written Herod narrative unique to this manuscript highlights the scribe's exposure to alternative versions of the narrative, most notably in the form of East Anglian mystery drama. The visual motif of kingship also demonstrates significant points of intersection between Harley 1766 and Yorkist propaganda circulating in the form of genealogical rolls in the 1460s.

This thesis examines the interaction of text and image, the deployment of visual motifs and strategies and the scribe's design of Harley 1766 and reads them within the context of contemporary historical events, namely, the deposition of Henry VI, the assumption of Edward IV, and the effects that this change wrought on the East

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<sup>17</sup> Scott, 'Lydgate's *Lives*', pp. 360-61.

<sup>18</sup> Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate and their Books, 1473-1557* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 39.

Anglian gentry readers who are the manuscript's most likely patrons. Members of the Tyrell family, an East Anglian gentry family whose main seat was the manor of Heron in East Horndon, Essex, have inscribed their names on the manuscript's flyleaves. These staunch Lancastrians were certainly early owners of Harley 1766 and, it will be argued, were its likely commissioners. Harley 1766 is thus a response to a very specific set of political and historical circumstances. It represents a political re-envisaging of the *Fall* for the Tyrell family during the early years of the reign of Edward IV. Commissioned as a direct response to their position as supporters of a deposed regime, the manuscript represents an attempt to realign the Tyrells politically with the new Yorkist establishment. Those features which make Harley 1766 unique amongst the extant *Fall* manuscripts evidence careful reading of Lydgate's text by the scribe and his reception and repackaging of that text to appeal to his patrons, sophisticated readers from East Anglia precisely at a time when kingship was challenged and loyalties were questioned and realigned.

Chapter One outlines the literary history and political context of the *Fall of Princes*, situating it as the product of royal patronage by Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, during the minority of Henry VI. It locates the *Fall* as a response to Gloucester's political position during the years of Conciliar rule when he was denied the position of *tutela* to the young monarch specified in the terms of Henry V's will. Lydgate's works were often commissioned precisely as topical responses to particular – often political – situations and a recent resurgence in Lydgate scholarship has largely recognised this. However, it less frequently recognises and investigates the equally topical stimuli prompting the repeated copying and transmission of works such as the *Fall* by other patrons long after the original commission. Chapter One, therefore, positions Lydgate as a topical poet whose name and works were appropriated for the hundred or so years after his death for equally individual and topical motivations. It also

identifies a dearth of interest in later manuscript copies of Lydgate's texts. The chapter provides a context for reading Harley 1766 as a politicised re-envisioning of Lydgate's text, an individually motivated commission responding to the particular needs of a specific group of readers.

Chapter Two provides a detailed codicological description of Harley 1766 and an in-depth review of the manuscript's connections to the Lydgate scribe and his Bury workshop. It also addresses the specific political context for Harley 1766 through an analysis of the flyleaf annotations by the Tyrell family. It further suggests that Harley 1766 may have circulated in a small gentry reading community brought together by inter-marriage and contextualises this with other known gentry and noble book ownership and patronage. The chapter closes with an overview of the other illustrated *Fall* manuscripts, indicating the richness of this corpus of material and the paucity of scholarship on it. Text-image analysis is at the heart of reading such a visually impressive manuscript and Chapter Three provides the methodological overview required to carry out such a study. This chapter offers an overview of recent approaches to text-image studies – a burgeoning area of interest for this period – placing the scant existing scholarship on Harley 1766's imagery within a critical framework and offering some preliminary ways of reading its illustrations.

Chapter Four scrutinises the paratextual elements of the manuscript, that is, elements of the *ordinatio* or *mise-en-page*, including the prefatory miniature, the scribal table of contents and the lengthy sequence of rubrics and labels within the manuscript. Each demonstrates the care and attention lavished on every aspect of the manuscript's design and production. In particular, the chapter identifies a strong focus on Lydgate and Bury St. Edmunds itself emphasising the manuscript's importance for a local audience such as the Tyrell family. It was not just individual

families who suffered following the accession of Edward IV: Bury itself became suspect as home to Lancastrian sympathisers. Harley 1766 aims, in part, to reinstate the former glory of Bury St. Edmunds by reflecting on its role as a seat of political, literary and spiritual authority as it had been during the Lancastrian regime.

Chapter Five investigates and analyses a distinct visual rhetoric of kingship evident particularly in the second half of the manuscript, charting its relevance to those caught up in the political conflict. The actions of exemplary kings are contrasted with anti-types of kingship, whose crimes deface the manuscript page. Yet such a rhetoric is not merely an abstract reflection on kingly qualities. The manuscript shows numerous points of intersection with legendary and historic motifs found in Yorkist propaganda that circulated following Edward IV's assumption of the throne in 1461. Prophecy, genealogy, verse and proclamation were all utilised to glorify Edward and affirm his right to the throne, by lineage, martial prowess and divine right. This argument refines the dating of the manuscript to post-1461 and re-imagines it as a piece of political realignment in which the commissioning family sought to display their new allegiances via the medium of the written book espousing Yorkist rhetoric and optimism.

Chapter Six goes on to examine a similar interest in queenship, particularly the potential challenge to masculine authority that could be embodied in the person of the queen. The chapter investigates the motif of the female suicide in the early books of Harley 1766. It argues that this motif creates a cumulative visual association, linking together texts that reference each other and share themes and anxieties. In each, the contradictory roles of the queen as wife, mother, and physical embodiment of royal lineage, figure a challenge to masculine royal authority. Such anxieties were played out on the national stage in the 1450s and 1460s. Yorkist

propaganda sought to denigrate and circumscribe the political activity of Margaret of Anjou, wife of Henry VI, through questioning her virtue and the legitimacy of her child, Edward, Prince of Wales and heir to the Lancastrian throne. The chapter examines how Harley 1766 promotes an idealised version of queenly behaviour whilst simultaneously focusing on female challenges to male authority.

Finally, Chapter Seven turns to a section of text unique to Harley 1766: Herod and the Massacre of the Innocents found in Book V. Whilst the majority of the scribe's editorial interventions were confined to the rearrangement of the text and design of the visual scheme, here Lydgate's text is replaced with a narrative presumably of the scribe's own construction. This chapter offers an overview of the Herod tradition, arguing that the frequency with which Herod's narrative was rewritten made it an ideal candidate for scribal intervention. Analyses of both Lydgate and the scribe's Herods reveal that the scribe worked closely with both Lydgate's own text and contemporary dramatic culture. Yet the scribe's text portrays a far more unsettling Herod than any of his sources suggested. This new Herod fits neatly into the rhetoric of types and anti-types of kingship identified in Chapter Five.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**THE *FALL OF PRINCES* AND RESPONSES**

**TO LYDGATE**

Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* is an extended and versified paraphrase of Laurent de Premierfait's *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* (c. 1409) which is itself a translation of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* (c. 1355-1360). Like Lydgate's later translation, Boccaccio's original prose narrative takes the form of a history of Fortune, a collection of stories describing the fates of powerful noblemen and women who are held up as exempla of virtue and vice. This history is realised through a dream vision in which the various personages come before Boccaccio at work in his study, some presented by Fortune, others bewailing their fate themselves.<sup>1</sup> However, it is through the works of de Premierfait that Boccaccio's text became known throughout both France and England. De Premierfait undertook two translations of the *De casibus*, firstly in 1400 for Charles VI and again in 1409 for the Princes of the Blood, Jean, Duc de Berry (d. 1416) and Jean sans Peur, John II, Duke of Burgundy (d. 1419). Bergen describes the earlier translation as a 'comparatively direct and straightforward rendering' which Hedeman unflinchingly refers to as a 'failure'.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, only seven manuscripts of the original version survive.<sup>3</sup> De Premierfait himself described the 'great default' of his original version; in the prologue to the 1409 retranslation he noted that 'it seemed to me that it was necessary that Latin books in their translation be transformed and converted into

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<sup>1</sup> Bergen, I, p. xi.

<sup>2</sup> Bergen, I, p. xiii; Hedeman, *Translating the Past*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Mortimer, p. 32. The oldest surviving manuscript is Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 24289.

such language that their readers and listeners can understand the effect of the sentence without working too much or too long to understand'.<sup>4</sup> As such his second version extended the text to twice its original length, interpolating geographical notes, explanations and information from his own readings of earlier historical and literary writers such as Justin, Livy and Ovid.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to the earlier version, the 1409 translation was apparently a great success, surviving in more than fifty illuminated copies.<sup>6</sup>

Today, ten copies of de Premierfait's text are to be found in British libraries, nine of them of the second recension.<sup>7</sup> It is unknown how many copies were in circulation in Britain at the time of Lydgate's writing, but it is clear that Lydgate drew upon this text in his own writing, further embellishing and amplifying his source material:

For a story which is nat pleynli told  
But constreynyd vndir woordes fewe  
For lak of trouthe, wher thei be newe or old  
Men bi report kan nat the mater shewe  
These bookis grete be nat down iheew  
First at a strok[e], but bi long processe,  
Nor longe stories a word may not expresse

(l: 92-98)

Like de Premierfait, Lydgate did not simply translate from his source but added episodes from his own reading of other authors, including Ovid, Petrarch, Chaucer and Gower whose interpolations he usually acknowledges. Conversely, Lydgate only mentions his French source on a handful of occasions throughout the *Fall*, more

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<sup>4</sup> Paolo Cucchi, 'The First French *Decameron*: A Study of Laurent de Premierfait's Translation' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Princeton University, 1972), p. 118; Hedeman, *Translating the Past*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Bergen, I, p. xiv; Hedeman, *Translating the Past*, p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Hedeman, *Translating the Past*, p. 12.

<sup>7</sup> Mortimer, p. 32.

usually choosing to refer 'myn auctour Bochas' (I: 226).<sup>8</sup> Although Boccaccio's Latin text did find its way into England, and Edwards has shown that eight of the ten *De casibus* manuscripts now in British libraries were already in England in the medieval period, there is little to suggest that Lydgate ever saw the original.<sup>9</sup> Mortimer argues that linguistic evidence suggests that Lydgate worked from the French rather than the Latin. In the tale of Sapor and Valerian, for example, he anglicises the French word for mounting block, telling us that it is 'in Frensh callid a mountweer' (VIII: 460).<sup>10</sup> Edwards notes that many passages which refer to 'Bochas' 'demonstrate [...] a lack of direct knowledge of the *De casibus*'.<sup>11</sup> The use of Bochas, then, is an authorising strategy by which Lydgate emulates his other professed 'maister' Chaucer (I: 275) whose Italian predecessors and sources included Petrarch, Dante and Boccaccio. Indeed, in the Prologue to the *Fall* Lydgate stresses Chaucer's works of translation.<sup>12</sup> In creating a role for himself as the translator of a great Italian author like the great Chaucer himself, Lydgate avers a literary status upon his works and the language in which he writes.<sup>13</sup>

Lydgate began work on this remarkable text soon after May in 1431, at the request of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, as he explains in his Prologue:

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<sup>8</sup> Mortimer notes that Lydgate names de Premierfait three times within the *Fall*, twice within the Prologue (I: 3 and 79) and once in the narrative of Charles of Jerusalem (IX: 1886). To this list I add a further reference in the Prologue (I: 36). Mortimer also notes two occasions where Lydgate refers to the French text but without naming it or its author: 'In Frenssh myn auctour recordeth thus parde' and 'The Frenssh vnkouth compendiously compyled' (VII: 966 and IX: 3329). Mortimer, p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> Edwards, 'Influence', pp. 426-7.

<sup>10</sup> Mortimer, p. 41.

<sup>11</sup> Edwards, 'Influence', p. 434.

<sup>12</sup> Lydgate mentions Chaucer's acts of translation five times within seven stanzas: 'he made a translacion / [...] in our vulgar', 'maad in his tyme a hool translacion', 'Dante in Inglissh, hymself so doth expresse', 'Bi gret auys his wittis to dispose / To translate the Romaunce off the Rose', 'In our vulgar to translate and endite / Origen vpon the Maudelyne' (I: 283, 286, 292, 303, 317-18).

<sup>13</sup> Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and his Readers: Imagining the Author in Late Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1933), p. 16; Larry Scanlon and James Simpson, eds., *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture and Lancastrian England* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), p. 8.

This said[e] prynce considred off resoun  
The noble book of Iohn Bochas  
Was, accordyng in his opynyoun,  
Off gret noblesse and reputacioun,  
[...]  
He gaff to me in comaundement,  
As hym sempte it was riht weel sittyng,  
That I shulde, afftir my cumyng,  
This book translate, hym to do plesaunce

(I: 422-25; 430-33)

Further references to Humphrey's role as 'lieftenant' of Britain (I: 376) and his religious fervour in 'hooli chirch[e] meyntenynge in deed / That in this land, no Lollard dar abide' (I: 402-03) allow a precise dating to May 1431. Humphrey took on the role of lieutenant and warden of England from April 1430 to January 1432 during Henry VI's coronation visit to France, and the mention of Lollards is thought to refer to the duke's suppression of Lollard uprisings at Oxford, Salisbury and London during the spring of 1431.<sup>14</sup> The date of completion is placed at c. 1438-39, based on both internal evidence and the known dates of his other works. In Book VIII, Lydgate complains of his advancing years: 'More than thre score yeeris set my date / Lust of youthe passid [with] fressshnesse' (VIII: 191-92). Lydgate was sixty when he began this momentous task and a work the size of the *Fall of Princes* could not have been completed quickly, particularly as his writing process was interrupted in 1432 when he was commissioned to write the *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund* in honour of Henry VI's visit to the monastery at Bury St. Edmunds.<sup>15</sup> By 1439 Lydgate was

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<sup>14</sup> Bergen, I, p. ix. For an overview of the uprisings see Ralph Griffiths, *The Reign of King Henry VI: The Exercise of Royal Authority, 1422-1461* (London: Ernest Benn, 1981), pp. 139-140.

<sup>15</sup> Bergen, I, p. x.

engaged in writing the *Life of Albon and Amphibalus* and it is generally assumed that the *Fall* must have been completed by this date.<sup>16</sup>

Lydgate frequently refers to Humphrey throughout the *Fall*, reflecting particularly on the duke's active role as literary patron. Gloucester apparently took a keen interest in the production of the text he commissioned and Lydgate readily praises the duke for selecting 'this noble book' (I: 423) and his oversight of the entire project:

He gaff to me in comaundement,  
As hym sempte it was riht weel sittyng,  
That I shulde, afftir my cunnyng,  
This book translate, hym to do plesaunce,  
To shewe the chaung off worldi variaunce.  
And with support off his magnificence,  
Vndir the wyngis off his correccioun,  
Thouh that I haue lak of eloquence,  
I shal procede in this translacioun

(I: 430-438)

Although 'support off his magnificence' refers as much to financial support as intellectual, Lydgate characterises Humphrey as a man of great learning and scholarship, 'off hih lettrure' 'no man is mor expert off language / Stable in study alwey he doth contune' (I: 384, 388-89), and frequently alludes to Humphrey's active contributions to the poem. For example, in Book II when he turns to the tale of Lucrece, he explains 'my lord bad I sholde abide' (II: 1006), contrary to his intent to pass over the tale. According to Lydgate Gloucester was no passive patron waiting for his completed book. Rather he appears to have seen the work in progress and asked for specific interpolations of material that interested him.

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<sup>16</sup> Bergen, I, p. x; *Saint Albon and Saint Amphibalus*, ed. George F. Reinecke, Garland Medieval Texts 11 (New York: Garland, 1985).

Other passages indicate that Gloucester may have loaned books to Lydgate from his own extensive collection. His interjection in the Lucrece passage, for example, may have been prompted by his ownership of Collucio Salutati's *Declamatio Lucretiae*, transcribed onto ff. 200v-205v of his copy of the philosophical *De fato et fortuna* (Manchester, Chetham's Library, MS 27929).<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Pearsall has identified that the section on good government (II: 806-917) is based on a passage from John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*.<sup>18</sup> Whilst popular on the Continent, the *Policraticus* did not have a wide circulation in England and was found mainly in monastic libraries.<sup>19</sup> However, a copy was held in Humphrey's own library and it is not unreasonable to assume that Lydgate saw his patron's copy in order to incorporate it into the text.<sup>20</sup>

The interpolation would certainly have been pleasing to Lydgate's royal patron. In both Boccaccio and de Premierfait, this chapter reminds kings that their royal power is derived from their subjects and both men advocate the right of the people to overthrow unjust tyrants.<sup>21</sup> Lydgate, however, offers a different rendering of the chapter, following *Policraticus* to allegorically compare the body politic to the human body. The king represents the head of the body whilst judges, merchants and clerics make up the other constituent parts. The feet and legs are represented by the labourers who 'bern up and susteene' the body (II: 892). The text promotes a societal interdependence 'as Nature hath prouided' (II: 837), yet maintains a sense

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<sup>17</sup> Mortimer, p. 75; Lalage Everest-Phillips, 'The Patronage of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester: A Re-Evaluation' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 1983), p. 142.

<sup>18</sup> Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, pp. 226-27.

<sup>19</sup> Ammon Linder, 'The Knowledge of John of Salisbury in the Late Middle Ages', *Studi Medievali*, 18: 2 (1977), 315-366.

<sup>20</sup> Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066-1530* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 90.

<sup>21</sup> Boccaccio's original chapter is 'In fastotam regum superbiam' which de Premierfait translates as 'Contre les roys & princes orgueilleux'; Jennifer Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 44.

of hierarchy.<sup>22</sup> Such a viewpoint must have been preferable to Gloucester than the overthrow of rightful rulers by their subjects.

Alongside requesting that Lydgate translate and interpolate individual texts, Gloucester also specified that Lydgate append moralising sections, or envoys, to the end of each narrative. Lydgate explains:

This myhti prynce, riht manli & riht wis,  
Gaff me charge in his prudent auys,  
That I sholde in eueri tragedie,  
Afftir the processe made mencioun,  
At the eende sette a remedie,  
With a lenvoie conuied be resound  
And afftir that, with humble affeccioun  
To noble pryncis lowli it directe,  
Bi others falling [thei myht] themsilff correcte

(II: 146-54)

With this simple addition, the *Fall* moves away from the history of Fortune genre in which Boccaccio and de Premierfait's works sat, becoming rather a 'manual of advice for rulers'.<sup>23</sup> Lydgate's narratives were not simply designed to demonstrate the fickleness of fortune or to advocate the overthrow of tyrants. Rather his text draws out the moral lesson for a princely ruler, to demonstrate both models of virtue and examples of vice to avoid.

Gloucester's active involvement in the commission of the *Fall* as well as his other well-documented literary activities – corresponding with and commissioning works from both English and Italian writers and poets, donations of books to Oxford

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<sup>22</sup> Summit, *Memory's Library*, pp. 44-46.

<sup>23</sup> Mortimer, p. 65.

University in 1439 and 1444, and collection of an impressive personal library – have sparked a great deal of critical interest in recent years. In particular, studies by Susanne Saygin, Alessandra Petrina, and Jennifer Summit all explore a correlation between Gloucester's literary patronage and political career.<sup>24</sup> All three challenge long-standing assumptions of Gloucester as an unscholarly man, interested in little beyond the look of the books he commissioned.<sup>25</sup> Certainly his involvement with the production of the *Fall*, from his request for envoys through to the additional texts he interpolated, point to a patron thoroughly involved with the contents of his books and their potential use as tools of political advancement.<sup>26</sup>

Saygin suggests that Gloucester's interest in the *Fall* stemmed from his desire to take on the role of *tutela* left to him in Henry V's will and denied him by the Great Council, firstly in 1422 and again in 1427.<sup>27</sup> Consumed by a desire to fulfil the spirit of his brother's will, in 1428 Gloucester began a programme of educating the young Henry VI in preparation for kingship, thereby bringing to an end the conciliar rule that he considered antithetical to the policies of Henry V. In June of the same year, Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, was appointed personal tutor to the young king with instructions from the Council under Gloucester's presidency to:

Generally norysse [Henry VI] and draw hym to vertues and the  
eschewing of vices [...] leiyng before hym mirrours and examples of  
tymes passed of the good grace and ure prosperite and wele that have  
fallen to virtuous Kyngis and to here landes and subgites of that oo part  
and of that contrair fortune that hath ensued to the Kyngis and to here

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<sup>24</sup> Susanne Saygin, *Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (1390-1447) and the Italian Humanists*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Summit, *Memory's Library*; Alessandra Petrina, *Cultural Politics in Fifteenth Century England: The Case of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 124 (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> See, for example: Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, pp. 226-27; Roberto Weiss, *Humanism in England During the Fifteenth Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), p.68.

<sup>26</sup> Summit, *Memory's Library*, p. 31.

<sup>27</sup> The following paragraph is indebted to Saygin and is summarised from pp. 48-68.

landes and subgittes of the contrarie dispocion on that other part.<sup>28</sup>

In 1430, Henry VI left England for his coronation in France. Upon his return in 1432, Gloucester appears to have picked up where he left off in his education of the young king. His commission at this time of both the *Fall* and a Latin translation of Aristotle's *Politics* by the Florentine humanist Leonardo Bruni have been read by both Saygin and Summit as texts designed to educate the ten-year old Henry on the practice of government.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, texts such as *Politics*, with its specific concern for children, were commonly commissioned for royal and noble education.<sup>30</sup> Such a function would serve to explain the inclusion of the envoys in Lydgate's *Fall* which echo the strictures laid down in the Council's curriculum for the young king.<sup>31</sup>

Royal readers may also have turned to such works in order to prove themselves receptive to wise counsel.<sup>32</sup> Gloucester's commission of the *Fall* can therefore also be read as his contribution to the dynastic, literary concerns of the Lancastrian regime, reinforcing their 'monarchical image'.<sup>33</sup> In so doing, not only did he contribute to Lancastrian propagandist aims but he also solidified his own position as 'A kyngis sone and vncler to the kyng' (l: 374) – an appellation he apparently appreciated. Read alongside his other literary patronage and the development of his own impressive library, it can be argued that Gloucester sought to promote his role as scholar-prince and learned statesman, indispensable to the Lancastrian regime for his literary connections which he was able to use to promote the Lancastrian

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<sup>28</sup> Saygin, pp. 48-51; *Proceedings and Ordinances of the Privy Council of England*, ed. N. H. Nicholas, 7 vols (London: Record Commission, 1767-77), III, p. 299.

<sup>29</sup> Saygin, pp. 50-51; Summit, p. 34.

<sup>30</sup> Orme, pp. 88-90.

<sup>31</sup> Saygin, pp. 64-65.

<sup>32</sup> Derek Pearsall, 'Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*: The Poetics of Royal Self-Representation', *Speculum*, 69: 2 (1994), p. 386.

<sup>33</sup> Petrina, p. 311.

monarchic image and maintain royal power in the face of rebellion.<sup>34</sup> It is likely that all of these functions played a part in Humphrey's commission of the *Fall*: a sense of self-aggrandisement, promotion of the Lancastrian regime and a concern for the education of his nephew to whom he doubtless felt some sense of duty. Each of these motives share a common element, namely, that the *Fall* was commissioned as a topical, political response to the position Gloucester found himself in during the 1430s.

Many of Lydgate's works were commissioned as a direct response to particular political circumstances. The *Troy Book*, for example, was commissioned by Henry V whilst still Prince of Wales and is usually read as a confident statement of Lancastrian rulership affirming its own legitimacy.<sup>35</sup> The *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund* was commissioned by Abbot William Curteys (d. 1446) for presentation to Henry VI to remind the young king of his time at the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds during the winter of 1431-32. In 1427 Richard Beauchamp commissioned the *Title and Pedigree of Henry VI* from Lydgate, a verse pedigree and 'piece of dynastic propaganda' which traced Henry's claim to the French throne.<sup>36</sup> In 1432 the Mayor of London commissioned verses to accompany a royal entry following Henry VI's return from his coronation in France to celebrate the king's return and his own sense of self-aggrandisement.<sup>37</sup> Lydgate's canon has therefore provided ample interest for those interested in his role in fifteenth century political life, in particular as a Lancastrian

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<sup>34</sup> Summit, 'Stable', p. 211.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example: Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, pp. 160-91; Maura Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 1-2; Lerer, p. 49.

<sup>36</sup> Derek Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 232.

<sup>37</sup> *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate: Part II: Secular Poems*, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS, OS 192 (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 613.

propagandist and apologist.<sup>38</sup> It is true, as Larry Scanlon and James Simpson argue in the introduction to their collection of essays on Lydgate, that his 'poetry is more thoroughly imbricated in explicitly public concerns of given regimes than the work of any other major insular and/or British poet writing between, say, Wace (d. c. 1180) and Spenser (d. 1599)'.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, in their collection of essays, editors Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown note a scholarly trend towards elucidating the 'politics and public sensibility' of Lydgate's poetics.<sup>40</sup> Walter F. Schirmer, one of the first critics to produce a monograph on Lydgate, also linked the poet's works quite explicitly to specific historical moments, creating a biographical account of his life and works.

Yet many of Lydgate's verses were repeatedly copied for patrons quite distinct from the original commissioners. Their interest in Lydgate reveals the facility with which his texts could be adapted for new circumstances and patrons. The appropriation of both Lydgate's name and works can be seen during his lifetime and the years after his death. His name was highly valued by authors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries trying to establish a literary lineage in which to place their works, as Lydgate himself had invoked the name of his 'maister' Chaucer. Peter Idley, George Cavendish and Gavin Douglas all borrowed extensively from his works and the *Fall*, in particular, seems to have been regarded as a particularly rich source of material. In a series of articles Edwards meticulously charts these borrowings, noting that some – like Idley – used the *Fall* as a source of 'didactic commonplaces', whilst

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<sup>38</sup> See, for example: Pearsall, *John Lydgate*; Lee Patterson, 'Making Identities in Fifteenth-Century England: Henry V and John Lydgate', in *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History*, eds. Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Paul Strohm, 'Hoccleve, Lydgate and the Lancastrian Court', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>39</sup> Scanlon and Simpson, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup> Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown, *Lydgate Matters: Poetry and Material Culture in the Fifteenth-Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 4.

others, such as Cavendish, elaborated on Lydgate's original text in his own poetry.<sup>41</sup> In the years following his death, repeated eulogies appear praising Lydgate's literary skills. The earliest example is found in 'In Praise of Lydgate' written by his follower Benedict Burgh. Here Burgh lists Lydgate's literary achievements, praising his 'innate sapience'.<sup>42</sup> He eulogises Lydgate's literary merits whilst denigrating his own capabilities, in a manner similar to Lydgate's own professions of unworthiness of the feet of his 'maister' Chaucer, 'off oure language [...] the lodesterre' (I: 246, 252).<sup>43</sup> Subsequent poets were nearly unanimous in their praise of Lydgate, regularly placing his name alongside those of Chaucer and Gower in a triumvirate of praise. The Suffolk Augustinian Osbern Bokenham (fl. c. 1450), for example, called Lydgate 'fresh rhetoryens', whilst George Ashby, in his *Active Policy of a Prince* (c. 1470) named Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate as 'primier poetes of this nacioun / Embelysshing oure englisshe tendure algate'.<sup>44</sup> Some thirty to forty years later, William Dunbar continued this tradition in his 'Lament for the Makars' and 'The golden targe' when he described 'The noble Chaucer, of makaris flour / The Monk of Bery, and Gower, all thre' (50-52) and 'O morall Gower and Ludgate laureate / Your sugurit lippis and tongis aureate' (262-263).<sup>45</sup>

Alongside these poetical effusions, both the copyist John Shirley (ob. 1456) and William Caxton (c. 1415~24-1492) sang the poet's praises and lamented his death.

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<sup>41</sup> *Peter Idley's Instruction to his Son*, ed. Charlotte D'Evelyn, Modern Languages Association of America Monograph vi (London: Oxford University Press, 1935); George Cavendish, *Metrical Visions*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press, 1980); *The Shorter Poems of Gavin Douglas*, ed. Priscilla J. Bawcutt (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1967), p. xxx; Edwards, 'Influence', pp. 424-439; Edwards, 'Douglas's *Palice of Honour* and Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*', *Notes and Queries*, NS 21: 3 (1974), p. 83; Edwards, 'Some Borrowings by Cavendish from Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*', *Notes and Queries*, NS 18: 6 (1971), 207-209.

<sup>42</sup> *Lydgate and Burgh's Secrees of Old Philosoffres*, ed. Robert Steele, EETS, ES 66 (London: Kegan Paul for the Early English Text Society, 1894), pp. xxxi-xxxii.

<sup>43</sup> Lydgate extensively eulogises Chaucer and his writings in the Prologue to the *Fall*. See I: 246-357.

<sup>44</sup> George Ashby, 'Active Policy', ll. 2-5, in *George Ashby's Poems*, ed. Mary Bateson, EETS, ES 76 (London: Oxford University Press, 1899).

<sup>45</sup> *The Poems of William Dunbar*, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), pp. 179, 37.

Like Burgh before him, Caxton speaks of the poet's superior skills and laments his own incapacity to do him justice:

Enlumyned with colouris fresshe on euery side  
Hit passith my wytte, I haue no eloquence  
To yeue hym lawde aftir his excellence.<sup>46</sup>

Echoing Lydgate's own protestations of unworthiness at the feet of his master Chaucer, Caxton *et al* use Lydgate's name as an authority, a founder of English poetry.

Lydgate's popularity continued unabated in the early Tudor period. Gillespie has observed that the extant manuscript and early printed evidence suggests that the *Fall* remained at least as popular as *The Canterbury Tales* until the mid-sixteenth century and continued to retain political currency.<sup>47</sup> Extracts from the *Fall*, along with some of his minor poems were printed in Wynkyn de Worde's *The Prouerbes of Lydgate* (1510?), apparently for use within a courtly context.<sup>48</sup> Proverbs were used for their political potential within the Tudor court, as suggested by Erasmus in his *Education of a Christian Prince*.<sup>49</sup> Editions of the *Fall* and Lydgate's other popular mirror for princes, a translation of Aristotle's *Secreta Secretorum*, were issued around the time

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<sup>46</sup> *English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey*, ed. E. P. Hammond (Durham, N. C.; London: Cambridge University Press, 1927), p. 196; 'The Recuyell of the Histories of Troy', in *The Prologues and the Epilogues of William Caxton*, ed. W. J. B. Crotch, EETS, OS 176 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928); *Caxton's Book of Curteyse*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS, ES 3 (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1868), ll. 388-90.

<sup>47</sup> Alexandra Gillespie, 'Framing Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*: The Evidence of Book History', *Mediaevalia: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Medieval Studies*, 20 (2001), p. 153.

<sup>48</sup> The following two paragraphs are indebted to Alexandra Gillespie's detailed analysis of the print culture of this period: Gillespie, *Print Culture*, pp. 151-228; A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, *A Short Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland, 1475-1640*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., rev. and enlarged by W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson and Katharine F. Pantzer, 3 vols (London: Bibliographical Society, 1986-91), no. 17026.

<sup>49</sup> *The Education of a Christian Prince*, ed. and trans. Lester K. Born (New York: Octagon, 1965), pp. 144-45.

of Henry VIII's attempt to win support from his council and the public in favour of war with France. The books produced around 1510-12 aggrandise monarchical authority through the replication of royal and Tudor imagery. Later editions of the *Fall* show similar politicising aims: Thomas Wolsey himself features in the woodcut image in the 1527 *Fall* at the time when he made a lengthy visit to France to sign the treaty of Amiens. Lydgate's works continued to be politically appropriated, just as they were in the 1460s by the Lydgate scribe.

Political issues were also responsible for the abrupt halt in production of Lydgate's religious texts. Prior to reform the majority of printing presses outside of London were associated with monasteries but after the break with Rome in 1534 it became expedient to suppress such printing activity. In a short period, saints' lives and other works of Christian devotion and moralisation became obsolete. Yet Lydgate's historical and political works retained currency throughout the troubled religious changes that accompanied the reigns of Henry VIII's children. His *Verses on the Kings of England*, originally devised for a divided Lancastrian regime, were printed anonymously in 1539 and again in 1552; his coronation verses for Henry VI were recast for the entry of Edward VI in 1547 and in 1590 the *Serpent of Division*, his only prose piece, was printed as a companion piece to *The Tragedye of Gorboduc*, a play written especially for Elizabeth in 1561 as a commentary upon her reign, particularly the need for her to marry.<sup>50</sup> As Gillespie argues, Lydgate's appeal during these troubled times was that he 'knew about political "noise", the grievances of an unruly readership, and the place of literary texts and the business of good governance'.<sup>51</sup> Yet simultaneously, his name became detached from his texts; Lydgate's literary identity was bound up in his role as monk, an undesirable association in times of

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<sup>50</sup> Gillespie, *Print Culture*, pp. 206-07, 210-211; Pollard and Redgrave, *A Short Title Catalogue of Books*, nos. 9984.5, 9983, 17028-9.

<sup>51</sup> Gillespie, *Print Culture*, p. 212.

religious reform. But he need not be named for his works to be valued and appreciated for their political and propagandist acumen and value.<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Lydgate sank into obscurity. By the nineteenth century, a renewed interest in Boccaccio led to a reinvestigation of some of his translators and Lydgate came to the attention of a new critical audience. Unfortunately, this audience was not sympathetic to Lydgate, and the period saw the beginning of a hostility towards him that is still partially in evidence to this day. Writing in the early nineteenth century, Joseph Ritson launched an unparalleled attack on Lydgate's 'stupid and fatiguing productions [...] and their still more stupid and disgusting author', 'this voluminous, prosaick, and drivelling monk'.<sup>53</sup> Although few attacks on Lydgate are as mean-spirited as Ritson's, the perception of Lydgate as verbose, prolix and not especially talented appears to have survived the ages. In his edition of the *Fall*, for example, Bergen describes Lydgate in damning terms as:

A writer who usually contrives to spoil even his most felicitous passages before he has done with them, who systematically pads out his lines with stock phrases and rhyme-tags, and pours out unending streams of verse during apparently the whole of a very long life, cannot well be taken seriously as one of the great poets. We search his works in vain for evidence either of imagination or originality, of sympathetic insight into character, sensibility, delicacy of feeling or a fine instinct for form; nor is he distinguished for more purely intellectual qualities.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Gillespie, *Print Culture*, p. 212.

<sup>53</sup> Joseph Ritson, *Bibliographia Poetica: A Catalogue of English Poets* (London: Printed by C. Roworth for G. and W. Nicol, 1802), pp. 88, 87.

<sup>54</sup> Bergen, I, p. xxi.

Looming large over Lydgate scholarship, the ghost of Ritson has long caused scholars to disregard the *Fall's* evident popularity and influence long after Lydgate's death. Consequently, with some recent notable exceptions, the handful of monographs which have been written on Lydgate's life and works have tended to apologise for their study of Lydgate or to denigrate his capabilities at the same time as recommending his 'usefulness' in understanding the fifteenth century.<sup>55</sup>

Derek Pearsall's 1970 study of Lydgate remains one of the most influential works, analysing Lydgate's work in terms of its social and political context. Pearsall contextualises rather damning indictments of Lydgate's verse in the expectations of the time in which he wrote. Thus on the one hand, Lydgate is a 'highly professional and skilled craftsman, capable of turning his hand to anything'.<sup>56</sup> On the other, he is a verbose and prolix versifier, incapable of focus or brevity:

Words and sentences slip away from him, blurred out of focus, just as eloquence gives way to grandiloquence, sonority to bombast, and moral seriousness to maudlin platitude.<sup>57</sup>

Pearsall defines these as characteristics of an age that valued amplification, prolixity and overt didacticism. Although he contextualises these as the features of Lydgate's literary age, Pearsall frequently makes similar statements about Lydgate's capabilities.

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<sup>55</sup> Cooper and Denny-Brown; Lois A. Ebin, *John Lydgate* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985); Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture*; Pearsall, *John Lydgate*; Alain Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967); Scanlon and Simpson; Walter F. Schirmer, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the Fifteenth Century*, trans. Ann E. Keep (London: Methuen, 1961).

<sup>56</sup> Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p. 5.

<sup>57</sup> Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, pp. 5, 228.

Other early commentators on Lydgate have also tended to assess Lydgate's works either as inferior copies of Chaucer and earlier medieval traditions or as a mediocre forerunner of emerging humanism. Renoir, for example, describes Lydgate as 'a competent craftsman who occasionally rises to a high level of poetic felicity'.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Schirmer begrudgingly admits the influence of the *Fall* whilst simultaneously pointing out its perceived failings for the modern reader:

So overpowering was the impression it [the *Fall*] created that it became the epic of this war-torn century. We may perhaps find it uninspiringly monotonous on account of its prolixity and padding, and may reproach Lydgate for his lack of imagination and insight into character. But the sonorous solemnity of his verse, which at times has the measured pace of a funeral march, makes this his greatest work. It has the pomp and ostentation of a procession of mourners, with the wheel of Fortune as background and an imploring speech to the living to keep the peace and maintain their personal integrity in this time of war and threatened civil strife.<sup>59</sup>

Such responses are defined by what Scanlon and Simpson refer to as the 'precise erudition versus aesthetic hostility' that has, until recently, been a characteristic of Lydgatean criticism.<sup>60</sup> In line with these responses, the *Fall of Princes* has come in for some particularly harsh treatment over the years, attacked as the epitome of Lydgate's 'verbosity' and 'prolixity', two words used with astonishing frequency in analysis of his works. Latterly, attempts to redress the balance have been made and there has been a resurgence of interest in Lydgate's works.

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<sup>58</sup> Renoir, p. viii.

<sup>59</sup> Schirmer, pp. 206-07.

<sup>60</sup> Scanlon and Simpson, p. 4.

Simpson's recent essay on Lydgate challenges traditional conceptions of the poet, arguing for a more nuanced understanding of Lydgate's works. Whilst acknowledging Lydgate's role as an official poet for the Lancastrian regime, Simpson makes a case for the variety of Lydgate's works and the multiple voices contained within his poetry. The *Fall* itself, whilst written for a powerful patron at the heart of mid-fifteenth century political life, constantly reminds the reader that the fate of rulers is ultimately at the mercy of Fortune.<sup>61</sup> Maura Nolan develops this theme in her monograph on Lydgate and public culture in which she analyses Lydgate's role in developing a new form of cultural expression in his writings during the minority of Henry VI.<sup>62</sup> Analysing the literary features of Lydgate's writings in this period, Nolan problematises and questions the apparent propagandist didacticism of these texts.<sup>63</sup> The collection of essays edited by Scanlon and Simpson also seeks to reinstate a more nuanced understanding of Lydgate's literary corpus. Their chosen contributors, therefore, address a range of topics including challenging the conception of aesthetics in relation to Lydgate's 'uneasy' syntax, analysing 'marginalised' literary forms (for example, the royal entry and the mumming), and scrutinising the self-awareness and reflection of Lydgate's 'official' poetry, as well as its capacity to mediate different centres of power.<sup>64</sup>

However, few of these authors have tackled the *Fall of Princes* and those that have tend to privilege the text over the manuscript tradition. Most studies take the form of short articles which analyse specific narrative passages or identify precise textual

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<sup>61</sup> James Simpson, 'Bulldozing the Middle Ages: The Case of John Lydgate', in *New Medieval Literatures*, vol. 4, eds. Rita Copeland, David Lawton, Wendy Scase (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 240-41.

<sup>62</sup> Nolan, pp. 1-2.

<sup>63</sup> Nolan, p. 2.

<sup>64</sup> Scanlon and Simpson, pp. 8-10.

sources and later borrowings from the *Fall*.<sup>65</sup> Others use the *Fall* to consider patterns of patronage and elucidate its role in the life of key figures such as the Duke of Gloucester (see above). It is only recently that a monograph dedicated to the *Fall of Princes* has been published, although this too focuses primarily on its literary and political contexts. Offering the first detailed study of the *Fall*, Nigel Mortimer addresses a range of issues including Lydgate's various roles as court poet and Benedictine monk, the relationship between the *Fall* and the French and Latin sources, and an analysis of the poem's reception and influence. In particular, he assesses how Lydgate's association with the Lancastrian court shaped his writing. Although Mortimer includes a chapter on reception and influence, his interest lies primarily with the anthologised selections of the *Fall* found in a variety of fifteenth and sixteenth century manuscripts.<sup>66</sup> Here as elsewhere, there is little evidence of interest in the physical aspect of Lydgate's canon – the actual manuscript objects.

Curiously, even one of the most recent monographs on Lydgate – despite being entitled *Lydgate Matters: Poetry and Material Culture in the Fifteenth-Century* – has also largely eschewed an examination of the material culture surrounding Lydgate's works. Despite the introduction's manifesto to examine both Lydgate's use of material culture and what his poetry can teach the modern critic about the role of material, few of the essays included consider the material world of manuscripts and those that do focus on the civic works of Lydgate in the 1420-30s, rather than the

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<sup>65</sup> For example see: Vincent Dimarco, 'Theseus, a Hercules', *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes, and Reviews* (formerly *American Notes and Queries*), NS 2: 2 (1989), 43-46; Mary C. Flannery, 'Brunhilde on Trial: *Fama* and Lydgatean Poetics', *Chaucer Review*, 42: 2 (2007), 139-60; Richard A. Dwyer, 'Arthur's Stellification in the *Fall of Princes*', *Philological Quarterly*, 57: 2 (1978), 155-171; Rita Copeland, 'The History of Rhetoric and *Longue Dureé*: Ciceronian Myth and its Medieval Afterlives', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 106: 2 (2007), 176-202; Maura Nolan, "'Now wo, now gladnesse": Ovidianism in the *Fall of Princes*', *ELH: Journal of English Literary History*, 71: 3 (2004), 531-558; Maura Nolan, 'Lydgate's Literary History: Chaucer, Gower and Canacee', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 27 (2005), 59-92.

<sup>66</sup> Mortimer, pp. 219-277.

later manuscripts of the *Fall* or the *Troy Book*, for example.<sup>67</sup> In particular, it is surprising that a book that allegedly focuses on the materiality of Lydgate's texts does not analyse the rich manuscript tradition or the question of text and image. Lydgate's works were frequently associated with visual culture from the minor poems designed to accompany works of art such as the *Legend of St. George* commissioned by the Goldsmiths of London to accompany paintings in the Armourers' Hall, London, or the *Dolorous Pyte of Crystes Passioun* which complemented an image of the Crucifixion.<sup>68</sup> Lydgate's *Dance Macabre*, meanwhile, was inspired by the Dance of Death in the Eglise des Innocents in Paris, and was used for the English copy of the Dance, commissioned by John Carpenter, Town Clerk of London for the Pardon Churchyard at St. Paul's in 1430.<sup>69</sup> The author of the *Liber Albus*, which records the customs of the city of London, Carpenter paid for the frescos to be painted on the cloister.<sup>70</sup> And in *The Testament of Dan John Lydgate*, the poet recounts his epiphany at the age of fifteen when, upon seeing a crucifix 'whos woundes were not smalle' (744), he turned from worldly pursuits to religion in earnest.<sup>71</sup>

Whilst many of Lydgate's works were commissioned specifically with a visual accompaniment in mind, others were later translated into visual contexts. Lydgate's verses are found, for example, on the walls of the Clopton chantry chapel at Long

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<sup>67</sup> Cooper and Denny-Brown, p. 4.

<sup>68</sup> Jennifer Floyd, 'St. George and the "Steined Halle": Lydgate's Verse for the London Armourers', in *Lydgate Matters*, pp. 139-164.

<sup>69</sup> Nicholas Rogers, 'The Bury Artists of Harley 2278 and the Origins of Topographical Awareness in English art', in *Bury St. Edmunds: Medieval Art, Architecture, Archaeology and Economy*, ed. Antonia Gransden, British Archaeological Association, Conference Transactions, 20 (London: British Archaeological Association, 1998), p. 221.

<sup>70</sup> Simpson, 'Bulldozing the Middle Ages', p. 235.

<sup>71</sup> *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate: Part I: Religious Poems*, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS, ES 107 (London: Oxford University Press, 1907), p. 356.

Melford Church in Suffolk.<sup>72</sup> John Clopton (d. 1497), a prosperous East Anglian merchant and Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk (1452-53), was a great benefactor to Long Melford. Prayers for Clopton and his family are inscribed on the exterior walls of the church and the windows at the west end once contained stained-glass images of Clopton, his ancestors and relations, friends and associates. As part of this programme of devotion, politics and benefaction, Clopton also commissioned paintings of scrolls containing extracts from Lydgate's *Testament* and his Marian lament, *Quis Dabit Meo Capiti Fontem Lacrimarum?*

It is against this backdrop which Harley 1766 must be read. Although Lydgate's works were often commissioned as a response to a precise set of circumstances, they retained currency and were frequently copied both during his lifetime and for over one hundred years after his death. Gloucester may have originally commissioned the *Fall of Princes* as a response to his political position during the minority of Henry VI, but the Tyrells were equally able to use the text as a tool of political realignment in the years following the accession of Edward IV. That this Lancastrian text could be appropriated in this way is testament to the tradition in which Lydgate's name and texts were continually used by successive generations of readers.

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<sup>72</sup> J. B. Trapp, 'Verses by Lydgate at Long Melford', *Review of English Studies*, NS 6 (1955), 1-11. The following is taken from Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 79-87.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HARLEY 1766 AND RELATED MANUSCRIPTS, THE BURY SCRIPTORIUM AND GENTRY READING COMMUNITIES

Although much is known about the circumstances that led to the commission of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, Gloucester's original presentation copy does not appear to have survived. Certainly, there are no extant copies bearing dedications, presentation images or armorial evidence of ownership either by the duke or Henry VI. Yet a rich and extensive manuscript tradition has survived and Edwards has traced ownership to the clergy, nobility and gentry indicating its interest for a wide range of owners.<sup>1</sup> British Library, MS Royal 18 D iv, for example, was owned by John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester (d. 1470) whilst British Library, MS Royal 18 D v was owned by Henry Percy, fourth Earl of Northumberland (d. 1489). Edward Sutton, sixth Baron Dudley (d. 1510) left his autograph in British Library, MS Add. 21410. Bergen suggests that London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 256 may once have been held in Lanthony Priory, whilst British Library, MS Sloane 4031 was owned by Battle Abbey.<sup>2</sup> Edwards also notes a number of books mentioned in wills and inventories which refer to books of Bochas in English, quite plausibly copies of the *Fall*. See, for example, the 'greate volume of velom named John Bokas lymned' owned by Lady Margaret Beaufort, countess of Richmond and mother of Henry VII or the 'ij Inglyshe books called Bochas of Lydgat's making' bequeathed to William Drury in 1492,

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<sup>1</sup> The following manuscripts and owners were collated by Edwards, 'Influence', pp. 429-430.

<sup>2</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 68; N. R. Ker, *Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Royal Historical Society, 1964), p. 8.

whose family owned the Ellesmere Chaucer (San Marino, Huntington Library, MS EL 26 C9).<sup>3</sup> Whilst the original copy may well have been produced as an instructional manual for the new young king or a piece of Lancastrian propaganda, it is clear the text had a much wider appeal within society.

Unfortunately, the patronage, ownership and provenance of many of the extant *Fall* manuscripts remains unknown. Yet the research carried out by Edwards provides a clear background against which to read manuscripts of the *Fall*, a background which highlights the enduring popularity of the text for fifteenth and sixteenth century readers from noble, gentry and clerical backgrounds. The following chapter explores the probable gentry patronage of Harley 1766, locating it as a product of Bury St. Edmunds by providing a detailed codicological description. Second, it offers brief descriptions of the other extant illustrated *Fall* manuscripts, highlighting the differences to Harley 1766. Notably, of the four other illustrated *Fall* manuscripts, three are identified as likely products of Bury St. Edmunds, although only one (McGill 143) is a product of the same scribe and decorative team responsible for Harley 1766. The decoration and illustration of these manuscripts reveals a sustained demand for deluxe copies of Lydgate's work in Bury St. Edmunds. Further, during the abbacy of William Curteys (d. 1446) Bury abbey oversaw the emergence of a talented provincial school of scribes and artists.<sup>4</sup> The iconographic and stylistic similarities shared by the earlier Bury manuscripts and those of the 1450s and 1460s point to a rich visual tradition in Bury St. Edmunds and may suggest a long-standing association of abbey and artisans.

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<sup>3</sup> E. M. G. Routh, *Lady Margaret: A Memoir of Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby, Mother of Henry VII* (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), p. 103; *Wills and Inventories from the Registers of the Commissary of Bury St. Edmunds and the Archdeacon of Sudbury*, ed. S. Tymms (London: Camden Society, 1850), p. 246.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas Rogers, 'Fitzwilliam MS 3-1979: A Bury St. Edmunds Book of Hours and the Origins of the Bury Style', in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Daniel Williams (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987), pp. 229-230.

## Harley 1766 <sup>5</sup>

<b>Size and description of MS</b>	302 x 214 mm, 4 paper flyleaves at beginning and end, ff. 1*-2* + 266; modern pencilled foliation.
<b>Binding</b>	Bound in brown leather with the arms of the Harley Earls of Oxford on front and back covers.
<b>Date of production</b>	c. 1450-1460 (although this thesis argues for a date of production in the early 1460s).
<b>Provenance</b>	Probably Suffolk (Bury St. Edmunds). See Table A below for flyleaf signatures.
<b>Material</b>	Parchment.
<b>Pricking and ruling</b>	Pricking visible on many folios. Ruled in grey for a single column of 42 lines with defining grid of single verticals and double horizontals, justification 220 x 128 mm except for the table of contents with single line defining grid 228 x 134 mm.
<b>Collation</b>	1 <sup>4</sup> , 2 <sup>8</sup> – 33 <sup>8</sup> , 34 <sup>6</sup> Catchwords used routinely throughout.
<b>Textual contents</b>	John Lydgate, <i>Fall of Princes</i> , from Giovanni Boccaccio and Laurent de Premierfait. Middle English. Ff.1-4 include unique table of contents.
<b>Scribes/hands</b>	One hand throughout, identified as the Lydgate scribe. Same hand responsible for table of contents and series of rubrics. Written in black ink in a formal cursive hand.
<b>Decoration and illustration</b>	i) One half-page miniature on f. 5r (Illustrator A). ii) 156 marginal images (see Appendix B for full list). Illustrator B (Master) and Illustrator C (Assistant). iii) Three-sided border with sprays in the upper and lower margins on f. 5r, bar spray border on f. 5r; one-line red and blue letters without flourishing and two-line blue letters with flourishing. iv) <i>Nota bene</i> hands: ff. 23v, 46r, 47r, 50r, 52r, 59r, 59v, 60v, 66r, 71v, 72v, 78r, 81r.

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<sup>5</sup> This codicological description is based on Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, pp. 302-304, Bergen, IV, pp. 30-51, and Reynolds, 'Illustrated Boccaccio Manuscripts in the British Library (London)', pp. 141-151. Their descriptions have been supplemented by my own study of the manuscript.

There are no definite marks of ownership – dedications, inscriptions or insignia – on Harley 1766, though numerous sixteenth century hands have inscribed the flyleaves and margins of the manuscript with their names (more of which below). Yet, as indicated in the Introduction, a great deal is known about the location and dating of the manuscript. Scott's location of Harley 1766 to Bury St. Edmunds, c. 1450-60 is a result of her work on a group of eight other Lydgate manuscripts with which Harley 1766 shares orthographic, stylistic, and iconographic similarities.<sup>6</sup> The same scribal hand has been identified in all eight, and has been dubbed the 'Lydgate scribe' by Edwards.<sup>7</sup> Four of these manuscripts are copies of the *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund*, a text originally written by Lydgate on the advent of Henry VI's extended visit to the monastery of Bury St. Edmunds in the winter of 1432-33. These particular manuscripts of the *Lives* are internally dateable to a much later period. Yates Thompson 47, Ashmole 46 and the manuscript belonging to His Grace The Duke of Norfolk, at Arundel Castle, West Sussex (no shelfmark) all substitute Henry's name with that of Edward IV, establishing a production date of post-1461. The fourth, Harley 4826, retains Henry's name but has been dated on the basis of its stylistic features and borders to no earlier than 1450.<sup>8</sup> Harley 1766 is stylistically similar to these four manuscripts and Scott has traced the hand of the same decorator in all five. As a final point of similarity, the prefatory miniature in Harley 1766 is directly comparable, although not identical, to the prefatory miniatures in the three later *Lives* manuscripts, all of which appear to have been based on the same model.

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<sup>6</sup> The manuscripts are: four *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund* (Harley 4826, Ashmole 46, Yates Thompson 47 and the Arundel Castle manuscript), two *Secrees of Old Philosoffres* (Laud. Misc. 673 and Sloane 2464), one *Troy Book* (Arundel 99) and one fragment of a *Fall of Princes* manuscript (McGill 143). See: Scott, 'Lydgate's *Lives*' for a detailed study of their inter-relationships.

<sup>7</sup> Edwards, 'Lydgate Manuscripts', p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 306.

The other 156 images all appear in the wide margins of the manuscript which was designed with a single column layout, unlike the majority of *Fall* manuscripts which have a double column layout.<sup>9</sup> This design allows precise placement of the images next to the sections of text they illustrate and saved the scribe the task of ruling spaces for miniatures within the body of the text. Although the spacious margins may have been designed to indicate the wealth of the patron, Harley 1766's deviation from the relatively standard two column format suggests that the manuscript was intended to be illustrated from the outset but that the details of the visual scheme were decided upon after the text was written. Other than the three-sided border with sprays in the upper and lower margins on f. 5r, the manuscript is devoid of decorative borders, although the manuscript is punctuated by one-line red and blue letters without flourishing and two-line blue letters with flourishing.<sup>10</sup> A series of rubricated running titles and chapter headings are also included in the manuscript (see Chapter Three). Scott has discerned the work of three distinct artists within Harley 1766. Illustrator A was responsible for the prefatory miniature so similar to those in the *Lives* manuscripts, whilst Illustrators B and C were responsible for the marginal images and Scott notes that their work is very similar. She designates C the assistant illustrator who worked on much of the later part of the manuscript after f. 69r. His work is characterised by 'fewer highlights, washier colours, and whiter, less modelled faces'. The work was distributed unevenly between the two, on the basis of double folios from within a given quire.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Of the manuscripts which I have viewed or read descriptions of I can find only three others that have a single column layout. These are: Berkeley, University of California Library MS 75 (*olim* John Gribble (Philadelphia) and *olim* Phillipps MS 8118), Chicago, University Library MS 565 (*olim* Phillipps MS 4255), and Princeton, University Library, Dept. of Rare Books and Special Collections, MS Garrett 139 (*olim* Phillipps 8117).

<sup>10</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, p. 303.

<sup>11</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, pp. 303-04.

The design of the manuscript falls into two distinct parts with a break in the design occurring at f. 100v. Up until this point, an illustrated folio might contain anywhere between one and three images, arranged in multiple registers on the page reading from top to bottom. After f. 100v, no more than one image per folio is found. This is possibly due to the increased involvement and capabilities of the assistant illustrator. However, Scott notes that the entirety of the quire comprising ff. 69-76v was illustrated by hand C and, of the eight illustrated folios in this quire, three contain two registers.<sup>12</sup> An alternative solution to this break is the corresponding thematic change and alteration in visual strategies which occurs at this point in the manuscript. Prior to f. 100v, women feature prominently in the visual scheme. After f. 100v, however, women are rarely depicted on the manuscript's folios and the visual focus centres on the role of kingship. This thematic change is reflected in the very design of the visual scheme and is analysed in Chapters Five and Six.

Although the illustrators of Harley 1766 cannot be identified with those of the Bury *Lives* manuscripts, the striking similarities of scribal hand and decorator, as well as the iconographically similar prefatory miniature, point to a production date for Harley 1766 around 1450-60 when the Lydgate scribe and associated artisans were in operation. As has already been stated, however, this thesis will argue for a post-1461 date like the *Lives* manuscripts discussed above. Harley 1766's location in Bury St. Edmunds also depends on its associations with these manuscripts. The original manuscript of the *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund* commissioned in Bury to mark Henry VI's stay at the monastery still survives and is now designated Harley 2278. Although the later copies of these two saints' lives were produced some twenty to thirty years later, Scott has noted that the format of the original manuscript seems to have had some influence on their production. However none

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<sup>12</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 304.

are direct copies.<sup>13</sup> The display of interest in a local saint (a local author who is pictured in some of these manuscripts) and the emulation of the format of a prestigious local manuscript commemorating an event of local and national importance, indicates that these manuscripts were produced in the Bury area, and that Harley 1766 with its similarities to these manuscripts was most likely also produced in this region.

The existence of such a group of manuscripts produced in the same area, written in the same hand and utilising the same group of artists suggests a regional workshop or alliance of craftsmen, experienced in producing deluxe manuscripts for a sophisticated local readership where demand for the works of a local poet persisted in the years following his death.<sup>14</sup> As Scott has argued, it is probable that this workshop or scriptorium was organised by the Lydgate scribe himself, a man quite capable not only of organising a group of artists and decorators, but also of acting as both designer and commissioning agent, involving himself in all aspects of the manuscript's production from the layout of the visual scheme, through the editing of the text itself to the inclusion of rubrics and tables of contents. Edwards asserts that such an interpretation of the scribe and his efforts 'assumes a degree of sophistication and affluence within a provincial milieu [which] challenges [...] generally held views about the relative sophistication of provincial centres of book production in the fifteenth century'.<sup>15</sup> Challenging though this may be analysis of the visual scheme and arrangement of the text of Harley 1766 demonstrates that the manuscript was carefully designed and produced by a culturally astute individual sensitive to the possibilities that Lydgate's texts presented for an audience comprised of gentry families living in politically precarious times.

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<sup>13</sup> Scott, 'Lydgate's *Lives*', p. 357.

<sup>14</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 303.

<sup>15</sup> Edwards, 'Lydgate Manuscripts', p. 19.

Lesley Lawton's treatment of the manuscript reflects this argument. She describes the highly unusual abridged and edited text as a distinct second recension, carefully edited and arranged by the Lydgate scribe himself.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, a careful examination reveals that the text itself is not the 'more or less garbled' version that Bergen described. Rather, the text shows clear signs of what Lawton refers to as 'intelligent editing'.<sup>17</sup> Textual omissions and rearrangements throughout the manuscript are accompanied by textual re-working to ensure that the edited text makes sense. For example, in Book V of Harley 1766 the story of Marcus Regulus is concluded by an envoy which lauds his efforts for the common good. In Harley 1766 this is followed by an episode from Book IV (239-322), an excerpt from the story of Marcus Manlius where Lydgate details the crowns which might be awarded for various services to king and country. Notably this is just an excerpt; Manlius' story is not included here or elsewhere in the scribe's text. This section has been deemed relevant, however, apparently because of Lydgate's mention that Regulus' story should be crowned with the laurel and the excerpt develops this idea. As well as including these lines for their relevance on the story, the scribe also moderates the opening of this stanza to ensure continuity. This section originally opened with the lines: 'For as Agellius maketh mencion / Ther wer in Rome deuised straunge crouns' (II: 239-40). In Harley 1766 these are altered to 'Whylom in Rome as made is mencion / ther wer foure knyghtes ordeyned diuers crowns'.<sup>18</sup> Similarly at the end of the excerpt, the scribe has altered 'Marcus Manlius in manhode souereyne' (II: 318) to Marcus Regulus.

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<sup>16</sup> Lesley Lawton, 'Text and Image in Late Mediaeval English Vernacular Literary Manuscripts', 4 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 1982), pp. 447-48.

<sup>17</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 49; Lawton, 'Text and Image', p. 448.

<sup>18</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 32. Lawton also notes this episode, 'Text and Image', p. 448.

Alongside these careful and intelligent editorial changes are found the 156 narrative marginal images which appear precisely next to the section of text they illustrate. Like the editorial changes, these reflect careful engagement with the text. Chapter Three offers more theories on reading manuscript images in general, whilst later chapters offer a rationale behind some of these editorial decisions by examining them in conjunction with the layout and design of the visual scheme, evidencing the scribe's involvement in every aspect of the manuscript from editing, to designing and placing the visual scheme, and adding aids to reading such as the scribal table of contents and the system of rubrics and labels found throughout the manuscript. The scribe's evident familiarity with and careful reading of Lydgate's text enabled him to edit and illustrate the manuscript in order to produce a highly politicised reading of the text that resonated explicitly with the experiences of his audience. Namely, he produces a manuscript that reflects and seeks to restore the name of Bury St. Edmunds through promotion of its most famous poet-monk and its founder king-saint. Further he creates a rhetoric by which the manuscript associates its owners with Yorkist propaganda. It also asks searching questions about the nature of medieval kingship, queenship, and the intersection of lineage, authority and gender – concerns which an audience living in such turbulent times were acutely aware of. Thus it is through the scribe's reading and reception of the text that it is repackaged and transmitted to its audience.

As indicated above, the manuscript contains no dedications or coats of arms to pinpoint exactly who the patron may have been, though the flyleaves contain numerous inscriptions which shed light on some early owners and readers. A full breakdown of those inscriptions dated to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is provided in Table A (overleaf). One name appears repeatedly in these inscriptions: Tyrell. And it is a Tyrell who identifies the book specifically as an heirloom which

must be returned to its rightful owner, 'the seyde Tyrell' (see f. 265v). John, Thomas and Edward or Edmund Tyrell all inscribed their name upon the opening and closing pages of the manuscript in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, suggesting that the Tyrells were early owners and possibly even commissioners of the manuscript and that it was passed from generation to generation of that same family.

Indeed, the Tyrell family seem plausible patrons. A gentry family established in East Anglia by the early fourteenth century, their main seat was the manor of Heron in East Horndon, Essex. Sir John Tyrell of Essex (c. 1382-1437) is documented to have been the wealthiest non-aristocrat in the country by 1436 when his annual income rose to £396.<sup>19</sup> Sir John cultivated close links with the crown, serving with Gloucester in France in 1415, acting as receiver-general to Richard, Duke of York, and treasurer of the king's household from 1431 to his death in 1437. John himself lived and died too early to have been involved in the production of Harley 1766, but his children (six sons and four daughters) lived through the tumultuous period which influenced the production of this unique manuscript. With his first son pre-deceasing him, John's estates passed to his second born son, Sir Thomas [ii] of Heron (c. 1411-1476). Like his father, Thomas joined the king's service and was a knight of the body by 1452, remaining staunchly Lancastrian with the outbreak of hostilities. In 1460, Thomas was amongst the supporters of Henry VI who held the Tower of London against the Yorkists. Unlike his younger brother William of Gipping, Thomas apparently did not suffer for his Lancastrian sympathies, co-operating with the new regime by serving on the commission of the peace from 1463 until his death. William, meanwhile, was executed for treason in 1462 for his part in a conspiracy against Edward IV. One of his alleged co-conspirators, John Clopton, was acquitted

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<sup>19</sup> The following relies on: O. F. Brown, *The Tyrells of England* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1982), pp. 88-133; Rosemary Horrox, 'The Tyrell Family', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com>> [accessed 3 December 2009].

**Table A: Flyleaf Inscriptions of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries** <sup>20</sup>

<b>Folio</b>	<b>Inscription</b>	<b>Date</b>
f. 2* v	John tyrell	Late fifteenth century
f. 2* v	Pendleton dwellinge in Mackeworthe [? Mackenworth, Co. Derby]	Early sixteenth century
f. 2* v	Thomas Cotton [written three times]	First half sixteenth century
f. 2* v	Johnson	Late sixteenth century
f. 2* v	John wallter dwell-lyng in wylysem half a mylle from netylstede [Willisham, near Nettlestead, Suffolk]	c. 1500
f. 2* v	Henry Ward	Late fifteenth century
f. 2* v	Edmund/Edward Tyrell	Early sixteenth century
f. 4v	John Bentley aetatis sue xxxiii, f. viii 1587 Anno Eliza xxx	1587
f. 265v	Requering euery Cryature that dothe fynd or see the same to Restore the seyde boke to the owner afore specyfyd for hit is a heyre lome Tout pour le mieux <i>quod</i> the seyde Tyrell [partly erased]	Late fifteenth century (identified by Scott as the hand on f. ii v)
f. 265v	This is mi boke Thomas tirell [followed by name in Greek]	Sixteenth century?
f. 265v	Fata non fortuna / fortuna fata / <i>John Lily</i>	Sixteenth century
f. 265v	Veni vidi vici (same hand as above)	Sixteenth century
f. 266r	Liber vocatur Bokas ex Translacione D. J. Lydgate monachi Ste (?) Edmundi	Later than the text but exact date unknown
	Liber vocatur Bokas ex Translacione D. J. Lydgate monachi Ste (?) Edmundi de burye <i>quod</i> (?) Jo lydgate amen	
	Thys ys ye boke callyd Bokas Translatyd / owth off latyn in to ynglysch amen <i>quod</i> D J lydgate / mownke off seynt edmundys Bury Amen and ita fiet	

<sup>20</sup> Dating taken from Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, p. 304, C. E. Wright, *Fontes Harleiani: A Study of the Sources of the Harleian Collection of Manuscripts Preserved in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1972), p. 334, Reynolds, p. 142, and Bergen, IV, pp. 50-51. On f. 2\* v, Wright and Scott have Edmund, whilst Reynolds has Edward.

f. 266r	Tompson	Late fifteenth century
f. 266r	Say fair well elisabeth darcy [in Greek, twice]	Sixteenth century Early sixteenth century
f. 266r	John moreheed	century
f. 266r	John Tyrell [possibly written twice? First inscription possibly followed by 'of St...' with the rest erased]	Late fifteenth century

and allowed to return to his home of Long Melford. The proliferation of white Yorkist roses in the stained glass he donated to the church there demonstrates Clopton's own programme of political realignment.<sup>21</sup> Another brother, William of Beeches (Rawreth), is known to have been a staunch Lancastrian and was knighted at the battle of Northampton in 1460. Like his elder brother Thomas, he appears to have suffered no repercussions for his allegiances. This is perhaps unsurprising given Edward's own well-documented mercy towards his enemies. As Charles Ross notes, Edward 'invested a heavy political capital in a policy of conciliation' with even those most closely associated with Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou given a second chance in the hope of future loyalty.<sup>22</sup>

Edward's clemency notwithstanding, a statement of political realignment would be a prudent measure and the Tyrell family history corresponds with the theory of a gentrified Lancastrian family seeking to realign themselves with the new regime. Indeed, it should be noted that Thomas' co-operation with the Yorkist regime dates from the year after his brother's execution and can be read as a public statement of allegiance to Edward over Henry. Commissioning a book such as Harley 1766 might

<sup>21</sup> Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion*, p. 80. Accounts of the execution of the alleged traitors can be found in John Warkworth, *A Chronicle of the First Thirteen Years of the Reign of King Edward the Fourth*, ed. J. O. Halliwell (London: Camden Society, 1839), pp. 2-5 and *John Benet's Chronicle for the Years 1400 to 1462*, ed. G. L. Harriss, Camden Miscellany 24 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1972), p. 232.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Ross, *Edward IV* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 64-65.

also be part of this political statement. The Tyrells certainly had the financial means to support such commissions. Evidence from wills suggests that Thomas was a book owner, bequeathing two books to East Horndon church in his will: a copy of Bartholomaeus' *De proprietatibus rerum* and a *Legenda sanctorum*.<sup>23</sup> Whilst Thomas looks to be an appealing choice of patron for Harley 1766, it must be noted that it is not possible to reconcile the names John, Thomas and Edward/Edmund and their respective dates with a particular branch of the Tyrell family. The Thomas identified in the inscriptions, for example, has been dated to the sixteenth century and cannot therefore be identified with Thomas of Heron. However, John of Beeches (c. 1475-1494), son to William, Thomas' younger brother, acted as executor of Thomas' will and may possibly be the late fifteenth century John who names the book as an heirloom on f. 265v. His heir Edward (1494-1541) died without male issue but may possibly be the Edward/Edmund on f. 2\* v. Unfortunately, neither the will of Thomas of Heron or John of Beeches mentions the bequest of a book of Lydgate or otherwise. Therefore although it cannot be definitively established whether Sir Thomas of Heron and the Tyrells were the original commissioning patrons of Harley 1766, their political affiliations, wealth, and location indicate that they are the very type of the gentrified patron-reader envisaged by this thesis.

Although it cannot be confirmed that the Tyrells were the original patrons of Harley 1766, it is evident that they were early owners. Two inscriptions on f. 265v link the Tyrell name explicitly with ownership of the manuscript. One of the two specifically states that the book is an heirloom, requiring all readers to return it to 'the seyde Tyrell'. This suggests that not only was the book owned by the Tyrells and passed from generation to generation as a possession of some importance, it was also lent

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<sup>23</sup> M. H. King, 'Ancient Wills (no. 3)', *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, 3 (1865), pp. 82-83.

out to other interested parties. The plea is reminiscent of the messages John Shirley wrote in his manuscripts to ensure their safe return:

Thankethe [...] the wryter for his distresse,  
Whiche besechithe your gentylnesse  
That ye sende this booke ageyne  
Hoome to Shirley that is right feyne.<sup>24</sup>

This is not to suggest that the Tyrells operated in the same way as Shirley who functioned almost as an early publisher, compiling, copying and distributing his own personal library amongst friends and social peers.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, all the evidence presented thus far for Harley 1766 and the Bury manuscripts points to the existence of a commercial scriptorium, operating within the auspices of or at least supported by the abbey and its library. Further, unlike Shirley's 'utilitarian [...] common profit productions', Harley 1766 is a deluxe manuscript and prized possession.<sup>26</sup> However, it does suggest that, like Shirley, the Tyrells may have been part of a wider reading community, amongst which books were shared.

The prominence given to the two statements of ownership on f. 265v also lends weight to this theory. Whilst other leaves are a mass of scribbled inscriptions, 'This is mi boke Thomas tirell' and 'Requering euery Cryature' are both placed prominently on f. 265v, the very folio on which the text ends. The former is placed directly beneath the final stanza of the text, whilst the latter is neatly positioned in the centre

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<sup>24</sup> British Library, MS Add. 16,165; Ryan Perry, 'The Clopton Manuscript and the Beauchamp Affinity: Patronage and Reception Issues in a West Midlands Reading Community', in *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the English West Midlands from the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Wendy Scase (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), p. 138; Ralph Hanna, 'John Shirley and British Library, Add. MS 16165', *Studies in Bibliography*, 49 (1996), p. 103.

<sup>25</sup> Margaret Connolly, *John Shirley: Book Production and the Noble Household in Fifteenth Century England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> Perry, p. 136.

of the page. Both would therefore be seen by the diligent reader who perused the entire text. This is in direct contrast to John Walter's inscription on f. 2\* v, for example, which is written upside down. These explicit marks of ownership and direction to return the book strongly suggests the possibility of a wider reading community and would go some way to explaining the plethora of other names on the flyleaves, all dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Little can be discerned from these remaining names – many being too common or too brief to investigate further. It is notable, however, that the address of John Walter on f. 2\* v is a Suffolk one, indicating that the book remained local. Walter's home of Nettlestead was also the home of the Wentworths, the gentry family who were elevated to nobility by Henry VIII, one of whom – Sir Richard Wentworth (d. 1528) – married Anne Tyrell (1480-1534), daughter of Sir James Tyrell of Gipping.<sup>27</sup> And it is possible that the Elisabeth Darcy who inscribed her name in Greek on f. 266r may be related to the Darcy family, several of whose members married into the Tyrell family in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Such marriages forged the bonds by which gentry communities were held together.<sup>28</sup> The exchange of books symbolised and reinforced these bonds and articulated shared literary and political interests.<sup>29</sup> Many East Anglian members of the gentry classes are known to have read and owned copies of both Lydgate and Chaucer. A Paston family booklist from 1474-79, for example, includes at least three Chaucer

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<sup>27</sup> Rosemary Horrox, 'Tyrell, Sir James (c.1455–1502)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com>> [accessed 3 Dec 2010].

<sup>28</sup> A. J. Pollard, 'The Richmondshire Community of Gentry During the Wars of the Roses', in *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England*, ed. Charles Ross (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1979), p. 47.

<sup>29</sup> Deborah Youngs, 'Cultural Networks', in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, eds. Raluca Radulescu and Alison Truelove (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 120.

and Lydgate manuscripts.<sup>30</sup> The Knyvett family arms appear on the Devonshire Chaucer (Tokyo, Tamikaya MS 24, f. 274v) and on f. 108v of the illuminated but unfinished copy of Chaucer's *Troilus* (now Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 61).<sup>31</sup> The Ellesmere Chaucer has the family motto of the Pastons, 'de mieulx en mieulx', inscribed on its flyleaves (ff. i v and vii v), whilst a note on f. 1v places Sir Robert Drury (1455-1536) of Hawstead, Suffolk as an early owner. A poem honouring the De Vere family, whose seat at Castle Hedingham was only ten miles from Drury's Hawstead home, also appears on the flyleaves.<sup>32</sup> The Drury family were also early owners of Harley 4826, the pre-1461 copy of the *Lives* produced by the Lydgate scribe.<sup>33</sup>

Both gentry and noble families recognised the value of books and legendary narratives as symbols of power and status and as tools for political gain and position. The Beauchamp family, for example, made extensive use of the Guy of Warwick narrative from the beginning of the thirteenth century to the end of the fifteenth century. Written in 1205 on the occasion of the Beauchamp assumption of the title of Earl of Warwick through marriage, Guy's legend was aggressively promoted by the Beauchamp family as they rose to power.<sup>34</sup> Successive Earls named sons after the legendary hero, whilst relics from his life were passed down from generation to generation. In the fourteenth century, the eleventh Earl Thomas Beauchamp (1313/14-1369) founded the shrine at Guy's Cliffe hermitage, whilst his second son

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<sup>30</sup> Hanna and Edwards, p. 13; *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century: Part I*, ed. Norman Davis, EETS, SS 20 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 516-18.

<sup>31</sup> Alison Wiggins, 'The Manuscripts and Texts of the Middle English *Guy of Warwick*', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, eds. Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007), p.78.

<sup>32</sup> Ralph Hanna III and A. S. G. Edwards, 'Rotheley, the De Vere Circle and the Ellesmere Chaucer', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 58: 1 (1995), pp. 13-15.

<sup>33</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 306.

<sup>34</sup> Emma Mason, 'Legends of the Beauchamps' Ancestors: The Use of Baronial Propaganda in Medieval England', *Journal of Medieval History*, 10 (1984), 25-40; David Griffith, 'The Visual History of Guy of Warwick', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, eds. Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007), p. 120.

and heir, another Thomas (1337-1409), oversaw the erection of Guy's Tower at the family seat of Warwick castle.<sup>35</sup> In the fifteenth century, Earl Richard Beauchamp (1389-1439) commissioned the French *Rommant de Guy de Warwik et de Herolt d'Ardenne* whilst his daughter Margaret (1404-67) commissioned Lydgate to write a poem on Guy in 1425.<sup>36</sup> The significance the Beauchamps attached to their legendary, chivalric ancestor emphasises their need to foster a strong sense of lineage and family identity.<sup>37</sup>

Towards the close of the fifteenth century, the chivalric dynastic history of the Beauchamp earls was deployed by Anne Beauchamp (1426-1493), daughter to Earl Richard and widow of Richard Neville, the Kingmaker (1428-1471). Following Neville's death at the Battle of Barnet, Anne was stripped of her inheritance with her estates being divided between her two daughters and their husbands by Act of Parliament in 1474. From June 1473 until after the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 she was treated as a virtual captive by her son-in-law Richard, Duke of Gloucester.<sup>38</sup> During this time, Anne campaigned furiously for the return of her rightful inheritance, writing letters to influential members of the court stressing the injustice of her situation.<sup>39</sup> Three manuscripts produced at this time are all thought to have been commissioned by Anne as part of her campaign to restore her estates. The *Beauchamp Pageants* (British Library, MS Cotton Julius E iv, article 6, c. 1485-90) celebrates the life of her father, Richard Beauchamp, servant to three Lancastrian

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<sup>35</sup> Earl William Beauchamp named his heir Guy in 1271 or 1272. Thomas Beauchamp (1313/14-1369) named one of his sons Guy. Griffith, p. 121.

<sup>36</sup> A. S. G. Edwards, 'Speculum Guy de Warwick and Lydgate's *Guy of Warwick*', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, eds. Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2007), pp. 87-88.

<sup>37</sup> Edwards, 'Speculum Guy de Warwick', pp. 87-88.

<sup>38</sup> Michael A. Hicks, 'Descent, Partition and Extinction: The "Warwick Inheritance"', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 52 (1979), pp. 120-122.

<sup>39</sup> *Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies of Great Britain*, ed. M. A. E. Wood, 3 vols. (London: H. Colburn, 1846), I, pp. 100-104.

kings, through a series of fifty-five splendid line drawings or pageants. Two armorial roll chronicles charting the history of the Earls of Warwick were produced during the same politically fraught period of Anne's life. The Latin Warwick or Lancastrian roll (London, College of Arms, MS Warwick Roll, c. 1477-1485) and the slightly later Yorkist Rous roll (British Library, MS Add. 48,976, c. 1483-85) have been read as companion pieces to the *Pageants*. Both manuscripts contain pen and ink drawings of numerous kings of England and the Earls of Warwick, both real and mythical, including figures such as Aeneas the Swan Knight, and the legendary romance hero Guy of Warwick. Each image is accompanied by a genealogical notice which focuses specifically on the individual's role as a benefactor of Warwick. As Griffith has argued, these manuscripts exemplify 'personal history mapped onto the political but with critical moments defined by Beauchamp upholding national and familial honour and status'.<sup>40</sup>

With her family history of literary and artistic patronage, Anne clearly recognised that legendary narrative could be shaped as a political tool in response to contemporary concerns.<sup>41</sup> Like her manuscripts, Harley 1766 operates both as a tool of political realignment and functions as a statement of social, political and economic confidence. As Ryan Perry has argued, it is not just the text of a manuscript that was intended to be read: 'in terms of cultural impact, the entire material artefact was a symbol that might be read and understood, by the commissioner, his family and their circle of gentry associates'.<sup>42</sup> Cultural capital was ascribed to books as artefacts by the socially ambitious gentry. It has already been argued that the very format of

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<sup>40</sup> David Griffith, 'Owners and Copyists of John Rous' Armorial Rolls', in *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the English West Midlands from the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Wendy Scase (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), p. 207.

<sup>41</sup> Martha W. Driver, 'Inventing Visual History: Re-presenting the Legends of Warwickshire', in *Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the English West Midlands from the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Wendy Scase (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), pp. 173, 177.

<sup>42</sup> Perry, pp. 158-59.

Harley 1766 with its wide margins and extensive visual scheme creates a sense of wealth and opulence. The manuscript is set out as a confident statement of a family secure in their own position. At the very moment at which their position may seem most vulnerable, they offer a confident display of their security, much like John Clopton and his extensive patronage of the church at Long Melford.

Indeed, books were a symbol of prestige and education and, in emulating the literary activities of the higher classes, the gentry sought to elevate their own status, fashioning an identity borne of literary discernment.<sup>43</sup> As Daniel Wakelin has suggested, the *Fall* is particularly suited to this means of self-fashioning as a book written *about* princes but *for* humbler men to read.<sup>44</sup> As the inscriptions of the book move into the sixteenth century and the Tudor period, away from the political turmoil and contemporary concerns of the 1460s that precipitated the production of this unique manuscript, it is this interpretation which takes precedence. The value of the book as a cultural artefact, a product of Lydgate and Bury St. Edmunds must surely be the reason for its continued interest for the readers who inscribed their names on its flyleaves.

**Montreal, McGill University Library, Rare Books and Special Collections**

**Division, Medieval MS 143**<sup>45</sup>

**Size and description of** 335 x 380 mm, ff. 1-4.

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<sup>43</sup> See, for example: Perry, p. 155; Gillespie, *Print Culture*, pp. 35-41; Laurel Amtower, *Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in the Middle Ages* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 27, 47; Carol M. Meale, 'The Politics of Book Ownership: The Hopton Family and Bodleian Library, Digby MS 185', in *Prestige, Authority and Power in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. Felicity Riddy (York: York University Press, 2000), p. 103; Deborah Youngs, 'Cultural Networks', in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, eds. Raluca Radulescu and Alison Truelove (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 119-121.

<sup>44</sup> Daniel Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading and English Literature, 1430-1530* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 37.

<sup>45</sup> This description is based on Edwards, 'The McGill Fragment' and Scott, 'Lydgate's *Lives*', pp. 355-56.

<b>MS</b>	
<b>Binding</b>	Unbound.
<b>Date of production</b>	c. 1450-60.
<b>Provenance</b>	Probably Suffolk (Bury St. Edmunds).
<b>Material</b>	Parchment.
<b>Pricking and ruling</b>	Pricking visible. Ruled in light brown for two columns of six stanzas.
<b>Collation</b>	4 non-sequential folios. A quarter of f. 3 is missing.
<b>Textual contents</b>	John Lydgate, <i>Fall of Princes</i> , from Giovanni Boccaccio and Laurent de Premierfait. Middle English.
<b>Scribes/hands</b>	One hand throughout, identified as the Lydgate scribe.
<b>Decoration and illustration</b>	1 illustrator. Alternating blue and red decorated initials at the beginning of each stanza; gilded initials with sprays on f. 1r. Running titles on ff. 3-4. 2 ruled and bordered miniatures, one stanza high (f. 3v, 4r). Style and costume suggest the miniatures were completed after 1485.

Although comprising of only four non-sequential folios, McGill 143 probably represents the remnants of another deluxe manuscript of the *Fall of Princes*, containing two ruled miniatures on f. 3v and f. 4r (Figures 2.1 and 2.2), and decorated initials punctuating each stanza.<sup>46</sup> Like Harley 1766, this manuscript has been identified as the work of the Lydgate scribe and the text appears to match the corresponding sections in Harley 1766, sharing omissions (e.g. VII: 460-6), additions (following VII: 376), and unusual sequences (V: 799-840, IV: 239-322, V: 831-882).<sup>47</sup> Both Edwards and Lawton speculate on the relationship between Harley 1766 and McGill 143. Their textual and orthographic similarities indicate that both were the product of the Bury scriptorium and that one was copied from the other or that both were copied from an earlier manuscript which featured some of the same omissions

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<sup>46</sup> It should be noted that McGill Library give these different folio designations, but having examined the text I adhere to those given by Edwards in 'The McGill Fragment'.

<sup>47</sup> Edwards, 'The McGill Fragment', p. 76.

and transpositions that are shown by these two. Edwards initially theorised that both manuscripts are an example of an earlier version of the text in which Lydgate himself had a hand.<sup>48</sup> However, more recent work done by Scott on the stylistic features of the manuscript and its relationship to other Bury manuscripts of the period indicates that both are later copies comprising a second recension of the text overseen by someone other than the author, most likely the scribe.<sup>49</sup>

Despite its textual similarities, the *mise-en-page* of McGill 143 suggests that the complete manuscript would have formed another distinct repackaging of the *Fall*. The *ordinatio* of McGill 143 comprises a column layout within which the two miniatures are ruled and bordered. Lawton argues that Harley 1766 represents a special commission of the *Fall* which proved so successful that the scribe was prompted to produce another copy with a more integrated *ordinatio*. The details of the visual scheme had already been decided in the earlier Harley 1766, making it possible for the scribe to rule in spaces for the miniatures.<sup>50</sup> However the miniatures themselves were not added until 1485, leaving the manuscript unillustrated for some twenty years before its completion.<sup>51</sup> That space was left for these images indicates that it was designed from the outset as another illustrated, deluxe commission completed at a later date. However, it cannot be known whether the images painted at this date followed the design carefully planned by the scribe some two decades earlier.

The first of the two images on f. 3v is accompanied by a rubric reading 'Duk Gawlter' and portrays the execution of that unfortunate duke. A figure stands to the side

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<sup>48</sup> Edwards, 'The McGill Fragment', p. 77.

<sup>49</sup> Scott, 'Lydgate's *Lives*', pp. 360-61.

<sup>50</sup> Lawton, 'Text and Image', p. 463.

<sup>51</sup> Scott, 'Lydgate's *Lives*', p. 362.

holding a sword, whilst Gaultier kneels with blood spurting from his neck. Visually, the image of Gaultier contains similar iconographic components to Harley, suggesting a correspondence between the two. This image is also placed at exactly the same spot in the text by the lines 'Took hym at myscheef and quakyng in his dred / Of hih despight in haste smet of his hed' (V: 2572-73). In Harley 1766, the image appears beside these lines at the bottom of f. 252v, whilst in McGill 143 the image appears just beneath them.

The second miniature, however, has no analogue in Harley 1766. It apparently depicts Lydgate, dressed in the black robes of his order, presenting a book to an enthroned character, presumably Duke Humphrey. This may be based on the prefatory miniature traced in so many other Bury manuscripts, but appears at a rather later point in the text introducing the 'relatively rare' envoy to Duke Humphrey which occurs complete in only nine *Fall* manuscripts, including Harley 1766, and which begins:<sup>52</sup>

Ryght reuerent Prynce, *with* support of your grace  
By your comaundement as I vndirtok  
With dredful herte, pale of cheer and face,  
I haue a-complysshed translacioun of your book  
(IX: 3303-06)

Although the miniature has no rubric to identify it, its position before these lines suggest the likelihood of its depiction of Lydgate and Gloucester. If it were a direct copy of Harley 1766, then an image of Edward at Poitiers would be a more expected

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<sup>52</sup> Edwards, 'The McGill Fragment', p. 76. The manuscripts are: British Library, MS Add. 21,410, Harley 1766, 3486, 4197, 4203 and Royal 18 B xxxi, New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M124, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 2 and New York, Columbia University Library, Plimpton MS 255.

image, this being the last illustration in Harley 1766 and the narrative that precedes the envoy to Gloucester here. Perhaps had the manuscript's illustrations been contemporaneous with the text, this image would indeed show the Black Prince and the relationship between the two manuscripts could be constructed with more certainty. However, as a small fragment, the motivation behind McGill 143's visual scheme remains tantalisingly opaque.

### **San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 268 and British Library, MS Sloane**

**2452**<sup>53</sup>

<b>Size and description of MS</b>	410 x 290mm, ff. ii, 158, Sloane 2452, ff. 8.
<b>Binding</b>	HM 268: eighteenth century, gold-tooled brown calf. Sloane 2452: dismembered quire.
<b>Date of production</b>	After 1438-39, c. 1440-50.
<b>Provenance</b>	Probably Bury St. Edmunds. Original owner unknown but silver swans badge (f. 100v) suggest aristocratic owner.
<b>Material</b>	Parchment.
<b>Pricking and ruling</b>	Ruled in brown ink, two columns of five stanzas each. Some pricking visible.
<b>Collation</b>	4 quires missing at the beginning (of which the second is Sloane 2452) 1 <sup>8</sup> (-4, 5) 2 <sup>8</sup> (-4, 5) 3-4 <sup>8</sup> 1 quire missing here 5 <sup>8</sup> (-4, 5) 6-7 <sup>8</sup> 8 <sup>8</sup> (-4, 5) 9-11 <sup>8</sup> 12 <sup>8</sup> (-4, 5) 13-14 <sup>8</sup> 1 quire missing here 15 <sup>8</sup> (-4, 5) 16 <sup>8</sup> (-2, 7) 17 <sup>8</sup> (-2, 7) 18 <sup>8</sup> 19 <sup>8</sup> (-2 through 7) 20-22 <sup>8</sup> , 23 <sup>8</sup> (-2 through 7) 24 <sup>8</sup> (-2 through 7) 4 quires missing at the end.
<b>Textual contents</b>	John Lydgate, <i>Fall of Princes</i> , from Giovanni Boccaccio and Laurent de Premierfait. Middle English.
<b>Scribes/hands</b>	One hand throughout.

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<sup>53</sup> This description is based on Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, no. 79, Bergen, IV, pp. 99-103, Edwards, 'The Huntington *Fall*', pp. 37-40, Lawton, 'Text and Image', I, pp. 469-503 and *Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library* <<http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/hehweb/HM268.html>> [accessed 17<sup>th</sup> November 2010].

**Decoration and illustration**

- i) 56 column miniatures in HM 268 and 2 in Sloane 2452.
- ii) Scene added on ruled blank, f. 19v.
- iii) Sketches for miniatures, ff. 19v, 72v, 74v, 81r, 126r, 140v.
- iv) Fifty-nine partial borders, many with figures and motifs.
- v) Calligraphic initials with cadels.
- vi) Text decoration: paraph signs at each stanza; three- or five- line blue letters with red flourishing at chapter divisions; gold letters at story divisions; coloured letters at major textual divisions.

Two illustrators and four border artists.

After Harley 1766, HM 268/Sloane 2452 contains the second longest visual sequence of the extant illustrated *Fall* manuscripts, containing fifty-six and two images respectively. As stated in the Introduction the manuscript is incomplete, lacking ten quires and seventeen bifolio, but it is estimated that in its original state it would have contained around ninety-five miniatures.<sup>54</sup> The surviving fifty-eight miniatures, decorated borders, and initials render it an impressive visual witness to the *Fall* even in its partial state. Stylistically the manuscript has been related to the original *Lives* manuscript, Harley 2278, and is likely a product of Bury St. Edmunds. As Scott notes, 'elaborate brocade costumes, figures standing with tilted heads and feet apart, small, triangular-shaped faces, cut-away interiors, monochrome paintings on walls, atmospheric skies, brown and yellow tiled flooring' feature in both, although she argues that the artists of Harley 2278 were not responsible for HM 268/Sloane 2452.

Iconographically, the manuscript may be related to Royal 20 C iv, an early fourteenth century copy of de Premierfait's *Des cas* which contains fourteen miniatures, many of which bear a marked similarity to those in HM 268/Sloane 2452. Miniatures such as

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<sup>54</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 231.

the 'Struggle of Poverty with Glad Fortune' are almost identical. However, the earlier French manuscript contains only fourteen miniatures whilst HM 268/Sloane 2452 once contained nearly one hundred images. The substantial number of images not found in the earlier French manuscript must have come from somewhere else, either another *Des cas* (now lost) or Lydgate himself (judging from the early date of the manuscript). Alternatively they may have been compiled and designed by the workshop responsible for this commission.

Lawton offers a detailed analysis of HM 268/Sloane 2452 arguing that its illustrative scheme was designed and assembled from a number of sources and methods. Some of the images apparently derive from the French scheme, as described above. Others clearly respond to details of the English text; for example, Lydgate's description of Herod's attempted suicide using a paring knife is depicted – a detail found only in Lydgate and not in his sources. Lawton notes instructions to the illustrator in the format of sketches in the margin which may well have assisted in the preparation of images not found in exemplar manuscripts.<sup>55</sup> Yet unlike Harley 1766, the images of HM 268/Sloane 2452 usually serve as chapter headings and appear at the opening of a text rather than next to the precise section of text that they illustrate. The primary function of these images is apparently to guide the reader/viewer through the narratives, creating a kind of visual apparatus which alerts the reader/viewer to the beginning of individual chapters.

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<sup>55</sup> Lawton, 'Text and Image' I, pp. 483-493.

**Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 263** <sup>56</sup>

<b>Size and description of MS</b>	387 x 317 mm, 225 leaves.
<b>Binding</b>	Not medieval.
<b>Date of production</b>	c. 1440-60.
<b>Provenance</b>	Probably Suffolk (Bury St. Edmunds).
<b>Material</b>	Parchment.
<b>Pricking and ruling</b>	Two columns, seven stanzas per column.
<b>Collation</b>	1-2 <sup>8</sup> , 3 <sup>7</sup> , 4-26 <sup>8</sup> . The first leaf of quire 3 appears to have been removed, although there is no loss of text.  Catchwords at end of sections, signatures mostly trimmed or worn off.
<b>Textual contents</b>	John Lydgate, <i>Fall of Princes</i> , from Giovanni Boccaccio and Laurent de Premierfait. Middle English.
<b>Scribes/hands</b>	One hand throughout.
<b>Decoration and illustration</b>	Beginning of stanzas denoted by paraph marks, alternately in gold with black decoration and blue with red penwork. Floriated initials in gold, blue and carmine with white tracery indicate the beginning of chapters and envoys.  Ten illuminated floriated borders.  On page 7, a large composite full-page miniature divided into twelve compartments, containing scenes from Book I:  <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Adam and Eve</li><li>2. Nimrod</li><li>3. Noah</li><li>4. Two knights in battle</li><li>5. Athamas and Learchus</li><li>6. Erysichthon</li><li>7. Jael and Sisera</li><li>8. Althaea</li><li>9. Hercules</li><li>10. Narcissus</li><li>11. Samson</li></ol>

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<sup>56</sup> This description is based on: Bergen, IV, pp. 11-13.

## 12. Priam

Same decorators/artist as HM 268/Sloane 2452.

Like HM 268/Sloane 2452, Bodley 263 is a relatively early copy of the *Fall*, dated to between 1440 and 1460. Stylistically and orthographically, it is related to HM 268/Sloane 2452 sharing, for example, a particular type of flourished initial in the first quire. It has also been identified as the work of the same decorating team as HM 268/Sloane 2452, marking it as another product of Bury St. Edmunds.<sup>57</sup> The manuscript contains a single, full-page composite miniature on p. 7 forming a frontispiece to Book I which begins on p. 8 (Figure 2.3). The miniature comprises twelve compartments, each of which contains a single narrative moment from the text of Book I. Bergen notes that ‘these pictures closely resemble those in Harley 1766 in both feeling and technique, and if not by the same painter are certainly of the same school’.<sup>58</sup> And indeed there is a certain amount of correlation between the two: like Harley 1766, Bodley 263 features Althaea’s suicide, Narcissus, the Temptation, Nimrod, Athamas, Jael killing Sisera, Hercules and Samson. Yet none of the hands who worked on Harley 1766 have been identified in Bodley 263 and this single image has been attributed to the hand of Illustrator B from HM 268/Sloane 2452.<sup>59</sup> However, it is suggestive of a ‘Bury style’ continued by those artists who worked on the later manuscripts of the 1460s. Unlike Harley 1766, there appears to be no particular rhetoric governing the choice of images, nor does their position in this displaced frontispiece offer any means of influencing the interpretation of the text, appearing rather as a means of ostentatious display. The beginning of each book is prefaced by a blank piece of parchment presumably intended for a similar visual

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<sup>57</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 232.

<sup>58</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 12.

<sup>59</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 232.

preface or summary.<sup>60</sup> Whether this design was suspended due to lack of patronal interest or lack of funds is impossible to say.

Lawton has speculated on the content of this image, noting that the narratives included for visualisation exemplify a need to 'hook' the reader/viewer, providing a tantalising glimpse of the tales of death and destruction that follow.<sup>61</sup> Yet the images themselves do not necessarily relate to those which Lydgate himself gives the most emphasis. Noah and the flood, for example, is mentioned very briefly as a prelude to the story of Nimrod (l: 1004-08, 1017, 1032-48); Noah's ark, however, features prominently in the top-right hand corner of the Bodley 263 frontispiece, suggesting artistic use of *moduli* to supply appropriate models. Similarly, the two knights in battle in the image cannot be positively identified and may strike the reader/viewer as visual 'filler', providing a generalised scene to give a sense of the book.

Elsewhere Lawton suggests that French models may have been used to fill in the gaps. The twelfth compartment apparently shows Priam being attacked from behind as he prays before Apollo. This is an episode to which de Premierfait devotes a considerable amount of attention and which is often illustrated in the French manuscripts. Lydgate, however, does not tell Priam's tale, stating that he has already done so in the *Troy Book* (l: 5902-6042). The image of Priam therefore has no referent in Lydgate's text. The collective impression of these images indicates a desire to provide a striking visual introduction to the book based on models and *moduli* more than the text itself, clearly differentiating the manuscript from the work of the Lydgate scribe and his scriptorium.

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<sup>60</sup> Lawton, 'Text and Image', I, p. 427.

<sup>61</sup> Lawton, 'Text and Image', I, pp. 523-24.

**Philadelphia, Rosenbach Museum and Library, MS 439/16** <sup>62</sup>

<b>Size and description of MS</b>	422 x 303 mm (trimmed).
<b>Date of production</b>	1465-75.
<b>Provenance</b>	Probably London; no known original owner.
<b>Material</b>	Parchment.
<b>Pricking and ruling</b>	Ruled in rose ink, two columns of six stanzas each. Some pricking visible.
<b>Collation</b>	I*, 1-4 <sup>8</sup> , 5 <sup>6</sup> , 6-9 <sup>8</sup> , 10-11 <sup>7</sup> , 12-15 <sup>8</sup> , 16 <sup>7</sup> , 17 <sup>5</sup> , 18-23 <sup>8</sup> , 24-25 <sup>6</sup> , 26-27 <sup>8</sup> , 28 <sup>6</sup> , 29 <sup>2</sup> . Imperfect, 18 folios wanting, together with about 3,200 lines. Catchwords used throughout.
<b>Textual contents</b>	John Lydgate, <i>Fall of Princes</i> , from Giovanni Boccaccio and Laurent de Premierfait. Middle English.
<b>Scribes/hands</b>	One hand throughout. Scribe identified as Richardus Franciscus.
<b>Decoration and illustration</b>	i) Seven column miniatures: Book I: Boccaccio and Adam and Eve, f. 4r Book III: scholars reading and writing, f. 74r Book IV: Manlius Capitolinus and a Gaul, f. 105r Book V: Boccaccio seated before finely dressed youths, f. 126r Book VI: Boccaccio before Fortune, f. 146v Book VII: Boccaccio in his study with three finely dressed youths, probably the three sons of Antony, Julius Caesar and Octavian, f. 169v Book IX: Boccaccio writing with Emperor Mauricius, f. 198r ii) Twenty-seven historiated initials: monochrome colours iii) Text decoration: scrolls around catchwords; one-line gold and blue letters with blue and red flourishes to open stanzas; calligraphic titles at book divisions; six-line gold letters on squared ground of rose/blue, orange and green.  Two illustrators and two border artists.

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<sup>62</sup> This description is based on Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, no. 119, Bergen, IV, pp. 88-92, and Victoria Kirkham, 'Decoration and Iconography of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* (*De Casibus*) at the Philadelphia Rosenbach', *Studi sul Boccaccio*, 25 (1998), 297-310.

Distinct from the preceding manuscripts both in style and location, Rosenbach 439/16 is the latest surviving illustrated copy of the *Fall*, dateable from stylistic evidence to 1465-1475. Unlike the other manuscripts it was produced outside of Bury St. Edmunds, most likely in London, and offers a rather different visual tradition to the Bury manuscripts. The seven miniatures found in Rosenbach 439/16 function as visual bookmarks denoting the opening of seven of the nine books. A ruled gap has been left on f. 44r at the beginning of Book II whilst two folios are missing from the beginning of Book VIII. The tradition of using imagery to indicate the opening of a book derives from the French *Des cas* manuscripts. Whilst many of these were made with extensive illustrative cycles, others contained only a single image at each of the nine book divisions. In this schemata, image content is dependent entirely on the literary framework rather than on a desire to present particular narrative episodes. The visual content for these images was relatively predictable and usually appeared in the following order:

Prologue: Presentation scene.

Book I: Adam and Eve.

Book II: Death of Saul.

Book III: Struggle between Fortune and Poverty.

Book IV: Death of Marcus Manlius.

Book V: Death of Antiochus and Seleucus.

Book VI: Fortune appearing to Boccaccio.

Book VII: Death of Marcus Antonius, son of the triumvir.

Book VIII: Petrarch appearing<sup>63</sup>

Despite apparently deriving from this structural framework, the images of Rosenbach 439/16 do not follow this set order although Books I and VII do accord in their subject matter. These alterations are doubtless partially due to the changes made to the text

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<sup>63</sup> Lawton, 'Text and Image', p. 444.

by Lydgate, but the images also evidence an interest in authorising the text. Five of the seven depict Boccaccio himself, either reading, writing or watching the characters who materialise before him. Despite the differences from the *Des cas* manuscripts, Scott notes that the image of Fortune and Boccaccio is found in a number of *Des cas* manuscripts. Two in particular (Geneva, Bibliothèque publique et universitaire, MS fr. 190, c. 1409 and Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5193, c. 1412) 'show a significant agreement with Rosenbach 439/16, namely, that they have a space left blank for a miniature at the head of Book II as in Rosenbach'.<sup>64</sup> In its similarity to these French manuscripts, Rosenbach 439/16 shows little relationship to extant illustrated copies of the *Fall*.

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These manuscript descriptions demonstrate that, out of a large number of extant *Fall* manuscripts, only a fraction were illustrated. Of those that were, most have been linked to Bury St. Edmunds either during Lydgate's lifetime or in the twenty or so years after his death. Rosenbach 439/16 is the only illustrated *Fall* manuscript to fall outside of this category and it is clear that its visual scheme is significantly different to those produced by the Lydgate scribe and his team and earlier artisans operating in Bury. The evidence points to a workshop or alliance of craftsmen operating in this area during the 1450s and 1460s to produce deluxe, illustrated copies of Lydgate manuscripts including the *Fall* but also the *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund* and the *Troy Book*. Harley 1766's idiosyncrasies can be read in the light of a provincial workshop specialising in deluxe Lydgate commissions for local gentry readers and patrons. This audience and its concerns can be recovered through the unusual

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<sup>64</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 321.

abundance of flyleaf inscriptions in Harley 1766 and placing these names in the context of work on gentry reading communities and book ownership and patronage.

## CHAPTER THREE

### READING IMAGES:

#### A METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Chapter Two stressed both the vitality of the manuscript tradition of the *Fall* and the dearth of scholarship on these manuscripts, particularly those with illustrations. This thesis contends that a thorough examination of the visual scheme and layout of Harley 1766 reveals that the manuscript has been deliberately and carefully designed to promote particular readings which encourage the reader/viewer to interpret the manuscript in light of the contemporary political situation. To contextualise this approach, this chapter offers an overview of existing scholarly responses to the interplay of text and image within late medieval manuscripts, focusing in particular on the illustration of vernacular, secular texts. Primarily, it argues that recent studies reveal the great potential that illustrated manuscripts of this period have for influencing the reception of the text by their readers through their imagery and the importance of the interconnected roles of commissioner, designer, scribe, decorator, illustrator and rubricator. It uses this framework to argue that Harley 1766 was designed and produced by an educated scribe, familiar with Lydgate's works and able to repackage and represent them for a sophisticated reading audience in East Anglia, in conjunction with a team of decorators and illustrators. The relationship between text, image and rubrics in the manuscript bears testament to this and allows a reconstruction of the ideals and issues which precipitated its commission and production.

An overview of modern responses to medieval manuscript illustration has been laid out in influential articles by Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall and by Lesley Lawton.<sup>1</sup> Both recognise that such responses have typically fallen into three categories: the decorative, the structural, and the interpretative. Similarly, both articles recognise that these categories are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, features of each can clearly be delineated in Harley 1766 and other manuscripts. The first category proposed by Lawton *et al* views manuscript illustrations as works of art, serving as part of a design to impress upon the viewer the sumptuous nature of the object and the skill of the artist, elevating the status of the book to an *objet d'art*.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, C. F. Bühler remarks that 'one may well speculate on whether or not the grand, deluxe, illuminated manuscripts are books at all. They may well be works of art – or furniture, as little to be used as furniture on display in a museum'.<sup>3</sup>

Certainly Harley 1766, like many of the Bury manuscripts, was intended as a deluxe commission. One need only look at the opening page (Figure 3.1) with its impressive half-page miniature and its border of delicate foliage, details of both picked out in gold and the 'luxury of unfilled space' in the margins to realise that this was an expensive commission designed to impress the reader/viewer and contribute to the display of wealth and opulence.<sup>4</sup> A similar effect must surely have been intended by the lengthy visual scheme and proliferation of beautifully detailed borders in HM 268. F. 100v, for example, has a bordered miniature depicting the murder of Bersane and

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<sup>1</sup> Lesley Lawton, 'The Illustration of Late Medieval Secular Texts, with Special Reference to Lydgate's *Troy Book*', in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), pp. 41-69; Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall, 'Pictorial Illustration of Late-Medieval Poetic Texts: The Role of the Frontispiece or Prefatory Picture', in *Medieval Iconography and Narrative: A Symposium*, ed. F. G. Anderson (Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1980), pp. 100-123.

<sup>2</sup> Lawton, 'Illustration', p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> C. F. Bühler, *The Fifteenth Century Book: The Scribes, the Printers, the Decorators* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press; London, Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 162.

<sup>4</sup> Maidie Hilmo, *Medieval Images, Icons, and Illustrated English Literary Texts: From the Ruthwell Cross to the Ellesmere Chaucer* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 167.

a three bar border of sprays in which the Bohun or Lancastrian swans nestle, with golden crowns around their necks (Figure 3.2). Harley 2278 is probably the most spectacular of the Bury manuscripts of the fifteenth century. As a gift for Henry VI, commemorating the young king's visit to the abbey, it features full page miniatures of Adam and Eve (f. 1r) and the arms of the abbey (f. 3r) as well as the liberal application of gold leaf in borders, images and historiated initials (Figure 3.3). Wide margins and a series of 120 miniatures over 119 folios contribute to the sense of opulence. Lydgate's *Troy Book* also has a tradition of impressive decoration and illustration with the most lavish – Manchester, John Rylands Library English MS 1– including a series of sixty-nine miniatures whose borders frame the text, creating a visually stunning page design.<sup>5</sup>

Yet all too often, responses to such sumptuous manuscripts are purely stylistic, focusing on concepts such as 'realism' or 'unity of composition'.<sup>6</sup> Early commentators on Harley 1766, for example, offered precisely such assessments of its illustrations. In his edition of the *Fall*, Bergen catalogued all of the manuscripts known to him at the time, pausing occasionally in an otherwise factual description of their images to comment on their perceived aesthetic "worth". Thus the two foxes on f. 83r are 'very ill-drawn', the narcissus on f. 74v is 'rude', and the suicide of Lucrece on f. 105r is described as 'perhaps the most successful of all the miniatures [...] from

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<sup>5</sup> This is one of the key points of Lawton's article.

<sup>6</sup> Salter and Pearsall, p. 100. See, for example, the responses to the Ellesmere pilgrims in Richard K. 'Text and Image in the Ellesmere Portraits of the Tale-Tellers', in *The Ellesmere Chaucer: Essays in Interpretation*, eds. Martin Stevens and Daniel Woodward (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1995), p. 143 or Patricia M. Gathercole's comments regarding the *Des cas* manuscripts: 'The artists have not learned to suppress non-essential details in order to focus attention on certain expressive elements [...] Scenes of horror are so exaggerated that [...] they become humorous and even senseless [...] An amusing effect is created by crowds of people hanging over the tops of towers or appearing at windows, all of which gives the impression of a toy shop. An abundance of tiny figures strewn over the landscape [...] often creates gaiety'. Patricia M. Gathercole, 'Illuminations on the French Boccaccio Manuscripts', *Studi sul Boccaccio*, 1 (1963), p. 407.

the aesthetic point of view'.<sup>7</sup> This suicide is one of a group of four almost identical images, discussed in detail in Chapter Six. The fact that only one of the four is selected for such praise underscores the somewhat arbitrary nature of such an approach. Similarly, E. P. Hammond remarked that the images are 'clumsy' and 'garish', dismissing them as interesting only to the 'student of costume'.<sup>8</sup> More recently, Catherine Reynolds has described the miniatures as 'unambitious and unskilled in their execution', further arguing that some of the 'complex' settings required were 'beyond the painters' capabilities' and unfavourably compares their achievements to those of their Continental contemporaries. 'These illuminators', she notes, 'are certainly remote from the achievements of their French and Netherlandish contemporaries'. For her, the "failings" of the artists render many of the scenes unintelligible; for example, she claims Narcissus' fall into the well on f. 74v would be quite 'incomprehensible without recourse to the text'.<sup>9</sup> She takes these images to be nothing more than simple illustrations of the text, dependent on the text both for their creation and their interpretation.

Yet manuscript images have meaning and function beyond the decorative and the stylistic. Although it is clear from the examples above that illustrated books were costly investments, betraying an interest in the physical form of the book, the images also suggest a desire to make political and social statements about the aspirations and affiliations of the owner or commissioner. The focus on Bury St. Edmunds in Harley 1766, for example, emphasises local pride (see Chapter Four for further analysis) whilst the lavish detail of Harley 2278 marks it out as an appropriate gift for impressing a king. Like Harley 2278, Harley 1766 is a deluxe manuscript, likely to have been produced for a relatively wealthy patron. Its very layout suggests wealth,

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<sup>7</sup> Bergen, IV, pp. 41, 43.

<sup>8</sup> Hammond, 'Poet and Patron', p. 123.

<sup>9</sup> Reynolds, p. 151.

in which its spacious margins, like those of the fifteenth century Ellesmere Chaucer or the Clopton manuscript, 'assert a sense of economic confidence'.<sup>10</sup> Coupled with the extensive visual scheme, which in itself marks the manuscript as a deluxe production, the patron must have had sufficient funds to desire and commission such a costly product. Although it contains no donor images or arms or other insignia to identify its original patron, its insistence on the promotion of Lydgate and Bury St. Edmunds places it as a local commission, quite probably from within the gentry classes who fell under the abbey's natural sphere of influence and would have the money to lavish on a manuscript of this ilk. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, extant evidence of book ownership in the fifteenth century indicates that Lydgate manuscripts were owned not only by wealthy magnates and nobles but also by the gentry and individual book collectors.<sup>11</sup>

Such statements of political affiliations and social aspirations, however, still tend to focus on the decorative value of manuscript imagery, designed to impress the reader/viewer with their opulence and, in so doing, to highlight the wealth or status of the owner or commissioner. But images may also serve a functional purpose in the manuscripts they illustrate. The second category of responses designated by Lawton, Salter and Pearsall highlights their use as a visual apparatus for navigating an individual manuscript. The *Troy Book*, two copies of the *Confessio Amantis* (Oxford, New College MS 266 and New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M 126) and many of the *Des cas* manuscripts all show evidence of images functioning in this way. Lawton demonstrates this in her analysis of Lydgate's *Troy Book* in which four

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<sup>10</sup> The Clopton manuscript is now split into: University of London, Senate House Library, Sterling MS V.17, New Jersey, Princeton University Library, R. H. Taylor MS 10, and Washington, Folger, MS V.b. 236; Hilmo, p. 167; Perry, p. 138; Ralph Hanna III, 'Sir Thomas Berkeley and his Patronage', *Speculum*, 64: 4 (1989), p. 884.

<sup>11</sup> Peter J. Lucas, 'The Growth and Development of English Literary Patronage in the Later Middle Ages and Early Renaissance', *The Library*, ser. 6, 4: 3 (1982), p. 241; Edwards, 'Influence'; Wakelin, p. 37.

of the eight illustrated manuscripts have a sequence of six miniatures designed to complement the division of the narrative into books, one has five miniatures and an initial and partial border for Book V, whilst a further three expand on the original visual scheme.<sup>12</sup> Even in these three manuscripts, however, the original six images still retain their importance and position. Notably, however, whilst the images play a key structural role, their content is not significant for guiding the reader's interpretation of the textual narrative.<sup>13</sup> That is, in each case, the image chosen for illustration is the first narrative in the book rather than an episode of particular import.

Likewise, many copies of the *Des cas* deploy imagery in this way, featuring only nine images which appear at the beginning of each of the nine books, providing a clear visual division of the text.<sup>14</sup> As indicated in Chapter Two, these nine images were of a standard type and usually featured a particular set of images which illustrated the opening narrative of each book.<sup>15</sup> Such an apparatus enables easy identification of specific passages, acting as a series of elaborate bookmarks or visual chapter headings.<sup>16</sup> Rubrics and titles in different coloured inks, decorated or historiated initials, and elaborate border work may all contribute to this effect. In a manuscript containing such a lengthy text as the *Fall of Princes*, such a mechanism is beneficial in navigating through the complex narrative. Indeed, it can clearly be seen that the scribe has been at pains in Harley 1766 to create such a means of non-linear reading in which the reader/viewer can easily identify individual episodes. A meticulous

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<sup>12</sup> Six miniatures are found in: British Library, Cotton MS Augustus iv, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS C.446, Cambridge Trinity College MS 0. 5. 2 and Bristol, Avon County Library MS 10. Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby MS 232) has five miniatures. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M 876, PML 876, British Library, Royal MS 18 D ii, and Manchester, John Rylands Library, English MS 1 expand on the visual scheme.

<sup>13</sup> Lawton, 'Illustration', pp. 54-55.

<sup>14</sup> Lawton, 'Illustration', p. 41; Hedeman, *Translating the Past*, p. 135; Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, p. 321.

<sup>15</sup> Lawton, 'Text and Image', p. 444.

<sup>16</sup> Lawton, 'Illustration', p. 41.

sequence of running titles, chapter headings, and Latinate chapter markers are included throughout the manuscript and correspond to the scribal table of contents at the beginning of the manuscript where the running title, chapter heading and chapter marker are also noted (see Chapter Four for further analysis). A reader/viewer searching for an individual episode might use any of these means to locate the desired narrative (Figure 3.4).

Whilst the images in Harley 1766 function partially to indicate division into chapters, working in tandem with the table of contents and system of rubrics and labels, many clearly do not mark the beginning of books or chapters. Nor are any of the eight books of this manuscript designated by an opening image. Rather the illustrations in Harley 1766 are designed to highlight specific sections of the narrative, emphasising high and low points from the careers of the characters, providing more of a highly simplified visual synopsis than a series of chapter headings. The wide blank margins of the manuscript allow a considerable amount of flexibility in the exact placement of images which are placed precisely next to the particular narrative episodes they illustrate and usually show an impressive fealty to the text (see Appendix B for a detailed breakdown of text and image). Their position and content is indicative of the care and attention brought to bear upon this manuscript.

It is, in part, the care and attention that was apparently lavished on many manuscripts that leads to the third proposed category for the function of images in manuscripts: the interpretative. This category suggests that images could fulfil a range of functions alongside the text, acting as a commentary on it, or as a parallel visual narrative providing a synopsis of the text. For example, Lawton highlights the 'carefully co-ordinated programmes' in manuscripts of Oresme's translations of Aristotle, which have been shown to be essential in understanding the Aristotelian

texts, supplying visual definitions of terms coined by Oresme in his translation. Similarly, the almost continuous visual narrative in the borders of a sumptuously decorated version of Lydgate's *Troy Book* (Manchester, John Rylands Library English MS 1) removes from the reader the 'onerous task of actually perusing the text'.<sup>17</sup>

Authors, translators and manuscript producers all might take an interest in the design of a manuscript and the presentation of an individual text. For example, Anne D. Hedeman convincingly argues for the active involvement of de Premierfait himself in the presentation of the two earliest copies of the 1409 translation of *Des cas*: Geneva, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire, MS Fr. 190 (presented to Jean, Duc de Berry by Martin Gouges, Bishop of Chartres, on January 1, 1411) and Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5193 (made for Jean sans Peur, John II, Duke of Burgundy). Specifically, she argues that de Premierfait conceived his second extended version of the *Des cas* as both a textual and visual translation of Boccaccio in which the miniatures were designed to amplify the same elements of the text that de Premierfait sought to expand in his text. These carefully organised illustrative programmes primarily sought to promote de Premierfait's moral readings of the narratives, in particular by contrasting virtue and vice. Some of the narratives, therefore, are illustrated by two images. The second image in each pairing is placed next to the moral following the story, linking it firmly to the preceding narrative to elicit the moral message. Other images serve to highlight examples of governmental change precipitated by the ambition of tyrannical rulers. Visual pairings and

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<sup>17</sup> Lawton, 'Illustration', pp. 44-45, 50, 64.

contrasts in sequential chapters, she suggests, ‘concretise Laurent’s enhanced textual opposition of virtue and vice’.<sup>18</sup>

The illustration of these first two copies of the manuscript ensured that *Des cas* was transmitted as an illustrated text with the majority of the extant copies being illustrated. Indeed, Hedeman states that once de Premierfait’s work was complete, ‘the text and a version of his generalised list of directions [i.e. for the illustrations] began to circulate among *libraires* and artists involved in the Parisian book trade’.<sup>19</sup> She scrutinises four manuscripts produced in Paris to articulate the difference in presentation of de Premierfait’s text for a wider audience amongst the court and government. Key changes include an added visual emphasis on Boccaccio as author, the addition of a presentation scene and additional scenes to ensure that each book began with a miniature.<sup>20</sup> Added scenes and iconography specifically reflected on contemporary political concerns, in particular the French civil war between Armagnac and Burgundian factions (1407-1415), displacing anxiety regarding it onto the representation of the Fall of Jerusalem. It also reveals the fascination of contemporary audiences with Boccaccio as author and suggests how readily a text might be repackaged and represented for a particular audience with their concerns and interests in mind.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, Harley 1766 is the product of a later redactor who not only added a visual scheme, but also made extensive editorial changes to the text before him. It is

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<sup>18</sup> Hedeman, *Translating the Past*; Anne D. Hedeman, ‘Visual Translation in Laurent de Premierfait’s French Versions of Boccaccio’s *De casibus virorum illustrium*’, in *Un traducteur et un humaniste de l’époque de Charles VI: Laurent de Premierfait*, ed. Carla Bozzolo, *Textes et documents d’histoire médiévale*, 4 (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2004), p. 92.

<sup>19</sup> Hedeman, *Translating the Past*, p. 129.

<sup>20</sup> For Boccaccio as author see for example: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Fr. 131, f. 7 and f. 241r. For presentation scenes see for example: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Fr. 226, f. 1r, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Fr. 131, f. 1r.

<sup>21</sup> Hedeman, *Translating the Past*, pp. 202-03.

logical to conclude that the scribe, like those in the Parisian *libraires*, made such changes with his audience in mind. Lawton agrees with this assessment, suggesting that the choice of illustration must have been in part expression of personal interest or personal preference on behalf of either the person commissioning the manuscript or the person preparing it.<sup>22</sup> This thesis builds on that argument to conclude that the choice was determined largely by the scribe himself through his own engagement with Lydgate's text and his presentation of that text to his audience. In her catalogue entry in *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, Scott suggests that images were in fact designed as part of the manuscript's 'moral lesson', designed to have a far greater impact than the 'more matter-of-fact accounts in the text'.<sup>23</sup> The moral lesson, she suggests, is visually pursued through the depiction of violence, although she does not expand upon this point. As will be argued, however, the correlation of text and image in Harley 1766 was designed not to impress a noble viewer with a moral lesson on their duties as rulers, but rather to resonate with Yorkist political propaganda about Edward IV, Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou for a gentry audience.

The *Des cas* manuscripts spawned an impressive and fairly standardised visual tradition. Yet, as already pointed out in Chapter Two, the same cannot be said for Lydgate's *Fall*. Indeed, illustrative sequences were simply not created for the major poetic texts of the fourteenth and fifteenth century in England as they were in France and Italy. For example, only eight illustrated Chaucer manuscripts survive, the most famous of these being the Ellesmere Chaucer with its well-known pilgrim portraits. In comparison, twenty-nine illustrated Gower manuscripts have survived.<sup>24</sup> Yet Gower manuscripts, in particular, show a great deal of standardisation in their layout and

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<sup>22</sup> Lawton, 'Text and Image', pp. 463, 465.

<sup>23</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 304.

<sup>24</sup> Scott, 'Design, Decoration and Illustration', in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*, eds. J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 32-33.

presentation. Edwards and Pearsall note an 'impressive consistency of text and layout in the *Confessio Amantis*'.<sup>25</sup> This highly standardised visual scheme comprises two images of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Amans kneeling before Genius. Of twenty illustrated *Confessio* manuscripts, only two feature extended visual schemes: Oxford, New College MS 266 which includes nineteen extant images and Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M 126 which includes 108 images (probably 110 in its original state), studied by Peter C. Braeger and Patricia Eberle respectively.<sup>26</sup> Thus the existence of several illustrated *Fall* manuscripts which do not show evidence of standardisation becomes all the more fascinating. In total, twenty-nine illustrated Lydgate manuscripts survive, but these have received little critical attention. Some notable exceptions include Lawton's analysis of the *Troy Book* (see above) and unpublished work on Huntington HM 268 in her 1982 thesis. The presentation miniature contained in the *Troy Books* has attracted some attention in the work of Alexandra Gillespie (see Chapter Four) and Scott has offered a detailed commentary on the relationship of the four later Bury *Lives* manuscripts and the other products of the Bury scriptorium (see Chapter Two). However, there has been no sustained and detailed analysis of the function of the images in Harley 1766.

Although little scholarly attention has been paid to illustrated Lydgate manuscripts thus far, this thesis situates itself within a burgeoning area of interest in medieval studies in which scholarly attentions begins to turn away, as Hilmo has argued, from

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<sup>25</sup> A. S. G. Edwards and Derek Pearsall, 'The Manuscripts of the Major English Poetic Texts', in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*, eds. J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 260; Derek Pearsall, 'Gower's Latin in the *Confessio Amantis*', in *Latin and Vernacular: Studies in Late Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*, ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987), p. 86.

<sup>26</sup> Peter C. Braeger, 'The Illustrations in New College MS 266 for Gower's Conversion Tales', in *John Gower: Recent Readings*, ed. R. F. Yeager (Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1989); Patricia Eberle, 'Miniatures as Evidence of Reading in a Manuscript of the *Confessio Amantis* (Pierpont Morgan MS. M. 126)', in *John Gower: Recent Readings*, ed. R. F. Yeager (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1989).

the 'origins, filiations and stylistic definitions' of images to 'what images were expected to represent, how they functioned, for what purpose and for whom they were made'.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Richard K. Emerson's study of the manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis* opens with the stipulation that the medieval scholar must not 'limit' his/her 'investigation to textual matters alone'.<sup>28</sup> That is, it is always necessary to take into account the highly visual nature of manuscripts in their images and decoration. The choices that were made in deciding how to decorate a manuscript were surely deliberate and designed to produce, promote or support deliberate readings.<sup>29</sup> In an idea stemming from Ralph Hanna, Emerson argues for the importance of applying 'codicological aesthetics' in our readings of manuscript, to appreciate the power that the codex itself has to impart meaning upon a given text. Thus images and decoration must be examined, not just as pictures simply designed to illustrate the text, but as features of the decorated page which may contribute to specific readings or the overall manuscript *ordinatio* or *mise-en-page*.<sup>30</sup> The study of the function of images and their interaction with text enables an investigation of the circumstances of manuscript production, patronage and audience.

In particular, Hilmo argues that much of the function of images derives from the artists themselves who she defines as competent critical readers of the text.<sup>31</sup> This is, however, a contentious point of view. Laurel Amtower, for example, argues that many illuminators would have been unable to read, having been apprenticed at an early age and would therefore have been unable to impose meaning upon their

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<sup>27</sup> Hilmo, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Richard K. Emerson, 'Reading Gower in a Manuscript: Latin and English in Illustrated Manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 21 (1999), p. 143.

<sup>29</sup> Emerson, 'Reading Gower', p. 144.

<sup>30</sup> Emerson, 'Reading Gower', pp. 143-44; Ralph Hanna III, 'Producing Manuscripts and Editions', in *Crux and Controversy in Middle English Textual Criticism*, eds. A. J. Minnis and Charlotte Brewer (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1992), p. 129

<sup>31</sup> Hilmo, p. xv.

illustrations. She argues that the instructions provided to artists stemmed from the master illuminator in the form of marginal sketches.<sup>32</sup> Yet evidence from the *Des cas* manuscripts, for example, indicates the existence of written instructions from which artists clearly worked. For example, an artist illustrating the story of Polycrates in Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS 63, an early fifteenth century copy of *Des cas*, evidently misinterpreted either written instructions or the text itself in his illustration. In this story, Polycrates throws his ring into the river to appease Fortune, which is then swallowed by a fish which is subsequently caught and the ring returned to its owner. In this particular example, the artist has mis-read *annel* (ring) as *anel* (lamb) and has consequently depicted a fish swallowing a sheep.<sup>33</sup> This rudimentary error is instructive in understanding how such images were produced. The artist in this instance was clearly relying on a text – whether the narrative itself or, more likely, a set of written instructions – to create his illustrations rather than copying from an exemplary manuscript. It indicates some level of consultation and choice in the provision and location of imagery which was not merely copied from manuscript to manuscript, but was transmitted via a carefully planned programme, albeit sometimes made incoherent by artistic error. What becomes clear is that some artists could read and utilised written instructions in their illustrations. It is safest to assume that, whilst some artists might use marginal sketches, others utilised written instructions and might even consult the text itself, albeit in a localised and intermittent fashion.<sup>34</sup>

Considered against the backdrop of theoretical approaches to text-image studies, Harley 1766 appears as the product of a carefully conceived plan, much like de

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<sup>32</sup> Amtower, pp. 20-21.

<sup>33</sup> Lawton, 'Illustration', p. 46; Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Boucicaut Master* (London and New York: Phaidon, 1968), p. 51. Illustrated in: Hedeman, *Translating the Past*, p. 146, Figure 95.

<sup>34</sup> Lawton, 'Illustration', p. 46.

Premierfait's early manuscripts. The careful editing and design of the illustrative programme were the result of careful reading and repackaging of the text in response to the needs of the commissioning patrons. The scribe functioned as a professional reader of the text as well as overseer of production, co-ordinating the efforts of a team of artists and decorators. He designed and organised the visual scheme to complement his abridged and edited text, in much the same way that de Premierfait designed his visual scheme to accompany his extended and amplified translation of Boccaccio. The intelligent editing of the text referenced in Chapter Two also extended to the scribe's treatment of the overall design of the manuscript, including the design and placement of the visual scheme and the system of rubrics, labels and the scribal table of contents.

Yet the influence of the artists is still felt in the design of the images themselves which show a great deal of iconographic and thematic repetition (see Appendix C for a full categorisation of the images). For example, the manuscript features a number of narratives of women who complain of fates over which they feel they have little or no control. Visually, many of these end with suicide by sword; Phaedra (f. 39r), Queen Jocasta (f. 50r), Althaea (f. 65r) and Canace (f. 90v) all choose this ending (Figures 6.1-6.4), and apart from some slight differences in clothing, the four images are strikingly similar. Apart from Canace, each woman stands facing the text, her hands held up in a gesture of despair as she throws herself onto a free-standing blade (see Chapter Six). Such repetition is usual amongst fifteenth century book artists who were concerned, as Scott argues, to 'stick to the known', using *moduli* and exemplars, repeating particular iconographic patterns.<sup>35</sup> Lawton notes that this exemplifies the 'construction of an extensive picture cycle from a few frequently

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<sup>35</sup> Kathleen L. Scott, *Tradition and Innovation in Later Medieval English Manuscripts* (London: British Library, 2007), p. xi.

repeated figure types' and describes a similar impulse at work in the John Rylands *Troy Book* where the illustrator has an 'extensive vocabulary of stereotyped figures', arguing that his 'natural method of construction seems to be in the recombination of stylistic clichés'.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Lawton argues that the compositions in Harley 1766 are 'formulaic' and 'reliant on recurrent figure types', suggesting that they were 'cobbled together ad hoc'. She goes on to argue that the repetition of types suggests the use of *moduli* rather than models, with the 'artist bringing into service his vocabulary of stereotypes as required'. The text itself stood next to the image he composed, serving as inspiration for his composition and suggesting a localised means of artistic reading of the text.<sup>37</sup>

And it cannot be denied that this impressive visual scheme does, as Lawton rightly notes, make extensive use of stereotypical figural attitudes and poses. Although recognising the widespread use of *moduli* within the manuscript, this thesis diverges from Lawton's readings by arguing that the choice of imagery included is crucial to reading the manuscript and that it works in conjunction with the scribe's redaction of Lydgate's *Fall*. From the analyses in the following chapters, this thesis aims to show that the scribe himself must have worked closely with the artists to devise the visual scheme. Their extensive use of *moduli* does not negate the effectiveness of the scheme as a whole. Further, other influences can be found within the illustrative scheme: images of St. Edmund are found in numerous Bury manuscripts (see Chapter Four) whilst the image of the Veronica on f. 198r is also found in Harley 2278 and may suggest the existence of an actual Veronica icon at Bury (see Chapter Five and Figures 5.4 and 5.9). Finally, as Chapters Five, Six and Seven indicate, the repeated focus on kings and queens resonates strongly with Yorkist propaganda

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<sup>36</sup> Lawton, 'Illustration', pp. 55-56, 65.

<sup>37</sup> Lawton, 'Text and Image', pp. 465, 467.

some of which may well have been seen in Bury St. Edmunds and the surrounding area.

As Kathleen Scott has argued, the apparent dependence on previous design and on *moduli* is not indicative of a lack of originality in fifteenth century English book production.<sup>38</sup> Rather, it emphasises how creative artists and book producers were in redeploying and adapting existing models to create new patterns and themes. These images are not just imported haphazardly from various sources to fill particular gaps or mark the beginning of narratives or fulfil other structural functions: they are included to work with the text and emphasise particular readings. This is certainly the case in Harley 1766. Where earlier critics have seen only repetitious reliance on *moduli*, this thesis examines the visual scheme as a whole and places it within a nexus of patronal and political concerns. In so doing, it reads the illustrative scheme, not as uninspired images designed merely for decorative purposes, but as integral to the manuscript's message for patrons caught up in the political aftermath of the Yorkist accession the throne.

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<sup>38</sup> Scott, *Tradition*, p. ix.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### LAYOUT AND DESIGN: THE PARATEXTUAL APPARATUS

Chapter Four scrutinises the *mise-en-page* or *ordinatio* of Harley 1766 focusing in particular on non-narrative images (the frontispiece), the scribal table of contents and the numerous rubrics and labels which punctuate the manuscript. Although seemingly a disparate grouping, together they provide a framework for understanding the manuscript as a whole – a paratextual apparatus.<sup>1</sup> It has long been recognised that the *ordinatio* of a manuscript can provide a ‘network of interpretative features’ which are often unique to an individual manuscript or group of manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> The paratextual apparatus in Harley 1766 reveals how the manuscript was carefully designed to facilitate its use by readers, through its meticulous series of annotations and the table of contents. Second, it frames the manuscript explicitly as a product of Bury St. Edmunds, written by the great poet-monk Lydgate, who is continually fêted and promoted by the Lydgate scribe. The systematic way in which this is achieved serves to highlight the scribe’s own familiarity

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘paratext’ is defined and explained by Gérard Genette in *Paratexts: Thresholds in Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). In brief, it refers to all the features which accompany a text and mediate its relationship to the reader, such as prologues, dedications, signs of authorship and other liminal devices which stand outside the main body of the text. I extend the definition for medieval manuscripts, and include those images that accompany and illustrate the text as part of the main body of the text.

<sup>2</sup> A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, ‘The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century’, in *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts*, ed. M. B. Parkes (London: Hambledon, 1991), p. 224; Ardis Butterfield, ‘“Mise-en-page” in the “Troilus” Manuscripts: Chaucer and French Manuscript Culture’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 58: 1 (1995), p. 51.

with the text, using Lydgate's own literary strategies to influence his editorial and design processes. Iconographic links with other manuscripts produced in Bury also indicate links between the scribe and the abbey at Bury.

### **Scribal Table of Contents**

The Lydgate scribe was a key figure in the design and production of Harley 1766 and it is apparently he who was responsible for the four folio table of contents that precedes the frontispiece and the beginning of the text on f. 5r. This is in the form of an added quire, most likely written after the scribe had completed his copy of the text and appended it to the beginning of the manuscript. This feature is nearly unique amongst extant copies of the *Fall* manuscripts, with similar tables found in only two other manuscripts. Of these, only that in British Library, MS Harley 1245 (c. 1450-1475) is contemporary. Harley 1245 begins with a vellum flyleaf which has a table of contents on its verso. The second, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C. 448 (c. 1460), has a table supplied by a later hand. Bergen speculates that Belvoir Castle, Leicestershire, Duke of Rutland MS (c. 1450-1475) may have once contained an index or contents table as the foliation runs two leaves in advance of the actual number of folios. Two leaves have apparently been lost which may have contained a table.<sup>3</sup> Like the two other extant tables, this would have been much shorter than that found in Harley 1766 which covers four folios, recto and verso, and which therefore offers a much more detailed apparatus for navigating the manuscript.

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<sup>3</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 68.

The table is carefully laid out in a sequence of chapter headings split into eight books, each indicated with the heading 'liber *primus*', 'liber *secundus*' and so on. These correspond to rubricated running titles throughout the manuscript where 'liber' is written at the top of each verso folio and the book number on the top of the recto page. Each book in the table is divided into a number of chapters which are described in several lines and preceded by a paraph mark.<sup>4</sup> In the right-hand margin of each page, every chapter heading is bracketed and accompanied by an abbreviated Latinate chapter marker. Thus the first chapter of Book I ('liber *primus*') reads 'Of the exclusioun or departing owt of Adam and Eve from Paradys', with Ca<sup>o</sup> i<sup>o</sup> written in the right-hand margin.<sup>5</sup> Like the book divisions, the chapter abbreviations correspond to notations throughout the manuscript, whilst the summarised headings are similar but not identical to the chapter headings that appear next to the text in the rest of the manuscript (more on rubrics and labels below).

The chapter headings in the table of contents often group together several concurrent narratives. Thus in the table of contents Book I, Chapter Three reads: 'Of the thrydde tragedye of saturn and of thanavs horastes Moydes pharas Oggigus'. In the manuscript, meanwhile, 'The thrydde tragedye of Satourn' is found at the beginning of the tale on f. 22r, whilst 'thanavs', 'horastres', 'moydes' and 'oggigus' are separate rubrics marking the entrance of each of these characters and their accompanying narratives on ff. 23r, 23v and 24r before the envoy on f. 26v. This meticulous annotation provides a system of cross-referencing, facilitating a means of navigating the manuscript not envisaged by the author and which promotes a non-linear mode of reading. In this

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<sup>4</sup> Book I = 11 chapters; Book II = 8; Book III = 4; Book IV = 5; Book V = 5; Book VI = 31; Book VII = 11; Book VIII = 15.

<sup>5</sup> Quotations from Harley 1766 are my own transcriptions unless otherwise stated.

respect, Harley 1766 bears more similarity to the French *Des cas* manuscripts than other copies of the *Fall*. Many *Des cas* manuscripts of both recensions are prefaced with a table of contents which replicate the chapter headings supplied throughout the text.<sup>6</sup> It is suggestive – though by no means conclusive – that the scribe or his patron had at some point seen one of de Premierfait’s manuscripts and was influenced by this in his own copy of the *Fall*.

The table begins with an introductory stanza apparently composed by the Lydgate scribe himself:

This famous werk / to putte in Remembraunce  
The soddyn Chaunge / trefyng of many Estat /  
The pe de gre / and thallyaunce  
Newly translatyd / by the Poete laureat /  
Monk of Bury / namyd Iohn lydgat /  
From lyne of Adam / Evene discendyng down  
This table doth Conveye with oute Varyacioun  
(f. 1r)

This opening stanza defines the manuscript as the work of Lydgate rather than Boccaccio. Although acknowledging that the text is a translation, Boccaccio himself is not actually named, shifting the focus and the authority to the ‘Poete laureate / Monk of Bury’, a designation which marks the Lydgate scribe as an early contributor to the fifteenth century discourse of praise and eulogy to Lydgate, celebrating him as a prestigious and local poet. In this respect, Harley 1766 is distinct from other extant copies of the *Fall*. Only one other *Fall* manuscript promotes Lydgate as literary authority

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<sup>6</sup> Lawton, ‘Illustration’, p. 51.

and originator of the manuscript: the mid-fifteenth century Manchester, John Rylands Library, English MS 2. These are the only two manuscripts to include any rubric naming Lydgate. Rylands Eng. MS 2 appends Lydgate's name to the text through its rubrics, alerting the reader to the author's interpolations to the text. For example, the decorative heading to the tragedy of Priamus on f. 31r describes Lydgate as 'the monke of Bury translator of this book'. Gillespie suggests that the addition of Lydgate's name conferred status on the book, connecting it with original authorship and patronage.<sup>7</sup> Similarly in Harley 1766 the invocation of Lydgate authorises the scribe's own authorial changes.

The scribal interpolations in Harley 1766 show the scribe to be more than an editor and manuscript producer; he was a Lydgate specialist whose works demonstrate his extensive familiarity with Lydgate's texts. The opening stanza, for example, shares both the vocabulary and thematic concerns of Lydgate's own envoys to the *Fall*. These similarities demonstrate his ability to redeploy Lydgate's own work in his promotion of the poet. In the finale to the *Fall*, Lydgate makes extensive use of the modesty trope proclaiming his own unworthiness. In the 'Wordys of the translatour vn to his book at the Ende' (f. 265r) Lydgate tells his 'littel book' (IX: 3589) to:

Go kis the steppis of them that wer forthing,  
Laureat poetes, which hadde souereynte  
Of eloquence to supporte thy makyng

(IX: 3605-07)

In this stanza, he acknowledges the literary sources that preceded his *Fall*, referring to their authors as 'Laureat poetes'. By contrast, Lydgate claims to be an unskilled

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<sup>7</sup> Gillespie, 'Framing Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*', pp. 159-60.

versifier, scarcely able to read French and unfamiliar with both classical and contemporary authors:

I nevir was acqueynted with Virgyle,  
Nor with [the] sugryd dytees of Omer,  
Nor Dares Frygius with his goldene style,  
Nor with Ovyde, in poetrye moost entieer,  
Nor with the souereyn balladys of Chauceer

(IX: 3401-3405)

In professing such ignorance, Lydgate purports to separate himself from these venerable predecessors. Such protestations of unworthiness are frequently seen in fifteenth century poetry. This trope of extreme humility enabled poets to construct a public persona which allowed them to negotiate complex social relationships with their often noble patrons.<sup>8</sup> Lydgate's claims to have been often 'troublyd with ygnorau<sup>n</sup>ce' and to be 'ronne fere in age / Nat quyk, but rude and dul of my corage' enable him to ameliorate the unpalatable moral of his text: 'Though your estat lyk Phebus wer shynyng / Yit, for al that, ye haue no sewerte' (IX: 3308, 3313-14, 3565-66).

The lines from this envoy are heavily indebted to the final stanzas of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*:

Go, litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye  
[...]  
And kis the steppes where as thow seest pace

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<sup>8</sup> David Lawton, 'Dullness and the Fifteenth Century', *ELH: Journal of English Literary History*, 54: 4 (1987), 761-99.

Lydgate also devotes nearly one hundred lines to rehearsing the accomplishments of his 'maistir Chaucer', 'cheeff poete off Breteyne' (I: 274; 246) in the Prologue to Book I of the *Fall*. Coupled with Lydgate's avowed unworthiness, the direct references to and borrowings from other authors reveal the extent of his literary knowledge and the expectation that his readers would also be familiar with these texts. His words create a statement of lineage, albeit a negatively phrased one.<sup>10</sup> Yet Lydgate claims that he merely seeks to allay any blame that might otherwise be laid at the feet of Boccaccio or de Premierfait. Any faults in the text – any blameworthy elements – are Lydgate's own: 'And where I faylle let Lydgate ber the lak' (IX: 3442). Yet it is through these words, which purportedly separate Lydgate from his literary forebears, that he is envisaged as an author in his own right. By extension of Lydgate's own argument, any elements of the book that are enjoyable, successful or in some way useful to the reader are also Lydgate's own.

In his opening stanza, the Lydgate scribe employs and plays with this multiplicity of ideas to emphasise the sense of Lydgate as author with much less subtlety than the monk of Bury himself. Where Lydgate describes his forebears as 'laureat poetes', a venerable group he wishes to associate himself with, the scribe goes one step further replacing the group of 'laureat poetes' with '*the Poete laureat*' (my italics). Lydgate supersedes all that have come before him. He is not merely the latest in a long line of eminent authors

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<sup>9</sup> All quotations from Chaucer are taken from: *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>10</sup> Cannon, 'Monastic Productions', p. 341. See also Lerer, pp. 3-21.

whose greatness he can only hope to emulate, but the accumulation and evolution of their successes. In this simple phrase, the scribe elevates Lydgate to a greater literary authority. As such Boccaccio remains unnamed in the table until Chapter Two of Book I, described as 'The compleynt of Iohn bochas vpon the fal of Adam' (f. 1r). The framework which establishes Lydgate as pre-eminent author suggests that this is no longer the complaint of Bochas himself, but the complaint as written by Lydgate and all further references to Boccaccio in the table are tempered by the scribe's positioning of Lydgate as author of the text. In this sense, the scribe's choice of the word 'pe de gre' in the opening stanza has a dual meaning; in Middle English 'pedegre' meant both a genealogical relationship and a line of succession.<sup>11</sup> In these lines, it ostensibly refers to the 'lyne of Adam / Evne descendyng down' and the history of men and fortune since the beginning of time. It also hints at the genealogies with which Harley 1766 has connections as will become evident in Chapter Five. Yet it also reflects on the literary genealogy of which Lydgate is part, placing him alongside or above the likes of Ovid and Virgil. By imprinting the table of contents with the authority of Lydgate the laureate poet in this way, the scribe provides *auctoritas* for a highly unusual version of the text and for his own editorial processes.

## Frontispiece

The manuscript proper opens on f. 5r with a half-page prefatory miniature or frontispiece depicting St. Edmund enthroned (Figure 3.1). Markedly different from the other 156 images, both in terms of its subject matter and its position on the page, the frontispiece

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<sup>11</sup> *Middle English Dictionary* <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED32720>> [accessed 1 May 2009].

has been identified as the work of a separate artist to the other images, designated Illustrator A by Scott.<sup>12</sup> Featuring intricate patterned borders in a variety of colours with details of both the miniature and the border picked out in gold, the frontispiece is a striking and opulent means of opening the manuscript. St. Edmund is depicted seated on a canopied throne, holding an arrow, the instrument of his martyrdom. Before him kneel two Benedictine monks wearing the black robes of their order, hands clasped together in prayer. Two scrolls unfurl upwards from the monks towards the saint. The one on the left has been left blank, whilst that on the right reads 'dan John Lydgate'. Reynolds identifies this as a sixteenth century hand and close inspection reveals that it is certainly not the hand of the Lydgate scribe.<sup>13</sup> The other monk cannot be positively identified, but Reynolds, Bergen and Scott all agree that he could be William Curteys (d. 1446), Abbot during Lydgate's lifetime and commissioner of the original *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund*, now Harley 2278. A keen promoter of local illuminators, a dedicated administrator, and the man responsible for the development and categorisation of the abbey library, Curteys played a significant role in the promotion of Bury St. Edmunds in the 1420-40s and evidently made use of Lydgate's talents to this end. His abbatiates, and the financial and political security which accompanied it, arguably marked the abbey's 'last period of splendour'.<sup>14</sup>

Like the table of contents before it, the frontispiece contributes to a discourse of praise and eulogy in which Lydgate is fêted not just as a great author, but as the great poet-monk of Bury St. Edmunds. The manuscript reflects on the abbey's recent and glorious

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<sup>12</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 304.

<sup>13</sup> Reynolds, p. 143. Neither Bergen nor Scott make any mention of this.

<sup>14</sup> Antonia Gransden, 'Curteys, William (d. 1446), Abbot of Bury St. Edmunds', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <[www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com)> [accessed 28 July 2008].

past in the figures of Lydgate, Curteys and St. Edmund. It acts as a visual preface to the text, creating an interpretative framework that uses author portrait conventions to construct an authorial narrative and add literary value to the manuscript book. It also firmly links the manuscript with other manuscripts produced by the Lydgate scribe and associated artisans, functioning as a kind of imprimatur for the Bury scriptorium. Three of the four copies of the *Lives* manuscripts produced in this period (Yates Thompson 47, Ashmole 46 and the Arundel Castle manuscript) contain strikingly similar frontispieces to Harley 1766, each of which is surrounded by nearly identical flourishes and foliage. In each, St. Edmund holds an arrow and sits on a canopied throne before a patterned background, differing only slightly from Harley 1766's grassy foreground in the choice of a chequered floor. Both the Arundel Castle manuscript and Ashmole 46 (Figures 4.1 and 4.2) depict a robed and tonsured Benedictine monk, presumably Lydgate, kneeling to the left of the image. Like their counterpart in Harley 1766, these monks' hands are clasped in prayer and an empty scroll unfurls away from each towards the seated saint. Unlike Harley 1766, there is no second monk. Unusually for the group, Yates Thompson 47 (Figure 4.3) omits any figures kneeling by St. Edmund's side. Even with these slight variations, the striking similarities between these images provide an immediate visual signal of their relationship. Scott has suggested that the existence of a group of manuscripts bearing such similarities is suggestive of 'a regional shop or alliance of craftsmen that had substantial experience in designing and producing vernacular and liturgical books with sequences of illustrations'.<sup>15</sup> Gillespie agrees that the decoration of these books indicates that the area supported a decorating shop.<sup>16</sup> These frontispiece images – copied into each book by four different artists – strongly suggest that there was

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<sup>15</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 303.

<sup>16</sup> Gillespie, *Print Culture*, p. 39.

not only a workshop of this type, but that those designing and purchasing these manuscripts were keen to imprint them as products of that workshop.

The design of the imprimatur further reveals a desire to visually identify the workshop with Bury through the representation of the figures of St. Edmund, Lydgate and possibly Curteys. Images of the apotheosis of St. Edmund can be traced back to eleventh and twelfth century manuscript images produced in Bury St. Edmunds. From the eleventh century, the monks at Bury were involved in exporting the image of St. Edmund through books produced there. Anthony Bale cites an eleventh century copy of Abbo of Fleury and Osbert of Clare's *Life, Passion and Miracles of St. Edmund* (now Copenhagen, Royal Library MS Gl.Kgl.S.1588), which was made in Bury and by the thirteenth century was owned by the abbey of St. Denis near Paris. From the eleventh century, many French, German and Netherlandish abbeys included Edmund in their legends.<sup>17</sup> Well-known both in England and on the Continent, the image of Edmund signified the importance of Bury as a seat of learning and spiritual importance. The Bury imprimatur was another product of this tradition and its format may well have been inspired by another manuscript made at Bury and held there until the sixteenth century: a copy of Abbo of Fleury's and Osbert of Clare's *Life, Passion and Miracles of St. Edmund* (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library MS M 736, c. 1130). A full page miniature on f. 22v depicts two monks kneeling and kissing the feet of a seated and crowned St. Edmund, who is offered a sceptre and palm by angels (Figure 4.4). Although not a frontispiece, its

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<sup>17</sup> Anthony Bale, ed., *St. Edmund, King and Martyr: Changing Images of a Medieval Saint* (York: York Medieval Press, 2009), p. 9; Antonia Gransden, 'Abbo of Fleury's *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*', *Revue Bénédictine*, 105: 1-2 (1995), 65-70.

composition is similar to the Bury imprimatur and may well have offered a template for the later Bury books.<sup>18</sup>

Those copies of the *Lives* which do not contain this imprimatur – Harley 2278 and Harley 4826 – both contain images of a kneeling Lydgate. On f. 9r of Harley 2278, Lydgate is shown genuflecting before St. Edmund's shrine, whilst a historiated initial on f. 52r of Harley 4826 contains a monk, complete with black robes and tonsure, identified in the margin as 'lydgate' (Figures 4.5 and 4.6). These images of St. Edmund, Benedictine monks and Lydgate himself may all have shaped the Bury imprimatur. The links to images once found in the abbey's own library may shed light on the relationship between abbey and artisans. Scott notes that of the books that survive from the abbey library, none are Lydgate manuscripts and, of its extant fifteenth century manuscripts, she can find no links with the groups of artisans who produced Harley 1766.<sup>19</sup> Thus although there are scant grounds for locating the workshop within the monastery itself, it could have facilitated the scribe and artists' work by allowing easy access to exemplary material.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the similarity of the *Lives* manuscripts to Harley 2278 point to the possibility that the Lydgate scribe saw either the original or a derivative. The potential use of an image from the abbey's own library and the scribe's familiarity with Lydgate's texts and the earlier copy of the *Lives* all suggest a close relationship between abbey and artisans. Whilst this may not reflect the activity of an organised, commercial

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<sup>18</sup> Scott, 'Lydgate's *Lives*', p. 349, n. 50.

<sup>19</sup> Scott, 'Lydgate's *Lives*', p. 362, n. 84.

<sup>20</sup> A. I. Doyle, 'Book Production of the Monastic Orders in England (c. 1375-1530): Assessing the Evidence', in *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence. Proceedings of the Second Conference of the Seminar in the History of the Book to 1500, Oxford, July 1988*, ed. Linda L. Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills: Anderson-Lovelace, 1990), p. 7; Gillespie, *Print Culture*, p. 39; *The Life of St. Edmund, King and Martyr: John Lydgate's Illustrated Verse Life Presented to Henry VI: A Facsimile of British Library MS Harley 2278*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (London: British Library, 2004), p. 12.

scriptorium of the type described by Doyle and Parkes, the repeated production of carefully illustrated Lydgate manuscripts in Bury in the 1460s demonstrates a burgeoning trade in Lydgate's texts supported by local demand, access to exemplars and repeated commissioning of a group of artists or workshop trained in a similar style and a single scribe whose work displays a close engagement with the texts he copied.<sup>21</sup>

By imprinting these manuscripts as the work of Lydgate produced in Bury, the scribe and artists evince a sense of local identity and pride which is very much bound up in Lydgate's literary achievements. The choice of an author portrait as frontispiece is crucial to these reflections as these are multivalent images that fulfil a range of functions: authorising, immortalising and promoting. They manage relationships between the author and his patrons, readers, sources and text. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in particular, author portraits were being produced with increasing variety and sophistication, increasingly able to respond both to the 'nature of the text and its relation to the audience'.<sup>22</sup> At once traditional and innovative, the Harley portrait confers both authority and value onto the manuscript, advancing Bury St. Edmunds as a seat of literary and political authority through its immortalisation of the poet.

In the fifteenth century, author portraits typically portrayed the author as a protégé of their patron, kneeling humbly before him whilst presenting their work. For example, in six of the eight illustrated *Troy Books*, Lydgate appears kneeling before Henry V whilst still Prince of Wales, presenting him with the completed volume.<sup>23</sup> Other common

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<sup>21</sup> Doyle and Parkes, pp. 163-210; Gillespie, *Print Culture*, pp. 35-39.

<sup>22</sup> Salter and Pearsall, p. 115.

<sup>23</sup> The six are: British Library, MS Cotton Augustus A iv (1430s), Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C.446 (1440-60), Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 232 (1420-30), Cambridge, Trinity

depictions of authors show them in the act of writing at a desk, reading from a lectern, teaching or preaching. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 61, for example, depicts Chaucer standing in a pulpit reading to an assembled courtly audience. Still others present them in the role of dreamer or spectator to the events of which they write (e.g. Deguileville in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 1647, Cicero in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Holkham 373 or Boccaccio in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 213).<sup>24</sup> Despite their variations, these author portraits share a common goal: to link the text to a visual representation of the author and in so doing confer *auctoritas* upon it.<sup>25</sup>

In striking contrast to these examples, the Harley 1766 frontispiece does not represent its author with a book of any kind nor does it explicitly link him with the text that follows. Yet the image is still clearly an author portrait, recognised as such by both the sixteenth century reader who inscribed Lydgate's name upon a scroll and by modern day critics who have not hesitated to identify the kneeling monk with Lydgate. The artist draws on an established literary and visual iconography which recognises Lydgate as the monk of Bury. As argued in Chapter One, this is part of Lydgate's authorial persona and the ways in which he was described and eulogised after his death. The opening lines of the manuscript's table of contents define him explicitly as 'Monk of Bury'. Represented in the prefatory miniature as a tonsured monk, wearing the black robes of the Benedictine order, there can be little doubt that this is Lydgate, particularly in a manuscript produced at a time and place where demand for his manuscripts is evident. Other visual

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College MS 0. 5. 2 (1440-60), John Rylands, English MS 1 (mid-fifteenth century) and New York, Pierpont Morgan Library MS M. 876 (1440-50). British Library, MS Royal 18 D ii (1455-69), contains a similar frontispiece which replaces Lydgate with the manuscript's patrons. Bristol, City Reference Library, MS 8 (1420-35) has gaps where images once existed.

<sup>24</sup> Salter and Pearsall, pp. 115-16.

<sup>25</sup> Jeanne Krochalis, 'Hoccleve's Chaucer Portrait', *Chaucer Review*, 21 (1986), p. 235.

representations of Lydgate – the *Troy Book* frontispieces, the historiated initial in Harley 4826, and the image in Harley 2278 – all show an almost identical figure, robed, tonsured and kneeling in a gesture of supplication, either before a patron or a saint.<sup>26</sup> So entrenched is this representation of Lydgate that he is shown in the same fashion in later woodcuts of the early sixteenth century. Pynson's 1513 edition of the *Troy Book*, for example, has a familiar representation of Lydgate kneeling before Henry V.<sup>27</sup>

As a non-standard author portrait, the Harley 1766 frontispiece depicts Lydgate in a devotional attitude before St. Edmund. The figure of the patron is replaced by a saint and the presentation with a gesture of supplication. Such deviations from established patterns suggest a deliberate strategy to set forth new associations for the author portrait which do not focus exclusively on its authorising function. With its inclusion of St. Edmund, the iconography of the image is more akin to that of the patron or donor portraits found primarily in devotional books where noble figures are shown kneeling in veneration before an image of the Crucifixion or the Virgin.<sup>28</sup> However, as Scott has noted, neither authors nor patrons of this period are typically shown venerating a saint and in only three other contemporary manuscripts can similar images be identified, none of which appear to have any connection with Harley 1766.<sup>29</sup> Kneeling at the feet of St. Edmund, king and martyr, Lydgate is shown both as the protégé of a royal patron and as

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<sup>26</sup> The only exceptions to this rule come in the *Siege of Thebes* manuscripts: British Library, MS Royal 18 D ii, f. 148r where Lydgate is possibly pictured amongst the pilgrims leaving Canterbury and British Library, MS Arundel 119, f. 1r where a pilgrim atop a horse is pictured in the opening historiated initial.

<sup>27</sup> Pollard and Redgrave, *A Short Title Catalogue of Books*, no. 5579; Schirmer, p. 43.

<sup>28</sup> See for example: the Abingdon Missal (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 227, 1461-62), f. 113v or the Beaufort Hours (British Library, MS Royal 2 A xviii, c. 1430-40), f. 23v.

<sup>29</sup> The three are: the Carmelite Missal (British Library, MS Add. 29704-05, 44892 (fragments, late fourteenth century), f. 136v, the Bolton Hours (York Minster, MS Add. 2, c. 1405-1415), f. 40v, and Bruge's Garter Book (British Library, MS Stowe 594, c. 1430-45), f. 5v. Scott, 'Lydgate's Lives', pp. 348-49, n. 50.

the loyal servant of a spiritual master. The figure of Edmund provides a point of intersection between secular and spiritual authority, just as Lydgate himself negotiated courtly and clerical life.

It is precisely this context that allows Lydgate and his text to offer advice to kings and princes. It is his role as monk that gives him the right to offer this advice. Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the earlier Bury manuscript, Harley 4826, where the opening to the *Secrees of Old Philosoffres* (ff. 52-81) is indicated by both pious illustration and worldly rubric. The historiated initial to which this chapter has already referred depicts Lydgate kneeling in prayer before God who appears from a cloud in the upper-right of the image, where initial meets decorated border. In the right-hand margin of f. 52r, the rubric states 'This is the book of the gouemaunce of kynges and Prynces'. This collocation leaves little doubt that Lydgate's role as a monk is as important as his role as poet. His piety elevates him above worldly and political turmoil to the position of wise and pious counsellor. In this respect, the frontispiece alters typical power relationships. Where the Lydgate of the *Troy Book* frontispieces 'submits [his] words to judging and rewarding patrons', the Lydgate of the Bury manuscripts kneels before no earthly patron but looks towards his spiritual master.<sup>30</sup> He is equal even to his Abbot who kneels alongside him. These images confer a higher authority upon Lydgate and his works.

It was his association with the worldly abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, with its courtly and royal associations, that provided Lydgate with the opportunity to offer such advice and this too is demonstrated in the frontispiece of Harley 1766. The figure of St. Edmund is

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<sup>30</sup> Lerer, p. 32.

not just a representation of the saint but a topographical marker of Bury St. Edmunds. As the patronal saint of one of the five richest Benedictine houses of the period as the patronal saint of Bury, St. Edmund must have been synonymous with the abbey there.<sup>31</sup> As such, the inclusion of the saint does not provide an exclusively spiritual context but reminds the viewer of Bury St. Edmunds, a worldly abbey with ties to the court and influential noblemen. Like its predecessor, Harley 2278, Harley 1766 makes direct connections between the origins of Bury St. Edmunds and its recent history, in which possibly the most popular, and certainly the most prolific, contemporary poet wrote for kings and nobles and documented the lives of saints, succinctly achieving this through the frontispiece's positioning of Lydgate and Curteys at the feet of the great founder saint.<sup>32</sup> In so doing, it provides an interpretative framework for understanding the importance of Lydgate and reflecting on the role of Bury as a seat of political and literary authority.

Similarly, the scrolls in the image contain a dual function, connecting Lydgate to both the spiritual and worldly aspects of Bury abbey. Although the scrolls have been left blank, their inclusion is reminiscent of devotional images in which wealthy patrons kneel before the Virgin or the Crucifixion, offering up a short prayer. Through the scrolls, the two monks are visually given a direct means of communication with St. Edmund. However, just as Edmund has a multivalent identity as king, saint and representative of the abbey, so the scrolls themselves have multiple meanings. They represent not only the monks' spiritual connection to St. Edmund, but the political and literary power that the abbey enjoyed during their lifetimes. The scrolls are a reminder of the wider textual culture of

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<sup>31</sup> Ebin, pp. 3-6.

<sup>32</sup> Edwards, *St. Edmund*, p. 3.

Bury St. Edmunds in which literary commissions and rigorous document keeping were combined, particularly if the second monk is read as Abbot William Curteys.

The inclusion of Curteys is at once a commemorative gesture and a reminder of Bury's recent glorious history, an act of homage to a man who worked tirelessly to preserve and promote Bury's eminent status as an abbey exempt from Episcopal jurisdiction and visitation, a status granted in 1044 during the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066).<sup>33</sup> Alongside this generous endowment, the abbey was also given the right to exercise authority on behalf of the crown in the area known as the eight and a half hundreds of West Suffolk or the Liberty of St. Edmunds.<sup>34</sup> During his abbatiage, Curteys combined rigorous record keeping with literary commissions to support these claims to exemption. His monumental two-volume abbatial register contains copies of all of the documents, charters and letters which asserted Bury's legal privileges, as well as literary sources, including a *Vita et passio S. Edmundi abbreviata*.<sup>35</sup> It is probable that the verse copies of the abbey's charters – the *Cartae versificatae* – found in volume I (Add. 14,848, ff. 243r-254r) were commissioned from Lydgate by the Abbot.<sup>36</sup> Written between 1435 and 1440, the *Cartae* brought together and translated into Middle English verse the abbey's royal charters, allegedly issued by Kings Cnut, Harthacnut, Edward the

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<sup>33</sup> Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p. 25. For an overview of Curteys' life see: *Memorials of St. Edmund's Abbey*, ed. Thomas Arnold, 3 vols (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1890-96), III, pp. 29-33; John William Elston, *William Curteys, Abbot of Bury St. Edmunds, 1429-1446* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UM, 1983), PhD thesis – University of California, Berkeley, 1979.

<sup>34</sup> *The Archives of the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds*, ed. Rodney M. Thomson (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1980), pp. 1-2. For the role of the abbey in the affairs of the town see: Mary D. Lobel, *The Borough of Bury St. Edmunds: A Study in the Government and Development of a Medieval Town* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935) and Robert S. Gottfried, *Bury St. Edmunds and the Urban Crisis: 1290-1539* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982).

<sup>35</sup> British Library, MS Add. 14,848 (Vol. I) & MS Add. 7,096 (Vol. II). The contents of the two manuscripts are described in: *Archives*, pp. 135-139. Lydgate's *Cartae versificatae* is reprinted in *Memorials*, III, pp. 215-235.

<sup>36</sup> *Memorials*, II, p. xx; *Archives*, p. 35; Mortimer, p. 149.

Confessor, William the Conqueror and Henry I, forming a kind of ‘documentary poetics’.<sup>37</sup> Part history, part literature, the aim of the *Cartae* was to stress the close relationship between the abbey and the Crown, whilst recognising that Bury’s privileges were dependent on continued royal support and protection, a theme continued in Curteys’ later commission of the *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund*. Indeed, in his edition of Harley 2278, Edwards notes that the manuscript ‘made a direct connection between the origins of this prominent royally founded religious house, its present status and its hope of future protection under kingly favour’.<sup>38</sup> In stressing the abbey’s contemporary and historical associations with the Crown, Lydgate was not simply exercising his own scholarly imagination, but was almost certainly influenced by Curteys and his policy of collating documentary and literary evidence to bolster his abbey’s claims to exemption and eminence.

Curteys’ fervour is unsurprising in light of the physical and jurisdictional attacks the abbey suffered throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The monks of the abbey were not always regarded as just overlords and in the fourteenth century Bury twice erupted in rioting due to perceived injustices in the abbey’s control of the town. In 1327 the townspeople of Bury St. Edmunds and the peasants working on the monks’ estates joined forces, taking Abbot Draughton (d. 1334) prisoner and extorting a charter of liberties from him which repealed some of the more controversial abbatial rights, particularly its power to levy taxes in the town.<sup>39</sup> During the following week, the abbey

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<sup>37</sup> Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 17.

<sup>38</sup> Edwards, *St. Edmund*, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Recorded as *Depredatio abbacie Sancti Edmundi*, in British Library, MS Cotton Claudius A xii. The text is reprinted in *Memorials*, II, pp. 327-354. The extorted 1327 charter is reprinted in *Memorials*, III, pp. 302-18 and is described on pp. xliv-xlvii. For an overview of these events see: Mary D. Lobel, ‘A Detailed

and its manors were plundered and burnt, whilst the prior and twenty-four monks were held in the parish church of St. Mary's. Although nineteen of the rebels were later arrested and hung in October 1328, two escaped and seized the abbot, taking him to Brabant, not to return to Bury St. Edmunds until April 1329. The abbey's charter was removed and given to the town's aldermen, not to be returned until 1332.

Similarly in 1381, townspeople broke into the abbey to steal its charters, with the rebels demanding a renewal of the charter of 1327.<sup>40</sup> On this occasion, the rebels also executed the chief justice of England, Sir John Cavendish, and two monks of St. Edmunds including Prior Cambridge and displayed their heads in the town's marketplace. Although their demands were temporarily granted, once the rebellion was suppressed, the charter was again repealed. In each case, the riots constituted both a physical attack on the monks themselves and on the documentation that authorised their privileged status. Yet these events reveal the fragility of the monks' claims and how easily the authority of the abbey might be threatened. By Curteys' time, such physical attacks on the abbey had been replaced by jurisdictional disputes with ecclesiastical rivals and local clerics.<sup>41</sup> Like the riots of the fourteenth century, these disputes challenged the abbey's exempt and privileged status and doubtless both contributed to his policy of documentation and defence.

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Account of the 1327 Rising at Bury St. Edmunds and the Subsequent Trial', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History*, 21 (1933), 215-31 and Gottfried, pp. 222-231.

<sup>40</sup> See *Memorials*, III, pp. xxv-xxvii; *Archives*, p. 24; Gottfried, pp. 234-36.

<sup>41</sup> See for example, the conflicts between Curteys and William Alnwich, bishop of Norwich. Throughout the 1430s, Alnwich made a number of attempts to assert jurisdictional authority over Bury St. Edmunds, claiming the right, for example, to examine Bury clergy for taxation and, upon hearing claims of suspected Lollardy in the area, insisting on his right to try the heretics himself in violation of Bury's own jurisdiction. For more on Alnwich and taxation see Curteys' register, Add. 14,848, ff. 87r and 193r. For the trial of Lollards in Bury see: *Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Norwich, 1428-31*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, Camden Society, 4<sup>th</sup> ser., 20 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1977), pp. 90-98 and Curteys' register, Add. 14,848, f. 109v.

For all Curteys' importance, the frontispiece remains primarily an author portrait of Lydgate. Through this focus it succeeds in defining the text solely as Lydgate's rather than a translation based on Boccaccio or de Premierfait. As in the table of contents, Lydgate is the ultimate author and source of the text. By contrast, many of the French *Des cas* manuscripts produced by the Parisian *libraires* include numerous images of Boccaccio as eyewitness, authenticating the veracity of the events that unfold before him.<sup>42</sup> Others include frontispieces which show de Premierfait presenting the text to a royal patron whilst Boccaccio stands behind, a fatherly hand resting on the shoulder of his kneeling student.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the late-fifteenth century copy of the *Fall of Princes*, HM 268 displays a comparable layering of authority and authorial voices containing images which show Lydgate presenting his book to Boccaccio (f. 18r), Boccaccio writing (f. 79v) and Petrarch appearing before Boccaccio (f. 153r). These images create a visual literary lineage which resounds throughout the manuscript, a lineage which explicitly relates to the text at hand and places the authors on a par with each other. By contrast, Harley 1766 omits Boccaccio entirely and favours Lydgate in its frontispiece, highlighting his status as a renowned poet, connecting him specifically with Bury St. Edmunds and promoting him as a great East Anglian poet.

The non-standard iconography of the Harley 1766 author portrait clearly brings with it a new set of associations and correlations. Yet despite the iconographic differences, the image retains its core authorising function. As a pre-eminent poet of the mid-fifteenth century, Lydgate's *auctoritas* was undeniable and might suggest no particular need for

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<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS 63, f. 3r; Hedeman, *Translating the Past*, p. 78.

<sup>43</sup> For example, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 131, f. 1r.

an image to authorise the text. The text in Harley 1766, however, is quite different to Lydgate's original. It is abridged, edited and rearranged by the scribe. Scott has argued that an entrepreneur producing a book might decide to illustrate its opening with a miniature of the author, almost certainly with the approval of the patron, for the motive of conferring authority upon 'that particular issue of a text'.<sup>44</sup> The scribe's pivotal role in the design and production of Harley 1766 casts him in the light of such an entrepreneur and the author portrait which opens the manuscript lends authorial weight and authenticity to a non-standard version of the text by associating it explicitly with Lydgate even though in its abridged and edited form it is further from Lydgate's own text than any other extant copy. Alongside this, it confers a contemporary *auctoritas* on Bury St. Edmunds itself by its insistence in linking Lydgate with the abbey in which he spent most of his life.

This is the increasing variety and sophistication of fifteenth century author portraits of which Pearsall and Salter have written, images that respond not only to the text but to the circumstances and location of its production. It is within this nexus of interpretation that the author portrait can also be seen to supply another kind of function: imbuing the manuscript with both cultural and commercial value. The books of Bury St. Edmunds display almost identical prefatory miniatures. The repeated commissioning of Lydgate in the area suggests that the value of the image was not confined to an individual text but to the author himself as a symbol which the gentrified book-buying public of East Anglia were prepared to pay for. A similar impetus is at work in the six illustrated *Troy Book* manuscripts each of which contains an image of Lydgate kneeling before his royal patron. None of these appear to be the original presentation copy in which such an image might function to remind the royal patron of his lowly poet and increase Lydgate's

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<sup>44</sup> Scott, *Tradition*, p. 142.

chances of financial remuneration and continued royal favour. Instead these manuscripts were the product of wealthy commission and armorial evidence reveals ownership by gentry and nobles alike.<sup>45</sup> The inclusion of the presentation scene reveals that they have acquired another – very different – value and meaning. For these wealthy but non-aristocratic patrons, the author portrait enhances the value of the book. By imitating the conventions of the presentation copy, these manuscripts are designed to associate their owners with noble commissioning classes; Lydgate himself becomes an ‘effect’, a symbol that the book-buying public were prepared to pay for.<sup>46</sup> This indicates both the capacity of the commissioning patron to influence the illustrative content of their books, and suggests the possibility that book producers were willing and able to utilise their customers’ social aspirations in order to influence their commission. In this way, the author portrait adds a kind of ‘cultural capital’ to the manuscripts, enhancing both their desirability to the gentrified classes and their commercial value to those producing them.<sup>47</sup>

The evidence of ownership of the *Troy Books* alone reveals both a noble and gentrified reading public who were familiar with a wide range of author portraits and presentation images, and who were doubtless familiar with the nuanced readings they supported and promoted, working within old traditions and establishing innovative new variations.

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<sup>45</sup> British Library, MS Cotton Augustus A iv bears the arms of Sir Thomas Chaworth, MP, sheriff and a justice of the peace (d. 1459) and his second wife Isabella de Ailesbury, whilst Manchester, John Rylands Library, English MS 1 has a full-page armorial statement of the Carent family on f. 173r. Cambridge, Trinity College MS 0.5.2 contains numerous coats of arms traceable to the Thwaites or Knevet families, who held a similar position to Sir Thomas Chaworth in the mid-fifteenth century. The only surviving copy which can be positively dated to the aristocracy is Royal 18 D ii, which bears the arms of William Herbert, earl of Pembroke, and his wife Anne Devereux, whom he married in c. 1455; Lawton, ‘Illustration’, pp. 40-41, 52-55.

<sup>46</sup> Gillespie, *Print Culture*, pp. 40-41.

<sup>47</sup> John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon-Formation* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

Authors, commissioning patrons and commercial book producers alike were all able to influence the production and inclusion of author portraits in order to make statements about social, literary and political positions and aspirations, and to add cultural or commercial value to a manuscript. Indeed, both Scott and Gillespie have argued that the inclusion of Edmund in these manuscripts represents little more than savvy commercial manuscript producers responding to the needs of wealthy patrons interested primarily in 'codicological display' rather than any interest in Edmund himself.<sup>48</sup> Yet the books of Bury St. Edmunds display an acute interest in the local saint and the meaning he held for the prestige of the area. These books utilised the multi-faceted nature of the author portrait, not to associate their owners with the world of the court as did the owners of the earlier *Troy Books*, but rather to enhance their local associations and affiliations. These images revel in Lydgate's role as poet-monk of East Anglia, as devoted servant of the abbey and advisor to kings and princes.

These statements of local loyalty can be read in the light of Bury's changing fortunes in the early days of the Wars of the Roses when the Lydgate scribe and his scriptorium were at work. For many, including the abbey at Bury, allegiance to the Lancastrian cause was disastrous following the victory of Edward IV at Towton in 1461. Like many of his contemporaries, Curteys had recognised that the security and ongoing good fortune of his abbey depended largely on the goodwill of those ruling the country in the king's minority.<sup>49</sup> Letters preserved in Curteys' register demonstrate that the abbot cultivated a

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<sup>48</sup> Alexandra Gillespie, 'The Later Lives of St. Edmund: John Lydgate to John Stow', in *St. Edmund, King and Martyr: Changing Images of a Medieval Saint*, ed. Anthony Bale (Woodbridge: York Medieval, 2009), pp. 175-177; Kathleen L. Scott, 'Caveat lector: Ownership and Standardisation in the Illustration of Fifteenth Century English Manuscripts', *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, 1 (1988), pp. 39-42.

<sup>49</sup> John Whethamstede, Abbot of St. Albans, for example, was patronised and supported by Gloucester; Elston, p. 63.

close relationship with the young king.<sup>50</sup> Henry frequently consulted Curteys on a variety of matters, borrowing money from him, asking for assistance in preparing for his marriage and confiding his fears regarding the ongoing military action in France. Other letters in Curteys' register reveal the patronage of one of the most politically powerful families of the period, the Beauforts.<sup>51</sup> Great patrons of the abbey since the time of John of Gaunt, Curteys continued to cultivate this alliance. However, during Henry VI's minority, Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester and later Cardinal of England (1375?-1447) continuously vied for power with Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester.<sup>52</sup> By the terms of Henry V's will, Humphrey was to be lieutenant and protector of the new young king, whilst his older brother, John, Duke of Bedford (1389-1435), was to continue fighting in Normandy until Henry VI came of age. However, the lords temporal and spiritual ruled that the power of regent should not be given to the dead king's younger brother, although he was given the role of protector and chief councillor alongside Bedford. In his *Chronicle*, John Hardyng records Beaufort's mistrust of Gloucester and his intentions in 1422 after the death of Henry V:

The duke of Gloucester then desired  
To haue the keypyng of the kyng enspired  
The bishop of Wynchester it withstode  
With all the lords there hole of his assent.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Some of these are reprinted in *Memorials*, III, pp. 241-279.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, Add. 14,848, ff. 121-121v.

<sup>52</sup> See Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 13-17, 30-35, 70-80; B. P. Wolffe, *Henry VI* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981), pp. 29-30; John Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 111-122.

<sup>53</sup> *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, ed. Henry Ellis (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1812), pp. 390-91. This is the second Yorkist version of the *Chronicle*.

Beaufort and Gloucester clashed regularly throughout Henry VI's minority, resulting in their armed forces confronting each other on London Bridge in October 1425. Bedford returned to force the contending parties to accept a settlement and uneasy truce.<sup>54</sup> Curteys' association with the Beauforts thus led the abbey into the risky world of partisan politics. As a rule, however, the abbey remained secure, even serving as a place where opposing factions could meet in peace and apparent friendship, as during the royal visit of 1433-34.

This visit secured Bury's position and safety for some time. Curteys' successors, William Babington (1446-1453) and John Boon (1453-1469), continued to enjoy the fruits of these alliances.<sup>55</sup> Yet during the 1430s and 1440s the political landscape began to change dramatically. In 1437 Henry VI declared his intent to take an active part in ruling and Beaufort and his clique moved to consolidate their position in the royal household and council. Notes appended to bills and decisions reveal the cardinal's growing influence.<sup>56</sup> Beaufort's nephew Edmund Beaufort, marquis of Dorset joined the council in 1443. William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk and steward of the royal household, was also nominated to the Council in 1430 during the king's absence in France and by the late 1430s was certainly associated with Beaufort's retinue.<sup>57</sup> Conversely, Gloucester's influence during this period appears to have declined. Records indicate he was rarely at council meetings in the late 1430s and was not paid as councillor after July 1438. The accusation of witchcraft levelled at his duchess and her subsequent arrest and trial in the

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<sup>54</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 70-80; G. L. Harriss, 'Beaufort, Henry (1375?-1447)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com>> [accessed 20 Dec 2010].

<sup>55</sup> Elston, p. 69.

<sup>56</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 275-76; *Proceedings and Ordinance of the Privy Council*, V, pp. 71, 312-15; *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, 6 vols (London: Record Commission), V, p. 438.

<sup>57</sup> Watts, pp. 162-63; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 40, 280.

summer of 1441 further served to damage his reputation.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, the influence of de la Pole increased throughout the 1440s. In 1444 the council, led by Suffolk, formulated a series of ordinances for dealing with bills and petitions presented to the king to which Henry VI signified his approval.<sup>59</sup> The council of 1444 was a decidedly smaller body than during the 1430s and was dominated by Suffolk himself.<sup>60</sup>

Yet Henry VI continued to exert his influence. Henry's actions throughout the 1430s and 1440s indicate his desire for peace with France, conscious both of the ongoing bloodshed and cost of war.<sup>61</sup> In 1440 Henry moved for the release of Charles, duke of Orléans, prisoner of the English since Agincourt. Beaufort had been a chief proponent of earlier peace negotiations in 1436-37 whilst Gloucester was defiantly opposed, reminding the council of Henry V's military successes and the Lancastrian right to rule in France.<sup>62</sup> To the pious Henry VI, however, a policy of peace was preferential to war. As part of the effort towards conciliation, a marriage treaty was brokered between Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou, niece of Charles VII of France, by which means peace between the two countries would be cemented.<sup>63</sup> Suffolk was the head of the embassy sent to

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<sup>58</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 280; G. L. Harriss, 'Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester (c.1400–1452)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com>> [accessed 21 December 2010]; Ralph A. Griffiths, 'The Trial of Eleanor Cobham: An Episode in the Fall of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 51 (1968-69), 381-99; *An English Chronicle of the Reigns of Richard II, Henry IV, Henry V and Henry VI*, ed. J. S. Davies, Camden Society, OS 64 (London: Camden Society, 1856).

<sup>59</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 283; *Proceedings and Ordinance of the Privy Council*, V, pp. 268-69, reprinted in *Select Documents of English Constitutional History, 1307-1485*, eds. S. B. Chrimes and A. L. Brown (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1961), pp. 277-79.

<sup>60</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 283.

<sup>61</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 443; *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France during the Reign of Henry the Sixth, King of England*, ed. J. Stevenson, 2 vols (London: Longmans, 1861-1864), II, ii, 451-60; *Proceedings and Ordinance of the Privy Council*, V, p. 132.

<sup>62</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 450; C. T. Allmand, 'Documents Relating to the Anglo-French Negotiations of 1439', *Camden Misc.*, 24 (1972), pp. 105-08.

<sup>63</sup> The policy of conciliation is discussed at length in Griffiths, *Henry VI*, especially pp. 482-550. See also Watts, pp. 221-239.

negotiate the terms of the marriage, accompanied by other members of the inner circle of the king's household.<sup>64</sup>

Following the truce of Tours in 1444, the royal couple married. A period of diplomatic activity followed in which ambassadors from both countries attempted to arrange a meeting between Charles VII and Henry VI to bring about a more lasting peace. In 1445, however, Charles VII demanded the cession of Maine as proof of the English desire for peace to which Henry agreed.<sup>65</sup> Watts argues that the nobility must have been aware of these negotiations, and that many of them likely agreed with their necessity.<sup>66</sup> However, B. P. Wolffe argues that Suffolk had to deny rumours that Gloucester had deliberately tried to sabotage proceedings at the Tours conference. Indeed, when the French embassy came to Westminster the following July, it was remarked that Henry himself had to ask his uncle to curb his all too apparent displeasure in front of the French delegates.<sup>67</sup>

Regardless of how many of the king's council were aware of negotiations, Henry's projected date of April 1446 for completion of the cession was optimistic as English officials and commanders in France refused to relinquish their lands. In July of 1447 Henry was forced to appoint two commissioners, Matthew Gough and Fulk Eyton to receive the towns of Maine, using force if necessary.<sup>68</sup> The loss of land and rents for Lancastrian landholders in Maine placed the regime in a difficult position. As the

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<sup>64</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 484.

<sup>65</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 495. In a letter dated 22 December 1445 Henry agrees to this request; Stevenson, II, i [639]-[642].

<sup>66</sup> Watts, pp. 222-225.

<sup>67</sup> Wolffe, pp. 184-87.

<sup>68</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 499-501; Stevenson, II, ii, [638]-[643].

surrender of Le Mans became public news towards the end of 1446, the possibility arose that Gloucester might become the leader for an increasingly disenchanting section of the nobility.<sup>69</sup>

Griffiths argues that Gloucester led the faction opposing the policy of conciliation whilst Watts believes that it is impossible to be sure whether Gloucester intended to 'exploit the difficulties of the governing group [...] as he had done before'. Suffolk certainly seems to have anticipated as much.<sup>70</sup> In 1447, a parliament meeting at the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds provided the opportunity for Suffolk to arrange Gloucester's arrest on suspicion of treason. Having changed the venue from Cambridge to Bury St. Edmunds in the heartlands of Suffolk's influence and away from Gloucester's own supporters in the London merchant classes, it appears that Suffolk and other courtiers persuaded Henry that Gloucester was raising a rebellion in Wales. Upon his arrival in Bury on 18 February, Gloucester was met by two officials from the king's household, Sir John Stourton and Sir Thomas Stanley, with a note from the king urging Gloucester to proceed to his lodgings. Later that day, Gloucester was arrested by Viscount Beaumont, Steward of England. By 23 February, however, Gloucester was dead. Although likely to have been the victim of a stroke – he lay unconscious for three days and his friend Abbot Whethamstede of Gloucester asserted his death was from natural causes – the king's circle apparently feared recriminations. Gloucester's body was publically displayed in the abbey church to dispel any rumours that he had met a violent end. However, the suspicion of foul play became a staple of Yorkist pamphleteers in the years

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<sup>69</sup> Watts, pp. 228-29.

<sup>70</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 496; Watts, p. 229.

that followed.<sup>71</sup> As hosts to the meeting that accompanied these events, Abbot Babington and the abbey itself may have fallen under suspicion and making such an alliance with an increasingly unpopular regime a dangerous one.

Following Gloucester's death, the peace process collapsed, followed by increasing losses in Lancastrian France culminating in Charles VII's armies marching on the Lancastrian French capital of Rouen on 29 October 1449.<sup>72</sup> Public feeling placed the blame largely on Suffolk himself who, on 22 January 1450, presented himself at parliament to answer any accusations that might be levelled against him.<sup>73</sup> On 29 January Suffolk was arrested on suspicion of treason and taken to the Tower. The bill of impeachment read before parliament accused Suffolk of having 'falsely and traiterously' managed relations between England and France resulting in the losses of Lancastrian lands in France.<sup>74</sup> In his defence, Suffolk argued that he had not acted alone, that he could not have done 'so grete thinges' without the cooperation of others.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> G. L. Harris, 'Humphrey [Humfrey or Humphrey of Lancaster], Duke of Gloucester [*called* Good Duke Humphrey] (1390-1447)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <[www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com)> [accessed 30 April 2009]; Schirmer, pp. 246-47; *Memorials*, xxxiii; J. H. Ramsay, *Lancaster and York: A Century of English History (AD 1399-1485)*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), II, p. 74; Watts, pp. 230-31; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 496-499; *The Great Chronicle of London*, eds. A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley (London: G. W. Jones, 1938), pp. 179-80; *A Collection of Political Poems and Songs relating to English History from the Accession of Edward III to the Reign of Henry VIII*, ed. T. Wright, 2 vols (London: Record Society, 1859-61), II, pp. 224, 268, for popular ballads. However Griffiths notes that many other records do not mention the possibility of murder, see: *John Benet's Chronicle for the Years 1400 to 1462*, ed. G. L. Harriss, Camden Miscellany 24 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1972); *Incerti Scriptoris Chronicon Angliae de Regnis Trium Regum Lancastrensiū, Henrici IV, Henrici V et Henrici VI*, ed. J. A. Giles (London: Nutt, 1848) (c. 1457); the register of Abbot Whethamstede of St. Albans (*Registrum Abbatiae Johannis Whethamstede*, ed. H. T. Riley, 2 vols (London: Record Society, 1872-73), I, 178-83, c. 1455).

<sup>72</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 514-15.

<sup>73</sup> Both Watts (pp. 244-251) and Griffiths, *Henry VI*, (pp. 676-686) offer detailed overviews of these events.

<sup>74</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 679; *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, V, p. 177.

<sup>75</sup> *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, V, p. 182.

Rather than being convicted of treason, Suffolk was banished, untried, to Burgundy.<sup>76</sup> Upon his release in the dead of night on 17 March, he barely escaped from some 2,000 angry citizens. Upon leaving Dover, however, his ship was forced to stop and he was beheaded without trial.<sup>77</sup>

Abbots Babington and Boon left no record of their experiences during these tumultuous times, but the alliances that Curteys had so carefully cultivated had suffered an extreme blow.<sup>78</sup> Elston argues that the abbey became a Lancastrian headquarters, with the monks' increasingly politicised role marking them out for mistrust and suspicion by the Yorkist faction. This is certainly possible given the death of Gloucester in 1447 and the abbey's sympathies do appear to have remained Lancastrian. Shortly after his accession, Edward IV moved to quell potential Lancastrian uprisings in the area such as the plot involving John Clopton, William Tyrell and the earl of Oxford discussed in Chapter Two. Of the six men arrested, all were influential Suffolk noblemen or merchants and all were patrons of Bury abbey. Several had been admitted to the lay confraternity there. The abbey itself was charged with suspected treason, having allegedly posted a notice on the abbey door stating that the Pope 'had given plenary

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<sup>76</sup> Historical opinion is divided on this. Watts argues that the complicity of the lords in Suffolk's plans led them to argue for the king's pardon. Griffiths, meanwhile, avers that Henry himself stepped into to protect his old advisor. See Watts, p. 247 and Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 678.

<sup>77</sup> These events are described in a number of contemporary sources, including two letters to John Paston. The first of these was written by William Lomner on 5 May 1450. A detailed account, the news was taken from the sheriff of Kent's servant who had brought the news to London. Accounts also appear in the 'Annals of William Worcester', 'Robert Bale's Chronicle' and town chronicles throughout England. See *The Paston Letters, AD 1422-1509*, ed. J. Gairdner, 3 vols (Westminster: Constable, 1900), I, pp. 126-27; K. B. McFarlane, 'William Worcester: A Preliminary Survey', in *Studies Presented to Sir Hilary Jenkinson*, ed. J. Conway Davies (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 196-221; *Six Town Chronicles of England*, ed. R. Flenley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), p. 129; Schirmer, p. 254; Wolffe, p. 228.

<sup>78</sup> *Memorials*, III, p. xxxiv.

absolution to the Lancastrians and had excommunicated all of Edward IV's adherents'.<sup>79</sup> The abbey obtained a general pardon after payment of a fine of 500 marks. The abbey's abrupt change in politics was rewarded in 1469 when Edward IV issued a royal decree which confirmed the ancient charter of privileges, reinforcing the abbot's exclusive jurisdiction in Bury.<sup>80</sup>

It was during this tumultuous period, during which the fate of the abbey at Bury seemed uncertain, that the Lydgate scribe was at work. The alliances that Curteys had so carefully cultivated now left the abbey in a politically precarious position. The manuscripts produced at this time are, in part, a response to this political situation. In the *Lives* manuscripts produced after 1461, this is achieved through a deliberate re-appropriation of the text's dedication to the new Yorkist king, Edward IV, rather than his Lancastrian predecessor. Harley 1766, meanwhile, apparently sidesteps direct issues of politics through its positioning of Lydgate as pious counsellor and wise author, elevated beyond partisan politics. It simultaneously harks back to the abbey's heyday, omitting more recent and less glorious history. And yet the choice of text – the *Fall of Princes* – is singularly suited to the politics of the day and as will be shown in Chapter Five, the scribe's design and editing explicitly sharpens Lydgate's own reflections on good and bad rulers.

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<sup>79</sup> Gibson, *Theater of Devotion*, p. 80; Gail McMurray Gibson, 'The Play of Wisdom and the Abbey of St. Edmund' in *The Wisdom Symposium: Papers from the Trinity College Medieval Festival*, ed. Milla Cozart (New York: AMS Press, 1986), pp. 55-56, 59; Cora Scofield, *The Life and Reign of Edward IV*, 2 vols (London: Frank Cass, 1923), I, p. 233; *Three Fifteenth-Century Chronicles*, ed. J. Gairdner, Camden Society, NS 28 (Westminster: Camden Society, 1880), p. 162; *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Existing in the Archives and Collections of Milan*, I, p. 107.

<sup>80</sup> Gibson, 'Wisdom', p. 59; *The Manuscripts of Lincoln, Bury St. Edmunds and Great Grimsby Corporation and of the Deans and Chapters of Worcester and Lichfield*, ed. W. D. Macray, Historical Manuscripts Commission (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1895), p. 139.

## Rubrics and Labelling

The opening section to this chapter outlined how the table of contents corresponds to a series of rubricated running titles, chapter headings and Latin chapter markings throughout the manuscript. Alongside these annotations, the margins of Harley 1766 feature an extensive programme of rubrics including individual names of characters, explicits, envoy markers, and several Latin glosses (see Appendix D for a full list). Like the scribal table of contents, these exhibit the scribe's detailed knowledge of the text and his meticulous attention to detail. The rubrics are uniformly laid out throughout the manuscript and are written in the right-hand margin on the recto of a folio, and in the left-hand margin on the verso, with the exception of explicits which are always placed immediately adjacent to the final word of the chapter in the right-hand margin. Names always occur adjacent to the line in which the character is first mentioned, again in the right-hand margin of the recto page and the left-hand margin of the verso. Similarly, rubrics identifying characters are placed next to each of the images, with very few exceptions.<sup>81</sup>

The rubrics are clearly the product of careful and methodical work and are in the same hand as the text itself, indicating the Lydgate scribe's diligent involvement at a variety of levels in the production of the manuscript. These features assist the reader in a mode of non-linear reading, allowing navigation through the manuscript based on a desire to read individual stories which might be found through a labelled image or a brief chapter

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<sup>81</sup> Two of the unlabelled images (Sardanapalus spinning, f. 116r and a Jewish woman roasting her child, f. 180r) occur next to the rubricated chapter heading which serves a double function as an image label. The other unlabelled images are: Pyrrhus, f. 148r; Marcus Regulus slaying the dragon, f. 156r; Tau cross, f. 199r; William d'Assise and son, f. 255r; Duke Gaultier, f. 255v; Philippa Catanesi and son strangling King Andreas of Hungary, f. 258r.

heading. It is notable that few other *Fall* manuscripts have such a detailed scheme of rubrication and that whilst many have some of the features contained in Harley 1766, none display all of them or the same level of consistency that Harley 1766 exhibits.<sup>82</sup> The extent of the scheme in Harley 1766 represents a sustained attempt to maintain a detailed apparatus which works in conjunction with the images and the table of contents to promote a verbal and visual scheme of cross-referencing and circular reading.

Several discrepancies in the placement of the rubrics provide insights into the design and production of the manuscript. On f. 255v, for example, the name 'Phelip Cathonoye' appears in the right-hand margin of the manuscript. In the left-hand margin, where the name would usually appear, is an image from the preceding narrative depicting Duke Gaultier being captured and killed.<sup>83</sup> Meanwhile, on f. 171v an image of Nero fleeing has been painted over a rubric (Figure 4.7). The paraph mark can still be seen as well as the 'T' of 'The lenvoye', a frequently used rubric in the manuscript and which would have been accurately placed by this section of text had it not been covered up.<sup>84</sup> In both cases, the scribe has thus had to choose between two governing principles of the manuscript's *ordinatio*, namely, that images must occur next to the portion of text they illustrate and that name-rubrics occur in the margin next to the introduction of the character. In each, the positioning of the image has been prioritised over the position of the name-rubric.

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<sup>82</sup> Sloane 4031, Royal 18 D v, Rawl. C 448 and HM 268 have no rubrication at all. Around a third provide running titles, over half have rubricated incipits and explicits, another third contain envoys, half contain chapter headings whilst a mere handful have names written in the margins. However, many of these features are infrequently scattered throughout the manuscripts.

<sup>83</sup> A similar example is found on f. 259v where the name of King John has had to be moved to the right-hand column so that an image of his capture by Prince Edward can take precedence in the left-hand margin.

<sup>84</sup> See f. 50v, for example, for a comparison of palaeography. A similar example of an image being painted over occurs on f. 141v where the image of Haman hanged has been painted over a rubric reading 'himylco' marking the beginning of the tale of Himilco, Duke of Carthage.

These examples demonstrate that the sequence of copying, illustration, and rubrication was not static and probably varied quire by quire. On f. 171v, the rubric was clearly in place before the image was painted and a decision was then made to paint over the rubric. Other instances reveal that rubrics were added after illustration. This can be seen on f. 143v which depicts Duke Hanno blinded and wounded. The label 'duk haynour' is written on top of the painted image as the space beneath is taken up by a rubric indicating 'The lenvoye'. Further, black and white copies of some of the folios (f. 203r, for example) reveal the different ink densities between the rubric label and the chapter marker, indicating the likelihood of them being written at different times.

Whilst these discrepancies are largely the result of compromise, only one actual error in labelling can be found in the entirety of the manuscript. The image on f. 204v shows one character, labelled Arbogastes, being hung by another, labelled Maximus, which is faithfully replicated in both Bergen and Scott as 'Maximus hung by Arbogastes'.<sup>85</sup> Careful examination of the accompanying text reveals that this is not Maximus at all, but Valentinian. The error in rubrication has resulted from confusion between two narratives. It is the preceding narrative which details the death of Maximus who is killed by Theodosius. Before his death, he orders that his son Victor should govern Gaul, but he, in turn, is killed by Arbogastes, general to Valentinian who 'slouh this Victor to regne when he began' (VIII: 1869). The following narrative then describes how Arbogastes becomes ambitious and kills Valentinian:

Of his lord[e] be ful gret hate

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<sup>85</sup> Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, p. 303; Bergen, IV, p. 45.

The deth conspired of fals couetise  
[...]  
Vp in a tour he heeng hym traitourli,  
[And] to mor sclaundre & hyndryng of his name,  
[...]  
Stefli affirmed, a thing that was ful fals,  
How he hymself[e] heng up bi the hals

(VIII: 1879-80, 1884-85, 1889-90)

This is the narrative that mentions hanging and it is next to this section of text that the image is placed. The hanging figure in the image should be marked 'Valentinian' not 'Maximus'. In an unusual slip, the scribe appears to have taken this name from the opening line of the folio which mentions both Maximus' death and Arbogastes:

This Maximvs, of whom I spak tofor,  
Tofore his deth[e] made an ordynaunce  
That his sone, which callid was Victor,  
Sholde aftir hym gouerne Gaule & Fraunce  
Whom Arbogastes hadde in gouemaunce

(VIII: 1863-67)

Rather than pedantically pointing out errors in his work, this provides further evidence that the scribe worked closely with the text, using it to ensure the images related back to the textual narrative, even if this in this case he skimmed the text for detail rather than his usual careful reading. Such skimming was not an uncommon practice amongst rubricators. Lawton, for example, has identified four similar errors in labelling in the John Ryland's copy of Lydgate's *Troy Book*, where the rubricator has skimmed the text for appropriate names to append to the illustrated characters resulting in confusion rather

than clarity. For example, on f. 53r a composite miniature shows Menelaus being told of Helen's abduction. He faints and is caught by two friends labelled 'Nestor' and 'Pira'. Nestor is a character from the text, but Pira is more problematic until, Lawton notes, one reads the lines adjacent to the miniature: 'To menelay the tydynges were brought / Whiles he abode with Nestor at Pira' (ll: 4276-77).<sup>86</sup> In skimming the text for detail, the rubricator's eye has alighted on a proper noun and made use of this in his annotation.

More usually, the rubrics in Harley 1766 are accurate and serve to either clarify visual detail or identify and locate sections of text. At times, they display the scribe's propensity to make use of Lydgate's own themes and vocabulary. The very first rubric of the manuscript on f. 5r, for example, is akin to the opening stanza of the table of contents, sharing lexical similarities with Lydgate's final envoys and reflecting on the theme of literary lineage. Positioned next to the opening of the text just underneath the image, the rubric reads:

Here begynneth the Processe and the book of bochas with this Prologe /  
And the Fal Off mighty kynges & Prynces with othur Estatys / as a  
following in this book in Ordre. Incipit . *prologus*  
(f. 5r)

Unlike that used in Bergen's edition, based on Rylands Eng. MS 2, this rubric does not mention Lydgate, Bury St. Edmunds or Gloucester. By contrast, the Rylands MS reads:

Here begynneth the book callyd I. Bochas descriuyng the falle of  
Pryncys pryncessys and other nobles translated in to Inglissh bi

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<sup>86</sup> Lawton, 'Illustration', pp. 64-65, 60-61.

Iohn Ludgate Monke of the Monastery of seynt Edmundes  
Bury atte commaundement of the worthi prynce Humfrey duk of  
Gloucestre.<sup>87</sup>

In Harley 1766, the opening rubric defers to the frontispiece and table of contents to make more explicit statements about authorship and allegiances. In its use of the word 'processe', it echoes Lydgate's own repeated statements about the 'processe' of his book:

This seid emprise to performe & contvne;  
The profunde processe was so poetical  
(IX: 3324-25)

Off gold nor asewr I hadde no foysoun  
Nor othir colours this processe tenlvmyne  
(IX: 3398-99)

Off this translacyoun considered the matere,  
The processe is in parte lamentable  
(IX: 3443-44)

Set nat your trust, beth war of fals Fortune;  
For al this book tretith of suych matere,  
Gynneth his processe, and so forth doth contvne  
(IX: 3499-501)

For Lydgate, the repetition of this word refers to the difficult act of writing and translating, literary lineage, the lives of men and the ongoing machinations of Fortune.<sup>88</sup> By referring

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<sup>87</sup> Bergen, I, p. 1.

to these things as processes, Lydgate renders the text part of an ongoing process in which meanings are re-written and re-transmitted. His work is part of a literary process which reaches back to his sources, affirming the literary lineage in which he seeks to place himself. Yet it also looks to the future, providing the text with an immediacy and relevancy that is a crucial component of this dedicatory envoy to Gloucester. Although the text has ended, Lydgate warns the reader to 'beth war of fals Fortune' who 'gynneth his processe'. The narrative continues unabated. In his editing of the text, the scribe takes part in this ongoing literary process, transmitting Lydgate's text in an unusual abridged and rearranged format. Through his appropriation of the 'processe' in his opening rubric, the scribe not only authorises Lydgate's inclusion within the pantheon of known and respected authors, he also confers authority upon his own editorial practices. If the work is a process, ongoing and changing, his amendments and interpretations become part of a continuously shifting transmission of meanings.

Like the opening rubric, some of the labels attached to images in Harley 1766 exhibit similarly careful reading practices. For example, the scribe's annotation of the story of Mucius Scaevola on f. 100v reveals his understanding of the narrative, highlighting the sacrifice that Mucius makes in his self-imposed penance. This episode opens Book III of Harley 1766 which shows a great deal of thematic cohesion in its treatment of the self-punishment of vice and perceived threats to virtue, alongside punishments imposed by God. In this episode, Lydgate recounts the tale of Mucius, a 'knyhtli man' (II: 922), who resides in Rome during its besiegement by the Etruscans. He resolves to break the

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<sup>88</sup> The *MED* defines 'process' as sequence or succession, period of time or narrative discourse. Lydgate and the scribe both play on these multiple definitions; *Middle English Dictionary* <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED34758>> [accessed 1 May 2009].

siege by killing the Etruscan King, Porsenna. Unfortunately, he mistakes a 'prynce of gret auctorite' for the king and kills him instead (II: 935). Upon realising his mistake:

He made a pitous lamentacioun  
Because he dede execucioun  
Off ignoraunce, ageyn his owne entent  
To spare a tyrant and slen an innocent

(II: 942-45)

Contrary to many of those whose lives are narrated by Lydgate, Mucius Scaevola is a worthy and noble man. To atone for his sin, he holds his hand in a fire until it is entirely consumed by the flames:

Both nerff & bon and his flessh to sheede,  
His hand consuming on pecis heer & yonder,  
And from his arm made it parte asonder

(II: 950-52)

The following text narrates how Mucius became known as Scaevola 'as moche to seyne be language off that lond [...] As a man which is withoute an hond' (II: 960, 962). The two images which accompany this narrative show his unfortunate murder of the innocent prince and his subsequent self-imposed punishment. In the first image, the man with the upraised sword with the dead prince at his feet is labelled 'Mucius' whilst in the lower register, the character holding his hand in the fire is labelled 'Scaevola'. The lexical items in the text are redeployed in the labelling of the image to highlight the transformative effect of his actions and self-imposed penance.

Other rubrics serve to clarify aspects of the text by interpolating information retrieved from elsewhere in a narrative. On the opening folio of the narrative of Canace (f. 88v), for example, an unusual rubric occurs in the middle of the left-hand margin in between two images of Canace (Figure 6.10). This rubric does not relate to either of the images which are individually labelled and reads ‘Eolus pater’. The narrative recounts how Canace becomes pregnant by her brother, Machaire. When their father discovers their sin, he flies into an almighty rage, demanding that Canace and her child be killed, whilst her brother and erstwhile lover manages to escape and avoid his father’s wrath. Lydgate’s envoy to this tale warns against hasty violence, epitomised by Canace and Machaire’s father, Eolus, who is not actually named until the envoy (l: 7057) and who is entirely absent from the visual scheme. However, the scribe’s careful reading of the text leads to the addition of his name within the margins of f. 88r, directly adjacent to the lines:

For whan ther Fadir the manere did Espye  
Off ther werkyng which was so horryble  
For Ire he Fyl almost in Frenesy

(l: 6854-59)

This is akin to the scribe’s practice of adding names in the margin where characters first appear in the text. In this instance, he proves himself familiar enough with the text to retrieve a detail from several folios later and insert it at precisely the appropriate place within the text, clarifying an absence of textual detail. It further serves to highlight Lydgate’s own moral to this tale, reminding the casual viewer of the textual blame apportioned to the father, highlighting his role in the sequence of events that follow but without disrupting the pathetic series of images of Canace and her child.

A similar but less readily interpretable rubric is found on f. 94r underneath an image of David berating Abner. In the accompanying text, Lydgate recounts how David entered Saul's tent during the night and stole his sword. As the king's own knight, Abner should have offered Saul protection from this incursion and David makes this point at length (ll: 374-399). In the accompanying image, Abner stands meekly before David who gesticulates as he makes his point. A name label is written beside each. Underneath the image, the scribe has added a paraph mark followed by the word 'Translator'. Translation is not mentioned in the text at all and the rubric's meaning is unusually opaque. However, the scribe's systematic approach to labelling and rubrication allows the reader/viewer to decipher its referent. Throughout the manuscript, only rubrics that refer to the text commence with a paraph mark whilst image labels never do. As has also been shown, rubrics are always placed precisely next to the section of text they refer to. In this case, the adjacent text reads: 'Loo, heer exa~~mp~~le off parfit pacience / Ageyn malice to shewe kynd[e]nesse!' (ll: 400-01). In these lines, Lydgate eulogises David's 'suffraunce & goodnesse' in the face of Saul's 'mortal violence' (ll: 403, 402). 'Translator' must therefore refer to either David or Lydgate himself, translator and narrator of the story who here ceases his narration to offer his interpretation of David's actions. However, Lydgate does this repeatedly throughout the entire text of the *Fall* and it is difficult to explain why the scribe chose to annotate this in only this one instance. The most logical explanation, then, is that the rubric relates primarily to David himself. But in what sense is David a translator? Translation here does not refer to translation from one language to another, but a symbolic translation of Saul's malice into David's kindness. His mercy transcends the treatment he receives at the hands of Saul

representing a movement away from the Old Law of Saul and his ilk to the New Law of Christ, of whom David is a type.<sup>89</sup>

Unlike the previous rubric in the story of Canace, David as 'translator' is not a readily interpretable rubric. However, like 'Eolus pater' it demonstrates the scribe's engagement with his material and the thought that went into the production of Harley 1766. Between them, these two rubrics also reveal that the scribe used both Latin and English in his rubrics. He mostly used the vernacular in his programme of annotation apart from a number of glosses (more of which below) and a number of status indicators such as 'Rex' and 'Imperator'. Other markers of status, however, such as 'Duke' are never translated into Latin. In the chapter headings the scribe almost exclusively uses the vernacular, reserving Latin for image labels and names placed next to the text, although this system is not entirely consistent.

Latin is mainly used in Harley 1766 in a series of rubrics which mark out rhetorical passages and classical and biblical allusions (see Table B overleaf). The majority of these are found within the first three books of the manuscript, with only one found towards the end in Book VIII.<sup>90</sup> Like the other labels found throughout the manuscript, the same meticulous care and attention has been paid to their position, always placed next to the line(s) of text they relate to. Again like the other labels, their inclusion reveals the scribe's familiarity not only with Lydgate's text but some of his source material, particularly Ovid, although the precise reason for their inclusion is less evident than for

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<sup>89</sup> See for example, definition 4 of 'translation' in the *MED*: a replacement of the old law by the new. *Middle English Dictionary* <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED46783>> [accessed 23 July 2009].

<sup>90</sup> Book I has five rubrics, Book II has six and Book III has one.

**Table B: Latin Rubrics** <sup>91</sup>

<b>Fol</b>	<b>Rubric</b>	<b>Translation</b>	<b>Adjacent to lines</b>
8r	Dialogus inter gaudium et rationem	Dispute between Glad Poverty and Reason	I: 260
30v	Ovidius de transformato libro 3 <sup>o</sup> in principi <sup>o</sup> et bochacius libro 2 <sup>o</sup> capitulo lxi	First, Book III of the transformation of Ovid and Book II, Chapter LXI of Boccaccio	I: 2145
55r	Senec Octaus	Seneca, Eighth Book	I: 4203
56v	A centum et aura	?From one hundred and air	I: 4333
57r	12 <sup>o</sup> de transformato	Of the twelfth transformation	I: 4355
74r	Ovidius iij de transformato	Of the third transformation of Ovid	I: 5618-19
76r	brachia domine tendit et sponsam capere temptat nil nisi sedentes infelix accipit Auras Ob quam causam secundas spreuit nupcias	He stretched out his arms and tried to catch his wife or feel her clasp but, unhappy one, he clasped nothing but air and for that reason he was stunned by his wife's second death	I: 5820-24
82v	quid fortius leone quid dulcius melle	What is stronger than the lion? What is sweeter than honey?	I: 6350-51
98r	Josephus	Josephus	II: 736
98r	Virtutem spreuit et omnem Religionem	Despising all virtue and religion	II: 740-41
98r	Cum malis moribus principum corrumpitur conuersatio subiectorum	A prince with wicked ways causes the life of his subjects to become corrupted	II: 746-48
104v	verba Lucrece	The words of Lucrece	II: 1212
235v	Nolite tangere christos meos et in prophetis meos nolite malignare	Do not touch my anointed ones and do not conceive evil against my prophets	IX: 1111-1114

<sup>91</sup> Assistance with rubric transcriptions and translations gratefully received from Gavin Cole, Sarah Macmillan and Charles Bayne-Jardine. Line references are to Bergen's edition.

those rubrics which provide a means of navigating the manuscript. Their inclusion is not an entirely unique feature of Harley 1766. Various *Fall* manuscripts contain Latin annotations, but only two others focus on classical and biblical allusions: British Library, MS Harley 4203 (c. 1470) and British Library, MS Harley 4197 (late fifteenth century).<sup>92</sup> Both of these manuscripts are incomplete but have some Latin rubrics which correspond to those in Harley 1766. Both have the rubric ‘*Virtutem spreuit & omnem Religionem*’ whilst Harley 4203 also has ‘*verba Lucrece*’ on f. 42r and ‘*Cum malis moribus principum corrumpitur conuersatio subiectorum*’ on f. 39v.

Wakelin suggests, reading across all three annotated manuscripts, that the rubrics were designed to ‘sharpen the rebuke of princes or effuse civic feeling’.<sup>93</sup> Looking exclusively at Harley 1766, only one of the rubrics seems designed with this end in mind, that on f. 98r which offers a criticism of corrupt princes corrupting their subjects. Wakelin further suggests that the glosses might derive from Lydgate himself, hypothesising that Lydgate prepared the *Fall* complete with a system of marginalia perhaps as a reminder for future revisions which was ignored by many later scribes.<sup>94</sup> This is an attractive theory as many of the glossing rubrics reiterate or expand Lydgate’s own textual references to source materials. But it is also problematic as it is based in part on Edwards’ suggestion that Harley 1766 was an early copy overseen by Lydgate himself. Scott’s location of the manuscript as a product of the 1450-60s renders this theory most unlikely and, if the

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<sup>92</sup> Bergen, IV, pp. 56, 53, 29-30, 85. Two other manuscripts contain Latin rubrication: British Library, MS Royal 18 B xxxi also contains many foot and side notes in Latin referring to the text and which take the place of headings, mostly by the scribe but continued by later hands. New York, Pierpont Morgan Library MS M. 124 contains short headings in Latin. Rawl. C 448, Corpus Christi College 242, Harley 1245 and Chicago, University Library, MS 565 all include annotations of sources and names of classical characters added by later hands.

<sup>93</sup> Wakelin, p. 42.

<sup>94</sup> Wakelin, p. 39.

glosses did originate from Lydgate himself, they must have been found in an earlier manuscript on which Harley 1766 was based.<sup>95</sup>

Pearsall notes similar scholarly responses to the Latin glosses found within the Ellesmere Chaucer which contains lines from the *Thebaid* at the beginning of the 'Knight's Tale', glosses from Petrarch in the 'Clerk's Tale', from Jerome's *Epistola adversus Jovinianum* in the 'Wife of Bath's Prologue' and the 'Franklin's Tale', and from the *Miseria human condicionis* in the 'Man of Law's Tale' and the 'Pardoner's Prologue and Tale'. However, Pearsall remains sceptical of the general assumption that these rubrics originate with Chaucer, arguing that any scribe or reader conversant with the Latin sources could have added them.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, the rubrics in Harley 1766 might as easily be the work of a later reader such as the Lydgate scribe. The use of Latin in such a large Middle English codex designed for a lay audience is problematic. Nicholas Orme argues that whilst Latin figured in the education of gentry families in the fifteenth century, there is little evidence that they were highly Latinate, further arguing that they seem to have preferred to use English and French.<sup>97</sup> In a manuscript for a gentry family, this series of Latin rubrics therefore represents a self-consciously erudite means of reading the manuscript.

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<sup>95</sup> Wakelin, p. 40; Edwards, 'Lydgate Manuscripts', pp. 17-18, 22; Edwards, 'The McGill Fragment', pp. 75-77; Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, II, pp. 302-04

<sup>96</sup> Pearsall, 'Gower's Latin', p. 14. Pearsall notes that all of the following come to similar conclusions in writing about glosses in Chaucer manuscripts: Germaine Dempster, 'Chaucer's Manuscripts of Petrarch's Version of the Griselda Story', *Modern Philology*, 41 (1943-4), 6-16; Daniel S. Silvia, 'Glosses to the *Canterbury Tales* from St. Jerome's *Epistola adversus Jovinianum*', *Studies in Philology*, 62 (1965) 28-39; Robert E. Lewis, 'Glosses to the Man of Law's Tale from Pope Innocent III's *De miseria humane conditionis*', *Studies in Philology*, 64 (1967), 1-16; John Matthews Manly and Edith Rickerts, eds., *The Text of the Canterbury Tales: Studies on the Basis of all Known Manuscripts*, 8 vols (University of Chicago Press, 1940), III, pp. 483-527.

<sup>97</sup> Nicholas Orme, 'Education and Recreation', in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, eds. Raluca Radulescu and Alison Truelove (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 71-73.

In his analysis of the Latin apparatus in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Derek Pearsall has argued that Latin was used to confirm Gower's reputation as a serious literary author, committing him to posterity alongside his classical literary forebears.<sup>98</sup> This explanation points to a similar role for the Harley 1766 rubrics. They represent a means of conferring *auctoritas* on Lydgate by the scribe by framing the text with a recognisably erudite, classical means of reading the text and emphasising his literary lineage. These extra-textual details – the summaries, paraphrases and specific references – all evidence a detailed knowledge of both Lydgate and his sources, yet are inessential to interpreting the text itself.

But it is not just the language of the rubrics that confers authority upon them: their content is of equal import. Many of the rubrics in Harley 1766 emphasise episodes where the idea of speech or discourse is important, awarding these sections prominence on the manuscript page. For example, Lucrece's impassioned oration before her suicide on f. 104v is highlighted by the inclusion of 'verba Lucrece' whilst Samson's riddle (f. 82v) is also warranted a place within the margins. Notably HM 268 also highlights Lucrece's speech with a spectacular set of painted gold and blue cadal initials on f. 50v (Figure 4.8). Unlike the biblical and classical allusions, these rubrics also have vernacular counterparts within the manuscript. F. 89r contains a rubric in the right-hand margin which annotates the beginning of 'The lettere of Canace sent to hire brother Machayrs', whilst ff. 224v-227v – the debate between Brunhilde and Boccaccio (IX: 162-504) – are annotated to indicate a change in speaker, akin to annotation of parts in a play. Thus Brunhilde's name ('Brunygylde) appears eight times in the margins and

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<sup>98</sup> Derek Pearsall, 'Gower's Latin in the *Confessio Amantis*', in *Latin and Vernacular: Studies in Late-Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*, ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987), pp. 13-15.

Boccaccio's ('bochas') seven. Through their inclusion in the margins, these annotations appear to take on a semi-structural function, somewhat akin to the chapter headings found throughout the manuscript. Similar strategies are found in other contemporary manuscripts both in England and on the Continent. The Ellesmere Chaucer, for example, indicates different speakers through its use of decorated initials.<sup>99</sup> The French manuscripts of the *Troilus* tradition also utilise rubrication, prioritising songs and letters within the margins alongside individual book and chapter headings.<sup>100</sup> However, in Harley 1766, these rubrics are not quite awarded the status of chapter headings and do not appear in the table of contents.

Yet this pseudo-structural function does create a hierarchy emphasising those narratives which reflect on gendered power relationships from Lucrece and Canace to Brunhilde. Even the narrative of Samson accords a prominent role to women, effectively highlighted by the use of marginal space. The story begins with Samson's riddle – 'What is mor strong than is a leoun / Or mor soote than hony in tastyng?' – the answer to which is wheedled out of him by his wife who 'gan compleyne & frowne' (l: 6368). She immediately betrays his trust by revealing the answer to his enemies, the Philistines. His wife's role in this episode is fleeting and no more is seen of her as the tale immediately turns to Samson's heroic exploits. By annotating the episode in the margins, however, the scribe awards it near parity with Samson's later, illustrated betrayal by Delilah. On f. 83v, Delilah is depicted cutting the hair of Samson who sleeps with his head on her lap. Similarly, the riddle and betrayal by his first wife are entered into the realm of the margins, suggesting a pattern to Samson's life in which his Achilles heel is proven to be

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<sup>99</sup> Parkes and Doyle, pp. 224-25.

<sup>100</sup> Butterfield, pp. 55-56.

his tendency to entrust women with his secrets. Despite being the archetypal conquering hero, he is twice brought low by the machinations of women.

The other women who merit rhetorical representation in the margins display a rather different approach to gender relationships and the imbalance of power between the sexes. The first of these women, Canace, writes a lengthy epistle to her brother in which she complains of their father's injustice and protests the innocence of their new-born child. Canace's letter focuses exclusively on her plight and that of her child, providing her with a voice that the reader cannot help but empathise with. However, this voice is shown to be utterly impotent. She bends to her father's will, committing suicide and condemning her child to death. For all her command of language, she is shown to have no more power than the 'goodli faire that lith here specheles' in her arms (l: 6930). Her voice reveals her lack of power in comparison to the men in her family, both of whom remain speechless within the text.

Lucrece's oration also reflects on shifting power relationships between the sexes. Following her rape by Tarquin, Lucrece wishes to commit suicide. Such an action is against the wishes of her husband and father, both of whom willingly absolve her from any blame, reflecting on her many virtues. But Tarquin's actions represent an assertion of male control over the female body and it is through her speech that she outlines the means by which she will regain control. To submit to her father and husband's reasonable arguments is to continue to be bound by the desires of men. Both Canace and Lucrece's use of language focuses the reader/viewer on the injustice of their respective situations, empathising with their plights. By highlighting these episodes in the margins, attention is drawn to the various ways in which Lydgate treats of women as

both persecutors and persecuted throughout the *Fall*. This focus on the complex and often contradictory role of the female is further elucidated in Chapter Six.

The remaining rubrics all highlight classical and biblical allusions in a variety of ways. Some name a particular author such as Josephus or Seneca Octavius (ff. 55r, 98r) echoing Lydgate's own reference to these authors. Others provide a direct reference to a particular text (ff. 8r, 30v, 57r, 74r). There are three individual references to books of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* on ff. 30v, 57r, and 74r. Again, these usually echo Lydgate's references to Ovid but, unlike Lydgate, they specify the individual book the story comes from, indicating the rubrics were written by someone familiar with Ovid's works. Still other rubrics offer translations of lines of text that refer to sources. Thus, 'Vertu dispysing and al relegeoun' in the text on f. 98r is translated in the margin as 'Virtutem spreuit et omnem Religionem'. On ff. 82v and 235v, Bible verses in the text are repeated in Latin in the margins; thus, 'What is mor strong than is a leoun / Or mor soote than hony in tastyng?' (I: 6350-51) is reiterated as '*quid fortius leone quid dulcius melle*' (Judges 14:18) and Boccaccio's recollection of 'a vers write[n] in the Sauteer / Touche nat my prophetis, ne neih hem nat to ner' (IX: 1109-1111) is repeated as '*Nolite tangere christos meos & in prophetis meos nolite malignari*' (Psalm 105:15).

Finally, two rubrics offer summaries of the text by paraphrasing their contents, rather than translating a single line directly. Thus the final rubric on f. 98r repeats the gist of the text, rather than translating, and the lengthy rubric on f. 76r which accompanies Lydgate's version of Orpheus offers summarised details from two stanzas, separated by a typically Lydgatean interpolation about women. In Ovid's version of this tale (Book 10 of *Metamorphoses*), Orpheus rescues his wife, Eurydice, from hell. He is bidden not to

turn around and look at her until they have exited the valley of Avernus. Fearing for her safety on the treacherous road, he turns and stretches out his arms and, as a result, she slips away and is lost. The rubric in Harley 1766 provides a similar synopsis: '*brachia domine tendit et sponsam capere temptat nil nisi sedentes infelix accipit Auras Ob quam causam secundas spreuit nupcias*' ('He stretched out his arms and tried to catch his wife or feel her clasp but, unhappy one, he clasped nothing but air and for that reason he was stunned by his wife's second death') (f. 76r). In the text, however, these narrative events are divided by a tangent on the horrors of marriage. Lydgate begins the tale with the stipulation made to Orpheus upon exiting hell: 'That yiff that he backward caste his look / He shole hire lese & seen his wiff no more' (l: 5798-5800). Rather than proceeding with the tale, he then offers two stanzas which reflect on the relief that this might bring to many a husband caught in the unbreakable bonds of wedlock, 'fretynge husbandis so sore' (l: 5816). After this brief diversion, Lydgate returns to Orpheus:

Because that he, whan he made his repair,  
Off hir [in] trouthe enbracid nothing but hair.  
Thus he lost hire

(l: 5821-23)

The detail about Orpheus stretching out his arms in the rubric is from Ovid and is not found in Lydgate's text. Similarly, the rubric on f. 74r which accompanies the stories of Narcissus and Echo references its source as '*Ovidius iij de transformato*' – 'Of the third transformation of Ovid', that is, Book III of the *Metamorphoses*. Unusually, Lydgate does not reference his source here but his narrative has been identified as following Ovid

rather than de Premierfait.<sup>101</sup> Maidie Hilmo has argued that not only do the Latin glosses lend authority to the tale but flatter the 'learned reader who must supply' the details from memory.<sup>102</sup> There is an expectation that the reader/viewer will understand and appreciate these intertextual references. Like Lydgate's own overt borrowings from Chaucer's *Troy Book* in the envoy to the *Fall*, the scribe's references to the Latin sources stress Lydgate's illustrious literary lineage. By highlighting the sources in the margins, the scribe once again elevates and lauds the 'laureat' Lydgate. The use of Latin serves to emphasise this conferral of *auctoritas*.

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Through its analyses of disparate, at times even peripheral, features of Harley 1766, this chapter has provided clear evidence of the care and attention that accompanied every element of its design and production, from the apparatus designed to provide an easy means of navigating the manuscript through to the interpretative framework created by the frontispiece and the scribe's repeated redeployment of Lydgate's own themes and rhetoric. Deliberate strategies were employed by the manuscript designer both to facilitate its use and to influence readerly reception, evidencing an engagement not just with the text itself but its relevance for a specific audience, based in East Anglia at a time of great political unrest. The following chapters examine some of these editorial strategies in greater detail. This familiarity with both text and patrons casts the Lydgate scribe in the light of a local publisher or entrepreneur, an educated man working closely

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<sup>101</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 159.

<sup>102</sup> Hilmo, p. 175.

with both abbey and artists to produce deluxe commissions for the gentry-folk who naturally fell under the abbey's sphere of influence.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FAMOUS AND INFAMOUS RULERS: VISUAL RHETORIC AND YORKIST PROPAGANDA <sup>1</sup>

The *Fall of Princes* is a series of narratives about princes, kings, emperors, popes and other rulers and their fates, about their respective qualities and failings as rulers. It is natural, then, that the text displays a recurring interest in aspects of kingship, forging links between seemingly disparate narratives. Different aspects of kingship are emphasised by different kings and different episodes. Although an intrinsic feature of Lydgate's original text, this theme is amplified by the design of Harley 1766, both in the scribal rearrangement of the text and the design of the visual scheme, creating a distinct visual rhetoric of kingship. Whilst earlier books of the manuscript exhibit some interest in this theme, it is in Books V-VIII where it is most fully realised through the repeated juxtaposition of "good" and "bad" rulers and a focus on the great British hero. Thus Constantine the Great is juxtaposed with Julian the Apostate in Book VI, and Marcus Regulus with Nero in Book V, counterpointing the qualities or failings of each with the making and breaking of empires. Whilst Constantine and Julian are textually adjacent in Lydgate's unabridged text, Marcus Regulus and Nero are brought together as a direct result of the scribe's extensive editing and rearrangement.

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this chapter is due to be published in the *Electronic British Library Journal* (2011) <<http://www.bl.uk/ebli/>>.

The final books of the manuscript, meanwhile, exhibit a close interest in British heroes, both historical and mythological, namely King Arthur and Edward of Woodstock, the Black Prince. Each of these characters emphasises different aspects of kingship, developing the manuscript's rhetoric to encompass a host of kingly qualities. Thus Arthur and the Black Prince display the importance of martial prowess and chivalric courtesy, defending the country from foreign threats and maintaining imperial rights; Constantine exhibits both mercy and piety and Marcus Regulus displays a willingness to put his people before his own safety. Nero and Julian demonstrate a host of sins antithetical to the behaviour of a true ruler: sexual depravity, violence and murder, persecution of the innocent, and grasping covetousness. Every "good" character is beloved by his people, whilst those who display iniquity and violence meet iniquitous and violent ends.

The first aim of this chapter is to identify and analyse this rhetoric to elucidate how the design of Harley 1766 offers a means of reading text and image in conjunction to reflect on the qualities of good and bad rulers and the effects of their leadership on their subjects as well as emphasising a glorious British history, defined in equal parts by chivalry, mercy and martial victory. Such a rhetoric is absolutely relevant to the time and the conflicts between the houses of York and Lancaster. Contemporary historical sources such as the petition presented by the commons at the first parliament of Edward IV's reign in November 1461 utilise precisely such a rhetoric contrasting 'the honorable and noble devoir [...] of princely and knyghtly prowesse and corage' of Edward IV with the 'persecucion and tyrannye' of the Lancastrian regime.<sup>2</sup> This rhetoric was clearly of topical interest to those caught up in the midst of the political turmoil – namely the politically active noble and gentry classes who had to pledge their allegiance to either side. Faction and division amongst the royal

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<sup>2</sup> *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, V, p. 462.

household and the ensuing breakdown in the efficiency of law and order made the commons increasingly aware of political events and their own grievances.<sup>3</sup> A discussion of who should wear a crown and what right they had to do so had an immediacy borne out of the contemporary political situation and was found in genealogies, prophecies, chronicles, and verse.<sup>4</sup>

As such the manuscript's rhetoric is not merely an abstract reflection on kingly qualities. Motifs and details in the visual scheme, particularly in these final books, strongly suggest that it was influenced by the Yorkist propaganda that circulated in the form of pedigrees and genealogies in the early years of Edward IV's first reign, which stressed not only the legitimacy of Edward's own claim to the throne but also the fact of Lancastrian usurpation. The genealogical tree was a powerful symbol during this period and had previously been utilised by the Lancastrians in 1399 and was used again in 1485 after Henry VII's defeat of Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth. In each case, pedigrees and genealogies were produced to legitimise the claims of the new, conquering king and his dynasty, making use of a mixture of history, mythology and prophecy to achieve their aims, often tracing the king's lineage back to Creation.<sup>5</sup> However, it was with the Yorkist regime that such propaganda achieved its greatest sophistication and widest circulation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Watts, pp. 63-74; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 562-97; V. J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Blandford, 1971), p. 173; L. Blanchard, *The Edward IV Roll*, <<http://www.r3.org/bookcase/misc/edward4roll/frame.html>> [accessed 17 November 2009].

<sup>4</sup> Alison Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda: Pedigree, Prophecy and the "British History" in the Reign of Edward IV', in *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England*, ed. Charles Ross (Gloucester: A. Sutton, 1979), pp. 188-189; Charles Ross, 'Rumour, Propaganda and Popular Opinion', in *Patronage, the Crown and the Provinces in Later Medieval England*, ed. Ralph A. Griffiths (Gloucester: Sutton, 1971) p. 15; Blanchard, *The Edward IV Roll*. See also: Alison Allan, 'Political Propaganda Employed by the House of York in England in the Mid-Fifteenth Century, 1450-1471' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wales, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda', p. 171.

<sup>6</sup> Ross, 'Rumour, Propaganda and Popular Opinion', p. 23; Michael A. Hicks, *Edward IV* (London: Arnold, 2004), p. 21.

In the 1460s, numerous works such as the *Illustrated life of Edward IV* (British Library, MS Harley 7353, 1461), the *Genealogies of Edward King of Britain* (e.g. London, College of Arms Roll, MS 20/20, 1464), and the *Edward IV Roll* (Free Library of Philadelphia, Rare Book Department, MS Lewis E 201, c. 1461) all stressed Edward's right to rule by descent from King Arthur and Edward III. Through the Mortimer line, Edward claimed to be the true heir of Richard II, whose nearest kin and named heir was Roger Mortimer, earl of March and grandson to Lionel duke of Clarence, second son of Edward III. The Mortimer line also gave kinship with the last indigenous king of Britain, Cadwallader, through the marriage of Ralph Mortimer, Lord of Wigmore to Gwladys Ddu, daughter of Llewellyn the Great, Prince of Gwynedd and the last prince of Wales.<sup>7</sup> Through Cadwallader Edward traced his heritage back to Arthur, the greatest of British kings, to Brutus, the founder of Britain.<sup>8</sup>

Produced in great numbers and often elaborately decorated by skilled craftsmen, these rolls were designed for use in a variety of contexts from display in baronial halls and the public arenas of courts and cathedrals to private study in noble and gentry homes.<sup>9</sup> Alison Allan argues that such rolls were perused in a leisurely fashion by those with money to spend and time to spare. The intricacy of the pedigrees and the prophecy they utilised, in particular, could not be fully understood at a glance, requiring private study. This potential restriction of audience does not diminish their value as propagandist texts; indeed, such documents would have

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<sup>7</sup> Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley e Mus 35, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley Lyell 33, British Library, MS Lansdowne 456, and London, College of Arms, MS 20/6 all stress the legitimacy of the Mortimer claim to the throne and the fact of Lancastrian usurpation. British Library, MS Add. 18268 A depicts Edward IV as the heir of both the kings of Britain and the Plantagenets. Add 18268 A is discussed in Allan, 'Political Propaganda', pp. 301-304.

<sup>8</sup> Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda', pp. 175-178; Jonathan Hughes, *Arthurian Myths and Alchemy: The Kingship of Edward IV* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2002), pp. 98-101; Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, *Richard III's Books: Ideals and Reality in the Life of a Medieval Prince* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), p. 138.

<sup>9</sup> Hughes, p. 98; Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda', p. 175.

particularly appealed to those classes of the greatest practical importance to Edward: the nobility, gentry and commercial classes.<sup>10</sup> Some royal genealogies even circulated beyond England. A letter written by a visiting Hanse merchant in November of 1468 indicates both the pervasiveness of such propaganda and its complexity. Sending home details of the recent events in England, the merchant includes ‘a tree (*trunck*) of King Edward, King of England, who is heir to the crown and nearer to it than King Henry’ and adds ‘have it explained to you by doctors and clerks’.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, a letter written to Pope Pius II informing him of Edward’s succession included a genealogical notice to prove the legitimacy of the new king’s claim.<sup>12</sup>

Many of the rolls bear the physical marks of having been on display at some point in their history, although there is no contemporary evidence of when this display took place.<sup>13</sup> There is, however, a well-documented example of a comparable genealogy hung in the cathedral of Notre-Dame, Paris in 1423, in support of Henry VI’s claim to the French throne.<sup>14</sup> Amongst the Yorkist genealogies, two of the most visually striking have been identified as possible candidates for similarly public contemporary display. The *Edward IV Roll*, for example, is eighteen feet in length and headed by a spectacular image of Edward on horseback. Its magnificent and intricate depiction of Edward’s genealogy was probably commissioned for Edward’s coronation and could

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<sup>10</sup> Allan, ‘Yorkist Propaganda’, p. 188.

<sup>11</sup> Hughes, pp. 117; Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, p. 140; *Hanserecesse von 1431-1476*, ed. G. von der Ropp, 7 vols (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1876-92), VI, item 117, p. 87.

<sup>12</sup> Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, p. 140; *Foedera, conventiones, literæ, et cujuscunque generis acta publica, inter reges Angliæ et alios quosvis imperatores, reges, pontifices, principes, vel communitates, ab ineunte sæculo duodecimo, viz. ab anno 1101, ad nostra usque tempore habita aut tractata; ex autographis, infra secretiores Archivorum regionum thesaurarias, per multa sæecula reconditis, fideliter exscripta*, ed. Thomas Rymer, 20 vols (London: Tonsor, 1726-35), XI, vol. 5, pt. 2, p. 110, 22 March 1462.

<sup>13</sup> Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, p. 206.

<sup>14</sup> B. J. H. Rowe, ‘King Henry VI’s Claim to France in Picture and Poem’, *The Library*, 4<sup>th</sup> ser., 13: 1 (1932), 77-88. The poem was Lydgate’s ‘On the English Title to the French Throne’ whilst the image is replicated in British Library, MS Royal 15 E vi, f. 3r.

only be appreciated in its full glory if displayed in a large hall or staircase and may have accompanied coronation celebrations.<sup>15</sup> Sutton and Visser-Fuchs also suggest the *Illustrated Life of Edward IV* (Harley 7353) may have been displayed in the Dominican house at Gloucester whose foundation by Henry III is recorded in the manuscript roll.<sup>16</sup>

Both of these manuscripts are full of Latin, prophecy, and heraldry, and would require a learned audience to fully appreciate the intricate network of symbols and biblical allusion they contain. Yet as Sutton and Visser-Fuchs argue: 'there is little doubt that much of it [i.e. prophecy and propaganda] filtered down in simplified but no less persuasive forms to all ranks of society. Prophecy was – and is – irresistible to everyone'.<sup>17</sup> Certainly Yorkist propaganda circulated in a variety of forms. English rolls and biblical genealogies were produced for an increasingly literate public, and motifs from the Latin genealogies and learned prophecies also circulated in the simpler forms of royal proclamations, manifestoes and bills, ballads and rhymes.<sup>18</sup> All shared a common purpose: to influence an increasingly literate public in favour of the new king.

Alongside establishing the legitimacy of Edward IV's claim to the throne, the rolls espoused Edward's moral superiority as king. As discussed in Chapter Four, Henry VI's reign had been characterised by conciliar rule, bouts of madness and extensive losses of English land in France; Henry himself shied away from the kind of heroic role that had been central to his father's reign and would prove pivotal to Edward's own monarchic identity. Hughes argues that the inefficacy of Henry's rule actively

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<sup>15</sup> L. Blanchard, *The Edward IV Roll*; Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, p. 139; Hughes, pp. 98, 117.

<sup>16</sup> Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, p. 138.

<sup>17</sup> Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, p. 206.

<sup>18</sup> Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda', p. 188; Hughes, p. 125; Ross, 'Rumour, Propaganda and Popular Opinion', pp. 15, 23.

encouraged a resurgence of 'a heroic archetype of kingship' and, in particular, an identification of the health of the king with the well-being of the land; Britain could never be made whole again under the rule of Henry VI.<sup>19</sup> The *Edward IV Roll* shows the disintegration of Brutus's realm into seven kingdoms after the Saxon invasion, only to be made whole again by the accession of Edward in 1461, visually represented by the culmination of the lines of descent at Edward's name.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, *The Prophetic History of Britain* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 623, c. 1465, Figure 5.1) depicts the crisis in modern Europe by representing in roundels the deaths of the last true kings in Europe: Cadwallader of Britain in 689, Pedro of Spain in 1264, Charles IV of France in 1321 and Richard II of England in 1399.<sup>21</sup> All four of these roundels are linked to a fifth containing the name of Edward IV in whose person these realms were to be reunited and the health of the nations restored. The *Illustrated life of Edward IV* (Harley 7353) depicts the descendents of Henry III in the form of a Jesse Tree. Henry III is depicted asleep at the bottom of the roll, his descendents emerging from branches which spring from his body. In the middle of the roll, Henry Bolingbroke lops off the branch on which Richard II sits. At the top, Edward IV emerges, gripping his sword whilst facing Henry VI (Figure 5.2).

Both Hughes and Hicks describe a world of unfettered optimism brought on by the uniting of the country under the new young and charismatic king, onto whom all the qualities of great leaders past and hopes and desires for the future could be projected.<sup>22</sup> Contemporary accounts record that the young king was a man of considerable personal charm. The *Croyland Chronicle* describes him as a man 'now

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<sup>19</sup> Hughes, pp. 64-66.

<sup>20</sup> The whole roll is available at: < <http://www.leavesofgold.org/gallery/literary/literary16big.html> > [accessed 28 February 2011].

<sup>21</sup> *A Summary Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, eds. F. Madden and H. H. E. Craster, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1922-53), II, part I, p. 235; Allan, 'Political Propaganda', pp. 213-214.

<sup>22</sup> Hughes, pp. 116-156; Hicks, *Edward IV*, p. 25.

in the flower of his age, tall of stature, elegant in person, of unblemished character, valiant in arms'.<sup>23</sup> Personal encomiums from Philippe de Commynes and Dominic Mancini also describe Edward as 'a very handsome prince' and 'of a gentle nature and cheerful aspect. He was easy of access to his friends and to others, even the least notable. Frequently he called to his side complete strangers, when he thought that they had come with the intention of addressing or beholding him more closely'.<sup>24</sup> In 1461, a visiting Italian merchant wrote to an acquaintance in Bruges claiming that he was 'unable to declare how well the commons love and adore him [Edward IV]'.<sup>25</sup>

Genealogies and other propagandist texts took Edward's personal qualities and mapped them onto mythological, legendary and historical characters, promoting the idea of the redemptive saviour. In the *Illustrated Life of Edward IV* (Harley 7353), for example, the Jesse Tree lineage is accompanied by five pairs of paintings charting Edward IV's ascent to the throne. Each image is accompanied by its Biblical 'type'. Edward's flight to Calais with the Earl of Warwick (1459) is paired with an image of the swaddled baby Moses, floating in a basket down the Nile surrounded by drowned infants. His capture of Henry VI at the battle of Northampton (1460) is paired with David kneeling before Saul whom he refuses to harm. Like David, Edward is the lord's anointed, waiting for a signal to assume his rightful place. His vision at Mortimer's Cross (1461) is paired with Moses' vision of the Trinity in the blazing bush. In this vision the Lord speaks to Moses, speaking of the 'affliction' of his people who must be delivered from their 'taskmasters' (Exodus 4). In these paired

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<sup>23</sup> *Crowland Chronicle Continuations 1459-1486*, eds. N. Pronay and J. Cox (London: Sutton, 1986), pp. 423-24.

<sup>24</sup> Philippe de Commynes, *Mémoires*, eds. J. Calmette and G. Durville, 3 vols, *Classiques de l'Histoire de France au Moyen Age* (Paris: Champion, 1924-25), II, p. 64; Dominic Mancini, *The Usurpation of Richard III*, ed. and trans. C. A. J. Armstrong, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), pp. 79-80; Charles Ross, *Edward IV* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice*, vol. I, 1202-1509, ed. R. Brown (London: H.M.S.O., 1864), no. 374.

images, Edward, like Moses, is shown to be the leader of a captive people in exile. Finally, his triumph at Towton (1461) is paired with the Battle of Jericho where Joshua stands ready to order the trumpets which will destroy the walls. Like Joshua, he is the outnumbered military leader who succeeds in battle through the might and will of God. The manuscript is completed by a pair of images, one depicting Edward IV atop the Wheel of Fortune, into whose spokes Reason places a bar, preventing further turning of the wheel. The other image depicts Reason enthroned surrounded by those who had prophesied Edward's coming.<sup>26</sup>

Other rolls include similar typology, figuring Edward as the leader of a captive people; one genealogy describes the British as 'Ebrues', a chosen people emerging from exile under their new leader.<sup>27</sup> Many other genealogies link the devastation of Jericho with the emergence of Jerusalem. Still others figure Edward as the founder of New Troy, a new land for his people. *Gregory's Chronicle* describes Edward's reception in London 'the city that sometimes cleped was New Troye', ten days after the second Battle of St. Albans.<sup>28</sup> In a Latin poem by John Whethamstede written after Towton in 1461, Edward was described as a 'Hector novus, alter Achilles' (a new Hector and a second Achilles).<sup>29</sup> Drawing on such typological associations, many of the propagandist rolls provide a selection of cognomens by which rightful and usurping kings may be identified, deriving from history, legend and heraldry.<sup>30</sup> For example, British Library, MS Cotton Vesp. E vii, f. 71r (early 1460s), Bodley 623, ff. 71-71v and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole Roll 26 (c. 1471) all contain

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<sup>26</sup> Hughes provides a more detailed description, pp. 141-151. Sutton and Visser-Fuchs also discuss the roll, pp. 138-39, 197, 201, 206.

<sup>27</sup> British Library, MS Lansdowne 456.

<sup>28</sup> *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. J. Gairdner (London: Camden Society, 1876), p. 217.

<sup>29</sup> Wright, *Collection of Political Poems and Songs*, I, pp. 264-65.

<sup>30</sup> Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda', p. 179.

diagrammatic representations of such cognomens.<sup>31</sup> Bodley 623 depicts a roundel containing an account of Edward IV's accession. Around the outside in overlapping circles are a series of names and symbols by which Edward may be recognised including Brutus, Sol, Cadwallader and Alba Rosa. A similar roundel for Henry VI gives him such cognomens as Lupus (wolf), Vulpes (fox) and Saul (Figures 5.3 and 5.4).

These genealogies contain numerous persons and motifs which are also found in Harley 1766's visual scheme, chiefly, Constantine and Arthur, and descent from Edward III. In Yorkist propaganda, these kings and rulers are figured as idealised types of heroic kingship representing Edward IV. The use of these characters in Harley 1766 suggests a similar typological reading. Yet as Harley 1766 contains no explicit mention of Edward IV, this reading is much more elusive than the propagandist manuscripts where it is readily apparent that Edward is to be read through the various characters and symbols. However there is a clear rhetoric of kingship in Harley 1766 which reflects on the same issues as the Yorkist texts: the right to rule through lineal descent, martial prowess and chivalry, and divine approbation. It is likely that the scribe and his patrons were exposed to propagandist themes and concerns in some fashion, whether in public poetry or proclamation or in genealogical roll format. As will become clear, the scribe and his associated workshop redeployed many of the themes and figures from the genealogies in their own work. It is even possible that a genealogy or pedigree once hung in the environs of Bury St Edmunds, a powerful abbey town which had long cultivated a relationship with the Lancastrian regime. As such, Bury would doubtless have been a prime

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<sup>31</sup> Both Cotton Vesp. E vii and Ashmole Roll 26 are described in Allan, 'Political Propaganda', pp. 214-217. Allan notes that whilst Ashmole Roll 26 was certainly produced soon after 1471, as it records the death of Edward of Lancaster, its contents are very similar to the earlier manuscript, Bodley 623, and is the product of the same author.

candidate for this kind of propagandist rhetoric. This chapter argues that the visual scheme in Harley 1766 draws on the rhetoric and motifs found in this kind of propaganda, thus refining the dating of the manuscript from the traditional c. 1450-60 given by Scott *et al* to post-1461.

### **Book VI: Constantine the Great and Julian the Apostate**

The narratives of Constantine the Great and Julian the Apostate are textually adjacent in both Lydgate's unabridged text (Book VIII: 1170-1708) and in Harley 1766 where they appear in Book VI. They present the reader/viewer with a pair of diametrically opposed characters who embody virtue and vice respectively, much like the sets of cognomens attributed to Henry VI and Edward IV (Figures 5.3 and 5.4). The striking contrast provided by Lydgate's text is emphasised and amplified in the design of the visual scheme, working to provide models and anti-models of kingship and kingly qualities and creating links between these models and Edward IV himself. Although the reader/viewer may read Constantine as a parallel to Edward IV, Julian cannot be read as Henry VI. Henry may have been an ineffective ruler who was badly advised but was not considered particularly rapacious, predatory or evil in the way that Julian is here.<sup>32</sup> Rather Julian the Apostate provides a foil by which to contrast Constantine and emphasise his kingly qualities.

Constantine's narrative begins by recounting the emperor's affliction with leprosy and the cure proposed to him:

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<sup>32</sup> See for example, an anonymous chronicler writing in the 1460s who described Henry as 'simple and lad by couetous counseylle', in *An English Chronicle*, ed. Davies, p. 79. Pope Pius II described Henry as 'a man more timorous than a woman, utterly devoid of wit or spirit, who left everything in his wife's hands', in *The Commentaries of Pius II*, trans. Florence Alden Gragg, 5 vols (Northampton, Mass.: Department of History of Smith College, 1937-57), III, p. 268

[...] to make a gret piscyne,  
With innocent blood of childre that wer pure  
Make hym cleene of that he did endure

(VIII: 1186-88)

In the accompanying image on f. 196r, Constantine is depicted clad only in a loincloth and crown, his diseased body ridden with sores. His contorted shape points to and brackets the section of text where the cure is proposed, juxtaposing the textual cure with his own pathetically grotesque figure (Figure 5.5). Given his terrible suffering, his 'soor so greuou' (VIII: 1184), Constantine initially accepts this proposal and gathers all the children of Italy to his palace. Yet, upon hearing the sobbing of the 'tendre moodres' (VIII: 1192), he cannot bring himself to carry it out and decides he will 'nat suffre innocentis bleede / Preferryng pite & merci mor than riht' (VIII: 1192, 1216-17).

In choosing to continue suffering for the sake of mercy, Constantine is clearly marked as the first Christian emperor, a type of Christ who makes a great personal sacrifice for the sake of others. The reward for such behaviour is immediately apparent and explicitly Christian: St. Peter and St. Paul appear to him in a dream and instruct him to go to Pope Silvester to be cured. This stage in the text features religious intervention, prayers and saints, rather than the dream visions and pagan gods of the earlier books.<sup>33</sup> The narrative continues with acts of charity and generosity, prayer and confession and finally a vision of Christ. Showing him a cross, Christ explains 'in this signe thou shalt ouercome hem alle' (VIII: 1428). And indeed he does just that, vanquishing Maxentius, taking possession of the entire empire and renaming

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<sup>33</sup> The manuscript's Christian iconography begins here with Constantine, whilst earlier books of the manuscript feature dream visions and pagan gods. See, for example, Laius and Oedipus' prayers to Apollo in Book I (illustrated on ff. 43r and 44v) or Astyages' vision of the death of his son, Cyrus, in Book IV.

Byzantium Constantinople. Divine approbation is also a regular feature of Yorkist genealogies and prophecies which interweave kingly qualities with celestial favour.

The equestrian portrait of Edward IV in the *Edward IV Roll*, for example, is surrounded by quotations from the Vulgate emphasising the divine favour shown to Edward and his claim to the throne. To the left of Edward one scroll reads *A domino factum est istud* (This was done by the lord) whilst that on the right reads *Si deus nobiscum quis contra nos* (If God is for us who will be against us?). This latter quotation was also used in the concluding stanzas of *The Battle of Northampton* in Dublin, Trinity College, MS 432, a collection of pro-Yorkist items written around 1460, where the author declares 'If god be with us, who is us agayne?' (114).<sup>34</sup> Bodley 623, ff. 71-71v and Ashmole Roll 26 both describe Edward as *verus heres erit electus a deo*.<sup>35</sup> *Edward, Dei Gratia* (1461-64?) recognises Edward as he who 'god hathe chose [...] to be his kny3st'.<sup>36</sup>

In contrast to Constantine, Julian's story is one of vice and iniquity. Where Constantine turns to religion through suffering and mercy, Julian is said to enter religion 'Vnder a colour of fals ipocrisie' and 'dissymuled hoolynesse' (VII: 1470, 1472). Having embarked upon a monastic life, he soon turns to necromancy in an attempt to gain possession of the whole empire. Through trickery, he finally achieves his aims using 'wikked spiritis' (VIII: 1500) to make his subjects believe that a laurel crown miraculously appears on his head. The image on f. 200r reveals to the reader/viewer that which cannot be seen by Julian's subjects – the winged demons floating around his head holding the laurel (Figure 5.6). Unlike Constantine's charity

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<sup>34</sup> Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry*, pp. 184-192; *Historical Poems of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. R. H. Robbins (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 210-17; Allan, 'Political Propaganda', p. 114.

<sup>35</sup> Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda', p. 180

<sup>36</sup> Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry*, p. 192; Robbins, *Historical Poems*, p. 92.

and good deeds, Julian proceeds with increasing impiety and malice, breaking crosses, killing Christian martyrs and fighting many ungodly wars. His tale finally ends with his death at the hands of 'a kniht vnknowe, angelik of visage' (VIII: 1600) who, the text states, was thought by some to be Mercurius, risen from his grave in Cesarea to kill Julian. The saintly intervention that allows Constantine to live is mirrored by the miraculous intervention of Mercurius, revived through prayer. As a final insult, Julian's body is flayed and his skin tanned and nailed to the gate of his palace by the Persian king Sapor.

This textual juxtaposition is a direct result of Lydgate's own literary strategy, having added the narrative of Constantine to his source, drawing largely from the 'Life of St. Silvester' in the *Legenda aurea* although he also briefly mentions the *Brut* (VIII: 1778).<sup>37</sup> Julian's narrative appears in both Boccaccio and de Premierfait's texts. Constantine's does not, although Lydgate introduces the tale by noting that 'Bochas maketh but short mencion / Of Constantyn' (VIII: 1174-75). Authorising his own narrative as a simple expansion of his source, Lydgate uses Constantine as a foil to the crimes committed by Julian, heightening the contrast by noting the blood relationship between the two: 'cursid Iulian / Which be discent to Constantyn was cosyn' (VIII: 1466-67).

The fullest English account of Constantine's narrative in circulation before the *Fall* is found at the close of the second book of the *Confessio Amantis*, although Gower's focus is quite different to Lydgate's. While claiming to be a story based on the qualities of pity and mercy (II: 3173-76), Gower actually produces a 'careful and theoretical consideration of the nature of imperial authority'.<sup>38</sup> That is, his

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<sup>37</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 309

<sup>38</sup> Mortimer, p. 109.

Constantine realises that to retain his 'maistrie' over his subjects, he must appear merciful. Any show of tyranny in this matter will ultimately damage his moral supremacy. Similarly, the *Legenda aurea* has Constantine announcing his decision to spare the children in a public square, offering a similarly political reason for his actions, namely the maintenance of the 'dignity' of the state, particularly in the eyes of other nations.<sup>39</sup> Lydgate's text, meanwhile, serves to position Constantine as an exemplary character, a knight of the Church:

Of Cristes feith thymperial champioun,  
Thoruh his noble knihtli magnificence  
To alle Cristene protectour & diffence

(VIII: 1440-42)

Julian, in contrast, is 'mortal enemy' to 'Cristes lawe' (VIII: 1549). In adding the godly Constantine before Julian whom, Bergen notes, is treated much less charitably than in either Boccaccio or de Premierfait, Lydgate produces a striking literary contrast between the two men.<sup>40</sup>

In these two narratives, then, Lydgate's own literary arrangement suits the scribe's overall design perfectly. The scribe utilises the already evident contrast between the two and carefully amplifies it in the design of the visual scheme, juxtaposing virtue with vice, divine visions with conjuration and religious symbols with demonic visitation. Thus Constantine's visual narrative is freighted with religious imagery – St. Peter and St. Paul (Figure 5.7), the Veronica (Figure 5.8), and a Tau cross (Figure 5.9) all feature prominently. Julian's visual narrative, meanwhile depicts winged demons crowning him before an awestruck crowd who clasp their hands together in

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<sup>39</sup> Braeger, p. 285; Jacobus, de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Or Lives of the Saints*, ed. F. S. Ellis, 7 vols (London: Dent, 1900), II, p. 88.

<sup>40</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 309.

prayer at the presumed miracle (f. 200r, Figure 5.6), only for him to be struck through the heart by an unlabelled character, the 'angelik' knight (f. 201r) in the next image. These depictions speak to the manuscript's rhetoric by highlighting the mercy and piety of a good ruler and how virtue becomes its own reward, whilst avarice and violence begets a similarly violent end. These contrasts contribute towards an idealised rhetoric of kingship and, further, associate this ideal with Edward IV by replicating motifs and symbols from Yorkist propaganda.

Even the portrayal of the characters themselves contrasts their respective qualities and failings, juxtaposing Julian's pride with Constantine's godly humility. Whilst an enthroned Julian is testament to his vanity and desire for power, Constantine is shown in a variety of humble and vulnerable positions: naked and half-diseased (Figure 5.5), in bed (Figure 5.7), and kneeling in his smock in prayer (Figure 5.8). Despite his apparent vulnerability, Constantine is always shown wearing his crown even when the text explicitly states that he removes it. On f. 198r, the text accompanying the kneeling Constantine at prayer before the Veronica states:

With gret reuerence & humble affeccioun,  
Whan he did of al his clothes white  
And cam hymself on pilgrimage doun  
Tofor Seynt Petir of gret deuocioun;  
Natwithstandyng his roial excellence,  
Made his confessioun in open audience.  
His crowne take of, knelyng thus he saide

(VIII: 1339-45)

Agreeing in all other details, even down to Constantine's white smock, the image offers an unusual divergence from the text by depicting the crown on his head. In part, the crown is simply an iconographic marker of Constantine's imperial status and

other figures in the manuscript sport similarly inappropriate headwear to denote their own status. On f. 135r, for example, the remains of King Cyrus are depicted floating in a barrel of blood, his crown firmly lodged on his decapitated head.

But Constantine's crown is more than a simple marker of this kind; it is a multivalent image that resonates with the motifs found in Yorkist propaganda. Its three-tiered structure has on occasion been mistaken for the papal tiara and has been explained by a lack of awareness on the part of the artist of the correct headwear for an emperor, the 'closed crown of contemporary practice'.<sup>41</sup> The papal tiara, however, is shown on St. Peter's head on f. 196v and is of a slightly different design, featuring a cross at its apex. Rather than a lack of artistic awareness, the triple crown of Harley 1766 was most likely influenced by the Yorkist genealogies in which Edward IV was regularly depicted wearing the triple crown of Britain, France and Spain to which he laid claim, symbolically linking the two men (Figures 5.4, 5.11 and 5.12).<sup>42</sup> Through this simple depiction of Constantine with the three-tiered crown, his qualities of piety, virtue and mercy are projected outwards onto the new young king. Other Yorkist manuscripts associate Edward both with Constantine and other exemplary heroes through use of the triple crown. Both College of Arms, 20/20 and Ashmole Roll 26, for example, highlight Edward's glorious lineage by placing triple crowns only on Brutus, Arthur, Cadwallader and Edward IV himself. In Hardyng's *Chronicle*, the account of Edward's reign has him crowned emperor with three crowns.<sup>43</sup> The Edward IV roll has a proliferation of the triple crown motif associating Edward variously with Constantine, Saint Edmund, Arthur and Brutus.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Reynolds, p. 151.

<sup>42</sup> Bodley 623, Cotton Vesp E vii, f.72 r, Add. 18,286 A.

<sup>43</sup> Hughes, p. 166; *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, p. 121.

<sup>44</sup> See *The Edward IV Roll* <<http://www.r3.org/bookcase/misc/edward4roll/frame.html>> [accessed 17 November 2009]. On the left hand side on the Mortimer line, the white lion of March holds a standard bearing the arms of Constantine. On the right hand side another white lion bears one of Arthur's

Lydgate's association of Constantine as a prince of Britain facilitates the relationship of Constantine with Edward IV. Opening his text with a reference to Constantine's birth in Britain, the penultimate stanza of the narrative exalts in his virtues as both a knight and a man of British origin:

Reioisshe ye folkis that born been in Breteyne,  
Callid otherwise Brutis Albioun,  
That hadde a prince so notabli souereyne  
Brouht forth & fostrid in *your* regioun,  
That whilom hadde the domynacioun,  
As cheef monarche, prince & president,  
Ouer al the world, *from* est til occident

(VIII: 1450-56)

Such a description increases the association of Constantine with Edward; Constantine is not just a moral forebear with whom Edward can be identified through their many shared virtues and experiences, but he is also an earlier prince of Britain of whom all Britons may be proud. Edward himself used genealogical propaganda to stress his linear descent from such princes of Britain as Cadwallader, Brutus and Arthur, and this stanza suggests an additional name for this list. Lydgate's text again lends itself admirably to the politicised aims of the manuscript producers. If Constantine is read as a type of Edward, the visual scheme of the manuscript suggests Edward's place in another lineage, that of the emperors of Rome.

Edward's triple crown was also associated with the three suns that appeared on the morning of the battle of Mortimer's Cross in 1461. This astronomical phenomenon –

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standards: three gold crowns on a red background. At the end of the roll to the left of Edward's name is a standard in which the royal arms of England are quartered with those of Castile and Leon with a central shield bearing three crowns, the arms of Arthur and Brutus.

known as a parhelion – is due to the refraction of the sun’s image through ice crystals, but was readily interpreted by Edward as a sign of the Trinity and an augury of God’s intervention. The firmly Yorkist *English Chronicle* written in the years after Edward’s accession records his rallying speech to his troops at Mortimer’s Cross in which he invokes divine support:

Bea the of good comfort, and dredethe not; thys is good sign, for these  
Ill sonys betoken the Fader, the Sone and the Holy Gost, and therefore  
lete us haue good harte, and in the name of Almyghte God go we  
agayns our enemyes and put them to flight!<sup>45</sup>

Indeed, all of Edward’s victories on the battlefield were presented as divinely providential and further signs of God’s approbation.<sup>46</sup> In a letter to King Pedro of Portugal, Edward himself wrote ‘we welcome the victories and successes in war granted by God in what seems to us a just quarrel’.<sup>47</sup> The parhelion was interpreted as a striking physical manifestation of these claims. Replicated in the historical rolls and taken by Edward as one of his emblems, the three suns soon also came to symbolise the three crowns to which he laid claim. The *Illustrated Life of Edward IV* (Harley 7353), for example, depicts three crowns in the sky through which three suns shine (Figure 5.13).<sup>48</sup> The cognomen ‘sol’ was also frequently used in the Yorkist genealogies and the *Illustrated Life of Edward IV* shows an angel bearing the word ‘sol’.<sup>49</sup> In Lydgate’s text, Arthur too is referred to as ‘a briht sonne set amynd the sterris’ (VIII: 2795).

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<sup>45</sup> *An English Chronicle*, p. 110

<sup>46</sup> Hicks, *Edward IV*, p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> J. Calmette, ‘Une lettre d’Edouard IV à D. Pedro de Portugal’, *Annales du Midi*, 31 (1919), pp. 193-96.

<sup>48</sup> Hughes, pp. 82, 101; Hicks, *Edward IV*, p. 1; Hannes Kleineke, *Edward IV* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 44.

<sup>49</sup> See for example, Add. 18,268 A and British Library, MS Sloane 965, f. 109v. See also Figure 5.4.

Like Edward, Constantine witnessed an astronomical phenomenon which he similarly interpreted as bestowing divine assistance. Seeing a brilliant light in the sky before the battle with his rival Maxentius in AD 312, Constantine interpreted this as a cross before the sun with the words 'in this sign you will be victor', represented in Harley 1766 by the Tau cross on f. 199r.<sup>50</sup> This resonates with Edward and his own visionary experiences; the triple crown worn by both serves not only to strengthen the associations between them but to signify divine approval. The actions of both, using a visual phenomenon to galvanize the belief of their armies in the righteousness of their cause, foreshadows the politically charged use of imagery in Yorkist rhetoric and Harley 1766.

The form of Constantine's Tau cross is unusual, a change from the more typical depiction of overlaid *chi* ( $\chi$ ) and *rho* ( $\rho$ ) – the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek. In Harley 1766, this has a dual function, which heightens the visual contrast of Constantine with Julian and foreshadows the upcoming narrative of King Arthur. Visually, it provides a final striking contrast with the last image in Julian's narrative on f. 201v, where Julian's flayed skin is shown nailed to the walls of his palace (Figure 5.14). Not only does it contrast the violence of Julian's death with the quiet piety at the end of Constantine's tale, it provides a visual reminder of the moral gulf between the two characters. The very shape of Julian's flayed skin as it hangs from the palace walls, mimics the shape of the cross from a few folios earlier, forming a macabre inversion of the former, much more conventional image, transforming the iconography. The cross transcends the flesh to the sacred realm of the immortal, the divine. The flayed skin shifts that focus back to the corporeal, physical rewards of sin. It draws the reader/viewer back to the textual contrast, to focus once more on the fine qualities of Constantine, the pious ruler, whose deeds resonate with those of

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<sup>50</sup> L. Blanchard, *The Edward IV Roll*.

Edward himself. Like the image of Julian enthroned, this is not a part of the *Des cas* visual tradition (see below) and appears to have been added with the specific purpose of heightening the contrast between the two characters.

Secondly, it anticipates the upcoming Arthur narrative of Book VII which, in its depiction of Arthur's tomb on f. 219r (Figure 5.15), is the only other visual sequence in the manuscript to portray a single, static object. Discussed in more detail below, the tomb looks to the future through the inscription of Merlin's prophecy upon it: 'Heer lith kyng Arthour which shal regne ageyn' (VIII: 3121-22). The genealogies and pedigrees that circulated during this period not only stressed Edward IV's descent from Arthur but also emphasised Merlin's prediction of the return of the knightly Arthur. Such prophecies were designed to encourage hope and glory for the future, embodied in the figure of the young, charismatic and martially successfully new king.<sup>51</sup> Like the tomb, the Tau cross speaks to a future age. Also known as the apocalyptic cross, the Tau cross presages the second coming of Christ and is more typically seen in images of the Passion.<sup>52</sup> The second coming in this context, however, is not the second coming of Christ, but of an earthly king, Arthur himself. These two images share a hope for the future and of a new beginning.

Other symbols in the Constantine sequence point not to Yorkist influence, but suggest further associations with Bury St. Edmunds and the abbey library. The image of the Veronica on f. 198r (Figure 5.8), for example, has attracted very little critical attention. Yet inspection of the text reveals no mention of this particular relic with Lydgate describing Constantine's pilgrimage 'Tofor Seynt Petir of gret

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<sup>51</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, pp. 9-10

<sup>52</sup> Daniel Callahan, 'The Tau Cross in the Writings of Ademar of Chabannes', in *The Year 1000: Religious and Social Responses to the Turning of the First Millennium*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York, 2002), p. 64.

deuocioun' (VIII: 1342). Instead of Constantine's subsequent confession, however, the image depicts the Vernicle or Veronica, the cloth with which Christ's face was wiped on the way to Cavalry leaving a lasting impression of his suffering face upon it. Like many of the symbols in this sequence, the Veronica has multiple functions and is used here not just as a sign of Constantine's holiness but also as a topographical marker of St. Peter's in Rome where the Veronica was held. This double function of the holy relic as a topographical indicator is also found in Harley 2278 where King Alkmund, father to St. Edmund, visits Rome:

The kynge in herte hadde a deuocioun  
Petir and Poule / in Rome to vesite  
Shewid to hym / be reuelacioun  
[...]  
Disposid him / to take that viage  
And to parfourme / his holi pilgrymage

(f. 12r)

In the accompanying image, Alkmund is depicted twice (Figure 5.16). On the left, he is shown standing before a pious lady who sees a bright sun shining from his chest, which part of the narrative is described overleaf on f. 12v. On the right, inside a room topped by crenallations, Alkmund kneels reverently before the Pope who raises his hand in benediction. To the left of the room stands an altar behind which is displayed the Veronica, the dark features surrounded by bright yellow beams. In his description of this folio, Rogers argues that 'just as on a modern tourist map of Italy Rome would be identified by the dome of St. Peter's, so here it is indicated by the Veronica behind the altar'. He further notes that the blackened features and long hair so distinctive of representations of the Veronica can also be found in a fifteenth century devotional miscellany from Bury, now held in a private collection,

extrapolating from this that Bury itself once held a copy of the Roman relic.<sup>53</sup> Although this cannot be ascertained, it again reiterates the strong links to Bury St. Edmunds exemplified in this manuscript and adds weight to the argument that the scribe and his workshop worked closely with the abbey and had access to both literary and visual material held within its extensive library.

Similarly, the image of Constantine in bed is also found in the earlier *Fall* manuscript, HM 268, itself probably an earlier product of Bury artisans. On f. 156r, a framed miniature in the left-hand column depicts the interior of a room in which Constantine lies in bed, his hands clasped in prayer, with St. Peter and St. Paul standing beside him clutching their respective attributes (Figure 5.17). In the foreground of the image another character holding a staff gestures towards a group of women and children, apparently ushering them towards the door. Here Constantine's suffering is counterpointed with that of the weeping mothers and their children as in the text itself, whilst Harley 1766 focuses on Constantine to the exclusion of all other earthly characters. Nor, in the HM 268 image does Constantine wear the triple crown, instead sporting a turban-type affair. Although the focus of HM 268's visual scheme is apparently quite different to Harley 1766, they both share the image of Constantine in bed not found elsewhere suggesting a possible transmission of images in Bury over the course of several decades, quite possibly facilitated by the abbey library.

However, the other images in the Constantine sequence have no identified Bury equivalents and, indeed, the whole series of images is quite different to Constantine images depicted elsewhere. Most typically, he is found in Books of Hours where he appears with Sylvester or his mother, Helena. The Harley 1766 sequence of Constantine images seems singularly suited to the interests of the manuscript.

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<sup>53</sup> Rogers, 'The Bury Artists of Harley 2278', p. 222.

Unlike Constantine, Julian's narrative is found in the earlier French tradition and, as such, depictions in the visual scheme do occur. However, in the sample of manuscripts examined thus far, there is only ever one illustration of Julian: his death at the hands of an unknown knight. Geneva, Bibliothèque Publique et Universitaire fr.190/I-II, f. 123r, Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5193, f. 333r, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS HS S.n. 12766, f. 298v, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 226, f.225r, British Library, MS Royal 14 E v, f. 419r and Glasgow, MS Hunter 208 (U.1.12), f. 322v all depict this narrative episode. No other sequence has yet been identified which includes images of Julian's sorcery or his ignominious end after his death. Thus the two images which provide the greatest points of contrast with Constantine appear to be specific to this manuscript.

Iconographically, the image of Julian enthroned is something of a stock figure, probably based on artistic exemplar. No less than six other crowned or enthroned figures populate the pages of the manuscript: St. Edmund (f. 5r, Figure 3.1), Samuel crowning Saul (f. 91v), Jadan before Jeroboam (f. 107r), Joash being crowned by Joiada (f. 111r), Arthur before the heathen knights (f. 217r, Figure 5.18) and Muhammad (f. 223r, Figure 5.10). Indeed, the image on f. 223r featuring Muhammad enthroned before a crowd with doves flying around his head, is strikingly similar to this one. However, as a deliberate addition to the Julian narrative, this image not only sharpens the contrast between the two characters but highlights the difference between divinely ordained images and those of false appearance, a crucial theme for a commission so concerned with the power of imagery. These images also create a recurring motif throughout the manuscript which brings together disparate narratives to develop the manuscript's rhetoric of kingship. In particular, this image punctuates the manuscript to draw attention to the qualities and rights of those who sit upon thrones. This element of the rhetoric indicates that kingship is dependent on a

number of factors: obedience to God and divine will, birthright, martial prowess and princely merit. St. Edmund forms the template for this idealised king: martial yet saintly, a great ruler of men who is yet obedient to God, a mould in which Arthur is shown to follow towards the end of the manuscript.

Other enthroned characters provide a foil to this idealised figure. Muhammad, for example, uses similar trickery to Julian to become a 'gret gouernor' (IX: 80) amongst his people:

On his shuldre[s] wer ofte tymes seyn,  
[...]  
Milk whit dowes, which that piked greyn  
Out of his eris; affermyng in sentence  
Thei *cam* be grace of goostli influence

(IX: 92-96)

Like Julian, Muhammad publicly interprets a piece of trickery as evidence of divine will. In the accompanying images, both men sit in almost identical positions on their respective thrones, their arms stretched out towards the assembled throng. Above them hover two birds/demons, one on each side of the head. Notably, however, Muhammad's text does not place him on a throne. Lydgate explains how Muhammad desires to become king but is put aside (IX: 127-28). Therefore his depiction on a throne, albeit minus a crown, is unique to the visual scheme and must come from either an exemplar or another image within Harley 1766. The similarities to Julian's image suggest it as an exemplar and the visual association of the two does serve to link the theme common to their narratives, that treachery will bring its own reward with Muhammad falling drunkenly into a puddle to be devoured by swine. Further, these similarities project criticisms of Muhammad back through the

manuscript onto Julian himself. While Julian is apostate, criminal and sinful, Muhammad is 'a fals prophete' 'of low kynreede' and an 'idolastre in deede' (IX: 53, 55-56) associating the crimes of each with the other character.

Recurrent themes are notable throughout all of the enthronement images: whilst two practice necromancy (Julian and Muhammad), another two meet their fate by being eaten by animals. Like Muhammad, Jeroboam is also eaten, this time by dogs. Still another two (Saul and Jeroboam) are shown to gain and lose their thrones through disobedience to God. Saul's career begins with his coronation 'be precept & ordenaunce deuyne' (II: 178). In the image the faithful Samuel places the crown on Saul's head, who is depicted as a young man, his hands clasped in prayer. The accompanying text reflects on the many good qualities of the young king, all of which link secular authority with obedience to God:

And whil that he was meek & humble in deede,  
Void off pride and fals presumpcioun,  
And prudent counsail with hym dede leede,  
Hym to gouerne bi good discrecioun,  
He fond quiete thoruh his al his regeoun;  
No foreyn enemy durst hym tho werreye,  
Whil he the Lord meekly dede obeie

(II: 190-96)

However, the text goes on to detail how Saul grew proud and wilful so that 'God from his crowne his grace gan withdrawe' (II: 224). Spiritual abandonment is soon followed by madness, paranoia and suicide. The theme of divine grace in kingship is one to which Lydgate returns later in the same book; Jeroboam is described as an ungrateful idolater who has forgotten God's goodness to him:

God aboue falsli set a-side,  
Wherfore from the anon he shal deuyde  
Thy kyngdam hool, withoute mor delay  
And from thi lyne the crowne take away

(II: 1607-10)

The accompanying image on f. 107r shows an idol (looking suspiciously like the pagan gods that populate this section of the manuscript) falling from an altar in front of Jeroboam's throne as a sign of divine displeasure and a presage of Jeroboam's own fall from grace two folios later. There is, of course, a danger of over-reading such a motif and it should not be suggested that all these images have the same level of nuanced reading as those of Julian, Edmund or Arthur, for example. However, what these images clearly do is draw the reader/viewer's attention to narratives which reflect upon the qualities and rights of those who sit upon a throne. Between them, these motifs point to the right to rule by genealogical descent, the importance of piety and obedience to God, martial prowess and moral superiority.

### **Book V: Nero and Marcus Regulus**

The images of Constantine and Julian were designed to amplify a textual contrast provided by Lydgate's own literary strategy. Yet the visual scheme of Harley 1766 contains other juxtapositions that are a direct result of scribal rearrangement of the text. Book V of the manuscript contains the narratives of Marcus Regulus and Nero who, like Constantine and Julian, are diametrically opposed characters both of whom rule over Rome. Whilst Marcus Regulus sacrifices himself for the sake of Rome, Nero is given over entirely to vice. Their very descriptions suggest the possibility of viewing them in juxtaposition as Lydgate describes Regulus as 'merour of knihtli gouernaunce' (V: 614) and Nero 'cheef merour of diffame' (VII: 784). This point of

contrast goes largely unnoticed in Lydgate's unabridged text, where Regulus appears in Book V and Nero in Book VII. In Harley 1766, however, the two have been brought within a few folios of each other to emphasise the contrast between them. Given how closely the scribe worked with the text, paying close attention to Lydgate's lexis and redeploying it to stress themes of literary lineage, for example, or authorise his own editorial practices, it is plausible that here too he has seized upon this idea of the mirror in order to create contrast and drama within the design of the manuscript. As in the preceding examples, the visual scheme heightens this contrast; Book V contains the fewest images of any in the manuscript – only eight over twenty-six folios. Six of the eight, however, accompany these two narratives forming a structurally and thematically cohesive unit and providing the reader with an explicit contrast.

Unlike Constantine, Marcus Regulus does not feature in Yorkist propaganda; he is not part of the glorious lineage to which Edward laid claim. Yet the qualities Regulus embodies resonate strongly with the very values with which Yorkist propaganda endowed Edward. Propagandist texts, for example fêted the qualities of the young Earl of March as in this poem from 1460:

E for Edward, whose fame the earth shall spread,  
Because of his wisdom named prudence,  
Shall save all England by his manliness,  
Wherefore we owe to do him reverence.<sup>54</sup>

Lydgate similarly eulogises Marcus Regulus as a hero of Rome, virtuous, brave and wise:

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<sup>54</sup> Frederic Madden, 'Political Poems of the Reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV', *Archaeologia*, 29 (1842), pp. 331-32.

In al this world ther was no bettir kniht,  
Bettir named & born of good lynage,  
A semli persone, riht manli off visage,  
Wal of the Romeyns, sharp yerd to Cartage,  
Demure, nat hasti, seyng al thing toforn

(V: 456-61)

Coupling these qualities with hereditary right to rule, Lydgate's description of Regulus sums up mid-fifteenth century attitudes to ideal kingship which desired not only that the king sit legally on his throne, but that he possessed the moral qualities to rule justly and wisely. 'Ruling', argues Jean Dunbabin, required a 'positive moral function, the identification and fostering of the common good'.<sup>55</sup> Marcus Regulus himself excels as a knight, foreshadowing the appearance of Arthur, 'the wisest p<sup>r</sup>ince and the beste kniht' (IX: 2667) towards the end of the manuscript. Nero, by contrast, is 'in kni<sup>h</sup>thod a coward' (VII: 736) providing another point of lexical similarity between the two narratives which may have prompted the scribe to this particular textual arrangement.

Regulus' narrative continues with his election as governor of Africa and Carthage and, at the height of his martial victories, slays a dragon 'so horrible / That al the contre of hym stood in such doute' (V: 495-96). Chosen to visually denote the opening of Regulus' narrative on f. 153v (Figure 5.19), the dragon-slaying motif is used on several occasions throughout the *Fall's* visual scheme to signal the zenith of a hero's career. Both Jason (f. 31r, Figure 5.20) and Hercules (f. 69r, Figure 5.21), for example, are depicted killing dragons by removing their heads. This symbolic gesture indicates not only the strength of the conquering hero, but exemplifies his

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<sup>55</sup> Jean Dunbabin, 'Government', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350-1450*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 483.

willingness to risk life and limb in pursuit of fame and fortune. Both of these men exemplify typically heroic behaviour, yet each acts for his own benefit and each meets his downfall at the hands of women. Regulus' motivation is quite different, acting to prevent the desolation of the country by the dragon. Although depicting a similar sense of strength and martial prowess to his heroic predecessors, Regulus' dragon-slaying exploits indicate the change within the manuscript that occurs around Book V. The earlier books operate within a largely mythological framework featuring pagan gods, magic and prophecy, while the latter half of the manuscript moves towards a Christian framework. Hence whilst Constantine has visionary experiences much like Laius and Astyages in Books I and IV, for example, these are placed within a nexus of explicitly Christian symbols (as discussed above) precluding any possibility of misinterpretation. Regulus' exploits, however, are tempered by his civic responsibilities rather than Christian duties. Thus, despite descriptions of his glorious victories and bravery taking up half of Lydgate's narrative (some 80 lines), only this one image of dragon-slaying accompanies this section.

The remainder of the text and the visual scheme exhibits Marcus Regulus' fortunes 'when he was falle in age' 'feeble & old of yeeris' (V: 565, 600) and his desire to uphold the common weal and protect Rome through the sacrifice of his own ageing body. The text repeatedly refers to Regulus' increasing years and in the following three images (ff. 157v, 158r, 159v) the artist faithfully represents this, showing him as a bent and bearded old man in contrast to the powerful young knight who slays the dragon.<sup>56</sup> Lydgate describes Regulus' capture in battle by Xanthippus, his subsequent captivity in Carthage and his return to Rome when the Carthaginians hope to exchange him for some of their own knights held in captivity. Regulus, however, asks the Romans not to submit to the proposed exchange. In a lengthy

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<sup>56</sup> See V: 632, 654, 657, 668, 679, 680, 681, 685.

speech, lasting some eleven stanzas, he pleads to be allowed to return to captivity so that the enemy may not have their side bolstered by 'yonge knihtis, fresh lusti of ther cheeris' (V: 599), a direct contrast to his own aged appearance and a comparison he draws on repeatedly. Enraged by the failure of their schemes, the Carthaginians brutally torture Regulus until he dies.

The driving force behind Regulus' narrative, then, is his desire to act for the common good, even at the risk of his own well-being. He is a stable ruler whose selfless actions are undertaken for the good of the nation. Yorkist propaganda sought to promote Edward in a similar light, a king acting not only to uphold his genealogical right to the throne of England but a man whose foremost interest was his subjects and their well-being. After being acclaimed king on 4 March 1461, for example, Edward set about issuing proclamations which announced his concern for the 'lamentable state and Ruynes of this Reaume of Englonde' and his desire to act only 'for the weel and prosperite of the said Resumes, and to remoeve and setts aparte the said mischeves and to confort and relinch the said subgettes, preserving the common welle'.<sup>57</sup> Similarly the petition presented by the Commons at the first Parliament of Edward's reign in November 1461 stressed the hardship he suffered for the common good, in particular putting aside mourning for his father, Richard Duke of York:

Though all the sorowe and lamentacion for the deth of the seid noble and famous prynce was nat a litle in your noble and naturall remembraunce, to adjoyne youre moost noble persone of knyghtly corage, accordyng to the nature of youre high birth, and the tender zele and naturall love that youre seid highnes bare unto the defence and tuicion of youre seid reame and subgetts, and to the resistance

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<sup>57</sup> Hughes, p. 78; Allan, 'Political Propaganda', pp. 91-94; *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Existing in the Archives and Collections of Milan*, p. 57.

of the maliciouse entent and purpose of the seid erles, and to procede  
of princely prowesse ayenst theym in bataille.<sup>58</sup>

Marcus Regulus may not be directly linked to Yorkist genealogies, but his narrative with its thematic focus on idealised types of kingship and the desire to act for the common weal is clearly comparable.

Regulus' role as defender of the people is symbolically realised in the repeated description of him as 'cheeff wal of our cite' (V: 605).<sup>59</sup> This role is emphasised in the visual scheme in the two iconographically similar images of Carthage and Rome (Figures 5.22 and 5.23) where the depiction of the sturdy city walls of Carthage and Rome contrasts with the frail body of Regulus, captive and doomed to self-sacrifice for the common good. Both images depict Regulus entering two buildings designed to represent each of the two cities. At Carthage, he is depicted in armour being ushered through the city gates by two unlabelled characters. Both are unarmed, although the foremost places a guiding hand on Regulus' shoulder. Similarly nameless characters welcome Marcus Regulus to the gates of Rome on f. 158r. Here, he stands outside the gates, symbolising his reluctance to enter the city and complete the exchange. In this image, he no longer wears armour but is dressed in a simple robe, stressing his changing role from warrior to diplomat. He holds the hand of the foremost character, whilst the other is raised in a gesture of supplication. In contrast to his earlier martial victories and triumphs over mythical beasts, this action is based on quiet logic and self-sacrifice and the images reflect this in their understated depiction of Regulus sacrificing his freedom for the good of Rome. Visually less magnificent than his earlier dragon-slaying, these images represent a more practical heroism in the context of civic duty rather than the heat of battle.

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<sup>58</sup> *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, V, p. 462.

<sup>59</sup> See also V: 607 and 701.

For all his bodily frailty, Regulus is shown to be strong and steadfast in spirit, even in the face of fickle fortune. At the beginning of the narrative, his sole interest is in the 'commoun proffit' (V: 449) and this continues to be the case even when Fortune, 'the geri goddesse [...] / Ageyn this prince hir fauour made appalle' (V: 566-67). Lydgate's envoy praises his actions and his willingness to die for the common good and makes it clear how this tale should be interpreted: 'Was euer founde any trewer kniht?' (V: 722). The idealistic self-sacrifice exemplified in the quiet scenes of Carthage and Rome and the accompanying eloquence of Regulus' speech, then, jars with the scene of considerable violence which ends both the textual and visual narratives. The Carthaginians' torture of Regulus is described at length in the most graphic terms:

First the liddis of his eien tweyne,  
Thei kutte hem of to encrece his peyne,  
That he nat sholde slepen in prisoun,  
But euer wachche with peyne intolerable,  
And for the constreynt of his passioun  
Crie & compleyne with sihhis lamentable.  
And aftir this, thei token a pley<sup>n</sup> table,  
Fret ful of nailles sharp[e] whet & grounde,  
And thereupon naked their hym bounde.  
Another table thei leide on hym aloffte,  
Nailed also; and atween thes tweyne  
Thei couched hym; his bed was ful unsoffte,  
Most importables hidous was the peyne;  
The blood ran out of eueri senew and veyne.  
This was his torment, alas, a cruel deth!

(V: 734-48)

These details are replicated exactly in the image on f. 159v located precisely next to this vivid account (Figure 5.24). Regulus' body lies at an awkward angle on the nail-studded, blood-spattered table, hands bound behind his back. Two unlabelled Carthaginians hold another board, ready to place on top of Regulus. The lower figure's robe is apparently already drenched with the dying man's blood. The only appreciable difference between text and image is the loin cloth he wears, when the text clearly describes him as naked. This is a consistent feature of the manuscript, where characters described as naked are clothed or obscured by bedclothes.<sup>60</sup>

Alongside bringing an immediacy to the act which contrasts sharply with the quiet scenes of sacrifice that precede it, the image introduces a greater sense of agency to the act. The faceless 'thei' – the 'peeple of Cartage' – are embodied in the two nameless torturers, the one a grey-haired old man, the other much younger. They are not powerful princes or magnates, yet they hold the power of life and death over this hero of Rome. Highlighting the extent of the sacrifice he has made through the violence of this act, Regulus is shown to be an extreme example of an ideal leader, sacrificing all for the sake of his people. Lydgate himself is at pains to make this point through an extended 'pre-envoy' in lines 750-805, eight stanzas which precede the actual envoy. These lines reflect on the qualities of the hero by comparing him to other citizens of Rome whose actions are cast unfavourably in the light of Regulus' achievements. Although not marked out as a separate envoy in Harley 1766 or in Bergen's edition, the lines mimic the envoy's format by using the final line as an envoy-like refrain, repeated in each stanza. Here Lydgate advises the reader 'And to this Marchus mak no *comparisoun*' (V: 756). In these lines, Lydgate reiterates the

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<sup>60</sup> See, for example, Candaules and his queen on f. 129r or Arsinoe and Demetrius on f. 150v. In both cases, the women are described as naked, yet in the images, Arsinoe wears a white shift whilst Candaules' queen is covered by a bed sheet with only her shoulders appearing.

unparalleled virtue of his hero, which may have helped bring this episode to the scribe's attention.

The scribe also viewed this pre-envoy as important to the development of his rhetoric, adding a stanza of his own after line 791:

And bochas here Rebukith in certeyn  
Folk that falsly / lyst to be for-sworn  
And make ther promys / and ther othes in veyn  
And yive no fors / though ther feith be lorn  
They take fals Chaff / they leve the trewe Corn  
nat lyk to marchus of Condycioun  
whoo lyst in trouthe / make a comparysoun<sup>61</sup>

Once again, the scribe shows himself to be a competent versifier, able to add to Lydgate's own text to add force to his own interpretation of the text. Again, he uses Lydgate's own authorising strategy of invoking the name of Bochas. Curiously, though, the notion of oath-breaking has no particular relevance to Regulus' narrative, although the lack of steadfastness and stability do counterpoint with Regulus' own sense of purpose and duty.

This image is the only one from Harley 1766's Regulus sequence that also appears in several of the *Des cas* manuscripts including British Library, MS Add. 35,321, f. 149r, Royal 14 E v, f. 239r (Figure 5.25) and Hunter 208 (U.1.12), f. 185r. In each of these manuscripts, a naked Regulus is placed between two studded boards whilst blood pours to the floor and the torturers look on at the gruesome sight. The foreground of Add. 35,321 also depicts a generic battle scene in which the Romans

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<sup>61</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 32.

fight the Carthaginians. Unlike many of the images discussed in this chapter, therefore, this visual narrative does have similarities to its French predecessors. Yet none of the *Des cas* manuscripts examined thus far feature the same extended visual scheme as Harley 1766 indicating once again the deliberate nature of its design for an English audience by the Lydgate scribe. The additional images visually contextualise Regulus' death, placing it within the visual rhetoric of kingship as an example of a highly idealised ruler who places the common weal before his own personal safety.

Nero's narrative, however, offers a very different experience for the reader/viewer. In comparison to Marcus Regulus whose actions are shown to be motivated by generous self-sacrifice, Nero's crimes are legion, ranging from the persecution of Christians, murder, matricide and all manner of sexual depravity including ravishing priestesses and dressing young boys as women before committing 'foul' and horrible deede[s]' with them (VII: 720-21). Although listing a character's crimes is far from unusual in the *Fall*, the content of this particular list does stand out in terms of its sexual nature. As emperor of Rome, Nero is the very antithesis of everything that Marcus Regulus stands for, being self-serving, murderous and violent. Lydgate himself often expresses concern about including Nero in his text, frequently declaiming 'I was ashamed to sette hym in my book' (VII: 739) and the envoy in particular makes this clear.<sup>62</sup> Unlike other tyrants, despots and perennial sinners, no moral message can be drawn from the life and crimes of Nero. In particular, Lydgate seems concerned that far from serving as an example of iniquity and vice to be avoided, Nero's example will be enjoyed by the reader:

To reede þe processe no prince shold haue ioye

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<sup>62</sup> See also: VII: 719-20, 789-90.

[...]

Yif that I myhte, I wolde race his name  
Out of this book, that no man sholde reede  
His vicious lyf, cheef merour of diffame.  
Set hym aside: let no wiht take[n] heede  
For to remembre so many a cruel deede,  
Sauf onli this, to thynken in substauce,  
How eueri tiraunt eendith with mischaunce

(VII: 777, 782-88)

As a skilled writer Lydgate must have appreciated the value of including such a depraved character and his protestations of concern do little to disguise the fact. To fit into the *Fall's* overall scheme, however, Nero's narrative must have a moralising envoy to justify its inclusion and Lydgate uses the opportunity to stress the horror of the tale.

The scribe also recognised the value of Nero as a compelling literary character. In bringing this narrative into close proximity with that of Regulus, he brings the two into sharp relief, increasing the impact of each and highlighting his rhetoric of kingship through juxtaposing Nero's crimes with Regulus' heroism, particularly through their respective positions as Roman leaders. However, where Julian provides an explicit foil for Constantine in Book VI on a variety of iconographic and thematic levels, the juxtaposition of Nero and Regulus is much less explicit, providing a more generalised contrast between the heroism of the one and the iniquity of the other. Yet the visual scheme still works to emphasise this contrast. The end of Regulus' visual narrative is followed by an equally violent representation of the most 'disnaturel' (VII: 733) of Nero's acts – matricide. On f. 171r (Figure 5.26), Nero's mother, Agrippina, lies on the floor, her torso cut open:

Which to remember it is abhominable, -  
He made hir wombe be korue upon a day  
To seen the place nyne monethes wher he lay

(VII: 730-32)

Like the preceding image, this depicts a moment of extreme violence in which two characters inflict terrible torture upon a helpless victim lying between them. A small, unnamed character, like Regulus' torturers, stands beside Agrippina brandishing a knife. Like the torturers in the previous image, the name of this character is irrelevant. He is a device or tool in the hands of Nero, who stands in the foreground. In contrast to Regulus' narrative, this tale's protagonist is the torturer rather than the tortured. He is shown to wield the power, yet his actions render him a figure to be despised rather than admired. The ideal actions of a powerful ruler are to exercise mercy and pity, as the emperor Constantine does in the following book. The design of the visual scheme also influences the reader/viewer's interpretation of Nero, whose appearance would appear almost comical were it not for the macabre context. Long ears rise from his head and appear to be those of either an animal or devil and a high conical hat sits atop his head. These details are not gleaned from the text but are designed to provide an immediate visual signal of Nero's own lack of humanity, presumably at the instruction of the scribe himself. None of the *Des cas* images which feature Nero have similar bestial portrayals.

The second image of Nero on f. 171v (Figure 4.7) exhibits a rather subtler point of contrast between the two narrative episodes. Nero is depicted in flight from two soldiers who stand in the foreground. His escape is as exaggerated as the crimes he has committed; he is depicted with limbs flailing, running from the soldiers who stand directly beneath him. In this image, the reader/viewer sees the cowardice in knighthood that Lydgate speaks of at the beginning of Nero's tale (VII: 736). Rather

than staying to face his fate like Regulus before him, he flees and when he is unable to affect his escape he commits suicide, stabbing himself with a knife. In this choice of image, Harley 1766 once again shows divergence from the *Des cas* tradition which displays a variety of visual responses to this episode. Whilst many of the manuscripts depict Nero drinking over the corpse of his mother (see, for example, BPU, fr. 190/I-II, f. 82r, Arsenal 5193, f. 283v, ÖNB, HS S.n. 12766, f. 248r, Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS 63, f. 218v, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 226, f. 191r), it is rare to see an image of Nero in flight, more usually ending the tale with a straightforward depiction of his suicide (as in Royal 14 E v, f. 365r and Hunter 208, f. 276r).

The only other manuscript to depict Nero's flight is one of the earlier *Fall* manuscripts, HM 268 where, on f. 144v, he is chased from the city on horseback by a sword-wielding knight. At the same time, Nero clutches a dagger in his hand and a bleeding wound is shown over his heart. The flailing, wide-armed posture is not dissimilar to Harley 1766 and, as has been described in Chapter Two, this manuscript was possibly produced in Bury St. Edmunds some ten-twenty years prior to Harley 1766. Occasional points of overlap between the two, such as here and in the image of Constantine, suggests the possibility of exemplary material, now lost, existing in Bury which successive generations of artisans were able to draw upon. However, such congruent images are relatively few, and do not suggest that Harley 1766 was based on HM 268 or that both were copied from the same exemplar manuscript. Rather it contributes to the theory that the Bury workshop was able to draw upon a variety of influences, from visual propaganda used by the new Yorkist regime through to the books housed in the extensive library at Bury Abbey.

## Books VII and VIII: Arthur and Edward

Books VII and VIII of Harley 1766 utilise a different kind of strategy to that seen in Books V and VI, but nevertheless continue and develop the visual rhetoric of kingship seen in both. Great British rulers open and end these two books, framing countless subsidiary characters who display hypocrisy, violence and inconstancy. Again, this is a feature of Lydgate's writing amplified by the visual scheme of Harley 1766. Many critics have noted that as the *Fall* continues towards its end, the tales included become shorter, highlighting disorder, misrule and the bleakness of the human condition.<sup>63</sup> However, Lydgate introduces some exceptions to this general rule – high notes which offer hope for the future by reflecting on glorious aspects of British history, namely, King Arthur and his court and Prince Edward's defeat and capture of King John of France at Poitiers in 1356. Crucially for the manuscript's rhetoric, there is a strong emphasis in these narratives on the right to rule by genealogical descent and through victory in battle, themes prevalent in the rhetoric of Yorkist propaganda. The design of Harley 1766 highlights the two tales by foregrounding Arthur's narrative at the beginning of Book VII instead of the middle of Book VIII (as in Lydgate's original text), a strategy designed to emphasise the shared sense of patriotism between these two narratives and the Yorkist genealogies from which their visual representations draw influence. The focus, particularly in the visual scheme, is positive and is based on English triumph and chivalry, offering hope for the future and a way forwards from political turmoil and bloodshed.

Lydgate's version of the Arthur story has three distinct strands, beginning with eulogistic and extensive praise of Arthur, his court and his country. Whilst Arthur is the wisest prince and the best knight, surpassing all others in martial prowess, his

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<sup>63</sup> See, for example: Schirmer, pp. 220-24; Ebin, pp. 72-73.

land is fêted as one of plenty and riches (VIII: 2661-2870). Next, the text moves on to detail Arthur's actions in defence of Britain when emissaries from the emperor Lucius come to claim tribute to Rome (VIII: 2871-3042). Lydgate's description of Arthur's behaviour defines him as the ideal chivalric knight who acts with courtesy to protect his imperial visitors from harm within his court, yet strikes down all who threaten him on the battlefield, personally killing five of the Saracen knights who fight for Lucius. Finally, Lydgate's narrative describes Mordred's attempted usurpation of the throne, the battle between Arthur and Mordred and their deaths (VIII: 3043-3129). The inclusion of this narrative within the *Fall* has been analysed as an explicit 'warning against conflict between members of high ranking families', particularly the Beauforts and Gloucester to whom the *Fall* was dedicated.<sup>64</sup> The inclusion of an envoy in which Lydgate bewails and warns against the perils of 'vnkynde blood' (VIII: 3136) adds weight to this argument, which he follows with a now rare 'exclamacion' against 'men þat ben vnkynde to þeir kynrede', now found in only a few extant manuscripts, including Harley 1766.<sup>65</sup>

Yet the images accompanying Arthur's tale in Harley 1766 subtly refashion Lydgate's text, directing the reader/viewer away from an interpretation which focuses on familial usurpation and bloodshed – highly undesirable in the light of Edward's own accession to the throne by force – to focus instead on the positive aspects of Arthurian chivalry and a contemporary renewal under a Yorkist king. Thus the first image on f. 217r (Figure 5.18) shows Arthur enthroned, with the three Roman emissaries kneeling before him; overleaf on f. 218r (Figure 5.27) his defeat of the Saracen kings in battle is depicted. Like the Yorkist rolls and pedigrees, these images set forth a heroic archetype of kingship in which martial prowess and imperial

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<sup>64</sup> Schirmer, p. 223; Lawton, 'Dullness', p. 784.

<sup>65</sup> Bergen, III, p. 911.

conquest are coupled with the chivalric values of courtesy and gentility. The first image emphasises the vulnerability of the Roman emissaries through their submissive posture and smaller stature, whilst Arthur and his sword-bearer – doubtless representative of the ‘proude Bretouns of cruel hasti blood’ (VII: 2946) who would have slain them – tower above them. Like Constantine before him, Arthur is represented as a merciful Christian hero. Similarly in Yorkist propaganda Edward IV is also portrayed in this light. In the *Illustrated Life of Edward IV*, for example, Edward is depicted kneeling before Henry VI at the Battle of Northampton (1460), in which Edward and Warwick defeated Henry and took him into their custody, effectively seizing control of the country in the person of the king (Figure 5.28). Yet this image focuses on his chivalry, refusing to harm God’s anointed king. The image is paired with a similar depiction of David kneeling before Saul whom he will not harm.

Similarly, the second image on f. 218r evidences Arthur’s renowned martial superiority. Five of the Saracen kings whom Lucius brought to fight for him in France lie dismembered at Arthur’s feet in a variety of awkward postures, the ground bespattered with blood. Arthur stands before them uninjured, his flag-bearer to his left. The victory is as decisive as those fought by Edward at Mortimer’s Cross and Towton and foreshadows the manuscript’s final image of the battle at Poitiers on f. 259v. Both Mortimer’s Cross and Towton are depicted in Harley 7353 and a pile of bodies litters the foreground of the latter image. Edward’s personal valour in battle is also recorded in a number of sources. Bishop Neville of Exeter, for example, wrote to Bishop Coppini in Flanders describing the fearlessness and leadership of Edward and his captains: ‘first fighting like common soldiers, then commanding, encouraging

and rallying their squadrons like the greatest captains'.<sup>66</sup> In contrast, descriptions of Henry VI are less than glowing. The parliamentary petition of 1461 describes his behaviour at the Battle of St. Albans where Richard, Duke of York, lost his life:

The same Henry, actour, factour and provoker of the seid commocion [...] not joynyng his persone and blode to the defence, tuicion and salvacion of the same lordes and persones comen to assist hym by his auctorite and commaundement, lyke a victorious and a noble captayne, but lyke a disseyvable coward, ayenst princely and knyghtly duetee, sodenly, privately and shamefully refused theym, sufferyng and procuryng to disseivably theffucion of their blode, and horrible murdre and deth, not havyng therof sorowe, pitee or compassion.<sup>67</sup>

Unlike other depictions of Arthur's life, such as that in Edward IV's own copy of the *Des cas* (Royal 14 E v, f. 439v, c. 1470-1483, Figure 5.29), Harley 1766 does not visualise the battle with Mordred, instead depicting Arthur's tomb on f. 219r (Figure 5.15) where Merlin's prophecy of Arthur's return is inscribed. In so doing it refocuses the eye of the reader, not, as the text would suggest, on the death of Arthur at the hands of the traitorous Mordred, but on his prophesied return:

He as a kyng is crownid in Fairie,  
With sceptre and suerd, & *with* his regalie  
Shal resorte as lord and souereyne  
Out of Fairye & regne in Breteyne,  
And repaire ageyn the Rounde Table;  
Be prophecie Merlyn set the date,  
[...]  
His epitaphie recordeth so certeyn:  
Heer lith kyng Arthour, which shal regne ageyn

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<sup>66</sup> *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice*, vol. I, 1202-1509, ed. R. Brown (London: H.M.S.O., 1864), no. 370.

<sup>67</sup> *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, V, pp. 476-77.

(VIII: 3112-17, 3121-22)

In narrating this episode both Boccaccio and de Premierfait identify belief in Arthur's return as stemming from the failure to bury him properly and Lydgate himself describes the prophecy as an 'errour' which 'abit among Bretouns' (VII: 3109).<sup>68</sup> Yet by depicting the tomb – an otherwise unprepossessing image – the visual scheme foregrounds and gives credence to the prophecy and the tragic ending of the textual narrative is replaced by hope for the future.

The Arthurian visual narrative in Harley 1766 thus looks to past British glories to provide a framework for the future: a future with a militarily successful but merciful king. This patriotic optimism is shared by the Yorkist rolls which project Edward as the living embodiment of Arthur and nearly all of which provide glowing accounts of his reign. Hardyng's *Chronicle*, for example, describes Britain at the height of its powers under Arthur.<sup>69</sup> Bodley 623 describes Arthur as the 'fierce' whilst Lewis E 201 calls him the 'miraculous'. Add. 18,268 A regularly uses King Arthur as a cognomen for Edward. Although Henry IV before him had made use of Arthur as a model and declared himself to be Merlin's 'Boar of Commerce', it was in Edward's reign that Arthur's propagandist value was most fully exploited.<sup>70</sup> Like Arthur, Edward was famed for his military successes, gifted in battle with a natural ability to lead and inspire courage in those around him.<sup>71</sup> The widespread propagandist association of Edward with Arthur appears to have strongly influenced the focus of Harley 1766's visual scheme on the return of Arthur, once and future king.

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<sup>68</sup> Reynolds, p. 149.

<sup>69</sup> *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, p. 48.

<sup>70</sup> Caroline D. Eckhardt, 'Prophecy and Nostalgia: Arthurian Symbolism at the Close of the English Middle Ages', in *The Arthurian Tradition: Essays in Convergence*, eds. Mary Flowers Braswell and John Bugge (Tuscaloosa and London: University of Alabama Press, 1988), pp. 115-16; Ross, 'Rumour, Propaganda and Popular Opinion', p. 23; Allan, 'Yorkist Propaganda', p. 171.

<sup>71</sup> Ross, *Edward IV*, pp. 9-10.

The optimism and patriotism exemplified by Arthur's narrative are revisited in the final pages of the manuscript in the retelling of the Black Prince's capture of King John of France at Poitiers in 1356 that closes Book VIII. Lydgate's text makes clear his association of the two societies. As in Arthur's court, so in Edward III's society 'ther floured in soth noblesse of cheualrie' (IX: 3151). Mars governs Britain, 'ther patroun in bataille' (IX: 3155), whilst Minerva influences them in prudence and learning. Like Arthur and the knights of the Round Table, this society is one which displays martial prowess, wisdom and courtesy. These chivalric motifs are represented in a single battle scene on f. 259v (Figure 5.30). Distinct from the French manuscripts which usually show John transported to England after his capture, the image is reminiscent of Arthur's earlier defeat of the Saracen kings.<sup>72</sup> This time, however, the corpses in the foreground are less visually striking than the bloodied and dismembered bodies before Arthur's feet. Rather the focus here is on the two kings who are shown facing each other in battle as equals; Lydgate himself describes each as a 'manli kniht' (IX: 3191, 3217). With the patriotic tone of the text and its associations with Arthur, there can be no doubt that the focus remains on the English victory: the arms of the English royal house fly prominently about the assembled troops. The chivalric motifs common to both the description of Arthur and the Black Prince's knights extend beyond the manuscript to Edward IV associating him with his one of his more recent forebears, Edward III.

The manuscript offers the reader/viewer a chance to reinterpret the text within the context of Yorkist England and the numerous references to the two earlier Edwards, the Black Prince and his father, must have resonated with the name of the new

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<sup>72</sup> See, for example, BPU, fr. 190/I-II, f. 188r, Arsenal 5193, f. 403v, ÖNB HS S.n. 12766, f. 366v, and Royal 14 E v, f. 510r.

young king. Indeed, some of the Yorkist genealogies such as Cotton Vesp. E vii, ff. 70v-71r and Bodley 623, f. 18r, utilise the prophecies of John of Bridlington, originally written to celebrate the lives and careers of Edward III and the Black Prince. The celebrated career promised to the Black Prince in the ninth chapter of the third section of Bridlington is translated to Edward IV, prophesying a glorious future for the new king.<sup>73</sup> In Harley 1766 the princely Edward is described as a ‘manli kniht’ no less than four times (IX: 3217, 3224, 3233, 3238). This conflation of Edwards presents the opportunity to reinterpret the text with Edward IV’s own battles for the throne. The reasons behind the battle of Poitiers and those fought by Edward IV are ostensibly the same: to restore the throne to its alleged rightful owner. The Black Prince fought for Edward III’s claim to the French throne which:

Bi collusioun King John did occupie,  
 Set out of ordre the roial alliaunce;  
 Sceptre, crowne, *with* al the regalie  
 Was down descended to Edward in substaunce,  
 Conueied the branchis be lineal concordauce,  
 For which[e] title grounded upon riht,  
 Prince Edward fauht ful lik a manli kniht

(IX: 3211-17)

Edward IV claimed the throne as lawfully his, held ‘bi collusioun’ and ‘out of ordre’ by successive Lancastrian generations. Similarly, the accession of the ‘new’ Edward, the embodiment of Arthurian chivalry, gave hope to those who looked to him to restore the grave losses that had been sustained in France during the reign of Henry VI. Poems circulating during this period, such as ‘The Lily, the Lion and the Son of

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<sup>73</sup> Allan, ‘Yorkist Propaganda’, pp. 180-182; *Collection of Political Poems and Songs*, I, pp. 123-215.

Man', prophesied the victory of the rightful English king over the French usurper.<sup>74</sup> The reacquisition of the French throne in the narrative and represented in Figure 5.30 echoes not only Edward IV's accession but is suggestive of a renewed hope for regaining lost French lands. Although the possibility of gains in France remained unlikely whilst the new king consolidated his hold on the throne and warded off attacks by Lancastrian forces, the narrative suggests the rightful reclamation of illegally held thrones, both British and French. Finally, the 'lineal concordance' of which Lydgate writes is distinctly reminiscent of the genealogies by which Edward sought to verify and legalise his claims to the throne and which influenced the visual scheme of Harley 1766.

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Throughout these narratives, Harley 1766 uses both Lydgate's own sense of literary contrast and textual rearrangement to foreground aspects of the text, amplifying them in the visual scheme to form a distinct rhetoric of ideal kingship. This rhetoric focuses the reader/viewer on the rights of kings to rule based on moral superiority, genealogical descent and martial prowess. This focus on kingship and divine right dovetails with contemporary political propaganda. Yet unlike Yorkist propaganda Harley 1766's visual rhetoric does not have the same propagandist motives as the genealogies and pedigrees produced for public consumption. It is not designed to convert people to the Yorkist cause. Rather, it realigns its commissioners, producers and even Bury itself with the new Yorkist regime, espousing Yorkist rhetoric and optimism which positioned Edward as the second coming of Arthur, a chivalric,

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<sup>74</sup> See Cotton Vespasian E vii, f. 86v and Bodley 623, ff. 76-76v. See also: M. E. Griffith, *Early Vaticination in Welsh* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1937), pp. 15-16. The Son of Man was one of Edward IV's many cognomens – see Figure 5.4 for example.

martially successful and merciful knight and hero-king, under whom Britain could be united once more. Absorbing and redeploying some of the visual markers of Yorkist propaganda, Harley 1766 is part of a programme of commissions which sought a subtle political realignment of Bury St. Edmunds – a realignment that was useful both to the patrons and those living in the shadow of Bury Abbey, a place perceived to have Lancastrian sympathies and connections.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE MOTIF OF THE FEMALE SUICIDE AND CHALLENGES TO MALE AUTHORITY

The *Fall of Princes*, as its name suggests, is a text predominately concerned with the lives and deaths of male rulers; it is a poem focused on men and a masculine ideal. And, as Chapter Five has argued, the later books of Harley 1766 (Books IV-VIII, ff. 124r-265r) display a marked interest in developing an idealised rhetoric of kingship which intersects with Yorkist propaganda and its promotion of Edward IV. These male-centred books deal explicitly with the qualities and failings of great rulers, juxtaposing and comparing exemplary and infamous figures. Of a total of sixty-five images in these books, only seven are of women (11%).<sup>1</sup> By contrast, women – especially royal women – feature prominently in the visual scheme of Books I-III (ff. 5r-123v): Eve, Ino, Medea, Creusa, Scilla, Ariadne, Phaedra, Jael, Jocasta, Althaea, Atalanta, Deianeira, Mirra, Eurydice, Delilah, Polyxena, Canace, Lucrece and Dido are all depicted within the first 115 folios of the manuscript, are often the focus of the narrative and often appear several times in the illustration of a single textual episode.<sup>2</sup> The first three books of Harley 1766 display an interest in the role of royal women, inviting the reader/viewer to consider these narratives in the light of fifteenth century politics and propaganda.

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<sup>1</sup> Book IV: Candaules' queen (f. 129r), Arsinoe (f. 150v); Book V: Agrippina (f. 171r); Book VI: Jewish woman roasting her child (f. 180r); Book VII: Queen Rosamund (f. 222r). Duchess Romilda (f. 230v); Book VIII: Philippa Catanensi (f. 258r).

<sup>2</sup> Thirty-four of ninety-three images in Books I-III feature women (37%).

This interest is realised through a repeated visual motif which punctuates these early books, namely, the female suicide. In Books I and II, Phaedra (f. 39r), Jocasta (f. 50r), Althaea (f. 65r) and Canace (f. 90v) all die by falling upon a sword. Apart from some slight differences in clothing and background, these images are strikingly similar. Each woman stands alone, hands held up in despair as she precipitates forward onto the large blade of a free-standing sword (Figures 6.1-6.4). In Book III Lucrece (f. 105v) and Dido (f. 114v) both stab themselves with a short-handled dagger (Figures 6.5-6.6). Dido also immolates herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Although figural attitudes, backgrounds and even subject matter is repeated within the visual scheme of this manuscript, this is the only example of a particular motif being replicated almost exactly in the illustration of several different textual episodes. This cumulative visual association links texts that reference each other and share themes and anxieties.

Lydgate himself creates connections between these narratives, re-telling the story of Phaedra before that of Althaea, and mentioning Dido again before beginning the narrative of Lucrece. He uses many of these tales to discuss issues of fidelity, culpability, hasty judgement, (un)natural behaviour and counterpoints these qualities with the political implications of the women's actions, although he often frames them within an affective and sympathetic discourse. In each case, the actions of each woman are considered in specifically gendered terms, either challenging male authority or invoking its wrath, and typically focus on the woman's sexuality and chastity and on her conflicting roles as wife, lover, sister and/or mother. Thus Phaedra and Althaea cause the death of their step-son and son respectively, whilst Canace and Jocasta have incestuous relationships with their male relatives. Dido and Lucrece both kill themselves because of the threat to or assault on their womanly virtue. The actions of each woman subvert the perceived 'natural' order of things. In

the scribe's hands, these narratives are closely associated through the visual motif to highlight the potentially disruptive role of the feminine in royal families and in dynastic succession.

This chapter explores the issues and anxieties raised by these narratives elucidating the challenges that the feminine role might suggest to masculine authority, placing this analysis against a context of contemporary discourse which saw the ideal woman as obedient, submissive and weak.<sup>3</sup> A woman's 'proper' role was as a faithful wife who would bring her husband legitimate heirs and, in the case of royal marriages, bring political and diplomatic alliances through her kin.<sup>4</sup> Women were seen as maternal and emotional, yet these qualities contrasted sharply with the fear of women as temptresses whose words and deeds could cause chaos for men, as had Eve's in the Garden of Eden.<sup>5</sup> Such fears and expectations shaped attitudes towards women, particularly those whose actions had a bearing on dynastic succession.<sup>6</sup> As wife and mother, a queen could ensure the continuation of the royal line and support masculine authority, but as a sexualised woman she could simultaneously challenge, usurp or destroy male authority and royal lineage.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For analysis of attitudes to women in fifteenth century England see, for example: Andrew Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997); Christine Meek and Catherine Lawless, eds., *Studies On Medieval and Early Modern Women 4: Victims or Viragos?* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2005); Shulamith Shahar, *The Fourth Estate: A History of Women in the Middle Ages*, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 2003); Jennifer Ward, *Women in Medieval Europe 1200-1500* (London: Pearson, 2002); John Carmi Parsons and B. Wheeler, eds., *Medieval Mothering* (New York and London: Garland, 1996); K. J. Lewis, N. James Menuge and K. M. Philips, eds., *Young Medieval Women* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> J. L. Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens: English Queenship 1445-1503* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 41-48.

<sup>5</sup> Blamires, pp. 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Scholarly works on late medieval queenship highlight the perceived importance of virginity and chastity and the uneasy connection of pregnancy with sexuality. See, for example: John Carmi Parsons, 'The Pregnant Queen as Counsellor and the Medieval Construction of Motherhood', in *Medieval Mothering*, eds. J. C. Parsons and B. Wheeler (New York and London: Garland, 1996), pp. 52-54; Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, pp. 59-62; J. L. Chamberlayne, 'Crowns and Virgins: Queenmaking During the Wars of the Roses', in *Young Medieval Women*, eds. K. J. Lewis, N. James Menuge and K. M. Philips (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), pp. 56-58.

Queens were not archetypal women but 'medieval women writ large' and a queen's virtue came under closer scrutiny than that of any other woman.<sup>8</sup>

The women who commit suicide in Harley 1766 all offer a challenge to masculine authority by stepping outside of these closely defined roles of submission, obedience and virtue. It is notable that each of these women is either a queen or of the blood royal and through committing suicide by sword each usurps a male means of death, effectively symbolising the challenge they present. Suicide by sword had long been considered a masculine death particularly appropriate to the tragic hero; these women usurp the very 'emblem of a man's demise'.<sup>9</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that some critics see phallic overtones in the use of the sword upon which these women commit suicide.<sup>10</sup> In Harley 1766, the recurring motif of the oversized sword piercing the female body focuses the reader/viewer's gaze squarely on the female body, providing a reminder of the operation of desire and sexuality within these narratives.

Harley 1766 provides an insight into the anxieties that circulated around the role of the feminine – particularly queens – in fifteenth century political life. A great deal of recent scholarship has been devoted to the ideal queenly role in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and has recognised that the queen's role was to confirm and enrich the legitimacy of her husband's kingship.<sup>11</sup> Early accounts of medieval

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<sup>8</sup> Parsons, 'The Pregnant Queen', p. 55.

<sup>9</sup> Nicole Loraux, *Tragic Ways of Killing a Woman*, trans. Anthony Forster (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 11. See also: Marilyn Desmond, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality and the Medieval Aeneid* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), pp. 26, 31; Dennis Trout, 'Re-textualizing Lucrece: Cultural Subversion in the *City of God*', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 2: 1 (1994), 53-70.

<sup>10</sup> This is not specific to Harley 1766. Critics of Dido and Lucrece, for example, readily interpret the sword as a phallic symbol. See, for example: Desmond, p. 31; Louise Sylvester, 'Reading Narratives of Rape: The Story of Lucrece in Chaucer, Gower and Christine de Pizan', *Leeds Studies in English*, NS 31 (2000), 115-144.

<sup>11</sup> Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*; Chamberlayne; Parsons, 'The Pregnant Queen'; Paul Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); John Carmi Parsons, ed., *Medieval Queenship* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1994);

queens argued that a queen's main role was as mother, guarantors and guardians of royal lineage, not only through successfully producing heirs but also through virtuous, chaste behaviour which ensured their legitimacy.<sup>12</sup> The bearing of children, chiefly sons, also validated kingship, proving that God approved of the ruling dynasty and offering a sense of national security.<sup>13</sup> Henry VI himself endured a lengthy period with no heir apparent and this uncertainty contributed to the dynastic struggles which were to engulf the throne in the 1450s and 1460s. The queen's body thus became a 'matrix of future kings', acquiring immense social and political significance.<sup>14</sup>

But bearing an heir was only one way in which a queen might enrich her husband's kingship. Both historical and literary evidence suggest that kings might marry to forge political alliances and to augment their kingship with queenly virtues of mercy and intercession. Henry IV, for example, remarried in 1403 despite having four adult sons upon his accession to the throne in 1399, whilst in chivalric literature Arthur and Guinevere's childlessness is never called into question.<sup>15</sup> Queens might also serve to forge political alliances between two peoples. Katherine of Valois, for example, married Henry V as a symbol of union between France and England, following the Treaty of Troyes in 1420 which granted Henry's heirs succession to the French throne. Like Katherine, Margaret of Anjou symbolised peace between the two countries, but this marriage was the result of uneasy compromise and truce rather

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Lois L. Huneycutt, 'Medieval Queenship', *History Today*, 39: 6 (1989), 16-22; John Carmi Parsons, 'Introduction: Family, Sex and Power: The Rhythms of Medieval Queenship', in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (Stroud: Sutton, 1994); John Carmi Parsons, 'Mothers, Daughters, Marriage, Power: Some Plantagenet Evidence, 1150-1500', in *Medieval Queenship*, ed. John Carmi Parsons (Stroud: Sutton, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> Patricia-Ann Lee, 'Reflections of Power: Margaret of Anjou and the Dark Side of Queenship', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 39: 2 (1986), p. 190; Parsons, 'The Pregnant Queen', p. 44; Parsons, 'Rhythms of Medieval Queenship', pp. 2-3; Chamberlayne, pp. 48-49.

<sup>13</sup> Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, p. 133.

<sup>14</sup> Parsons, 'The Pregnant Queen', p. 44.

<sup>15</sup> Chamberlayne, p. 49; Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, pp. 28-29.

than the military gains at Agincourt that had presaged Henry V's own nuptials.<sup>16</sup> A queen's virtues, breeding and wisdom might also enhance her husband's majesty and bring refinement to his court.<sup>17</sup>

Recent criticism has made much of the queenly role of the merciful intercessor, influenced by the increasing popularity of the cult of the Virgin Mary.<sup>18</sup> Strohm cites the example given in Froissart of Queen Philippa's intercession with Edward III to spare the lives of six burghers of Calais.<sup>19</sup> Delivered to his justice, he orders their execution to compensate for the English deaths that were caused through Calais' resistance. Despite the pleas of his lieutenant to spare them, Edward remains implacable until Philippa appears from the margins of the scene. Heavily pregnant, she throws herself to the floor and begs him to be merciful until he reluctantly agrees. The pattern for queenly intercession is set here: Philippa has no political role to play until she sinks to her knees. Her role is acutely feminised with frequent references to her pregnancy and her sense of maternal pity. Although arguing with the king for mercy, she presents herself as submissive and weak, kneeling on the floor before him. Denied power in her own right, she tempers masculine royal anger and allows Edward an opportunity to show mercy without rescinding his original judgement. Her perspective complements his and enhances his renown as king. His judgement is not overturned, merely supplemented by the actions of his queen.<sup>20</sup> Her actions affirm masculinity by showcasing everything that men are not; women, especially

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<sup>16</sup> Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, pp. 42-43 P. A. Johnson, *Duke Richard of York, 1411-1460* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p.44; Watts, p. 193; Chamberlayne, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, p. 48.

<sup>18</sup> See for example: Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Picador, 1985); Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, p. 73; John Carmi Parsons, 'The Intecessionary Patronage of Queens Margaret and Isabella of France', in *Thirteenth Century England VI: Proceedings of the Durham Conference 1995*, eds. Michael Prestwich, R. H. Britnell and Robin Frame (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1997), p. 147.

<sup>19</sup> Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow*, pp. 99-105.

<sup>20</sup> Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow*, pp. 100-103; Jean Froissart, *Chroniques*, ed. Siméon Luce, Société de l'histoire de France, 159, vol. 4 (Paris: Renouard, 1873), p. xxv.

queens, may have admirable qualities which complement kingship but it is these emotional qualities that disbar them from exercising authority in their own right.<sup>21</sup> The queen's role was a specifically gendered one which operated at the interstices of wifely obedience and queenly intercession.

Preserved in Froissart's *Chroniques*, Philippa's narrative is perhaps the most dramatic example of queenly intercession. However, the queens of Richard II, Henry VI and Henry VIII are all documented to have assumed a similar mediatory role. Anne of Bohemia acted as intercessor at the ceremonial reconciliation between Richard II and the city of London in 1392.<sup>22</sup> The *Westminster Chronicle* documents that Anne, like Philippa, threw herself to her knees repeatedly, begging Richard to consider the plight of the citizens of London.<sup>23</sup> An account of the ceremony itself written by the Carmelite friar Richard Maidstone records the words of the spokesperson for the city:

Flectere regales poterit regina rigores,  
Mitis ut in gentem rex velit esse suam.  
Mollit amre virum mulier; Deus huic dedit illam;  
Tendat ad hoc vester, O pia, dulcis amor.

(229-32)

Let the queen soften royal severity that the king may be forbearing  
to his people. A woman mellows a man with love; for this God gave her;  
for his, O blessed woman, may your sweet love aspire.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow*, p. 104.

<sup>22</sup> Blamires, pp. 88-89; Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow*, pp. 105-111; Helen Suggett, 'A Letter Describing Richard II's Reconciliation with the City of London, 1392', *English Historical Review*, 62 (1947), 209-13. The fullest account is given in Richard Maidstone, *Concordia: Facta inter Regem Riccardum II et Civitatem Londinie*, ed. Charles Roger Smith (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1972).

<sup>23</sup> *The Westminster Chronicle, 1381-1394*, eds. L. C. Hector and Barbara Harvey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 502.

<sup>24</sup> *Concordia*, p. 191; Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow*, p. 108.

Margaret of Anjou was also alleged to have sought mercy for those taken prisoner in the aftermath of Cade's rebellion in the summer of 1450. The general pardon issued was said to have been granted at the request of the queen.<sup>25</sup> As late as 1517, Katherine of Aragon undertook a publicly ceremonial role to plead for pardon for the London apprentices accused of taking part in the Evil May Day riots.<sup>26</sup> Some critics have viewed these events as little more than ceremonial posturing, invoking the name of the queen, rather than actual acts of intercession.<sup>27</sup> After Cade's rebellion, for example, a number of arrests were also ordered in the queen's name complicating the role she played.<sup>28</sup> It is likely that Henry VI employed the familiar intercessory trope as a means of dispensing mercy over judgement. Although queenly intercession may not have been actively observed by the fifteenth century, these events demonstrate that each woman was figured as an intercessor for her people, allowing male authority a position from which to offer mercy.

The women in Harley 1766 can be read not only against this contemporaneous discourse on the idealised role of medieval queenship, but against a backdrop of specific political events in which one woman, Margaret of Anjou, stepped beyond the

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<sup>25</sup> *Calendar of the Patent Rolls Preserved in the Public Record Office: Henry VI, vol. 5, AD 1446-1452* (London: Anthony Brothers, 1909), p. 338; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 262, 616, 640; Diana E. S. Dunn, 'Margaret of Anjou, Queen Consort of Henry VI: A Reassessment of her Role', in *Crown, Government and People in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. R. E. Archer (Stroud: Sutton, 1995), pp. 142-43; Helen E. Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou: Queenship and Power in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), pp. 68-71.

<sup>26</sup> C. S. L. Davies and John Edwards, 'Katherine [Catalina, Catherine, Katherine of Aragon] (1485-1536), Queen of England, First Consort of Henry VIII', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <[www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com)> [accessed 25 February 2011]; Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

<sup>27</sup> Griffiths, for example, believes that the pardon was genuinely at the behest of the queen. See Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 262. Dunn offers a more cautious interpretation noting that the evidence is inconclusive. See Dunn, 'Reassessment', p. 143 and Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, p. 162. Maurer, meanwhile, notes that 'it is a little difficult to separate real conviction from conventional rhetoric and to sort out genuine responsibility from window dressing'. See Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 68.

<sup>28</sup> One of those imprisoned, John Payn, wrote to John Paston I in 1465 stating that he had been detained 'by the Quenes commaundement'. *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. N. Davis, 2 vols, EETS, SS 20-21 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), II, p. 315. See also: Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, p. 163; Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, pp. 72-74.

traditional roles ascribed to her to assume political power. Married to Henry VI in 1445, Margaret was heavily pregnant with her only child when Henry suffered his first mental and physical collapse in August 1453, leaving him completely unable to rule. In the political vacuum that followed, competing nobles, most notably Richard, Duke of York and Henry Beaufort, Duke of Somerset and Henry's principal advisor, fought for control over Henry and his son, Edward.<sup>29</sup> Circumstances thus conspired to push Margaret into a position incompatible with late medieval theories of gender and queenship, by placing her firmly within the political arena.<sup>30</sup> In the absence of firm political leadership from her husband, Margaret sought to maintain the power and integrity of the Lancastrian dynasty to preserve her son's inheritance.

Although her bid for the regency in January of 1445 was ultimately a failure, Margaret established a base of power acting on behalf of her husband and son, invoking their names to authorise her actions.<sup>31</sup> The pageants welcoming her to Coventry in September 1456 specifically avoid portraying her as a leader, focusing instead on her role as wife to the king and mother to his heir, identifying her status in terms of her relationship to the throne, redistributing the power of the king amongst the royal family as a unit.<sup>32</sup> The power she obtained during the years that followed is evidenced by the wording of warrants issued from the Prince of Wales during 1457-

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<sup>29</sup> Margaret's actions in the years following Henry's first collapse have been documented in the biographies of Henry VI, Duke Richard of York and Edward IV. See for example: Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 231-274, 722. More recent studies have focused on Margaret herself. See, for example: Diana E. S. Dunn, 'Margaret [Margaret of Anjou] (1430-1482), Queen of England, Consort of Henry VI', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com>> [accessed 09 July 2010]; Dunn, 'Reassessment'; Diana E. S. Dunn, 'Monster Queen or Dutiful Wife?', *Medieval History*, 4 (1994), 199-217; Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*; Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*; Patricia-Ann Lee, 'Reflections of Power: Margaret of Anjou and the Dark Side of Queenship', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 39: 2 (1986), 183-217.

<sup>30</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*; Dunn, 'Reassessment', p. 143.

<sup>31</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 715-738.

<sup>32</sup> Laynesmith, *The Last Medieval Queens*, pp. 140-143; J. L. Laynesmith, 'Constructing Queenship at Coventry: Pageantry and Politics at Margaret of Anjou's "Secret Harbour"', in *Authority and Subversion*, ed. L. Clark, Fifteenth Century III (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003), pp. 139-49; *The Coventry Leet-Book or Mayor's Register 1420-1555*, ed. M. D. Harris, EETS, OS 134-35, 138, 146 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1907-1913).

59, all of which authorise decisions and appointments with the express consent of the queen in the name of her son.<sup>33</sup>

Through these actions, Margaret gave her opponents ammunition by challenging defined gender roles. Not only should a wife and queen be subservient to her husband, restricting her activity to patronage, mediation and mercy, a foreign queen in particular must avoid involvement in English politics.<sup>34</sup> Modern criticism has tended to reflect this attitude. Hannes Kleineke, for example, describes her as the 'formidable', 'redoubtable', 'meddling' and 'pushy Frenchwoman' whilst Ross refers to her as a 'masterful queen', whose opposition to York prevented reconciliation amongst the nobles.<sup>35</sup> Such inappropriate political involvement made her an easy target for Yorkist propaganda which dealt with her political transgressions through impugning her honour and fidelity to her husband and questioned the legitimacy of their son. The *English Chronicle*, for example, reports that 'the queen was defamed and desclaudered, that he that was called Prince, was nat hire sone, but a bastard gotten in avoutry'.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, in June 1460, shortly before the Yorkist invasion an anti-Lancastrian ballad was 'affixed to the gates of Canterbury, in which a reference to 'fals heryes fostred' alludes in more circuitous fashion to the prince's alleged bastardy'.<sup>37</sup> By contrast, other poems emphasised Edward IV's legitimacy 'conceived in wedlock and coming of royal blood'.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 134.

<sup>34</sup> Lee, p. 190; Dunn, 'Reassessment', p. 108.

<sup>35</sup> Kleineke, pp. 22, 26, 34; Ross, *Edward IV*, p. 19.

<sup>36</sup> *An English Chronicle*, p. 79.

<sup>37</sup> *An English Chronicle*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>38</sup> Madden, *Political Poems*, pp. 331-32.

Maurer convincingly argues that the charges of sexual transgression and infidelity were 'uniquely damaging to a woman's reputation'.<sup>39</sup> By discrediting her virtue, the associative effect was to discredit her in all other areas, personal and political. Disorder in the life of the royal family was, by implication, replicated by disorder within the country as a whole. The charges attack Margaret specifically on gendered grounds for the fault of sexual transgression, as a fallible woman who has been unfaithful to her lord and king. It was claimed that she transgressed the boundaries, not politically, but within the bounds of marriage and 'proper' feminine subservience and fidelity to her husband. Sexual transgression provides a convenient stand-in for her other perceived public and political transgressions.<sup>40</sup>

Yorkist propaganda did not occupy itself only with Margaret's perceived sexual transgressions but also focused on the threat to the security of the realm that Margaret figured. Characterised as a vengeful woman bent on destroying England, her French descent proved a useful tool in blackening her name. In 1462, Edward IV himself wrote to Alderman Thomas Cook stating that 'by the malicious counseyle and excitacion of Margaret his wife' Henry VI planned to invade with an army of Scots and French, 'with all ways and meanes to them possible to destroye utterly the people, the name, the tongue, and all the bloud englyshe of this owr sayd Realme'. He further maintained that if Margaret regained power 'hir Oncle called Chas de Angew with the Frenchmen, shall have domination rule and governaunce of this owr Realme'.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the first official item of business discussed by the new Yorkist government in November 1461 applauded Edward for acting in defence of the realm against Margaret who would have destroyed England with assistance from

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<sup>39</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 47.

<sup>40</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 48.

<sup>41</sup> Laynesmith, pp. 46-47; *Original Letters Illustrative of English History*, ed. Henry Ellis, 2<sup>nd</sup> ser., 4 vols (London: Harding and Lepard, 1827), I, pp. 126-128.

northerners, the Scots and the French. Henry was also attainted and charged not only with breaking his oath to the Yorkists but, more particularly, with assenting to Margaret's plans.<sup>42</sup>

Propaganda designed to publicise Edward's virtues and bolster his security on the throne often focused on the inappropriate nature of Margaret's assumed role as much as it did on Henry, indicating where the real perceived Lancastrian threat lay:

Moreovyr it is Right a gret abusion,  
A woman of a land to be a Regent –  
Qwene margrete I mene, that ever hath ment  
To gouerne all engeland with might and poure,  
And to destroye the Ryght lyne was entent...  
And now sche ne rough, so that sche might attayne,  
Though all engeland were brought to confusion:  
Sche and here wykked affynite certayne  
Entende uttyrly to destroy thys regioun;  
Ffor with theym ys but Deth and distruccioun,  
Robbberye and vengeaunce with all Rygour.<sup>43</sup>

The *English Chronicle* describes the queen ruling the realm as she pleased, 'gaderyng ryches innumerable'.<sup>44</sup> One poem, *God Amend Wicked Counsel* (1464), is written as a lament in which Henry blames Margaret for his misfortunes:

I weddyd a wyf at my devyse,  
That was the cause of all my mon.  
Thyll her intente seyde I neuer naye;  
Ther-for I morne & no thyng am mery.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 202; *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, V, p. 462.

<sup>43</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, pp. 203-04; R. H. Robbins, ed., *Historical Poems of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 224.

<sup>44</sup> *An English Chronicle*, p. 79.

The amount of propaganda which centred around Margaret suggests the power she wielded on behalf of the Lancastrian party. In a letter to Sir John Fastolfe written by John Bocking (9 February 1456), Margaret was described as a 'grete and strong laboured woman, for she spareth noo peyne to sue hire thinges to an intent and conclusion to hir power'.<sup>46</sup> In order to discredit her, Yorkist propaganda attacked the impropriety of her actions in stepping beyond prescribed gender boundaries. Existing theories of idealised queenship and female behaviour readily allowed the creation of a discourse which associated the impropriety of her actions as a political leader with her role as a sexually active woman.

Given Harley 1766's other connections to Yorkist propaganda and the political position of its patrons, it is likely that the scribe made connections between existing political discourse and his motif of the female suicide, both of which figure an anxiety about the role of women and their relationship to male authority. The women in Harley 1766 can be read against this backdrop of Yorkist propaganda in which Margaret's actions in overstepping prescribed gender boundaries laid her open to attack in particularly gendered terms. Unlike the rhetoric of kingship identified in Chapter Five, the texts highlighted by this motif do not contain direct parallels with Yorkist propaganda relating to Margaret. Rather, they point to the general receptiveness of a sophisticated audience to elusive issues clustering around notions of lineage, power and succession in the context of a precarious political environment.

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<sup>45</sup> Robbins, *Historical Poems*, p. 81, 13-18.

<sup>46</sup> Gairdner, *The Paston Letters*, III, p. 75.

## **Books I-II: Phaedra, Jocasta, Althaea and Canace**

Four women are depicted committing suicide within the first two books of Harley 1766: Phaedra, Jocasta, Althaea and Canace. All four women are queens or of royal blood and the narrative of each exemplifies family disorder. Disorder in the royal family, evidenced by the events of the 1450-60s, frequently manifested itself in the politics of the country leading to feudal infighting and civil war. These narratives examine the disruption of the complementary roles of the authoritarian, judgemental king and the intercessory merciful queen through unnatural female behaviour. Working within a familiar discourse condemning the frailties and failings of the 'weaker' sex, these narratives identify an anxiety about the role of queens and their effect on dynastic succession. Simultaneously, they highlight the integral role queens played in tempering and complementing the judgement of kings, averting crises and deaths. The role of the merciful queenly intercessor is notably absent from all of these narratives. These dual arenas of idealised and challenging female conduct point to contrasting attitudes towards women in this period.

None of these women are models of queenly or wifely obedience and submission, although Lydgate often treats their stories with great sympathy. Each narrative contrasts passivity and action, victims and sinners, loyalty and deception. In each case, the woman's roles as mother, daughter, wife and lover come into conflict, particularly through the destabilising influence of female desire and desirability, creating powerful tensions between the sexes which can only be resolved through the death of the woman. It is particularly striking that these narratives simultaneously reveal anxieties about the role of women whilst underlining the absence of an ideal role that woman could fulfil as merciful intercessors able to temper masculine, royal

wrath, reflecting the dual nature of medieval discourse on women that saw them simultaneously as Eve and Mary, fallen woman and virgin saint.

Although treating of a range of issues, these four narratives are drawn together by Lydgate's own inter-textual references, highlighted through the scribe's use of the suicide motif. The end of Phaedra's story demonstrates the scribe's deliberate creation of this motif. Lydgate concludes with Phaedra's suicide through shame and dread of Theseus' vengeance:

She took a swerd, ful sharp[e] whet & grounde,  
And therwithall she rooff hir herte on tweyne  
[...]  
Yit summe bookis off Phedra do recorde  
That she, a-shamyd & confus off this deede,  
Heeng hirsilff up ful hih[e] with a corde

(l: 2871-72; 2878-80)

In these lines, Lydgate offers two alternative endings to Phaedra's story.<sup>47</sup> Either of these modes of death would have sufficed as an illustration and images of hanging appear frequently in Harley 1766's pages.<sup>48</sup> The decision to show Phaedra committing suicide by sword may be in part determined by sources which depict her death in this way, such as the *Des cas* manuscripts, Add. 35,321 (f. 14r) and Hunter 208 (U.1.12) (f. 27r). However, it also demonstrates a desire to create a cumulative

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<sup>47</sup> This is also seen in other narratives. For example, on f. 243r Duke Henry, son of Emperor Frederick II is shown tumbling into the water and drowning. Lydgate's text, meanwhile, states that some books describe him falling off his horse and breaking his neck, whilst other books state that he died in prison. Boccaccio's version has him falling off a bridge and drowning. Here the version given by Boccaccio has been privileged for illustration.

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, Haman on f. 141v, Valentinian on f. 204v and the deaths of William d'Assise and Gaultier's son on f. 255r.

visual association in which this narrative of female challenges to male authority is linked to other narratives in which similar challenges are played out.

Phaedra's story tells of her unnatural lust for her step-son Hippolytus. When he will not return her advances, she accuses him 'off fals auoutri' to her husband Theseus (l: 2830). Fearing his father's rage, Hippolytus flees and his chariot is caught in a landslide and he drowns. The narrative highlights the danger of unchaste queens in whom sexuality and desire might cause the downfall of kingdoms. It also emphasises the absence of a balanced royal couple comprised of masculine anger and judgement and feminine mercy and pity. Phaedra's deception serves to stoke up the fires of masculine, royal fury by accusing her step-son of inappropriate advances towards her. Theseus' hasty judgment goes untempered by his queen, the cause of the dispute, resulting in the death of his heir.

Lydgate also re-tells the story of Phaedra and Theseus (l: 4243-4557) just before commencing Althaea's narrative. In this version, he omits the details of Phaedra's death, referencing his previous version of the tale:

And how Phedra through myscheeff & vengeaunce  
Slouh hirselff ageyn al womanheed –  
Heer in this book tofor as I you tolde

(l: 4459-61)

Lydgate uses this version to dwell on the sorrow of Theseus who, 'with salte teris sore gan compleyne' (l: 4473) at his son's death. He also offers Bochas' advice that husbands should not believe their wives without proof. He connects the two narratives through verbal echoes of the envoy of the first version to ensure that the connection between the two versions is not lost. In this envoy Lydgate warns against

the machinations of Fortune, from the heights of whose wheel any prince might 'doun declyne' (l: 3115). Repeated as the refrain in the last line of each stanza of the envoy, this alliterative phrase is also found in the final stanza of the second Theseus narrative:

Ech thing mut bowwe whan it is ouer-lade  
Worshepis & honouris, whan thei brightest shyne,  
With vnwar changes than rathest doun declyne.

(l: 4527-29)

Although ostensibly reflecting on Theseus, whose hasty anger caused the death of his son, the chapter equally provides a pre-envoy to the narrative of Althaea who causes the death of her son in a 'sodeyn rancour [...] and hasti wrathe' (l: 4995-96). This thematic connection also links these two narratives to that of Canace whose narrative is impelled by her father's ire and his hasty judgement against her. Her envoy also warns against decisions made in the heat of anger. Thus Lydgate creates a variety of thematic connections between those narratives which end in female suicide.

In each of the narratives which feature such examples of violent judgment, hasty anger is prefigured as an entirely masculine trait. In the second telling of Theseus and the non-narrative chapter that follows, Lydgate advises princes not to judge hastily, specifically placing them under injunction not to listen to their wives who may prompt them to such action. Similarly, Althaea's actions in murdering her son are not only described as sudden and hasty, but as 'ageyn al womanheede' (l: 5000). Yet at the same time as provoking masculine anger, the texts point to the missing feminine role in these narratives, that of the intercessory queen. In each of these narratives, the effects of masculine anger, unmitigated by feminine mercy, are devastating.

Like the other women in Books I and II, Althaea's story is defined by her relationship to men. Unlike them, her suicide is not precipitated by unlawful desire or marriage but through her conflicting loyalties to her brothers and her son, Meleager. Cursed at birth, Meleager's life is linked to that of a brand thrown into the fire by the three Fates. Once the brand is consumed, Meleager will perish. Acting on maternal instinct to preserve her son, Althaea removes the brand from the flames and secures it from harm. Upon growing to manhood Meleager kills her two brothers following a hunting dispute. Vengeance fights with maternal instinct and, following a lengthy internal debate, Althaea returns the brand to the fire, condemning her son to death. After an impassioned lament to the Fates, she commits suicide. Althaea's actions are repeatedly defined as an affront to the natural order of things: 'To slen hir sone it were ageyn nature' (l: 4953). Allowing her son to die, Althaea acts against the very precepts of her gender, 'ageyn al womanheede' (l: 5000). By contrast, Meleager's own unlawful murder of his uncles is achieved 'thoruh his manhod' (l: 4932). Like his mother, he kills members of his own family, but as a man the desire for violence and vengeance is a natural part of his character and is not condemned.

Thus the crux of the story is the conflict between Althaea's 'natural', maternal, protective instincts and the vengeful and therefore unnatural, masculine role that she assumes. Lydgate devotes eight stanzas to Althaea's inward dilemma in which the desire for vengeance for the death of her brothers conflicts with the desire to protect her child:

In langwisshyng shendureth foorth hir peyne;  
And remedie can she non ordeyne,  
Sauf feyn she wolde auenge hir, yiff she may,

But thane cam nature foorth and seide nay.  
It was hir sone, a-geyn al kyndli riht  
On whom she caste auenged for to be:  
To women alle an ougli straunge siht,  
That a mooder, deuoid off al pite,  
Sholde slen hir child so merciles parde.  
Nay nay, nat so, nature wil nat assente;  
For yiff she dede, ful sore she shal repente

(l: 4960-70)

On five separate occasions, the text states that to kill her son would be 'ageyn nature' (l: 4953). Lydgate catches the nuances of her internal struggle beautifully with such lines as 'nay nay, nat so, nature wil nat assente' (l: 4969) in which the reader/viewer can imagine her torment. In reading the text, the reader/viewer is entirely enmeshed in Althaea's internal struggle in which 'atwen ire and twen affeccioun / She heeld hir longe, on nouthur parti stable' (l: 4992-93). The stanzas which follow this description of mental turmoil relate her complaint unto the Fates (three stanzas) and her suicide which is described in a mere four lines.

Using direct speech Lydgate is at pains to show Althaea's mental turmoil preceding the death of her son. The scribe replicates this privileged position in the visual scheme; unlike either Phaedra or Jocasta who each feature in only one image, Althaea appears in three of the five images which illustrate her narrative. Comparable images from the *Des cas* tradition focus rather on Meleager. Getty 63, for example, shows a composite miniature on f. 16v in which Meleager and Althaea both stab themselves; Royal 14 v, meanwhile, includes a composite miniature in which Meleager is shown in the act of killing his uncles (f. 37v). The scribe's focus on Althaea rather than Meleager stresses the importance of Althaea and of the female suicide in his visual scheme.

But her speech is not merely indicative of a personal mental struggle. It defines her anguish in terms of natural and unnatural behaviour. As a mother and a woman she cannot kill her son, yet by taking violent action upon her she assumes a masculine, authoritative role. The text exemplifies this battle between her natural, feminine role and the unnatural, masculine one she assumes. In effect, she usurps her own naturally ordered position of subservient, obedient wife and queen. It is notable that she does have a husband at the beginning of the text (I: 4860), but he disappears from the narrative early on and is similarly absent from the visual scheme. With his disappearance, Althaea assumes centre stage and her private roles as mother and sister are played out in the political arena. Although the majority of the text references her own internal struggle, it also highlights the potential conflict between blood kin and married relations.

The tensions between Margaret of Anjou's role as niece to Charles VII of France and wife to Henry VI have long been documented.<sup>49</sup> Extant letters show that she was encouraged by members of the French king's household to assist in the negotiations between the two countries specifically by encouraging the surrender of Maine in 1445. Writing to her uncle in December 1445, she declared herself ready to 'stretch forth the hand' and Henry himself acknowledged Margaret's influence in his decision, 'favouring also our most dear and well-beloved companion the queen'.<sup>50</sup> Although Henry himself was desirous of peace, such instances served as reminders of the queen's divided loyalties and cast doubt on her capacity to fulfil her duties of loyalty to her husband and his kingdom. Likewise, Althaea's conflicting obligations render her unable to fulfil her role as protective mother of a royal lineage.

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<sup>49</sup> See, for example: Griffiths, *Henry VI*, pp. 495; Dunn, 'Reassessment', p. 141; Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 33.

<sup>50</sup> *Letters Illustrative of the Wars in France*, I, pp. 164-7, 639-42.

In Althaea's narrative, male anger is replaced with feminine rage. And where masculine, royal authority might be tempered by female mercy, in this narrative Althaea's assumption of both roles precludes the possibility of female intercession. Yet her indecisiveness indicates her inappropriateness to fulfil this masculine role. Although the masculine desire for vengeance wins out, as a woman Althaea is unable to handle the consequences of her decision and kills herself 'for to auenge the wrong and gret onriht / Which that I haue accomplishid in your siht' (l: 5030-31). The visual scheme emphasises the contrast between the maternal, feminine role and masculine violence. Two of the three images on ff. 63r and 64v show almost identical representations of Althaea holding the brand before a fire (Figures 6.7 and 6.8). These two images are quiet, static depictions of Althaea holding the brand in a similar fashion to Canace clutching her swaddled child (Figures 6.11 and 6.12). On the one hand, these images indicate her maternal role; on the other, they are indicative of the power of life and death she holds over her son. The natural maternal instincts displayed in the first image are subverted in the second, although the reader/viewer is not shown Meleager's actual death. It is through the textual context that the reader/viewer infers the maternal and destructive influences which inform these two images.

By linking the narrative of Althaea to that of Phaedra (as described above), Lydgate highlights how inappropriate feminine behaviour removes the possibility of female, queenly intercession. The assumption of dual roles of male avenger and female intercessor leads Althaea to murder her son and take her own life, whilst Phaedra's sexual advances to Hippolytus and deception of Theseus preclude her from intervening in the ensuing family discord. The second telling of Theseus' narrative links the two tales by reflecting on hasty anger and the disruption of idealised gender

roles. In each of these narratives, the traditional queenly role of intercessor remains unfulfilled, either because the virtue of the woman is called into question or because the woman herself usurps the male masculine role. As such, these narratives indicate the consequences of leaving that role unfulfilled.

In the narrative of Canace and Machaire, the role of queenly intercessor also goes unfulfilled, giving masculine vengeance unbridled reign. Masculine fury impels narrative action to its tragic end, resulting in both the suicide of Canace herself and the death of her newborn child. Chapter Four argued that Canace is given a voice in the narrative, only for that voice to be proven impotent in assuaging her father's anger and saving herself and her child and this interplay of speech and power intersects with ideals about queenly and womanly behaviour. Canace herself is the focus of both the textual narrative and the visual scheme. The majority of the text is taken up with the heartfelt letter Canace writes to her brother after Eolus has demanded her death. Similarly, the visual scheme continues the emphasis on the suffering figure of Canace and the pathos inherent in her story.

Five images accompany the text, in each of which Canace figures prominently as a lone figure of suffering and sorrow. F. 88v shows Canace and her brother in bed together in the upper register, whilst the lower depicts her receiving a messenger from her father (Figure 6.9). F. 89r depicts a single image of Canace holding her child (Figure 6.10). The upper register of f. 90v shows her holding her child, a pen and a sword, whilst the lower register depicts her suicide. Beneath her, the child's prone body is consumed by wild animals (Figure 6.11). The last four of these five are iconographically very similar, showing Canace either kneeling or standing, her arms held in a similar raised gesture in each. Whilst this evidences the tendency of the medieval artists to copy rather than create, it also serves to focus the eye of the

reader/viewer on the doomed and isolated figure of Canace with the instruments of her downfall around her: the child and the sword. The pen symbolises the voice with which she defends her position, admits her guilt and laments her fate, but which ultimately does nothing to change her destiny. The focus on the suffering woman precludes the inclusion of Eolus, her father, despite the envoy's clear reference to his hasty anger:

Kyng Eolus to rigorous was, parde,  
And to vengable in his entencioun  
Ageyn his childre Machaire & Canace

(l: 7057-59)

Instead, Eolus and the patriarchal power he represents appear in the narrative through the sword he sends to Canace. His power is manifested through it and it is a power so great that he needs no voice in the text or a visual presence. Present in three of the five images, it represents the driving force of the narrative: his murderous, unchecked rage. The penultimate image shows her clutching it alongside the child (a speechless innocent, but born of incest) and the pen with which she writes her final yet impotent complaint, highlighting the interplay of speech, silence and power and indicating that, in this case, the pen is no mightier than the sword.

Eolus also manifests himself through Canace's actions which are entirely impelled by his wishes:

With hool purpose tobeien his plesaurnce,  
She gruchchith nat, but lowli off entente,  
Lich a meek douhter to his desir assente

(I: 6872-74)

Despite the incestuous relationship with her brother, she seeks to maintain her role as dutiful and obedient daughter. Powerless as the child in her arms, she yields to the desires of her father, no matter how unreasonable they may be. Her fealty to her father transcends her maternal desire to protect her child and forces her to forsake her lover. She is neither lustful nor false; her sin, she argues, is to have loved the wrong man which she blames on Cupid, 'a blynd archer with arwes sharp[e] grounde / Off auenture yeueth many a moral wounde' (I: 6992-93). The visual scheme subtly promotes these notions of culpability and responsibility.

It has been noted that four of the five Canace images are strikingly similar, linking them clearly and cohesively as part of one sequence of images. The first image of Canace and Machaire in bed, however, is markedly different, yet artistic strategy creates a connection with the following images. The pattern of the bed linen in this first image is replicated in the pattern of Canace's dress in the following three images: she literally wears her sin and the consequences of that one act visually remain upon her person through the repetition of this pattern. In the final image of her suicide, however, she wears a plain brown shift. The removal of her dress (a detail not found in the accompanying text) removes the iconographic marker that linked her with the incestuous encounter in the first image. With her death, the visual reminders of her sin are simultaneously destroyed. The outer dress vanishes and even her child is destroyed, dismembered by the animals at the foot of the image. This image signifies no repentance for her actions. Indeed, she absolves herself from any wrongdoing and regrets only that her child must die. Rather it reinforces her return to the model of daughterly, feminine submission and obedience from which she has transgressed. Masculine authoritative control is reasserted by Canace's

actions and is affirmed by the dissociation with the patterned dress which symbolised her previous transgression. A similar pattern is found at the end of Althaea's narrative where the patterned dress she wears throughout is found to be absent in the image of her suicide. Through her suicide, Althaea relinquishes the masculine, authoritarian role she has usurped.

Previous interpretations of the Canace narrative have tended to focus on its relationship to Lydgate's sources. Boccaccio makes no mention of the episode and it is accorded only a few scant lines in de Premierfait. Lydgate had to turn elsewhere for his narrative and his text is drawn primarily from Ovid's *Heroides* and Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.<sup>51</sup> Diane Watt has argued that Gower's telling of Canace produces a 'reasoned discussion of incest', examining the complexities of human behaviour and considering the culpability of Canace and her brother, Machaire.<sup>52</sup> Lydgate's version, whilst retaining some interest in the nature of culpability and responsibility, is primarily a tale of pathos and suffering, impelled by Eolus' readiness to condemn his daughter to death. Although he acknowledges the sin committed by the two in their incestuous relationship which is 'so horrible' and 'ageyn nature' (l: 6855, 6839), the moral of the story warns against such hasty vengeance. Indeed, as Elizabeth Archibald has noted in relation to Gower, the incestuous love story has been shown to be 'decentred by Eolus' wrath'.<sup>53</sup> The theme of hasty anger has already been shown to be particularly pertinent to narratives which centre round gender and power, showing both the threat of female sexuality and the absence of the idealised intercessory role.

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<sup>51</sup> *Confessio Amantis*, III: 151-90, in *The English Works of John Gower*, G. C. Macauley, ed., 2 vols, EETS, ES 81-82 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner, 1900-01).

<sup>52</sup> Diane Watt, 'Gender and Sexuality in *Confessio Amantis*', in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. Siân Echard (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004) pp. 199-203.

<sup>53</sup> Elizabeth Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), p. 83.

In Harley 1766, the design of the visual scheme highlights the similarities of this episode with that of Althaea creating a layering of narratives and themes not seen elsewhere in the representation of Canace. In particular, the Canace narrative is fashioned almost as an inversion of Althaea's. In both royal parental rage fuels the narrative, with no opportunity for queenly intercession. In both, Lydgate references the unnatural relationship between family members, and in both, the hasty anger of the parent results in the death of a child. The key difference between the two narratives is that the focus in each is on the woman involved and the conflict of her specifically gendered roles as faithful victim (grieving sister and obedient daughter) and active offender (filicidal murderer and incestuous lover). Notably the men in both narratives are not shown to repent of their actions, whilst the women are given voices to do so at length, articulating the challenge to masculinity that they represent.

The final woman highlighted by this motif, Jocasta, is an entirely more passive character than the other three. Jocasta unknowingly marries her son, Oedipus, after he kills her husband, Laius. When a soothsayer reveals their relationship to one another, Oedipus tears out his own eyes for sorrow, whilst their two sons fight amongst themselves and finally kill each other. Jocasta commits suicide for sorrow at the destruction of Thebes and her sons and for the dishonour she has incurred by marrying Oedipus. Whilst the other narratives display the dangers of women operating outside the boundaries of male control and pre-defined gender roles, Jocasta's narrative highlights the equal dangers of an overly passive woman who is ruled by men to her ruin. She is, apparently, the epitome of wifely and queenly obedience. Silent and submissive, she is rarely seen in either the text or the visual scheme. As such, of nine images which accompany this narrative, Jocasta is seen only in the penultimate image where her suicide is depicted (Figure 6.2). Yet she is textually framed as the focus of the narrative from the outset:

Off queen Iocasta Bochas doth eek endite,  
Pryncesse off Thebes, a myhti gret cite,  
Off hir vnhappis he doolfulli doth write  
[...]  
Off vnkouth sorwe which dede hir assaile,  
With a tragedie to wepyn and bewaile  
Hir inportable & straunge dedli striff

(l: 3158-60; 3175-77)

The first three stanzas of this episode, predominately written by Lydgate himself rather than de Premierfait or Boccaccio, maintain the focus on Jocasta and her terrible suffering.<sup>54</sup> However, once her story begins her position is quickly textually and visually usurped by the actions of her husband(s) and sons. This reflects her role in the story as a passive woman whose primary function is to accept the actions and decisions of men. This passivity is coupled with near silence in the text. She is given no direct speech and, although she initially appears to Bochas 'pleynli to discure / Hir infortunys and hir infelicite' (l: 3167-68), her primary means of communication is through emotional, non-verbal outbursts. Thus when Laius decides to kill Oedipus to prevent his own prophesied death at the hands of his son, Jocasta makes no verbal complaint despite falling 'almost in a rage' (l: 3218). Similarly, prior to her suicide she says nothing, and remains 'trist and heuy, pensiff & spak no woord' (l: 3767). This is in direct contrast to most of the women in this chapter who often explain their actions prior to the act itself, making manifest the challenge to male authority that they embody.

Archibald has argued that the Oedipus narrative was not a popular one for medieval writers, who tended to downplay the incest element of the narrative in favour of its

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<sup>54</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 150.

political ramifications.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Lydgate's own envoy to the tale takes as its refrain 'kyngdamys deuyded may no while endure' (l: 3822), focusing on the destruction caused by the rivalry between the two sons of Oedipus and Jocasta who fight for the throne. The threat of civil war was often present in late medieval Europe and it is unsurprising that this element of the story attracted so much attention. It would clearly have an immediacy for those caught up in the dynastic struggles between the Houses of York and Lancaster. This political interpretation focuses primarily on the actions of the men in the narrative and the in-fighting between male heirs. The rhetoric of queenship developed in this manuscript also points to the potential role of the feminine as peacemaker and mediator.

Unlike Margaret of Anjou whose active involvement in politics has often been interpreted as a primary cause of division, Jocasta's narrative draws attention to the opposite extreme by remaining utterly passive. She is too meek, too submissive. At no point does she take up the intercessory model of queenship to beg for Laius' mercy for her son, Oedipus. Nor does she seek to make peace between Polynices and Eteocles. However, just prior to the envoy and Jocasta's suicide, Lydgate indicates that Jocasta understands her failure as queen:

Eek whan Iocasta stood thus disconsolate,  
And sauh off Thebes the subuersioun,  
The contre stroied, wast and desolate,  
The gentil blood shad off that regioun,  
Withoute confort or consolacioun,  
Thouhte she myhte be no mor appeared

(l: 3760-65)

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<sup>55</sup> Archibald, pp. 73-75.

Lydgate dwells on her dismay at the destruction of Thebes as much as at the deaths of her children. She has failed in her duty to continue patrilineal succession and as a result the country is destroyed. Her narrative evidences the fine line that a queen was required to tread: she must not usurp male authority but her role might require her to temper its more violent and martial excesses. Where this role is unfulfilled, bloodshed ensues.

### **Book II: Saul and the Role of the Male Suicide**

The motif of the female suicide, which brings together a range of issues and anxieties over the role of the feminine, also provides a new, gendered way of reading the narrative of David and Saul. Saul (f. 95r) is the only male to commit suicide by sword like the women discussed in this chapter (Figure 6.12). This is the culmination of one of the lengthiest visual sequences in Harley 1766 featuring eight images from ff. 91v to 95r and which includes his coronation, his relationship with David and his fall from God's grace. With the image of his suicide, Saul is visually associated with the women whose lack of 'proper' behaviour (i.e. obedience and submissiveness) has disrupted masculine authority and the 'natural' order of things.

Saul is shown to be disobedient to a higher authority. Having been raised up to the position of king through divine ordinance, his reign is characterised not only by the masculine traits of 'knyhtli prudent gouernaunce' and 'wisdam and manheede' (II: 207, 209) but by meekness, lack of pride and prudent counsel. Yet Saul becomes 'contrarious' and 'disobediesaunt' (II: 274, 275) to the God who raised him to such heights. As the God of the Old Testament, he demands violence and retribution and bids Saul massacre the Amalekites, including their king Agag. Saul, however, chooses to disobey and spares their lives, offering an alternative animal sacrifice.

From this point, Saul loses God's grace and, simultaneously, his right to rule. Specifically, he is punished for taking on the feminine role of merciful intercessor and thereby failing to fulfil his divinely ordained masculine, military role. His punishment is to be feminised. This is implicit in the text through his loss of 'his sperit of knyhtli hardynesse' (II: 415). He ventures instead into the female world of sorcery in his meeting with the 'phetonysse' (II: 434) or witch of Endor (Figure 6.17). His feminisation is explicitly realised in the visual scheme where he kills himself in an identical way to the women who commit suicide within the manuscript. A lone figure, he kneels and falls forwards on to his sword.

This deliberate feminised association becomes clear when compared to the accompanying text and comparable imagery in the French manuscripts. Lydgate's text makes clear that, although Saul commits suicide, he does so on the battlefield to ensure that he does not fall into the hands of his enemies, the Philistines. Yet, he first asks his squire to do the deed for him. The inappropriateness of this is hinted at in the squire's reaction who:

Wold nat assente to doon so foul a deed;  
To slen his lord he gretli was afferd  
A thyng hatful in eueri manys siht

(II: 490-92)

The phrase 'eueri manys' suggests that this falls outside the proper masculine sphere of action. In contrast, consider the actions of Marcus Regulus who willingly delivers himself into the hands of his enemies. Despite the hints of impropriety, Saul's death still takes place in the masculine context of the battlefield unlike the Harley 1766 image. Similarly, the depiction of this scene in the French manuscripts portrays Saul on the battlefield, surrounded by the bodies of his dead warriors. Both

British Library, MS Add. 18750 (f. 34r) and HM 936 (f. 29) depict such a scene, and the *Fall* manuscript, HM 268 continues in this tradition. In this image (Figure 6.13), Saul stands crowned atop a hill, with dead bodies scattered around him, whilst his sword is turned to point towards his own head (f. 19v).

Other manuscripts contextualise his suicide with his role in the execution of Agag the Amalekite, the moment of his disobedience to God. F. 29v of Royal 18 D vii, for example, depicts Saul supervising the execution. He points to the left of the scene which depicts a later moment of the narrative, his own suicide (Figure 6.14). These images all place Saul's death within a masculine context of violence and war. Although he does not die in battle as would be fitting for a royal, military leader, it is a public space within the realm of men. The artist of Harley 1766 could easily have visualised Saul's death in such a way; battle scenes occur throughout the manuscript indicating the facility with which a scene could have been created.<sup>56</sup> Instead Saul's death is identical to the deaths of the women in Books I and II feminising the reading of his narrative.

Saul represents a point of contact between the two discourses of kingship and queenship, of masculine authority and female challenges to that authority. In disobeying God to whom even kings must be subservient, Saul becomes weak and effeminate, unable to protect himself. This feminisation of Saul increases his associations with the deposed Henry VI whose masculinity and virility were repeatedly questioned.<sup>57</sup> Pope Pius' assessment of Henry describes him as 'a man more timorous than a woman, utterly devoid of wit or spirit, who left everything in his

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<sup>56</sup> See, for example: the battle of Cyrus and Astyages, f. 128r; heathen kings slain by Arthur, f. 218r, and Edward, the Black Prince and his troops at Poitiers, f. 259v.

<sup>57</sup> Hughes, p. 58.

wife's hands'.<sup>58</sup> In 1460, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick allegedly informed the Bishop of Terni that the king 'is stupid and out of his mind; he does not rule but is ruled. The government is in the hands of the queen and her paramours'.<sup>59</sup> In her analysis of the fourteenth century *Legend of Good Women*, Nancy Bradley Warren argues that kings who strove for peace rather than the pursuit of chivalry and glory on the battlefield were much more likely to prompt questions regarding their masculinity. Charges of effeminacy and, therefore, illegitimacy could be waylaid through overt expressions of female submissiveness; mastery of the queen emphasised a suspect masculine authority.<sup>60</sup> A similar ideology is at work in Yorkist writings which imply that Henry had lost both sexual control of his wife and political control of the realm.<sup>61</sup> The variety of surviving references to Margaret's alleged infidelities suggest the popularity of the trope in expressing distrust of both Margaret and Henry.<sup>62</sup> Yet Henry's increasing incapacity forced Margaret into the realms of political action. His failings forced her into an increasingly authoritative role which cemented a perception of him as a passive character ruled by his wife.

Saul's crown is taken by David, the young, virile warrior who displays the proper masculine kingly virtues of courage, justice and obedience to God. Saul and David are explicitly compared to Henry VI and Edward IV in a number of Yorkist genealogies and propagandist texts. Lists of cognomens in Bodley 623, ff. 71-71v

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<sup>58</sup> *The Commentaries of Pius II*, III, p. 268.

<sup>59</sup> *The Commentaries of Pius II*, III, p. 269.

<sup>60</sup> Nancy Bradley Warren, "'Olde Stories'" and Amazons: The 'Legend of Good Women', the 'Knight's Tale' and Fourteenth-Century Political Culture', in *The 'Legend of Good Women': Context and Reception*, ed. Carolyn P. Collette (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), pp. 98-101.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas A. Prendergast, 'The Invisible Spouse: Henry VI, Arthur and the Fifteenth-Century', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 32: 2 (2002), p. 311; Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>62</sup> Laynesmith, pp. 137-139. *An English Chronicle* (written in the first half of Edward IV's reign) records the accusations levelled at Margaret: 'the quene was defamed and desclaundered, that he that was called Prince, was nat hir sone, but a bastard gotten in avoutry'. See *An English Chronicle*, p. 79. In 1456, a law apprentice was executed for distributing bills which claimed that Prince Edward was not the queen's son. See *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 216.

(Figures 5.3 and 5.4), Cotton Vesp. E vii, Ashmole Roll 26, Bodleian Library, Bodley MS Digby 82 and Bodleian Library, MS Bodley Lyell 35, ff.17v-18v all associate Edward IV's name with David and Henry VI's with Saul. Bodley 623, Cotton Vesp. E vii and Ashmole Roll 26 further accompany the name of Saul with the statement 'king Saul wickedly erred wishing to make war on David whom God chose to be the king of Israel'. A corresponding statement by David's name reads: 'David king in the judgement of God', a phrase also replicated in the *Edward IV Roll*.<sup>63</sup>

The comparison between the two men is most explicitly realised in the *Illustrated Life of Edward IV*, Harley 7353, where one panel illustrates the Yorkist victory at the Battle of Northampton on 10 July 1460. Capturing Henry VI, the Yorkist lords all pledged their allegiance to Henry whilst simultaneously seizing control of the country in the person of the king.<sup>64</sup> Harley 7353 depicts this moment with Edward, then Earl of March, kneeling reverently before Henry VI who sits in the doorway of his tent. This gesture is coupled with an accompanying scene in which David is shown with Saul at his mercy. Standing before Saul's tent, David is armed in a similar fashion to Edward and the typological reading is clear. Both men are chosen by God to succeed as king. On f. 93v, Harley 1766 also depicts the episode in which David preserves and protects Saul's person whilst he sleeps, unprotected and unarmed (Figure 6.15). The upper register shows Saul sleeping in his tent, unguarded. The lower register shows David removing the spear from Saul's tent: 'The spere off Saul stondyng at his hed / Daid took it and wente his way anon' (II: 365-66). Like Edward IV, David holds his king's life in his hands, but does not seek to endanger

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<sup>63</sup> Translations from Hughes, p. 151.

<sup>64</sup> *Benet's Chronicle*, p. 226; *Three Chronicles*, p. 74; *An English Chronicle*, pp. 97-98; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 863. *An English Chronicle* includes the speech of reassurance allegedly delivered to Henry in his tent by the Yorkist lords.

him in any way. Indeed, in this text David does not seek the crown and 'euer kept hym lowli in his sihte' (II: 333).

In Harley 1766 Saul's mental disturbance enhances the parallel between Saul/Henry and David/Edward. The text describes Saul's torment by 'a feend' and a 'wikked sperit' (II: 294, 303) but this spirit is not visualised. Rather the image on f. 92v portrays a man tormented by some invisible force (Figure 6.16). Spirits, monsters and pagan gods are not beyond the remit of any of the artists; indeed, only a few folios later the witch of Endor is depicted raising a soul from the grave (f. 94v, Figure 6.17). The inner torment displayed by Saul is akin to Henry's own incapacitating illness. Mentally incapable and feminised, he is not fit to rule as king and his place is assumed by one who shows the appropriate characteristics of masculine authority.

### **Book III: Lucrece and Dido**

Two women commit suicide in Book III: Lucrece (Figure 6.5, f. 105v) and Dido (Figure 6.6, f. 114v). However, the means by which they do so is slightly at variance with the death by sword favoured by the women of Books I and II. Lucrece stabs herself with a short-handled dagger whilst Dido both stabs and immolates herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Although the motif of the female suicide causes the reader/viewer to associate these women with those of Books I and II, the slight change in the iconography also reveals an alteration in the attitudes expressed towards women. In this book, the operation of female desire/desirability is tempered by the honourable actions of the women themselves. Deriving originally from the works of Livy, Lucrece has been fêted over the years as an emblem of feminine piety

and chastity, a heroic example of virtue.<sup>65</sup> Following her rape at the hands of Tarquin, who threatens to kill her and dishonour her good name if she does not comply, Lucrece proclaims her innocence before her husband and father before dispatching herself with a dagger. Dido, meanwhile, kills herself rather than submit to an undesired second marriage.

Their actions preserve their virtue and result in political gain for their realms. Lucrece's death precipitates the downfall of the Tarquins and the establishment of a Roman republic, whilst Dido's death removes the threat of war against her people by her would-be suitor. Yet both subvert masculine authority through their actions. Lucrece's husband and father absolve her of blame and attempt to prevent her suicide, whilst the princes of Carthage counsel Dido to re-marry. In committing suicide they realise a final feminine act of defiance which asserts the rights of the woman over her own body and actions, and offers an unanswerable challenge to masculine authority. Their actions realise the paradox at the heart of these narratives: their heroism is at odds with their gender. Both Lydgate and the scribe recognise this paradox and consequently problematise their reception, Lydgate by a multiplication of narratives and the scribe by his inclusion in the motif of the female suicide. Although virtuous, each of the two women steps outside of gendered boundaries as clearly as the sexually transgressive women in Books I and II. Both women should submit to the judgement and guidance of their male family and counsellors. Lucrece should accept their forgiveness and absolution, whilst Dido should re-marry. Both challenge male authority by regaining or retaining control over their own bodies.

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<sup>65</sup> See, for example: Sylvester, 'Reading Narratives of Rape'; Paul Thoen and Gilbert Tournoy, 'Lucretia Lovaniensis: The Louvain Humanists and the Motif of Lucretia's Suicide', *Humanistica Lovaniensia: Journal of Neo-Latin Studies*, 56 (2007), 87-119; Trout, 'Re-textualizing Lucretia'; Carol Weiher, 'Chaucer and Gower's Stories of Lucretia and Virginia', *English Language Notes*, 14: 1 (1976), 7-9.

This problematisation is reflected in the multiplication of stories relating to these two women in the Middle Ages which focus on different elements of their tales. Lydgate himself references several versions of the same narrative, increasing the diversity of interpretations that can be brought to bear on these characters. In Ovid, Lucrece figures as a tragic heroine, whilst in Livy her rape and dishonour at the hands of Tarquin is placed within the greater context of rulers misusing their subjects. Gower, meanwhile, focuses on the actions of Aruns (his name for Tarquin) and Brutus who swears vengeance following Lucrece's death.<sup>66</sup> De Premierfait himself included two versions of Lucrece's tale in his *Des cas*. The first is found in Book II, Chapter Six and is little more than a passing reference to her narrative. He expands the episode fully in Book III, Chapter Three.<sup>67</sup> Lydgate follows this proliferation of narratives and tells Lucrece's story twice in Books II and III, on the first occasion expanding the few scant lines of de Premierfait to a lengthy narrative of over three hundred lines. Roughly a third of the narrative is given over to Lucrece's complaint, while nearly half is dedicated to the speeches of her husband and father who absolve her from blame and praise her virtue.

This expansion of the text, Lydgate informs the reader, is taken from Collucius and was included at the behest of his patron, Gloucester:

Also my lord bad I sholde abide,  
By good auys at leiser to translate  
The doolful processe off hir pitous fate.  
Folwyng the tracic off Collucyus

(II: 1006-09)

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<sup>66</sup> Mortimer, p. 63.

<sup>67</sup> Lawton, 'Text and Image', p. 467.

The Book III version of Lucrece is omitted from Harley 1766. In this version, the majority of the text is given over to Lucrece's complaint to her father and husband, with Lydgate sketching in the details of the assault only very briefly. Yet for all the apparent similarity with the previous complaint, the second text provides a more matter-of-fact description of the rape. She lives only long enough to extract a promise of vengeance from the menfolk in her family before killing herself. By implication, they appear almost to assent to her death:

Made all beheste, with al ther full[e] myth  
Tauenge hir wrong; and Lucrece anon riht  
Took a sharp knyff, or thei myhte auerte,  
And roof hirself euene thoruh the herte.

(III: 1145-48)

Through their tacit assent, these men change the interpretation of the narrative. Lucrece's actions no longer signify a challenge to masculine authority but are subsumed into a framework of authorised behaviour.

In the Book II version, not only do the men not assent to her actions, but also suggest that her suicide implicates her in some sin:

Thi-silff to moodre, to summe it wolde seeme  
Thou were gilty, wer-as thou art clene  
[...]  
Folke will nat deeme a persone innocent,  
Which wilfully, whan he is nat coupable  
Yildeth hymselffe to deth be iugement

(II: 1191-92, 1198-1200)

Church teaching also condemned Lucrece on these grounds. Augustine, in particular, suggested that her suicide cast doubt upon her chastity and virtue.<sup>68</sup> The following stanzas repeatedly refer to Lucrece's record of wifely truth, chastity and soberness (II: 1070, 1073, 1081), suggesting that here too she will obey her menfolk and submit to their judgement. She subverts their expectations by reasserting control over her own body, in direct contrast to the rhetorical ideal they have laid out before her. Her definition of truth, chastity and virtue is demonstrated to be distinct from that of her husband and father and, by not submitting to their judgement, she challenges male authority. Whilst beneficial political upheaval is borne out of her death, this is not the main focus of her tale. Rather it is the lengthy discussion with her father and husband in which she narrates her sense of shame and intention.

In contrast, de Premierfait's version is highly politicised and is used in the early Ducal manuscripts as part of a visual amplification in conjunction with the story of Virginia and Appius. Like Lucrece, Virginia's virtue is threatened by a Roman decimvir, Appius, and her father kills her to save her from eternal dishonour. De Premierfait explicitly associates these narratives with a passage that relates the action of tyrants on vulnerable citizens to the eventual downfall of particular forms of government (Book III, Chapter Nine).<sup>69</sup> Lydgate follows de Premierfait in this pairing, but the scribe does not illustrate Virginia's narrative and utilise this element of de Premierfait's rhetoric. Virginia does not fit into his scheme as she is not an independent woman challenging masculine authority through her own body. His interest is less in the resultant changes of government affected by these women, but their own actions in relation to men and the challenge to masculine authority that they pose. By submitting to her father, Virginia offers an idealised vision of threatened

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<sup>68</sup> Thoen and Tournoy, p. 88.

<sup>69</sup> Hedeman, *Translating the Past*, p. 100.

virginity and daughterly obedience quite distinct from the challenging actions of Lucrece.

In Harley 1766, the pairing with Virginia is replaced by a pairing with Dido, queen of Carthage. Lydgate's own additions to Dido's narrative complicate the reader/viewer's response to her as a virtuous heroine. Both Boccaccio and de Premierfait utilise Dido's narrative as a celebration of chastity. Boccaccio uses her narrative to critique contemporary widows and the excuses they offer for their second marriages. To Boccaccio Dido is praiseworthy precisely because she rejects her role as a sexual woman.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, de Premierfait uses her as an example of a heroic, virtuous response to the actions of a tyrant. Lydgate, meanwhile, destabilises this response through references to an alternate Dido tradition and his own authorial interventions.

Two alternate traditions existed for the Dido narrative, both of which are referenced by Lydgate. The first to be narrated in the *Fall* celebrates her chastity and fortitude, and depicts her as a great ruler who flees her home country having seen her brother murder her husband. Founding Carthage, she rules in peace and prosperity before attracting the attention of a neighbouring king who wishes to marry her, threatening violence against the people of Carthage should she refuse. Rather than submit to his wishes, she commits suicide on a funeral pyre dedicated to her first husband. After her death, Lydgate narrates, Dido is 'worsheped [...] lik a chast goddesse' (II: 2145), whilst widows weep for her. The other tradition, originating in Virgil's *Aeneid*, places Dido as a foolish and sexualised woman. This version has Dido receiving shipwrecked Trojan refugees into Carthage, amongst whom is Aeneas. Sheltering from a storm in a cave during a hunt, the two give way to desire, which Dido

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<sup>70</sup> Desmond, p. 62.

interprets as marriage. When Aeneas departs from Rome, he lets Dido know that he is held by no such marital bonds, leading to her eventual suicide.<sup>71</sup>

Whilst Lydgate follows his sources in narrating the first of these versions, he twice references the *Aeneid* tradition. Before embarking on his first narration of Lucrece, he mentions the 'gret outrage / Bi Eneas doon to Dido off Carthage' (II: 986-88). Again, at the end of Dido's narrative, he mentions that 'though that she be acusid off Ouide / Afftir Bochas I wrot hir chast[e] liff' (II: 2151-52). These fleeting references recollect an alternative tradition which complicates and questions Dido's virtue. The second envoy added by Lydgate to Dido's narrative has a similarly complicating effect. Although the first envoy to the tale praises Dido as 'merour off hih noblesse' and 'lode-sterre off al good gouernaunce' (II: 2172, 2185), the second envoy – 'the lenvoye of the translacione to alle women' – advises women not to follow Dido's example:

Beth nat to rakell in your stabilnesse,  
That no such foly entre your corage  
To folwe Dido, that was queen off Cartage.  
With hir maneris hath non aqueyntance,  
Put out off mynde such foltish wilfulnesse:  
To slen yoursilff[e] wer a gret penaunce!  
(II: 2202-08)

In a sentiment worthy of Chaucer's Wife of Bath, Lydgate warns widows not to be unprovided with lovers, as 'In on alone may be no sekirnesse' (II: 2224) and urges them to hold their 'seruantis vnder obeisaunce' (II: 2227) as the best means to 'encrenen in richesse' (II: 2223). This pragmatic and cynical approach tends to

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<sup>71</sup> Desmond, p. 2. It is this version that Gower draws upon in his *Confessio Amantis*.

diminish the example of widow Dido. Her behaviour, whilst virtuous, is idealistic and inapplicable to everyday life. These conflicting interpretations of her nobility and courage cast doubt on whether Dido is or should be an example for women. It is, in part, her gender that makes her actions inappropriate, yet at the same time her self-sacrifice is worthy of the exemplary male characters who populate this section of the manuscript.

Whilst de Premierfait utilises both of these women for part of his political message against tyrannous rulers, Lydgate's treatment of them reflects rather on the outraged sense of female virtue through their dramatic speeches with which they defend their honour and actions. In Harley 1766, the message is still political, but it centres on an explicitly gendered interpretation. These women do effect political change, but they do so through the medium of their own bodies – not in war, as a man might, but by inverting the violent tendency, turning it inwards upon themselves. They transcend gender boundaries by refusing to act as sexual women, but cannot ultimately move beyond definitions of female virtue. By perceiving suicide as their only way forward, they prove their political instability and vulnerability at the same time as the texts ostensibly praise their virtue. This sense of political and personal vulnerability is emphasised in the visual scheme through the isolation of the two women.

Typically in the French sources, these two deaths are figured as public acts of bravery and virtue. The many instances of Lucrece in the *Des cas* tradition usually depict her suicide before an amassed group of males: BPU, fr.190/l, f. 89v (Figure 6.18), BNF 5193, f. 94v and Getty 63, f. 67r, for example, are all almost identical. The public nature of her suicide tends to be consistent across comparable imagery.<sup>72</sup> Iconographic variations focus on either the weapon of her demise or the gender of

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<sup>72</sup> Other examples include: ÖNB HS S.n. 12766, f. 76v and BNF fr. 226, f. 66v.

those watching her; thus the image of Lucrece on f. 121v of Royal 14 E v shows her delicately placing a sword to her breast, whilst the watching group includes a female onlooker (Figure 6.19). The inclusion of the male counsellors who watch her suicide validates her actions and suggests their complicity in her decision. In depicting her lone suicide on f. 105r, Harley 1766 is unusual and helps dissociate the image from earlier incarnations which focus on Lucrece the virtuous heroine. In Lydgate's Book II version of Lucrece, she explicitly acts against the wishes of her male family members. Acting in isolation, she transgresses against male authority.

The rape scene is also rarely included in comparable manuscripts. Harley 1766 features such a scene on f. 101v (Figure 6.20) in which an armed and crowned Tarquin is shown entering Lucrece's bed. It is possible that the inclusion of this scene was influenced by the early Bury manuscript, HM 268. Unlike Harley 1766, HM 268 includes both versions of the Lucrece narrative. Lawton argues that this manuscript maintains the French hierarchy, which prioritises the second version of Lucrece, by the inclusion of a full size miniature of sixteen lines attached to the second telling, along with a beautifully illustrated 'verba lucrece' to indicate the opening of her complaint (Figure 4.8).<sup>73</sup> This image on f. 50v depicts Lucrece kneeling in another chamber, surrounded by a group of men who presumably include her husband and father (Figure 6.21). Here the reader/viewer sees the very moment of her suicide; the knife pierces her chest and blood spurts from the wound. The array of hand gestures from the onlookers suggests the confusion and unexpected nature of the scene before them. They are at a loss to prevent Lucrece's course of action. Accompanying the first narrative is a much more unusual image which depicts Tarquin in Lucrece's bedchamber. The image on f. 27v conflates her suicide with the attack by Tarquin (Figure 6.22). She stands poised before her bed, a knife

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<sup>73</sup> Lawton, 'Text and Image', p. 467.

held to her breast, whilst Tarquin advances on her, a sword in one hand, gripping her dress with the other. Lawton notes that this miniature is half-size and may well have been designed as a chapter heading, later replaced with an image.<sup>74</sup> However, it is notable that two manuscripts produced in Bury both contain such an unusual image. In the case of the earlier manuscript, HM 268, this appears to be a direct response to illustrating a narrative not duplicated in the French manuscripts, whilst in Harley 1766 the artists appear to have conflated the two traditions in one telling of the narrative.

The two images accompanying Dido's narrative show some fascinating similarities to the early French ducal manuscripts produced by de Premierfait. In these manuscripts, two images of Dido are paired with two images of Sardanapalus. Both commit suicide by plunging into fire and are designed to contrast virtue and vice. Notably, this pairing is found only in these two manuscripts.<sup>75</sup> Yet in Harley 1766, the reader/viewer is presented with a similar pairing. A connection to the ducal manuscripts is unlikely, so how did this similarity arise? It is possible that the scribe saw a similar pairing preserved in another French manuscript, now lost. However, the scribe's continuous engagement with Lydgate's and his other visual strategies suggest that he, like de Premierfait, noted the opportunity for contrast and comparison provided by these two narratives. Further, the first image of Dido on f. 112v is entirely different to that in the ducal French manuscripts. In the *Des cas*, Dido is shown accidentally witnessing the death of her husband which prompts her flight to Carthage. In Harley 1766, however, she is shown in a ship, mid-flight. The iconography of the ship in the Dido narrative is more usually seen in the *Aeneid* tradition and tends to depict Trojan refugees being received at Carthage or Aeneas leaving.

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<sup>74</sup> Lawton, 'Text and Image', p. 467.

<sup>75</sup> Hedeman, *Translating the Past*, p. 110.

The comparison between Dido and Sardanapalus in Harley 1766 is specifically on gendered grounds, focusing on the tension between masculine and feminine. Blurring gender boundaries, it creates a continuum of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Dido is no longer an unquestioned exemplar of virtue and is shown to operate outside of gendered boundaries. Sardanapalus is a feminised man, much like Henry VI, who is impugned for his feminine characteristics. Lydgate stresses his lack of manly qualities. He is 'most femynyne of condicioun', 'off fals vsage [...] so femynyne' and 'in euery manys siht / So femynyne in his affeccions' (II: 2237, 2243, 2285-86). It is his femininity, visualised in the image of him spinning with women on f. 116r that reveals him to be an unsuitable ruler whose position will be usurped. That both Dido and Sardanapalus die in flames connects them with the paired images of Mucius Scaevola at the beginning of the book (discussed in Chapter Four). Following soon after the explicitly feminised narrative of Saul, Scaevola is characterised as a 'knyhtli man' (II: 922) and a 'manli man' (II: 954), leaving no doubt over the proper gendered sphere of his actions. He behaves in a virtuous and exemplary male fashion, operating within defined gender boundaries which celebrate his self-sacrifice, casting the behaviour of those that follow him in Book III into sharp relief.

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The motif of the female suicide evidences a set of anxieties about women that can be read against a political backdrop of ideas circulating in Yorkist propaganda. Books I and II emphasise the uncertain nature of female sexuality and desire and its potential destructive role. Simultaneously, these narratives highlight the absence of an idealised intercessory role for medieval queens without which death and destruction

are sure to follow. The women in these books are at odds with the idealised roles laid out for them by a late medieval understanding of queenship. Even the pathos of Lydgate's poetry cannot resolve their gendered transgression from the ideal queenly role to gendered stereotypes. This apparent duality points to the complex representation of women during the period which praised their virtues whilst emphasising their physical and spiritual weakness. The motif of the female suicide also creates the opportunity for the feminisation of Saul in Book II creating another point of intersection between Harley 1766 and Yorkist propaganda which routinely figured Henry VI as Saul and Edward IV as David. The feminisation of Saul in this manuscript demonstrates his inability to rule, just as Henry VI's increasing incapacity forced Margaret of Anjou into the political arena.

The ineffectuality of Henry VI's personal rule doomed public perception of Margaret's actions. At best, she inappropriately usurped male authority through her involvement in politics. At worst, she was an adulterer whose body might imperil the fate of the kingdom through raising a bastard to the throne. The presentation of Dido and Lucrece in Book III reveal the impossibility of her position. Even these heroic women are shown to subvert masculine authority as they act in defiance of male counsel. The emphasis drawn to them through the motif of the female suicide shows how strictly gender boundaries – and queenly duties in particular – were defined. Only through submitting to masculine authority at all times might a woman be lauded as an idealised character. For Dido and Lucrece, challenging male authority is the only way to regain control of their bodies and allay their own outraged sense of virtue. For Margaret, involving herself in politics was the only way to ensure the accession of her son and the security of the Lancastrian dynasty. Like Dido and Lucrece, her actions placed her outside the accepted roles appropriate to her gender and status. Like them, she raised an uncomfortable challenge to the male ruling elite.

This complex rhetoric is confined almost exclusively to the early books of the manuscript, whilst later books tend to contrast male rulers and their actions. The kingly heroes who populate these books have little or no association with women. The stamp of male authority in the visual scheme of these books is undeniable. Of the seven women who do appear in these folios, it is notable that four are condemned specifically in terms of their lack of virtue and stability. In Book IV, for example, King Candaules shows his sleeping wife to Gyges. Consumed by love, Gyges kills Candaules and marries the queen himself. The queen in this narrative is an entirely passive figure, featured only in the most vulnerable of positions, asleep in her bed (visualised on f. 129r), whilst the men prove themselves the actors in the narrative. Yet it is the woman who is blamed for her lack of fidelity. Three other narratives focus on the adulterous relationships of licentious royal women which result in their own deaths and those of their lovers (Arsynoe and Demetrius, f. 150v; Queen Rosamund and Squire Melchis, f. 222r; Duchess Romilda and King Cakanus, f. 230v). Even at this late stage in the manuscript, the machinations of women still serve as a timely reminder of their potentially disruptive influence. Yet their stories are more peripheral than those of the women in Books I-III and their actions are largely dwarfed by the actions of the heroic and vice-ridden rulers who dominate these books.

This split between masculine and feminine invites the reader/viewer to interpret the two halves of the manuscript with reference to the contemporary political situation. The first half reflects on the disruptive and complicated role of the feminine, echoing issues and anxieties most recently played out in the political arena by Margaret of Anjou. With the accession of Edward IV, whose heroic qualities are espoused and emphasised in the later books, the second half of the manuscript heralds the onset of

an age where the disruptive influence of women has been minimalised, if not entirely overcome. In her discussion of the Herod mystery plays, Theresa Coletti has argued that the plays define gendered spheres of meaning in which the political, public realm is dominated by male violence and power and the private sphere of home and children is governed by women who nurture and protect. 'It is a world', she argues, 'in which male solidarity is maintained through an emphasis on men's difference from, and fear of, women'.<sup>76</sup> The same is true of this manuscript: a male rhetoric of kingship is defined by the public actions of men within the political world, whilst a woman's role is defined within the confines of private relationships with the men in her life. However, these relationships of necessity impact on men and lineage. Women's differences are emphasised in order to separate them, but their challenge to male authority cannot be denied, and is emphasised through their appearances in the visual scheme. Ultimately though, the design of the book allows the scribe and the reader/viewer to move beyond the disruptive challenges of the female to focus exclusively on the actions of men.

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<sup>76</sup> Theresa Coletti, 'Re-reading the Story of Herod in the Middle English Innocents Plays', in *Retelling Tales: Essays in Honour of Russell Peck*, eds. Thomas Hahn and Alan Lupack (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 37-38.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### RE-WRITING HEROD THE GREAT: SCRIBAL REVISION AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE MYSTERY PLAYS

Through a series of editorial and visual strategies, the scribe succeeded in repackaging and representing the *Fall* for his audience. Focusing on issues of kingship, lineage and local pride, the scribe's manuscript repeatedly evidences his close engagement with Lydgate's own text, visual culture at Bury and contemporary discourse and propaganda. One final scribal contribution to this rhetoric stands out in Harley 1766: the amended version of Herod and the Massacre of the Innocents. Appearing in Book V (Book VII in the unabridged text), Lydgate's original narrative has been entirely rewritten, presumably by the scribe himself. This is not the only example of the scribe adding his own text to the *Fall*. See, for example, the scribal table of contents analysed in Chapter Four or the additional stanza in the Marcus Regulus pre-envoy examined in Chapter Five. And, as demonstrated in Appendix A, the scribe removed and rearranged large portions of Lydgate's text.

Yet nowhere else does the scribe entirely remove a section of Lydgate's text only to replace it with a narrative of his own invention. Sixteen stanzas (including the envoy) replace the original twenty-eight condensing Lydgate's description of Herod's entire life

to two events: his meeting with the Magi and the Massacre of the Innocents.<sup>1</sup> These lines have, until now, remained unstudied apart from some initial stylistic comments from Bergen who described this unusual section of text as ‘interesting for a certain downrightiness of style’ before remarking that it must have been written by an author ‘wholly insensitive to Lydgate’s rhythm – that is, if it was his intention to imitate him’.<sup>2</sup> These lines provide further evidence of the scribe’s close interaction with Lydgate’s text and the intelligent editorial eye he brought to bear on it. Far from being ‘wholly insensitive’ to Lydgate’s own text, the scribe closely engaged with the original narrative both thematically and lexically to further his own rhetoric of kingship.

The aims of this chapter, then, are twofold: first, to explain how and why the scribe re-wrote the narrative of Herod the Great and, second, to analyse both Lydgate’s and the scribe’s versions of the text. In revising Herod the scribe worked within a pre-existing tradition of rewriting this narrative. From apocryphal and patristic texts, through Latin liturgical drama through to the vernacular mystery plays of the fifteenth century, Herod was constantly rewritten resulting in a highly complex character, a ‘variety of persons under one name’.<sup>3</sup> In all its incarnations, the Herod narrative focuses on issues of kingship: the right to rule, lineage, usurpation and tyranny. As a culturally astute man, alert to the influence of a range of visual and textual media, the scribe was doubtless aware of the potential Herod could contribute to his overall rhetoric of kingship. In Harley 1766, the scribe contributes to this ongoing tradition and conjures up a particularly dark and menacing Herod who develops the anti-type of idealised kingship seen in Books V-

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<sup>1</sup> The full text is found in Bergen, IV, pp. 33-35.

<sup>2</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> David Staines, ‘To Out-Herod Herod: The Development of a Dramatic Character’, in *The Drama of the Middle Ages: Comparative and Critical Essays*, eds. Clifford Davidson, C. J. Gianakaris and John H. Stroupe (New York: AMS Press, 1982), p. 207.

VIII. Although the scribe's presentation of Herod diverges from Lydgate's, his text bears some similarities to the mystery play texts, indicating that the scribe was influenced in his writing by fifteenth century dramatic culture.

The only canonical gospel reference to Herod is found in Matthew 2, where his meeting with the Magi, the Massacre of the Innocents and his death are all briefly mentioned.<sup>4</sup> The first century historian Josephus, on whose works the author of Matthew must have drawn, documents a rather different version of Herod's story. Both the first book of his *Jewish War* and books XV-XVII of *Jewish Antiquities* delineate the successes and disasters of Herod's career. Ruling successfully for almost forty years until his death at the age of seventy, Herod presided over a time of peace and prosperity in which Jerusalem was transformed and Solomon's temple rebuilt. Yet Herod's domestic life was marred by family feuding and strife. Suspecting his sons of plotting to take his throne, Herod accuses them and condemns them to death before murdering his first wife, Marianne.<sup>5</sup> Herod's life finally ends with a painful and debilitating illness, accompanied by increasing acts of savagery and an unsuccessful suicide attempt:

After this, the distemper seized upon his whole body, and greatly disordered all its parts with various symptoms; for there was a gentle fever upon him, and an intolerable itching over all the surface of his body, and continual pains in his colon, and dropsical turnouts about his feet, and an inflammation of the abdomen, and a putrefaction of his privy

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<sup>4</sup> This section is indebted to the following: Miriam Skey, 'Herod the Great in Medieval European Drama', *Comparative Drama*, 13: 4 (1979), 330-364; Staines, 'To Out-Herod Herod'.

<sup>5</sup> For the condemnation of his sons see: Josephus, Flavius, *The Jewish War*, trans. G. A. Williamson, rev. E. Mary Smallwood (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), Book I, Chapters 26-28 and Josephus, Flavius, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. Louis H. Feldman, 10 vols (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press; Heinemann, 1965), Book XVI, Chapter 11. For the murder of his wife see: *Jewish War*, Book I, Chapter 22 and *Jewish Antiquities*, Book XV, Chapter 7.

member, that produced worms.<sup>6</sup>

Matthew 2:19 simply notes that 'when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt'. The illness described by Josephus appears to have been translated from Herod Agrippa, grandson to Herod the Great. Responsible for the beheading of St. James and imprisoning St. Peter, Herod Agrippa was struck down by an angel and died 'eaten of worms', probably in AD 44.<sup>7</sup> Josephus is apparently the first to impute this death to Herod the Great, but it remained a part of the apocryphal tradition in which it became divine retribution for Herod's role in the Massacre, which Josephus himself never mentions. It is Matthew who first attributes this episode to Herod.<sup>8</sup>

Following Matthew, early Christian patristic writers developed the evil aspects of Herod's character, focusing particularly on his attempted deception of the Magi, his hypocrisy, rage and savagery, and the Massacre itself. In these writings Herod figured as the first enemy of Christ, a character to be maligned and condemned. Patristic writers throughout the centuries turned to Herod as a personification of vice who could act as a moral exemplum for mankind, from Eusebius' (c. 263-339) *Historia ecclesiastica* in the third century (itself a translation of Josephus) through the works of St. John Chrysostom (349-407). Chrysostom's work was translated to the Middle Ages as *In originali super Matthaem* by Remigius of Auxere (c. 841-908), who is quoted but not followed in the *Legenda aurea*, and Peter Riga's *Aurora* (c. 1140-1209). Despite variations in their

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<sup>6</sup> *Jewish War*, Book I, Chapter 33: 5.

<sup>7</sup> Acts of the Apostles, xii; S. S. Hussey, 'How Many Herods in Middle English Drama?', *Neophilologus*, 48: 3 (1964), p. 252.

<sup>8</sup> Skey, 'Herod the Great', p. 331.

presentation of Herod's death, these authors are united in their moral condemnation of Herod, the murderer of thousands of innocents, whose illness and death represent divine justice.<sup>9</sup>

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries Herod's narrative was translated to liturgical drama. Although patristic writers had focused solely on the evil aspects of Herod's character, this early church drama began to diversify its presentation of Herod, investigating both the tyrannical and successful aspects of his character and monarchy. This early Continental Latin drama emphasised Herod's kingship through its presentation of a sumptuous court, full of the trappings of success. Herod's court is filled with attendants, knights and soldiers who defer to his judgement and authority, although his impressive regality is often accompanied by a vicious temper and cruelty.<sup>10</sup> In many of the plays, he rages at the scribes (see, for example, the Freising play, c. 1070, or the Montpellier play, c. 1150). In others, such as the Bilsen play (c. 1130), Herod throws the Magi in prison in a towering rage. In several, rubricated stage directions indicate that 'Herod brandishes his sword in anger'.<sup>11</sup> But for all his violence, many of the plays reveal the inefficacy of Herod's rage. His physical lack of control signifies his lack of capacity for reasonable thought or action and, although he orders the Massacre, he is unable to achieve his ultimate goal: the death of Christ and with him, the threat to his throne.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Skey, 'Herod the Great', p. 331.

<sup>10</sup> Skey, 'Herod the Great', p. 333.

<sup>11</sup> Skey, 'Herod the Great', p. 333. For the texts of these plays, see: Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933), II, pp. 68-72 (Montpellier), pp. 75-80 (Bilsen), pp. 92-97 (Freising). See also: Peter Dronke, *Nine Medieval Latin Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 24-32.

<sup>12</sup> Staines, p. 215.

In these plays the church dramatists succeeded in unravelling a one-dimensional figure of evil, sowing the seeds for later vernacular drama written both in England and on the Continent. Various presentations of the courteous and sophisticated king, the foolish tyrant dedicated to luxury and vanity, and the evil monarch committed to vice and sin afforded the authors of fifteenth century drama a wealth of dramatic types to draw upon.<sup>13</sup> Herod usually features in two plays in the fifteenth century mystery cycles: the Presentation of the Magi and the Massacre of the Innocents. Extant play cycles from York, Chester, Wakefield (Towneley) and the N-Town (possibly Bury St. Edmunds, but certainly of East Anglian origin) all include both of these plays.<sup>14</sup> An additional pageant surviving from Coventry (the Shearmen and Taylor's Pageant) includes both the Presentation and Massacre and presents the most comic interpretation of Herod's character.<sup>15</sup> This play contains the now famous stage direction in which 'Erode ragis in the pagond and in the strete also' and makes absurd claims to divinity: 'For I am evyn he that made both hevin *and* hell, / *And* of my myghte powar holdith vp *this* world rownd (488-89). This Herod is a 'light-hearted and bombastic buffoon' and is ultimately rendered a comical and ineffectual character.<sup>16</sup> The play ends with news of the Holy Family's escape and Herod riding after them.

Many of the plays highlight the comical elements of Herod's character. In the Chester plays, for example, his anger and tyranny manifest themselves as physical disorder, as

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<sup>13</sup> Staines, p. 207.

<sup>14</sup> *The York Cycle of Mystery Plays*, ed. J. S. Purvis (London: S. P. C. K., 1957); *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, eds. R. M. Lumiansky and David Mills, 2 vols, EETS, SS 3 & 9 (London: Oxford University Press, 1974-1986); *The Wakefield Pageants in the Towneley Cycle*, ed. A. C. Cawley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958); *The N-Town Play: Cotton MS Vespasian D.8*, ed. Stephen Spector, 2 vols EETS, SS 11-12 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> *Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. Craig Hardin, EETS, ES 87 (London: K. Paul, Trench & Trübner, 1902).

<sup>16</sup> Staines, p. 216.

he shouts and rages: 'All for wrothe, see how I sweate! / My hart is not at ease' (194-195). He takes up props and casts them down and cannot remain still. Frantic movement provides a visual reminder of Herod's inability to command the dignity for the position he holds, a comical character who is a poor reflection of the dignified and solemn Magi. The physical comedy of Herod's person highlights the tragedy of the situation; a man so at odds with himself remains able to command the forces of the state to commit genocide.<sup>17</sup> This play finishes with Herod's sudden illness, quickly followed by the appearance of a devil sent to claim his soul.

Herod's lack of dignity is revealed through his ineffectual rule in the Towneley and York pageants. In both counsellors and doctors advise Herod to order the Massacre. Where a character like Constantine might dispense with such advice, Herod follows it to the letter. Such unquestioning behaviour belies his own lack of authority, evidenced in the York play by the return of his soldiers, unable to confirm that they have killed the Christ child. The play ends with Herod and his counsellors riding out to finish the task. The Towneley pageant finishes with Herod directly addressing the audience, revelling in his apparent moment of triumph. The audience, of course, know that he has ultimately failed in his aims and the end of the pageant emphasises his characteristics of foolish, comical pride rather than his cruelty.

Of all the pageants, the N-Town plays present the most solemn and serious version of Herod. The Presentation Play adopts some of the features of the boastful braggart seen elsewhere, but his character soon devolves into a bloodthirsty, tyrannical figure who

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<sup>17</sup> David Mills, 'Some Possible Implications of Herod's Speech: Chester Plays VIII 153-204', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen: Bulletin de la Société Néophilologique de Helsinki*, 74: 1 (1973), p. 139.

orders the Massacre and glories in its details. The play ends with Mors (Death) coming to claim Herod and his soldiers, all of whom are received by Diabolus (the Devil). The potential humour of Herod in this play is circumscribed by the ferocity of the language used by Herod and his soldiers. This Herod is a tyrant to be feared, rather than an ineffectual buffoon to be mocked. The didacticism of Mors' speech in the closing moments contributes an element of sober moralisation.<sup>18</sup>

In each play, Herod's baser actions are contrasted with the quiet nobility of the Magi, examples of a dignified, earthly kingship. Not only does Herod's behaviour render him unworthy of the crown he holds, he is also revealed in each to be an imposter, a usurper and a tyrant: a king chosen by man, not God. This disrupts not only the 'natural' laws of succession by placing an undeserving foreigner on the throne in place of a rightful successor, it also has wider implications for the patrilineal succession of society as a whole. Herod's constant bragging reveals a man who sits uneasily on his throne, acutely aware of his lack of right to hold it. The sense of unease displayed by Herod becomes manifest in the Massacre. To maintain a power he did not inherit and does not deserve, thousands of sons must be prevented from succeeding their birthright. He does not disrupt one succession, he disrupts thousands.

Underpinning all of these narratives is a discourse of kingship characterised, variously, by tyranny, cowardice, cruelty, violence, avarice and ambition. Dramatists and writers adapted and appropriated Herod's narrative for the facility with which it dealt with questions about rule and authority, blood and family, lineage and succession.<sup>19</sup> The

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<sup>18</sup> Staines, p. 219.

<sup>19</sup> Coletti, pp. 38-44.

themes of the mystery tradition, with its concern for the rights of kingship and genealogy, coincided neatly with the scribe's own aims and interests. By rewriting Herod, the Lydgate scribe proves himself to be aware of the ways in which the Herod narrative could be utilised. He contributes to this through his own variation of the narrative. But this is not merely a theoretical connection; the location of the scribe and his workshop in Bury St. Edmunds places him directly within a hub of dramatic interest and activity. For example, the Bury guild certificate of 1389 lists eighteen religious guilds and confraternities, including the Corpus Christi guild of St. James Church which listed as one of its official functions the provision of an 'interludium' of Corpus Christi. Similarly, surviving craft guild records of 1477 specify that one half of fines paid for violation of craft rules went towards 'the sustentacione and mayntenaunce of the payent of the Assencione of our Lord God [...] amongge other payenttes in the processione in the feste of Corpus Xfi'.<sup>20</sup> Bury is also the most likely origin of and home to a number of extant play texts and fragments. Studies of dialect in the N-Town plays locate them as the product of East Anglia. Gibson puts forward Bury itself as a possible location for its production, whilst Penny Granger suggests the nearby towns of Thetford and East Harling as other plausible homes for the plays.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Gibson, 'Bury St. Edmunds, Lydgate and the N-Town Cycle', p. 60; Karl Young, 'An Interludium for a Guild of Corpus Christi', *Modern Language Notes*, 48: 2 (1933), pp. 85-86; V. B. Redstone, 'Chapel, Chantries and Gilds in Suffolk', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History*, 12 (1904), pp. 24-27; Alan H. Nelson, *The Medieval English Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 189; Norman Maclaren Trenholme, *The English Monastic Boroughs: A Study in Medieval History* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1927), p. 93; *The Manuscripts of Lincoln, Bury St. Edmunds and Great Grimsby Corporations and of the Deans and Chapters of Worcester and Lichfield*, ed. William Dunn Macray, Fourteenth Report, Part 8, Historical Manuscripts of Great Britain 65 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1895), p. 134.

<sup>21</sup> Gibson, 'Bury St. Edmunds, Lydgate and the N-Town Cycle', p. 58; Penny Granger, *The N-Town Play: Drama and Liturgy in Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2009), pp. 41-42.

Dialectal studies also impute the fifteenth century fragmentary drama, the *Dux Moraud*, to Bury on the basis of close similarities to British Library, MS Sloane 2593, a manuscript identified as the product of Bury and quite possibly of the monastery itself.<sup>22</sup> Several plays have references to the local area, including *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament*. Apparently performed at Croxton, Norfolk (about fourteen miles north of Bury), the play contains a reference to Babwell Mill, a mill just outside the north gate of Bury.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, two of the most important English medieval morality play manuscripts, the *Digby Plays* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 133) and the *Macro Plays* (Washington, Folger MS V.a.354), are both written in East Anglian dialect and are thought to have been owned by Bury abbey itself. The *Macro Plays* allude to several local towns and *Mankind* references a 'tapster of Bury' (274).<sup>24</sup> Latin inscriptions in the margins of the *Macro Plays* manuscript reveal that a monk Hyngham was the owner of the plays, identified by D. C. Baker and J. L. Murphy as Richard Hyngham, abbot of Bury from 1474-1479.<sup>25</sup> The *Digby Plays* have similarly been identified through marginal annotations by Myles Blomefylde, a physician and book collector born in Bury in 1525 who repeatedly inscribed his name on the flyleaves. This sixteenth century bibliophile may have been related to the William Blomefylde who resided at the monastery a century earlier.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments*, ed. Norman Davis, EETS, SS 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. cxiv-cxv.

<sup>23</sup> *The Non-Cycle Mystery Plays: Together with the Croxton Play of the Sacrament and The Pride of Life*, ed. Osborn Waterhouse, EETS, ES 104 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1909); Lillian J. Redstone, 'First Minister's Account of the Possessions of the Abbey of St. Edmund', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History*, 13 (1909), p. 329.

<sup>24</sup> *Three Late Medieval Morality Plays* ed. G. A. Lester (London: A. & C. Black, 1990).

<sup>25</sup> Gibson, 'Bury St. Edmunds, Lydgate and the N-Town Cycle', pp. 60-63; *The Macro Plays*, ed. Mark Eccles, EETS, OS 262 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 138, 162, l. 274; D. C. Baker and J. L. Murphy, 'The Late Medieval Plays of MS Digby 133: Scribes, Dates and Early History', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama*, 10 (1967), 153-166.

<sup>26</sup> Gibson, 'Bury St. Edmunds, Lydgate and the N-Town Cycle', pp. 60-63; Howard R. Patch, 'The *Ludus Coventriae* and the Digby Massacre', *PMLA*, 35: 3 (1920), 340 and n. 43; Baker and Murphy, p. 164.

The vibrancy and variety of dramatic culture in Bury and the surrounding area and the possible location of the N-Town plays to Bury has led Gibson to speculate on the possibility of Lydgate having had a hand in one of the cycles that contributed to the cycle now preserved in British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian D viii.<sup>27</sup> As the most famous writer of pageants, royal entries and mummings, including those written for the royal entry of Margaret of Anjou in 1445, Lydgate certainly possessed the skills and experience to have been one of the authors of the text.<sup>28</sup> However, the N-Town manuscript itself has been dated to between 1468 (the date written on f. 100v at the end of the Purification play) and 1500.<sup>29</sup> Lydgate could not have had a hand in the production of this manuscript, nor could the scribe have seen it. However, the plays it contains have been identified as a combination of three distinct earlier cycles which Lydgate may have written or contributed to and which the scribe may have seen either in dramatic or manuscript form.<sup>30</sup> This is, doubtless, an appealing and plausible hypothesis, although the evidence is inconclusive. Yet from the documented dramatic context of East Anglia during the period in which the scribe worked, it is likely that the scribe would be familiar with varying presentations of the Herod narrative either from personal experience of performance or from manuscripts of the texts, perhaps even versions of the play written by Lydgate himself. Although the scribe's text bears no

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<sup>27</sup> Gibson, 'Bury St. Edmunds, Lydgate and the N-Town Cycle', pp. 81-90.

<sup>28</sup> Gibson, 'Bury St. Edmunds, Lydgate and the N-Town Cycle', pp. 81-84. For details of the entry see: Robert Withington, 'Queen Margaret's Entry into London, 1445', *Modern Philology*, 13: 1 (1915), 53-57; *Mummings and Entertainments*, ed. Claire Sponsler (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 2010); Carleton Brown, 'Lydgate's Verses on Queen Margaret's Entry', *Modern Language Review*, 7 (1912), 225-34. See also: Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture*; Schirmer, pp. 100-108.

<sup>29</sup> Fletcher, p. 164.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Spector, 'The Composition and Development of an Eclectic Manuscript: Cotton Vespasian D VIII', *Leeds Studies in English*, NS 9 for 1976 (1977), pp. 62-83.

direct resemblance to that of the N-Town plays, there are traces of the structural and thematic nuances of the mystery tradition.

### **Lydgate's Herod**

If Lydgate was the author of the N-Town plays, the Herod he wrote for the *Fall* was quite different. Unlike the mystery texts, the *Fall's* Herod provides details of his life prior to his meeting with the Magi and the Massacre and the text opens by crediting Herod with a host of ideal kingly qualities:

Ordeyned was, [first] for his hih prudence,  
And for his notable knihtli excellence.  
Famous in manhood, famous of his lyne,  
Famous also bi procreacioun

(VII: 83-86)

Describing Herod's proclamation as king through his qualities of wisdom and bravery, these lines hark back to the earlier historical writings of Josephus *et al* who detailed Herod's many military and political successes as well as his long life and death. Both Boccaccio and de Premierfait take this more encyclopaedic approach to Herod's life and the Massacre, in particular, is treated very briefly in de Premierfait.<sup>31</sup>

Despite the positive opening, the *Fall* omits the many successes of Herod's career during a long and profitable life. Instead, Lydgate disregards his immediate sources to focus primarily on Herod's disastrous familial relationships, the Massacre and his final

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<sup>31</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 374.

illness and death. Like the mystery texts and the apocryphal writers, the *Fall* associates Herod's illness and death explicitly with his role in the Massacre. It is likely that in writing the *Fall* Lydgate used a variety of other texts for his Herod, and both Bergen and Emil Koeppel suggest the additional details came from the *Historia scholastica* of Petrus Comestor (the 'Maister of Stories' who Lydgate alludes to in VII: 90 and 141), and the chapter on the Innocents in the *Legenda aurea*.<sup>32</sup> In the *Legenda*, however, Herod's punishment for the Massacre is a deepening distrust and discord between him and his sons resulting in their deaths. As he deprives others of their children, so he is deprived himself. Both the *Historia scholastica* and the *Legenda aurea* describe Herod's illness, attempted suicide and eventual death at the age of seventy. Herod's illness is described as 'a grievous malady by right vengeance of God', although the length of time separating this from the Massacre disassociates the two acts.<sup>33</sup> Following Josephus' account, both texts describe Herod's attempts to kill himself with a fruit knife only to be foiled by his cousin Achiabus.<sup>34</sup> Lydgate too includes this episode:

To pare an appil he axed a sharp knyff,  
His malladie did hym so constreynne,  
Fulli in purpos to kutte his herte in tweyne

(VII: 227-29)

In writing Herod, Lydgate appears to have drawn on a range of sources from Boccaccio and de Premierfait, Comestor and the *Legenda*. Like the mystery plays, Lydgate's narrative focuses on issues of kingship, authority and lineage.

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<sup>32</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 274; Emil Koeppel, 'Laurents de Premierfait und John Lydgates Bearbeitungen von Boccaccios *De casibus virorum illustrium*: Ein Beitrag zur Litteraturgeschichte des 15. Jahrhunderts' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Munich University, 1885), p. 44; *The Golden Legend*, II, pp. 79-82.

<sup>33</sup> *The Golden Legend*, II, p. 79.

<sup>34</sup> Skey, 'Herod the Great', p. 332.

The opening lines of Lydgate's text reflect on many of the ideal qualities of kingship that the scribe develops and emphasises in Harley 1766: the right to rule by 'prudence' (VII: 83) and 'knihtli excellence' (VII: 84). The lines also stress Herod's glorious lineage, placing him within a genealogy which looks back to his father Antipater ('his lyne', VII: 85) and forwards to his descendents ('procreacioun', VII: 86). Here, as elsewhere, an individual's right to rule is defined in equal measures by birthright and merit. With a host of ideal kingly qualities and celebrated ancestry, Herod's claim to the throne of Judea should be secure, heralding the beginning of an enduring dynasty. Yet Lydgate's Herod reveals that kingly lineage may be both a source of pride and danger. It is, in part, this fêted line which precipitates Herod's troubles. Strife, discord and distrust come to characterise his familial relationships and his narrative rapidly degenerates into mistrust and murder. Twelve stanzas prior to this meeting with the Magi describe Herod's many crimes, all of which relate to his family.

Herod's actions are governed by his own sense of insecurity on his throne. He murders his wife Marianne after his sister Saloma falsely accuses her of adultery:

Ageyn[e]s hire of rancour sodenli  
He gan of herte greuousli disdeyne;  
With rigorous suerd he slouh hir furiously

(VII: 99-101)

As discussed in Chapter Six, many narratives in the *Fall* reflect on the role of women in ensuring patrilineal succession. Adultery could result in Herod rearing a bastard as his own. However, Marianne is innocent of any crime. Like many other characters in the

*Fall*, Herod gives hasty credence to false reports and repents at his leisure (see, for example, Theseus and Phaedra, discussed in Chapter Six). In a familiar verbal gesture, Lydgate declaims 'Loo, what it is a prince to be hasti, / To eueri tale of rancour to assente' (VII: 106-07).

Yet Herod's concern is not for his bloodline but his own name and renown, 'To make his name also perpetuell' (VII: 164). His line is of secondary importance to his own fame and grasp on the throne. Lydgate explains how Herod 'hadde also a fals condicioun: / He truste[d] non that was of his kynreede' (VII: 169-70). Thus he kills his wife's brother Aristobolus, Bishop of Jerusalem 'falsli' 'of malis & hatreede' (VII: 148-49, 154) and suspects his sons of trying to kill him to ensure the succession for themselves. He kills them both 'as fadir most vnkynde' (VII: 174). His actions in these stanzas reveal an uncertain ruler. A man jumping at shadows, Herod's own insecurity reveals his unworthiness to rule. The twelve stanzas that precede the meeting with the Magi are a familial microcosm of the impulses that set Herod on his path to become the first enemy of Christ. Even before the birth of Jesus, he kills his innocent wife and sons to secure his grasp on the throne. Herod is not merely a poor judge of character who listens to false reports; he is motivated by a singular desire for power – for himself, not his line – which can only be viewed as antithetical to the very sustaining forces of medieval society in which patrilineal succession was key. Family crises are played out on the political level in which concerns of succession and lineage conflict with familial relations and the surety of lineal succession raises the threat of murder. Other episodes within the *Fall* have been read as explicit warnings to warring factions within the house of Lancaster

and Lydgate's Herod reveals the catastrophic effects of discord amongst the families of the ruling elite.<sup>35</sup>

As a counterpoint to the barbarity and injustice of his actions, these stanzas also remind the reader of the apparent merit of his kingship and the line of kings that his reign should produce:

Bi Antonye and bi Octauyan  
He crowned was & maad kyng oflude,  
Bi the Senat maad theron a decre,  
And registred that he and his kynreede  
Sholde in that lond lynealli proceede.

(VII: 122-126)

Lydgate here describes an apparently lawful process by which Herod secures not only his throne, but the fortunes of his line in perpetuity. However, the following stanza makes it clear that Herod is 'a foreyn' who 'vsurpid' the crown of Judea (VII: 129, 132). As the rhetoric of kingship identified in Books V-VIII demonstrates, kingly qualities are intrinsically linked to hereditary right to rule. Without hereditary right to rule, Herod's kingly qualities become questionable. And it is this doubt that leads to his crimes of increasing magnitude.

Herod's attacks on his family are a microcosm of the impulses that motivate him in the Massacre. The disorder of the kingdom is figured through Herod's own mental disorder, whose sorrow and regret for the murder of his wife regularly borders on lunacy:

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<sup>35</sup> See, for example, the story of Arthur and Mordred discussed in Chapter Five, p. 163.

So sore dede hym repente  
That he for thouht[e] fill into anoye  
Of hertli sorwe & malencolie  
[...]  
Troubrid with furye that he wex frentik,  
With dremys vexed & many an vnkouth siht;  
[...]  
And eueri moneth onys lunatik

(VII: 110-112; 114-115, 117)

Trying to secure his position on his throne, he succeeds only in destabilising his own mind and the security of his kingdom. In both Lydgate's text and the mystery plays, the state of Herod's mind helps characterise him as a man of uncertain temperament, prone to outbursts of violent emotion.<sup>36</sup> In the plays, chaotic behaviour is frequently matched by physical manifestations of disorder and discomfort. In the Coventry pageant, for example, Herod declaims: 'I stampe! I stare! I loke about!' and 'I rent! I rawe! And now run wode!' (777, 779). Similarly, in the Wakefield pageant, Herod's speech degenerates into incomprehensible shouts of rage: 'We! outt! for teyn I brast! / We! fy!' (148-49), coupled with a stage direction denoting frenzied physical action: 'He rushes about, and belabours the knights'. This reveals a similar ideology to that used by Yorkist propaganda in the 1450s and 1460s in which disorder in the kingdom was figured through disorder in the royal family, specifically in the bodies of Margaret of Anjou and her alleged sexual transgressions and Henry VI's own mental and physical incapacity, as discussed in Chapter Six.

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<sup>36</sup> Mills, p. 139.

In comparison to the mystery plays, Lydgate's text deals only briefly with the meeting with Magi and the Massacre in a mere five stanzas. However, thematically these lines continue to focus on the same issues as the preceding stanzas, namely, Herod's concern to maintain a grasp on a throne he deserves neither in name nor in worth. Lydgate tells the reader that 'Neuer thyng so gretli dede him trouble' (VII: 178) as the arrival of the Magi. Herod knows that his position as king is threatened as 'The child was born that sholde hym depyue, / Newli descendid from Daid doun be lyne' (VII: 189-90). Contrasting sharply with Herod's own usurpation of the crown of Judea, Christ is a direct descendent of David, king of the Jews. Lydgate also highlights the qualities of both earthly and celestial kingship in his descriptions of Christ, 'that blissed yonge king' (VII: 182), and the Magi, 'the hooli famous kynges' (VII: 186). Herod, by contrast, is 'a tyrant of venymous outrage' and 'cruel of nature' (VII: 193, 148) in whom qualities of prudence and martial excellence have been replaced by distrust and violence. The reference to David links Herod's narrative to that of Saul and David in Book I of the *Fall*, an Old Testament forerunner of Herod and the Innocents. Like Herod, Saul is raised to the position of king, but grows proud and wilful and incurs God's displeasure. Like Herod, he is visited with a terrible mental affliction in the form of a 'feend' with which 'he was also trauailed' (I: 294). In Harley 1766, this is realised through physical suffering and torment. The artist appears to have attempted to depict Saul's mental anguish which Bergen characterises as 'a foolish expression on his face' (Figure 6.16).<sup>37</sup>

The Massacre itself is described in only seventeen lines which briefly describe the shedding of 'innocentes blood' (VII: 203). These deaths are not described in the graphic

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<sup>37</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 42.

detail found elsewhere in the *Fall*.<sup>38</sup> Lydgate focuses rather on the fact of Herod's active involvement in occasioning the attack, sparing 'non for fauour nor for grace' (VII: 196):

Each tiraunt gladli eendith *with* myschaunce,  
And so must he that wex ageyn Crist wood,  
Which for his sake shadde innocentes blood  
[...]

Thei wer echon slay[e]n for his sake

(VII: 201-03, 10)

These repeated references to dying for his sake are designed to remind the reader of Christ's own death for humanity on the cross. In this simple phrase, the Innocents become closely associated with Christ himself.

Although this episode may only be briefly treated of in the *Fall*, the envoy reveals that Lydgate considered this to be the crucial incident in Herod's life. It shares a number of lexical items with the two and a half stanzas which describe the Massacre, focusing the envoy in particular on Herod's actions at this point. Although it references all of Herod's actions from the murder of his wife onwards, the refrain of the envoy links it specifically to the Massacre: 'which ageyn Crist gan frowardli maligne' (VII: 253). The Massacre is not just horrifying for its unwarranted attack on defenceless young children. It also places Herod in the role of the first to 'frowardli maligne' Christ as the Massacre was intended to ensure his death. The vocabulary in this refrain reinforces the link to the Massacre episode where Lydgate describes Herod 'of cursed herte gan frowardli maligne' (VII: 192). The repetition of phrases linked to both Christ and the Innocents

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<sup>38</sup> See, for example, the torture of Marcus Regulus in V: 734-48, quoted in full in Chapter Five.

heightens the associations between the two. Herod's kingship is thus set up in opposition to the forces of holy kingship and innocence, emphasising his own dramatic fall from grace.

In contrast to the children whose deaths are not delineated in any detail, Herod is described as a very real, corporeal figure of suffering. As in many of the mystery play texts, including the N-Town cycle, Herod's disfiguring illness and eventual death are presented as a direct result of his actions in the Massacre, rather than his other crimes and treatment of his family:

Fro that day forth, as maad is mencioun,  
He fill in many vnkouth malladie;  
His flesh gan turne to corrupcioun,  
Fret with wermys on ech partie,  
Which hym assailed bi gret tormentrie;  
His leggis suell[e],corbid blak gan shyne;  
Wher vengauce werkith, a-dieu al medecyne

(VII: 211-17)

Five stanzas are dedicated to a description of Herod's illness and death, counterpointing and balancing the five stanzas which describe his meeting with the Magi and the Massacre. But in contrast to the preceding section's lack of physical detail, this is a graphically detailed description of Herod's bodily decay. His flesh rots and his body is tormented with worms. His legs swell and turn black with a stench like carrion. Lydgate effectively describes a living corpse. Unlike the Herod of the mystery plays, this Herod has no time to gloat over his perceived victory: punishment is almost instantaneous. Lydgate finishes the narrative with a damning description of the protagonist:

This cursid wrech, this odious caitiff,  
I reede of non stood ferther out of grace,  
In sorwe & myscheeff eendid hath his liff.  
Ech man was glad[e] what he shold[e] pace.  
And for his stori doth this book difface  
With woful clauses of hym whan I write,  
Therfor I caste no mor of hym tendite

(VII: 239-45)

Herod's fall from grace is complete. From the idealism and optimism of his knightly beginnings, he sinks to the lowest depths. A murderer of thousands of innocents, he not only departs from ideal kingly qualities, but opposes the epitome of divine kingship, Christ himself.

### **Harley 1766's Herod**

Lydgate's original text includes many of the same themes that the scribe highlights in his rhetoric of kingship: an interest in lineage, the right to rule both by merit and by blood, and the characteristics which define a king. Yet the scribe still made substantial changes to this source text. The scribe distils the piece into the two sections that feature in the mystery cycles and which are at the core of Lydgate's narrative: the meeting with the Magi and the Massacre itself. The resultant text is much shorter than Lydgate's at sixteen stanzas instead of the original twenty-eight. Herod's death is referenced in a single line, but the gruesome details of his illness are not mentioned. Additionally, the scribe gives a detailed description of Herod's discussion with the Magi and emphasises the youth and vulnerability of the Innocents. Lydgate's depiction of a man fallen from the

heights of political success and the comic figure of the mystery plays is replaced with a man who is cold, cunning and calculating throughout. This Herod does not rage in the pageant or the streets. He is much more menacing than his other fifteenth century counterparts.

Although the scribe's text appears to be quite distinct from that of Lydgate, it retains a number of similarities which continue to reveal the scribe's engagement with Lydgate's own text. These points of similarity demonstrate that the scribe did not merely replace Lydgate's Herod with another version he had to hand, but re-wrote it himself, drawing influence from both Lydgate's own text and his experience of the Herod tradition in text, drama and the visual arts. The most notable point of contact between the two narratives is in the retention of Lydgate's envoy, albeit in an amended form. Lydgate's original envoy of four stanzas is reconfigured by the scribe so that the final stanza becomes the first. Lydgate's envoy also follows an unusual eight line format which the scribe has regularised to seven lines to match the rest of the poem. In most envoys Lydgate typically ends each stanza with a single-line refrain but in this case he uses two lines to fulfil this function. Each stanza ends with a damning indictment of Herod who was 'The first tiraunt (ye may the Bible reede) / Which ageyn Crist gan frowardli maligne' (VII: 252-53).<sup>39</sup> The scribe removes line seven in each stanza to recreate the standard pattern followed elsewhere by Lydgate.

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<sup>39</sup> The remaining three stanzas of the envoy finish with similar sentiments: 'Was the firste cause he stode in dreede - / Which ageyn Crist gan frowardli maligne' (VII: 260-61); 'The firste also, who list take heede / Which ageyn Crist gan frowardli maligne' (VII: 268-69); 'To shewe that non shal in his purpose speede / Which ageyn Crist doth frowardli maligne' (VII: 276-77).

The reconfiguration of the text at this point also reveals one of the scribe's attempts to create continuity in his redaction of the text. The first stanza of his envoy reads:

Remembryth / whan ye be in your Royal stal  
off Abytomarus / how he did ovir-lede  
the *Commoun* peple / Remembryth as I Rede  
In what myscheef / that he did Fyne  
whan he frowardly / gan to malyne

(88-91)<sup>40</sup>

In Lydgate's text, the reference to Abytomarus is to Herod himself: 'Doth nat the people oppresse nor ouerleede / Vpon Herodes remembreth, as ye reede' (VII: 273-74). In Harley 1766 Abytomarus (or Britomaris) actually refers to the protagonist of the preceding tale. Half of Book V and all of Book VI have been subjected to an editorial cut. Britomaris is the last tale in Book V to survive this omission and is followed immediately by Herod. This reference is designed to create a smooth transition from one narrative to the next but, unfortunately, Britomaris is neither an oppressor nor a tyrant but a successful warrior, a 'manli man & a ful worthi kniht' (V: 947). He rides from France to make war on Rome, barbarians who offer human sacrifices to their gods (V: 885-889). After numerous successes in battle, the Romans fight back and capture Britomaris:

In tokne of tryumphe brouht to Rome toun,  
To the Capitoile, with a ful pale cheer,  
Lad bounde in cheynis, ther geyned no raunsoun:  
This hath Fortune appallid his hih renoun.

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<sup>40</sup> The full text is found in Bergen, IV, pp. 33-35. For clarity, I have imposed line references.

And in tokne of his disconfiture,  
Offrid to goddis was his cote armure.  
Thus Lachesis his lyues threed gan drawe  
Til Antropus it brak with ful gret peyne

(V: 981-87)

This narrative echoes that of Marcus Regulus which features a few folios earlier, a heroic knight captured and killed by his enemies. Interpolated between the narratives of Marcus Regulus and Britomaris are five stanzas on the tyrant Ptolemy Philopater. Killing his father, mother, and sister in order to be crowned king of Egypt, Philopater then kills his wife and devotes himself 'to al riot, surfet & outrage' (V: 853). Although Lydgate does not describe him as an oppressive ruler, Philopater's narrative would better suit the link created by the scribe in his envoy to Herod. Despite the error in naming in this envoy, the attempt to create continuity again makes evident the scribe's engagement with the text and his determination to create a seamless redaction of Lydgate's text. This instance is so striking precisely because it is such a rare lapse in concentration for the scribe, seen elsewhere in only a handful of mislabelled images (see Chapter Four).

The beginning of the scribe's Herod also emphasises his determination to emulate Lydgate's style of writing. Opening the narrative with 'Next in Ordre this processe moost Cruel / It cam in mynde to bochas in his wrytyng' (1-2), the scribe utilises Lydgate's own lexical choices and appeals to literary authority. Both 'Ordre' and 'processe' are frequently used in Lydgate's text not only to reflect the passage of time through the work, but to highlight the literary process by which Lydgate affirmed his own literary authority. The scribe himself employs this term in his opening rubric to the manuscript in which he

refers to ‘the Processe and the book of bochas’ (f. 5r). In redeploing the word here, the scribe once again inserts himself into this literary lineage, authorising his own editorial interventions. Similarly, the scribe claims textual authority from Bochas himself for his amended text and makes frequent references to other instances of Herod’s story ‘be Record / of scripture’, ‘as made is mencyou<sup>n</sup>’ for those ‘whoo lyst se’ (6, 15, 16). This layering of authors and authorities is typical both of Lydgate himself and the scribe who worked so diligently on his texts.

The similarities in the format of the envoy and the desire to emulate Lydgate’s own authorial style make it clear that the scribe began writing his version of Herod with Lydgate’s text in front of him. His retention of the envoy suggests that he also intended to retain the moral of the narrative. Lydgate’s own explanation of the envoys, as the scribe would have been aware, was to draw out the moral from each episode as requested by Gloucester himself:

At the eende sette a remedie,  
With a lenvoie conuied be resound  
And afftir that, with humble affeccioun  
To noble pryncis lowli it directe,  
Bi others falling [thei myht] themsilff correcte

(II: 150-54)

With its repeated refrain of ‘which ageyn Crist gan frowardli maligne’ (VII: 253, 261, 269, 277), the envoy to Herod emphasises the importance of the Massacre in Herod’s life. Although his other crimes – the murder of his wife, children and family – are referenced,

it is his role as the first to oppose Christ that defines him. Both Lydgate and scribe recognise this fact although they realise his narrative in distinct ways.

Whilst Lydgate prefaces the Massacre with an earlier family drama, the scribe focuses all of his energy on the Meeting with Magi and the Massacre itself. Both reflect on kingship but in significantly different ways. Lydgate's presentation of a man fallen from greatness fits his schemata of the falls of princes. The scribe's Herod has no redeeming kingly qualities. Rather he forms the perfect antithesis to idealised, divine kingship embodied by Christ. This is congruent with the position of the narrative in the manuscript, occurring in the middle of Book V of Harley 1766 in which the scribe begins to develop his rhetoric of kingship through contrasting pairs of characters. The scribe's Herod follows the stories of Marcus Regulus (see Chapter Five), Ptolemy Philopater, and Britomaris. But a few folios later comes the narrative of Nero. In the hands of the scribe, Herod becomes another anti-type of kingship whose presentation contributes to his clear-cut portrayal of virtue and iniquity.

In his focus on the Meeting with the Magi and the Massacre, the scribe's text bears similarities to the mystery plays which focus solely on these two episodes. It is not just their underpinning rhetoric of kingship that attracted the scribe, nor their proximity as possible influences; he also utilised the format and layout of the plays. By distilling the narrative into two distinct episodes, he mirrors the mystery texts which usually form two distinct plays: the Meeting with the Magi and the Massacre. Moreover, unlike Lydgate, he gives both Herod and the Magi direct speech. However, the scribe's text cannot be linked to any individual extant play or cycle and he omits the physical disintegration and

verbal lack of control seen in many of the play texts.<sup>41</sup> The Coventry, York and Wakefield plays, for example, reveal Herod's spiritual corruption through his unrestrained, over-the-top, and often comical language, and the N-Town and Chester plays portray his physical disintegration and death. Lydgate works within this tradition, portraying Herod's illness and death as both direct punishment for his sins and a physical manifestation of his spiritual decay. The scribe's text has neither the boastful excessive language of the plays, nor the physical debilitation portrayed by Lydgate and the N-Town and Chester plays. Despite the similarities to both Lydgate's own text and the influence he draws from the mystery cycles, the scribe succeeds in creating a new Herod, whose terrible crimes are not counterpointed with comedic ineffectualness or a painful death. Instead, his Herod is counterpointed with other types and anti-types of kingship in Books V and VI. His Herod is a much darker character than that portrayed by Lydgate and the mystery play writers.

The scribe's text begins with a list of Herod's many failings:

[...] both Cursyd and fel

[...]

The Cursedyst / that was in erthe levyng

A foreyn he was / be Record / of scripture

To goddys peple / a malicious Creature

He was the first / ageyn Cryst gan to werre

slowh the Innocentys / Oonly for Crystes sake

(3, 5-9)

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<sup>41</sup> Carolyn Coulson-Grigsby, 'Enacting Herod the Great's Diseased Spirit', *Early Drama, Art, and Music Review*, 23: 2 (2001), 110-126.

The scribe's agenda is clear from the outset. This Herod is an anti-type of kingship like Nero and Julian in Books V and VI respectively. Although altered in line with the scribe's rhetoric, echoes of Lydgate's text remain. Like Lydgate, the scribe describes Herod as 'a foreyn' (6), although he does not develop this aspect. Lines 8-9 also echo Lydgate's envoy and not only highlights the scribe's engagement with the text but emphasises Herod's role as the archetypal anti-image of kingship warring against the King of Heaven.

Herod's other crimes are referenced in only a few short lines in the third stanza:

This herondes / also as made is mencyoun  
Slowh wyff / and Chyldre / the story whoo lyst se  
And many other / for short conclusyoun  
Ek his lordys / with other of the Comounte

(15-18)

Comprising little more than a passing reference, these scant lines summarise a lengthy narration of eighty-four lines in Lydgate's text demoting these episodes in importance through the use of 'as made is mencyoun' and 'for short conclusyoun' (15, 17). The lack of detail allows these episodes to be consumed by and conflated with the Massacre itself. Herod's own children are mentioned in this stanza but are unnamed and, crucially, unspecified by age. In Lydgate's text, it is clear that his two sons are of an age where they are a threat to Herod and his throne. The ageless, unspecified 'Chyldre' of the scribe's Herod associates them with the children of the Massacre. Where Lydgate's Herod is developed as much through his familial interactions as the Massacre itself, the

scribe's Herod focuses almost exclusively on his role as deceitful king and habitual child killer.

The scribe equally defines his Herod through treachery and deceit. His meeting with the Magi is reminiscent of Satan's deception of Eve in the Garden of Eden:

vndir fals Colour / of a glydyng snake  
he gan entrete hem / and with hem couenau<sup>nt</sup> make  
vndir fals flatrye / and feyned symulacyoun  
Them to destroye / to ther vttir confusyou<sup>n</sup>

(11-14)

Evoking serpentine imagery, the text invites the reader to consider Lucifer's temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden. Just as Satan was the first to 'maligne' God through his deception of Adam and Eve, so Herod is the first to 'maligne' Christ in his attempted deception of the Magi. The scribe utilises a semantic range of falsity and deceit in his repetition of 'fals' and 'feyned'. Herod goes on to equate his throne and status with liberty, an elision of terms that again points to his central desire to maintain his own best interests. The repeated use of words like 'equite' and 'liberte' (56, 65) reinforces the dissonance of his actions, in which he seeks to detain and murder the Magi and the Christ child. This focus on deception is new to the scribe's Herod and is enabled by the use of direct speech.

The scribe imbues Herod with a voice with which to communicate both with the Magi and the reader. Whilst in Lydgate's text, Herod's actions are mediated through the poet's descriptions. Stanzas four through to seven comprise a conversation between Herod

and the Magi and stanzas nine and ten consist predominantly of Herod's instructions to his soldiers. The Magi are also given a voice, but it is less developed than that of Herod. They speak only to stress the lengthy journey they have made and to exalt Christ's fame which has already spread 'thorough al the parties of euery Regioun (39)'. Although there are three of them, they speak with one voice, akin to a chorus line. These characters have a functional appearance in the text and do not need to be individualised. Their role is to provide a foil and a focus for Herod's treachery. Consequently, whilst the beginning of Herod's speech is usually denoted by 'quod' or 'seyde', the Magi's is not.

Herod's voice enables his attempt to make a 'couenaut' with the Magi, 'vndir fals flatrye and feyned symulacioun' (13-14). Herod recognises the threat to his throne and uses deception and trickery in an attempt to preserve his tenuous hold on the crown of Judea. Attempting to cast doubt upon their mission, Herod's language evidences his desire to disregard the claim of the new young king to the throne of Judea:

Which in effect / as be your language  
he shulde be born / in this Regioun  
The which is / bothe yong and tendir of age  
And as ye seyn / in your Oppynyoun  
This Chyld / shulde haue greet domynacioun  
As seyn prophetys / of Antiquite  
but what is the cause / ye come this Child / to se

(29-35)

Repetition of phrases such as 'your language', 'your Oppynyoun' and 'as ye seyn' all represent his attempt to discredit the Magi's reports. Yet Herod makes no attempt to deny that the child is king of the Jews. Instead he focuses on Christ's vulnerability as a

child 'bothe yong and tendir of age' (31). He stresses his frailty and fragility, rather than fêting him as the king of heaven and redeemer of mankind. Upon hearing of the Magi's determination to visit the Christ Child, Herod tries to tempt them to return to him so that he may 'afftir to his hyh Renoun / doon reuerence / as longeth vn-to me' (49-50), purposing to slay them upon their return. In the context of his previous attempts to discredit the Christ child, his attempted 'couenaurt' (11) is patently false and the Magi 'deludyd' Herod to return to their home country (52).

This focus on deception and false oaths is found only five folios after a similar scribal interpolation on oath-breaking. The pre-envoy inserted into the story of Marcus Regulus rebukes those false folks who make oaths in vain: 'Folk that falsly / lyst to be for-sworn / And make ther promys / and ther othes in veyn'.<sup>42</sup> Herod's treaties and covenants are presented as precisely such false oaths. These additional reflections on the notion of oath-breaking firmly link the manuscript with the political context of the early 1460s where the making and breaking of oaths featured heavily in the Yorkist usurpation of the throne. At the Parliament held in Coventry on 20 November 1459, Richard, Duke of York was accused of breaking his oaths of fealty to Henry VI and raising war against the king at the first battle of St. Albans.<sup>43</sup> In June 1460, Edward, then Earl of March, and the other exiled Yorkist lords in Calais sent a manifesto to the Archbishop of Canterbury and 'at large to the comunes of Engelond' in which they asserted their loyalty to Henry VI and their wish to rectify the state of affairs in England, namely the 'evil counsel' guiding the king's actions.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, letters written to the papal legate Coppini assert their loyalty

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<sup>42</sup> Bergen, IV, p. 32.

<sup>43</sup> *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, V, p. 346; Watts, p. 353, n. 388.

<sup>44</sup> *An English Chronicle*, pp. 86-90; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 860.

to Henry VI and a public oath taken at St. Paul's Cathedral offered similar reassurances.<sup>45</sup>

Despite their reassurances, on 10 October 1460 York formally laid claim to the throne, a claim which was swiftly rejected by Parliament. The oaths sworn by York and the danger of perjury were given prominence in the dismissal of his claim.<sup>46</sup> By 31 October 1460 a compromise was reached with oaths sworn by both sides to validate the process. York and his sons swore to uphold previous oaths to accept the sovereignty of Henry VI, in return for Henry's disinheritation of his own son, Edward of Lancaster, in favour of York and his sons. A further clause defined any attempts on York's life as treason.<sup>47</sup> Following the capture and execution of York at the Battle of Wakefield on 30 December 1460 and the rescue of Henry VI by Lancastrian forces at the second Battle of St. Albans (17 February 1461), the terms of the accord were disregarded.<sup>48</sup> To legitimise their continuing battle against the Lancastrian forces, the Yorkist lords claimed that Henry VI had himself broken the terms of the accord cited in the Parliament of November 1461, not only breaking his vow but actively engineering the death of York.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Existing in the Archives and Collections of Milan*, I, p. 23; *Letters and Papers*, p. 773; Johnson, *Duke Richard of York*, p. 205.

<sup>46</sup> Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 867; Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 183; *Registrum Abbatiae Johannis Whethamstede* I, pp. 378-80.

<sup>47</sup> Maurer, *Margaret of Anjou*, p. 184; *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, V, pp. 378-80.

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, p. 223; *Registrum Abbatiae Johannis Whethamstede*, I, p. 382.

<sup>49</sup> *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, V, p. 466; *Brut*, p. 532; *Three Chronicles*, p.76; *Great Chronicle*, pp. 195-96. Henry VI's involvement at St. Albans was minimal. One source records him being 'placed under a tree a mile away where he laughed and sang'. See *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts Existing in the Archives and Collections of Milan*, I, pp. 54-55; Griffiths, *Henry VI*, p. 873.

Yorkists also utilised a discourse of oath-breaking in their claims to Henry's throne. At the opening parliament of Edward IV's reign, the Lancastrian dynasty was decried as the result of perjury of Henry Bolingbroke who:

Ayent his feith and liegeaunce, rered were at Flynte in Wales ayent  
the seid Kyng Richard, hym toke and enprisoned in the toure of London  
of grete violence; and the same Kyng Richard soo beyng in prison  
and lvyng, usurped and intruded upon the roiall power, estate,  
dignite, preemyence, possessions and lordship aforeseid, takyng upon  
hym usurpously the coroune and name of kyng and lord of the same  
reame and lordship.<sup>50</sup>

Claiming to arrive from exile only to claim the duchy of Lancaster, Bolingbroke instead claimed the crown. Chronicles, propaganda and official parliamentary records thus all stressed the importance of oaths sworn and oaths broken by Lancastrians and Yorkists alike.

Herod's attempted 'couenaunt' and the additional 'oath-breaking' stanza in Regulus' narrative acquire new import in light of this contemporary political significance. In Yorkist rhetoric, Lancastrians were a dynasty of perjurers habituated to renegeing on their word. In his attempted false 'couenaunt', Herod shares this trait. Marcus Regulus is the very antithesis of such behaviour and the reader/viewer is again invited to read contemporary significance into the scribe's rhetoric of kingship. The repeated refrain in the Regulus pre-envoy – 'to this Marchus mak no comparisoun' (V: 756) – encourages the reader to

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<sup>50</sup> *Rotuli Parliamentorum*, V, p. 463; Paul Strohm also discusses the Yorkist focus on Lancastrian oath breaking. See Paul Strohm, *Politique: Languages of Statecraft between Chaucer and Shakespeare* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), pp. 183-85.

make such a comparison. As the contrast of the visual scheme causes the reader/viewer to compare Marcus Regulus with Nero, so the additional stanza points to a second point of comparison with Herod. Whilst Regulus chose to suffer and die for 'proffit of the comourte', Herod acts to preserve his crown, rather than his country (V: 812).

Herod is shown to be fiercely proud and protective of his role as king of Judea. Upon meeting the Magi, he is at pains to emphasise his own kingly authority and suggest their own lack of worth, prefacing his first reference to Jesus with claims to his own sovereignty:

Sith ye be Entryd / of newe in-to my Reem  
lyk wourthy kynges / Come fro ferre Cuntre  
In-to my Cite / Callyd / Ierusaleem  
wher that I am wont to holde my Royal se  
As Prynce and hed / and kyng of Iude  
And I conceive / Cheef Cause of your coming  
ye axe the weye / toward / the yonge kyng

(22-28)

The repeated use of the possessive pronoun ('my Reem', 'my Cite', 'my Royal se', 22, 24, 25) indicates Herod's own grasping need to lay claim to the throne and crown of Judea. A similar grouping asserts his claim to be 'Prynce and hed and kyng' (26), the repetition serving only to cast doubt upon his claims. By contrast, the Magi themselves are foreigners, newly arrived from a far country. Attempting to cement his own sense of authority, Herod's reference to the 'ferre Cuntre' (23) instead serves as a reminder of his own status as a 'foreyn' (6).

For all his grandiosity, Herod's speech contains no claims to excessive or divine power as seen in the mystery plays. Nor is Herod 'cast [...] almost in a rage' (VII: 191) when faced with the departure of the Magi and the threat of Christ's birth, like Lydgate's Herod who exhibits madness and melancholy. It is Herod's conceit and vanity that enable his portrayal as a hysterical, exaggerated and absurd figure, whose temperament precludes the dignity expected of his kingly rank.<sup>51</sup> The Chester Presentation play, for example, includes increasingly excessive claims to divinity as Herod claims that 'I drive the devils all bydeene / deepe in hell adowne' and 'I maister the moone [...] / the sonne yt dare not shine on me (174-75, 178, 182). In these plays, Herod's boasting and hyperbole are representative of his spiritual and mental disorder. Even the solemn N-Town Presentation play features Herod boastfully proclaiming the security of his throne and his dominion over all others:

In sete now am I sett as kynge of myghtys most;  
All this werd for ther love to me xul thei lowt.  
Both of hevyn and of erth and of helle cost,  
For dygne of my dygnyte thei have of me dowl.  
Ther is no lord lyke on lyve to me wurth a toost,  
Nother kyng nor kayser in all this worlde abought  
(129-34)

The hyperbole of Herod's speech demonstrates a sense of self-assurance and control – a feeling that the audience knows to be false. Their suspicions are confirmed as Mors arrives to claim his soul.

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<sup>51</sup> Mills, pp. 133-34, 139.

In Harley 1766 the scribe's Herod has the dignity and cool self-assurance expected of one of his rank. Upon discovering that the Magi have escaped his clutches, Herod does not rant or rage, instead matter-of-factly deciding that 'But mawgre them / he wolde avenygd be / Sleen al the Children / to kepe his liberte' (55-56). His actions are characterised by an unusually pervasive sense of calm. This Herod is more restrained than the original *Fall* or any of the mystery texts. Neither his appearance nor his speech hint at the corruption of his soul and the resultant character is a much more dignified and threatening version of Herod than is presented elsewhere.

Herod utilises his sense of control and authority in commanding his soldiers, when he repeatedly returns to issues of lineage, fealty and right to rule:

But first he seyde / conceyveth that I am your kyng  
& yeve yow in Charge / that with al your myght  
In conseracyoun / of my tyle of ryhte  
That ye goo forth / for myn avaurtage  
And sleeth al thoo / that be of two yeer Age

Thus he bad hem / his biddynge to Obeye  
For noon but he / shulde Regne of equite  
Makith al the children / vpon your swerdys deye  
Sparith not Oon / for mercy nor pite  
For I am *quod* he / kyng of this Cuntre  
The crowne of / lewys / longeth to me of right  
Therefore sleeth thoo . that comyth in your sight

(59-70)

This speech reiterates Herod's earlier claims to hold the title and crown 'of ryhte' (61). As rightful king, Herod invokes the kingly prerogative to command his knights who are bound to him by oaths of fealty. His words are suggestive of the battlefield on which kings might defend their title through their bodies and those of their knights. Here, however, the opposing enemy forces are innocent children. The alliteration and verbal repetition of 'bad hem / his biddyng to Obeye' lends a rhythmic force to his commands.

These verbal manifestations of power function as performative utterances. Herod's right to rule is derived from his constant repetition of the fact, rather than a right to the throne by lineage or martial right. In contrast, although the Magi are referred to as kings by the scribe on three separate occasions, they never refer to their own status. Herod tries to undermine their role by referring to them 'as lyk wourthy kynges' (23) in contrast to his own claim to be 'kyng of al lude' (26), but it is an unsuccessful attempt. And even Herod cannot deny the kingship of the Christ Child. Although he focuses on the youth and vulnerability of Christ, he never tries to argue that the child is not king of the Jews. In the context of his actions as murderer and oath-breaker, Herod's claims to kingship are shown to be untenable and unsustainable.

Although written as direct speech, Herod's commands to carry out the Massacre are closely modelled on Lydgate's original text of the *Fall*. For example, Lydgate describes how Herod 'Lik a tiraurt of venymous outrage / Slouh al the children withynne too yeer age' (VII: 194). The scribe, meanwhile, has Herod command 'sleth al thoo / that be of two yeer Age' (63). Similarly, Lydgate describes how Herod 'spared non for faouour nor for grace' (VII: 196), whilst the scribe has Herod declaim 'Sparith not Oon / for mercy nor pite' (67). The scribe's text repeatedly emphasises its connections to Lydgate's original

text. However, he changes the third party description of Herod's actions to direct commands issuing from Herod's own mouth. This shift to the first person focuses the reader on Herod's direct culpability. Although the soldiers are clearly present they are given no voice with which to enjoy their participation, like the knights in the N-Town play, or condemn Herod for his action like those in the Chester, Coventry and Wakefield plays who do not wish to carry out their orders and must be reminded of their duty to obey. In the Coventry pageant, for example, Herod has to threaten them with execution. The appearance of the soldiers is minimal and their involvement is signalled largely through Herod's speech. Their similarly minimal presence in Harley 1766 focuses the Massacre on Herod himself, a sole actor driving the narrative forwards to its bloody conclusion.

In maintaining this focus on Herod's role in the Massacre, the scribe is able to launch into a wholehearted condemnation of Herod and his actions:

O thow tyraunt / thow cruel tourmentour  
which with thy swerd / of / mortal violence  
The yonge Childre / that can no socour  
Sleen and devoure / in ther pure Innocence  
To god above / thow dyst gret offence  
Slen and mordre / that in ther Cradyl slombre  
These yonge Children / thy malyce to encoumbre  
(71-77)

Coupled with the absence of soldiers, the description of Herod's 'sward of mortal violence' places Herod at the heart of the Massacre. Although not literally involved, it evokes the power that such a king might wield through his army. Many of the mystery

plays use Herod's speech to virtually involve him in the actions of the Massacre. The N-Town play, for example, has him delineating in detail the physical details of the attack:

Ryybs ful reed with rape xal I rende  
Popetys and paphawkys I xal puttyn in peyne  
With my spere prevyn pychyn and to pende

(10-12)

Fourteenth and fifteenth century images of Herod also often portrayed the tyrannous king watching his knights fulfilling his commands. A miniature in the Queen Mary Psalter (British Library, MS Royal 2 B vii, f. 132r, c. 1310, Figure 7.1), for example, depicts Herod seated on his throne drawing a sword, whilst knights on either side attack children clutched in the arms of their mothers. Similarly, a piece of stained glass at St. Peter Mancroft at Norwich (c. 1450-55) shows Herod leaning from his palace window to observe his knights whose swords impale young bodies (Figure 7.2).<sup>52</sup>

In the final stanza of the scribe's Herod, all verbal deceit is stripped away with the repetition of 'slen' and 'mordre' (76). His actions are not those of a man defending his right to the throne. He is a murderer of innocent children. In contrast to Herod's violence which has parallels in many external visual and textual sources, this stanza stresses the vulnerability and innocence of the children themselves, 'that can no socour', 'in ther pure Innocence' and 'in ther Cradyl slombre' (73, 74, 76). They have no means of protecting themselves against the force of Herod's ungodly violence and even the

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<sup>52</sup> *Queen Mary's Psalter: Miniatures and Drawings by an English Artist of the 14th Century, Reproduced from Royal MS. 2 B. VII in the British Museum*, ed. George Warner (London: British Museum, 1912); CVMA inv. no. 016649, *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi* <<http://www.cvma.ac.uk/>> [accessed 6<sup>th</sup> August 2010].

mothers who try to protect them in many of the mystery plays are absent. The notion of the children in the cradle is reminiscent of the N-Town plays where Herod boasts: 'Whan here barnys blede yndyr credyl bende / Sharply I xal hem shende' (16-17). Whether influenced by the N-Town Herod or not, the cradle emphasises the vulnerability of the infants.

The inclusion of 'devoure' in this stanza is a particularly interesting lexical choice which has no analogue elsewhere in the English mystery texts. Whilst the *MED* states that 'devouren' can figuratively mean to kill, this word creates connections with the various acts of child cannibalism that appear within the pages of the manuscript, in particular those narratives which are graphically realised in the visual scheme.<sup>53</sup> In Book I (I: 3844-4242), Atreus kills his brother's children and serves them up at dinner (f. 53r), whilst during the Siege of Jerusalem starving woman roasts her own child on a spit (VII: 1402-1488, f. 180r). This stanza creates a new web of associations reminding the reader/viewer of the various images of child violence that punctuate the manuscript (see Appendix C, Part 1).

Unlike Lydgate's text, this final condemnation is not followed by a graphic description of Herod's death. The final stanza prior to the envoy references Herod's death in only a single line: 'In sorwe and myscheef / Endyd hath his lyff' (80). This stanza is another extract from Lydgate's text in which the poet pauses to reflect on the death of Herod, described in great length in the preceding four stanzas:

Ech man was glad[e] whan he shold[e] pace.

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<sup>53</sup> *Middle English Dictionary* <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>> [accessed 6<sup>th</sup> August 2010].

And for his stori doth this book difface  
With woful clauses of hym whan I write,  
Therfor I caste no mor of hym tendite.

(VII: 242-45)

This ending may well have been a surprise to the scribe's audience. They might reasonably have expected either a Herod who suffers a terrible death and dies, like that written by Lydgate, or seen in the N-Town and Chester plays. Both of these plays depict a demon or Mors coming to collect Herod's soul, an image frequently replicated in the visual arts. One of the fifteenth century roof bosses in the cloisters of Norwich Cathedral, for example, shows devils dragging Herod's soul from his body, as do illustrations from twelfth century psalters such as the Eadwine Psalter (British Library, MS Add. 37,472, Figure 7.3) and the Canterbury Great Psalter (Paris, Bibliothèque National de France, MS lat. 8846).<sup>54</sup> Alternatively, his audience may have expected a raging tyrant reduced to nothing, his efforts to destroy Christ having been unsuccessful. The scribe's Herod does not utilise either of the traditional mystery play endings. He dies but there is no sense of retribution.

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In his creation of a new Herod for Harley 1766, the scribe began by utilising Lydgate's original text, both in terms of the envoy and lexical choices throughout the text. This suggests the value of the text to the scribe and also reveals the continuing editorial

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<sup>54</sup>Illustrated in: Miriam Skey, 'The Iconography of Herod in the Fleury Playbook and in the Visual Arts', in *The Fleury Playbook: Essays and Studies*, ed. Thomas P. Campbell and Clifford Davidson (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1985), pp. 70-78. See also: Stephen Spector, *The N-Town Play: Cotton MS Vespasian D.8*, 2 vols EETS, SS 11-12 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 480.

strategies by which he authorised his own redaction of the text. Despite these similarities, however, the scribe's Herod is quite distinct from Lydgate's, particularly in his distillation of the narrative into two episodes: the Meeting with the Magi and the Massacre of the Innocents. Unlike Lydgate who uses Herod's life prior to these incidents to compare his personal and political disasters, the scribe focuses squarely on the Massacre itself. Considered in the context of Book V, where the scribe begins his rhetoric of kingship through the opposition of figures who epitomise virtue and vice, this is a logical editorial strategy. The characters chosen for emphasis in these books are black and white figures, either virtuous and heroic, or iniquitous figures of evil. In his menacing presentation of Herod, the scribe provides another antithesis to Marcus Regulus who opens the book and to whom no one can compare: 'And to this Marchus mak no *comparisoun*' (V: 756). The irony of the design of the manuscript is that the scribe specifically encourages the reader/viewer to compare and contrast iniquitous characters with the heroic Regulus.

The distinctive split into the Meeting with the Magi and the Massacre suggests the scribe took influence from the dramatic tradition, which also condensed Herod's life into these two key episodes usually in the forms of two separate plays. Herod's use of direct speech is reminiscent of the dramatic tradition which flourished in Bury St. Edmunds and the surrounding areas during the later Middle Ages. As an intelligent, literate man, alert to the visual and literary culture around him and proud of his area, the scribe was well placed and well able to draw influence from the Herod of the mystery tradition. If Lydgate was responsible for a cycle of plays that later contributed to the N-Town cycle, then it is reasonable to assume that the scribe had seen them performed or read the play manuscripts and been tempted to use them. This speculation aside, the scribe's

Herod has no definite parallels with any of the extant dramatic texts. The N-Town Herod is the closest with its threatening and tyrannical presentation of Herod, yet the scribe eschews the didacticism and sense of retribution conveyed by the N-Town's death of Herod. The scribe's Herod is a far more blood-thirsty and terrifying tyrant precisely because of his solemnity, dignity and calmness; he is able to command the forces of the state to unleash a terrible reckoning upon his subjects.

## CONCLUSIONS

In 1966, Ralph Hanna III argued that bespoke manuscripts ‘represent defiantly individual impulses – appropriations of works for the use of particular persons in particular situations. [They] may have required no explanation, the private quirks behind their manufacture being abundantly clear’.<sup>1</sup> This thesis has sought to analyse and explain the ‘defiantly individual impulses’ which led to the production of Harley 1766 by examining those very features which make it so unusual, namely, the lengthy visual scheme, scribal additions and editing, the *mise-en-page*, rubrics and layout. Reading across these features, this manuscript can be interpreted specifically as a response to the situation East Anglian gentrified patrons and Lancastrian supporters found themselves in after the accession of Edward IV. The manuscript pages reveal an acute interest in the rhetoric of kings and queens, borne out of the contemporary political situation.

The man responsible for this manuscript, the Lydgate scribe, was a critical reader of Lydgate’s text. He knew the *Fall* well and was able to engage with and repackage it, not simply to produce a deluxe manuscript, but to meet the demands of his audience, who sought to realign themselves with the new regime. The framework of the manuscript, with its focus on Bury St. Edmunds and its role as spiritual, political and literary authority reveals a keen pride in the area and its history. In his choice of Lydgate for this task, the

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<sup>1</sup> Ralph Hanna III, ‘Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Literary Production in Late Medieval England’, in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, eds. Stephen G. Nichols & Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), p. 37.

scribe must have seen not only the local pride with which the poet-monk was viewed, but also the political potential his works carried.

Lydgate's role as 'Lancastrian apologist' has long been recognised in contemporary criticism (see Chapter One).<sup>2</sup> Seth Lerer, for example, has argued that Lydgate's own poetic preoccupations with the lineage of Henry VI 'gives voice to the great social anxieties of fifteenth-century dynastic politics, and [...] phrases its search for fatherhood and lineage in terms distinctively akin to Lydgate's search for a Chaucerian *paternitas*'.<sup>3</sup> Just as Lydgate's own works seek to emphasise sovereign and literary authority, so too does the scribe's redaction of the *Fall*. Just as Lydgate used Chaucer as his 'auctor' and 'maister' so Lydgate himself and his home of Bury are used to create a strong authorial standpoint. Invoking Lydgate's *auctoritas* through the use of his name and image and by the unerring focus on Bury St. Edmunds, the scribe authorises his redaction of the text and its connections to Yorkist propaganda. This analysis provides evidence for a previously unrecognised political use of Lydgate's works. Whilst Gillespie's work on the rise of print culture has identified the use of Lydgate's texts in Tudor Britain (see Chapter One), Harley 1766 reveals a political appropriation of Lydgate's writing during the early years of the reign of Edward IV, showing how successive generations turned to his work for its political value and significance.

Reading Harley 1766 politically requires the reader/viewer to recognise a variety of editorial strategies in the rearrangement of the text and design of the visual scheme which emphasise elements of the narrative and resonate with contemporary anxieties

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<sup>2</sup> Gillespie, 'Framing Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*', p. 153.

<sup>3</sup> Lerer, p. 16.

and propaganda. Thus the manuscript is framed by the focus on Lydgate and Bury St. Edmunds through the rubrics, scribal interpolations and the prefatory miniature. The early books of the manuscript use a repeated visual motif to associate narratives about women in order to reflect on their potentially destabilising effect and the threat they represent to masculine authority. Although not forging direct links with propaganda relating to Margaret of Anjou, these books tap into an undercurrent of anxiety utilised by the Yorkists to discredit Margaret's political role. The later books, meanwhile, develop a rhetoric of kingship which moves away from the potentially malign effects of female influence into the masculine realms of good governance, chivalry and martial success, replicating Yorkist propagandist motifs and creating a visual rhetoric of ideal kingship.

It has thus been possible to identify and analyse the 'defiant impulses' and 'private quirks' that informed the production of this highly unusual medieval book. Whilst earlier approaches to text-image studies have generally sought to delineate 'origins, filiations, and stylistic definitions', the study of the function of manuscript images can do much more than inform the critical reader about the mechanics of book production or the transmission of images throughout the ages.<sup>4</sup> An examination of how images function in relation to the text, what their purpose was and for whom they were designed by locating the manuscript in a particular space and time is crucial to an analysis of such books.

This functional and contextual approach has yielded striking results and a new, politicised reading of Harley 1766. It may not be possible to replicate such a study for every unusual illustrated manuscript. Some may be little more than *objet d'art* designed to impress whilst the circumstances of production of others may be so lost in time that a

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<sup>4</sup> Hilmo, p. 2.

contextual reconstruction is impossible. But it is clear that a holistic approach can reveal the unique motivations behind the production of illustrated manuscripts and represents a most desirable area of future study. The methodology used to analyse Harley 1766 has shown that an approach which incorporates text-image studies and reads this against a historical backdrop can not only provide a highly politicised reading but can offer a means of reading other manuscripts to produce similarly exciting interpretations.