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THE FEYNYNG AESTHETIC IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE

by

MATTHEW BOYD GOLDIE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1999

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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For P.J.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The storyline of how I became interested in fifteenth-century English literature—indeed medieval literature in general—does not follow a direct course, but perhaps, as Tristram Shandy observes, "Digressions, incontestably, are the sunshine;—they are the life, the soul of reading." I wish to thank the many people who have contributed to my study of fifteenth-century writing, the most recent chapter in my story and one that happily traces a more undeviating line. It goes without saying that all "wandrynge by the weye" that remains in the dissertation is entirely my own.

Steve Kruger first introduced me to the fifteenth century and has consistently encouraged a way of thinking that opened its texts to interesting and challenging questions. He has been an ideal adviser throughout the study and dissertation-writing process, generous in spirit and in the time he has freely offered. During our conversations about texts, when he framed a thought between his hands, fingers curving in to hold the suggestion, he challenged me to attempt a careful symmetry of comprehensive scholarship balanced with concise reflection. I trust that my ideas, arguments, and prose have benefited from his insights. Steve, I hope that your querulous enjoyment of literary issues, analysis, and writing has found its way into the dissertation. Your approaches to literature and your engagement with my work will remain with me as models by which to proceed in the future. Thank you.

Other faculty at the Graduate School have helped the dissertation directly through teaching, discussion, or suggestions, and by other means such as demonstrating their professional commitment to helping me find my way around the fortieth floor on forty-second street and medieval studies in the United States. First among them is Pam Sheingorn, whose rigorous wariness about potential traps and beguiling over-simplifications in approaching medieval literature has kept me alert to my own intellectual apathy. I hope that I can offer my own students even a fraction of the encyclopedic knowledge she has offered me in the years I have been her student. I have also been

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privileged to benefit from the wisdom and humor of Catherine McKenna, Michael Sargent, and Scott Westrem within the classroom, in examinations, and through discussion. Furthermore, they have constantly encouraged me with their eager willingness to support me whenever and wherever I might need it. David Greetham and Gordon Whatley have also assisted me in developing ideas and in checking them when they became witless. To all of you, many, many thanks.

This dissertation is dedicated to you P.J. For your like mind, your warm goodness, and your refusal to let me develop bad habits, I will be grateful in all the years to come that we will spend together. You have put up with my doubts and my frustrations, continually challenged me with your intelligence and helping me in every aspect of writing the dissertation. I hope that no longer being students will mean we never grow up in silly ways. I am happy the degrees are over for both of us. Now, let's take a holiday.

Everybody should know that Jason Tougaw is turning into a formidable scholar. Failing that, he is an excellent friend. He has also helped me through every stage of the thinking and writing process. I am not sure whether he is a better person to have read and scrutinize a dissertation or to play tennis with, but he has had infinite dedication to both. Thank you. Not long to go now yourself. Others I have been lucky enough to meet through the Graduate School have also helped me in this little project, and I would like to thank all the dissertation-writing groups in their various manifestations for reading about literature that is infrequently encountered, a task made all the more puzzling by my often unclear ideas and writing.

Rosemary, Charles, Terry, Art, Richard, Pam, Victoria, Mark, Chris, Olivia, Michael, David, Phoebe, and Harry have no clue as to what I am writing about. Nor do they have to. All of them, however, continue to make me who I am and where I am today. Mum and dad deserve special thanks for trusting all those years ago that education could be an ideal in itself.

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I would also like to thank the institutions that have generously provided financial support and work. Hunter College, the Graduate School, Brooklyn College, and Vassar College have offered me Graduate Fellowships, other awards, and teaching opportunities that have encouraged me to develop my thinking and have given me years of experience in the classroom. Behind each semester are faculty and staff members, who worked hard to make things turn out this way. I am also grateful to Morton N. Cohen for the Dissertation Fellowship in his name, and Maryloo Schallek and the Richard III Society for the William B. Schallek Memorial Graduate Fellowship Award.

A version of chapter two, "Psychosomatic Illness and Identity in London, 1416–1421: Hoccleve's *Complaint* and *Dialogue with a Friend*," is due out any day in *Exemplaria* (11.1), and I am grateful to the anonymous reader there for useful suggestions. Chapter four is to appear in slightly different form as "Gauging Engagement: Audience Responses to English Drama after 1409" in *Fifteenth-Century Studies* in fall, 1999.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AnM	*Annuale mediaevale*
Beadle	Beadle, Richard, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*
ChauR	*Chaucer Review*
Comitatus	*Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*
EETS, es	Early English Text Society, Extra Series
EETS, os	Early English Text Society, Original Series
EETS, ss	Early English Text Society, Special Series
ELH	*English Literary History*
Exemplaria	*Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies*
JEGP	*Journal of English and German Philology*
JMEMS	*Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*
MÆ	*Medium Ævum*
McEntire, *Margery*	McEntire, Sandra J., ed. *Margery Kempe: A Book of Essays*
M&H	*Medievalia et Humanistica*
MED	*Middle English Dictionary*
MLQ	*Modern Language Quarterly*
MS	*Mediaeval Studies*
NLH	*New Literary History*
PMLA	*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*
PQ	*Philological Quarterly*
REED	Records of Early English Drama
RP	*Rotuli Parliamentorum*
SAC	*Studies in the Age of Chaucer*
SP	*Studies in Philology*
Speculum	*Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies*

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STS	Scottish Text Society
TEAMS	Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages

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INTRODUCTION

But oo alas, the Rhetorykes swete
Of petrak Fraunces that couthe so endite
And Tullyus, with all his wordys white
Full longe agone, and full olde of date
Is dede alas and passed into faate

And eke my maister Chauser is ygrave
The noble Rethor, poete of Brytayne
That worthy was the laurer to haue
Of poetrye, and the palme atteyne
That made firste, to distille and rayne
The golde dewe, dropes, of speche and eloquence
Into our tunge, thurgh his excellence

And fonde the floures, firste of Retoryke
Our Rude speche, only to enlumyne
That in our tunge, was neuere noon hym like
. . . . . .
Wherefore no wondre, thof my hert pleyne
Vpon his dethe, and for sorowe blede
For want of hym, nowe in my grete nede
That shulde alas, conveye and directe
And with his supporte, amende eke and corecte

The wronge traces, of my rude penne

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There as I erre, and goo not lyne Right
But for that he, ne may not me kenne
I can no more. (1.1622–52)

John Lydgate's *Life of Our Lady* contains one of many epitaphs written during the fifteenth century that commemorate eloquence's passing in tropes of inadequacy and humility. How can he presume to write, Lydgate asks, when Petrarch, Cicero, and Chaucer are dead, their effects have not lasted, and his own writing goes awry and is crude? Chaucer in particular is not there to "convey" what Lydgate needs nor to "direct, support, amend, and correct" the "wronge traces" of his pen. His words remind present-day readers of Chaucer's most significant accomplishment for fifteenth-century culture and beyond: writing in English rather than French or Latin. Yet what is most unexpected about this passage is the praise of Chaucer as translator of beautiful rhetoric and verbal acumen into English, a celebration of Chaucer's eloquence and style that reveals more than anything else the fifteenth-century author's own preference for verbal display. Lydgate selects those qualities he most admires: Chaucer is "noble Rethor," who "made firste, to distille and rayne / The golde dewe, dropes, of speche and eloquence / Into our tunge" and "fonde the floures, firste of Retoryke / Our Rude speche, only to enlumyne." Ironically, by focusing on the aspects of Chaucer's poetry he esteems and comparing them with his own inadequacy, Lydgate is authorized to employ his preferred style: his *humilitas* is highly rhetorical, his rudeness embellished phrase after phrase, his crude writing highly floriated. The subject matter here is ultimately Lydgate and his writing, and this somewhat fraught awareness of his role as an author, which gives rise to extensive rhetorical decoration and experimentation, is precisely the feature most noticeable in the works of not only Lydgate but nearly all early fifteenth-century English authors.

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This study analyzes and accounts for the self-consciousness and the concomitant stylistic characteristics of English literature from the first half of the fifteenth century, placing the two phenomena in the context of contemporary debates about the English language, devotional practices, advice to princes, and so on. It is importantly synthetic in that it brings together the poetry, prose, and drama of authors writing within courtly, religious, middle- and lower-strata contexts while remaining historically sensitive to their divergent but intersecting cultural spheres.[1] Genres of literature, as they are commonly understood today, existed in closely related cultural spheres in the Middle Ages. Their distinction, even their definition, appears undefined or perhaps unimportant, as when Chaucer's Man of Law introduces his prologue and tale by saying "I speke in prose" but both are rime royal verse.[2] Lydgate is indicative of an author who writes across genres and moves in a variety of cultural spheres: a monk who enjoys royal patronage and writes devotional religious poetry and prose, advice to princes, histories, and mummings. In addition, present-day generic boundaries that divide medieval literature into different categories have the tendency to isolate and obscure important commonalities of style, thematics, and context. For example, the traditional separation of the English contemplative writers, so important in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century culture, from other writers has tended to pull them out of their historical and textual contexts and to seclude them from important events. It is difficult to understand how Margery Kempe's prose, for instance, can partake of the same cultural moment as Thomas Hoccleve's *Complaint* or the buffoonery of the morality play *Mankind* because past studies have not integrated texts of different genres for examination in any systematic way. Gathering different early fifteenth-century authors together in one place is to restore them to the fractious but intertwined

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[1] For the term "middle strata" see Sylvia Thrupp 288–319.

[2] *Canterbury Tales* II.96. For a discussion of what the phrase might mean in this context, see Martin Stevens, "Royal."

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milieux of fifteenth-century culture, and it is by means of the rubric of "feynyng" that I intend to create a dialogue among them.

The term "feynyng" is particularly well-suited to describe the aesthetic that characterizes early fifteenth-century poetry, prose, drama because the authors are very mindful of their actions in making their works and consistently present their *auctoritee* as at once creating and counterfeiting, composing and dissembling, writing and hesitating. The meaning of the verb *feyne*, ultimately derived from *fingere*, slides from the relatively neutral "invent" and "make" to the more connotatively ambiguous, even dubious, "pretend," "adulterate," "counterfeit," "dissemble," "evade," and "hesitate" (*MED* 445–48). Lydgate uses the word in nearly all these senses in the *Troy Book*: invent or write a story, "Ovyde feyneth" (1.10); make up, "to telle pe troup pleyn, and no fable feyn" (2.2367); pretend, "Eche wiseman . . . / Schulde feyne cher and kepen in secre / Pe inward wo" (2.4346–48); dissemble, "Lady dere, I feyne nat, but speke of hert entere" (2.3990); and hesitate, "I wil not feyne . . . / To helpe and forther in al pat may 3ou like." (1.2326–27). While a sense of self-consciousness about the making of literary texts might emerge in different eras and can be said to exist in some form in the texts of the fifteenth century's immediate predecessors (and Chaucer in particular), the ways in which early fifteenth-century literature manifests the particular forms of self-awareness are specific to this historical and cultural moment; the appearance of this self-consciousness is distinct due to the peculiar context of fifteenth-century English culture. The realization of the self in textual production of the first half of the fifteenth century appears as the excessive ornamentation evident in the *Life of Our Lady* but also as three other identifiable characteristics: persuasive incoherence, repetition for a central rhetorical effect, and awkward self-awareness, particularly about language. These four stylistic features are common to the majority of early fifteenth-century texts to a greater or lesser extent although, in the current project, they will serve as the basis of four discrete chapters that address different texts.

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Chapter one, "Laborious Patriotism and Groundless Elaboration," examines the deliberate choice on the part of Hoccleve and Lydgate to revel in rhetorical excess. It attempts to account for the appearance of such a characteristic in their *Fürstenspiegel* (Mirrors for Princes) and begging poems by investigating the historical and cultural forces that contribute to the elaborate and lavish ornamentation in these, their most ambitious poetic achievements. Most important in this regard is a Lancastrian attempt to identify as closely as possible with the vernacular by means of patronage of the literature. Hoccleve's and Lydgate's responses accord with their patrons' wishes, establishing a recognizable corpus of English literature by discovering a vernacular literary history and furthering that tradition with their own writing. They also elevate English's standing by writing in as beautiful a language as possible through amplification, floriation, and a gilded English. However, when they self-consciously turn to discuss themselves and their poetic projects, they repeatedly contradict their patriotic efforts by pointing to the debilitating effects of England's economy and the nation's very identity in space and time. Exceeding rhetorical *humilitas*, they blame England for their inability to carry out their intentions. England undermines its English aspirations to the extent that Hoccleve's and Lydgate's poems, massive ornaments seemingly in the service of linguistic patriotism, exist without sufficient rationale.

The next two chapters on Thomas Hoccleve and Margery Kempe are closely related. Both writers compose texts in what Jean Starobinski has called an "autobiographical style," containing "spontaneous" elements, but the subject matter of their texts is the presentation of the self in a society that challenges the particular features of their identities.[3] Their self-presentations are therefore as difficult as those discussed in chapter

[3] Starobinski makes a distinction between confession to God (as in Augustine) and confession to an interlocutor (as in Rousseau). He argues that with confession to God, God is the explicit audience. This provides the guarantee, to the confessor's implied human audience, of the truthfulness of the confession (77–78). However, in the case of confession to a human interlocutor, as is primarily the case with Rousseau, the truthfulness has to be guaranteed by other means. This is achieved through feeling and pathos. The audience identifies with the writing and believes the truthfulness of the autobiography because of style: "the spontaneity of the writing, copied closely (in principle) from the actual spontaneous

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one, but the issues they confront and the influences on their compositions are distinct. The treatment of Hoccleve in chapter two, "Psychosomatic Illness and Identity in London, 1416–1421," shows how the psychosomatic illness presented in the first two poems of his *Series*, the *Complaint* and *Dialogue with a Friend*, disrupts his attempt to present his self as concordant. The feynyng of these poems is centered again on the self, but his identity is neither stable nor coherent. Hoccleve tries to show he is well according to contemporary discourses about psychosomatic illness, but his argument becomes contradictory, inconsistent, fractured. This lack of integrity can be traced to the facts that Hoccleve and his interlocutor in the *Dialogue* live in London and that Hoccleve sets the *Complaint* and *Dialogue* in the urban space at a time when there is no consistent or compatible discourse about the city.

Margery Kempe's approach to presenting her self as psychosomatically stable, undivided, and an *auctor* differs from Hoccleve, yet the focus on presenting an identity remains. As I suggest in chapter three, "Reading Repetition," *The Book of Margery Kempe* is structured as a series of separable episodes, each one centered around a particular event. Just as there is a kind of repetition to the feynyng of identity in other fifteenth-century authors, so too Kempe relies upon repetition in that each of the narratives in the *Book* is almost exactly identical in form. This repetition of structure among the episodes foregrounds Kempe's construction of her identity, making it at once apparent and transparent. Kempe's method of presenting her self is deliberate here; moreover, it is a common way for people of Kempe's time to present themselves. Kempe's most immediate audience, her priest-scribe, chooses to present himself in much the same manner. Rather

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sentiment (which is given as if it were an old, relived emotion), assures the authenticity of the narration. So style . . . becomes 'self-referential,' it undertakes to refer back to the 'internal' truth within the author" (80–81). This is Evelyn Vitz's argument about Abelard. Abelard's style, his lack of success in transforming the "raw material" of his personal life into a coherent narrative, makes the narrative appear spontaneous and therefore truthful. "[T]here is a something rather appealing—surely something human—in Abelard's willingness to be, in his inability to avoid being, 'faithful' narratively speaking to his love for Heloise" (30).

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than create rhetorical or structural variety, both Kempe and her scribe repeat what I identify as a tripartite structure to present themselves as authoritative.

So far, the study of the feynyng aesthetic considers poetry and prose, and a middle-strata urban author, Thomas Hoccleve, a monk, John Lydgate, and a middle-strata contemplative woman, Margery Kempe. In the fourth chapter, however, "Audiences for Language Play in Medieval Drama," I turn to the drama, whose authorial origins are unknown. The vibrant tradition of English medieval plays, mysteries and moralities, is possibly the most substantial feature of cultural production in the fifteenth century. While much of the criticism of the drama focuses on the play texts, their performances, and their significance, it is also fruitful to examine the drama in relation to other fifteenth-century literature; indeed, several of the most prominent and important characteristics of the drama make sense only when they are compared to the poetry and prose. The ornamentation, the rhetorical difficulties, and the affectation common to the writings examined so far also appear in the Middle English drama, but especially prominent in the plays is the fourth feature of the feynyng aesthetic: language-play and language experimentation. Fifteenth-century texts exhibit linguistic excess and repetition, but the drama composers make the intersection of different languages, the power inherent in using a particular language in a particular way, and the tenuous nature of authority and even of meaning the subject-matter of their texts. Again I situate this concern for language historically, addressing the contexts within which the plays were composed and performed by considering the reception of the plays by audiences. My conclusion is that the audiences shared the playwrights' fascination with language and signification, indicating that the philological issues of the fifteenth century are cultural phenomena that extend beyond courtly, religious, and middle-strata contexts to a broader population and to people with marginal degrees of literacy.

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As these brief descriptions make clear, there are a variety of historical forces that lead to authorial self-consciousness and the textual feynyng aesthetics, but the common

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background to these issues is the presence of momentous changes in the English language, mutations that were often highly contentious with real and serious social effects. Chaucer's creation of himself as literary father and the shadow of Bloomian belatedness this casts over those following his death are significant influences on the ensuing century, but additional factors engender in that century's literature its particular characteristics. A brief preview will suggest some of the extent of the contentions and large changes occurring within the first half of the fifteenth century.

On 30 September, 1399, Henry IV deposed Richard II and ascended to the throne. Henry's reign existed under the cloud of his usurpation, requiring him to address the anxiety and indignation of the Ricardians, and to fight not only French forces in the continuing Hundred Years War but also a series of domestic rebellions. Thomas Blount, Owain Glyndwr, Henry Percy, and others threatened to form alignments with France and Scotland when they took arms against the king. Religious dissent, spurred on by the complications of the Great Papal Schism, also increased during the early years of the century, Henry responding with legislation such as the *de Haeretico Comburendo* and Archbishop Arundel's Constitutions of 1409, which exacerbated rather than mollified the situation. At the beginning of 1410 Henry's son, the Prince of Wales, displaced the king's favored Archbishop and ruled virtually without reference to the king, who was fighting in France at the time, until Henry returned to dismiss the prince and his council at the end of 1411.

Henry V's accession to the throne in 1413 promised a consolidation of power, but his nine-year reign was also dominated by war with France, culminating in a marriage of alliance that did little to resolve the problems there, and uncertainty at home. Sir John Oldcastle, convicted of heresy in 1413, would remain a threat to Henry until 1417, leading a revolt against the king in 1414. Later in 1414, in response to increasingly centralized juridical control that raised the burden on the courts and the need for more taxation to fund the wars, Henry issued a general pardon, excusing whoever could afford to apply for a

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pardon from certain financial liabilities and crimes such as treason, murder, and rape. Henry VI was nine months old when he ascended to the throne in 1422, inheriting the large debt that had accrued from his father's and grandfather's reigns. In order to stabilize the throne, Henry IV had issued grants of land and annuities, and his household expenses increased. Henry V and Henry VI each strained royal resources. Consequently, parliament was in a much stronger position to argue for restraint in Lancastrian expenses and obtained greater control of the king's resources than ever before (Harriss, "Financial Policy"). Burgundy withdrew from its alliance with England in 1435, the year in which Henry VI's first period of madness occurred, and twenty years later the Wars of the Roses would signal the beginning of the end of Lancastrian rule.

The period is a time of great change in both the authority of the vernacular and the make-up of the language in governmental and other spheres. Royal, financial, and religious instabilities were exacerbated by the Black Death, whose effects on fifteenth-century life, principally serious labor shortages, meant large-scale and frequent migration of peoples from rural to urban areas and from town to town. At precisely the same time that this led to the clash and intermingling of dialects, Lydgate and others began a conscious project of importing Latin and French words into the English language. In the 1420s English started to gain dominance as what John Fisher calls an "administrative language." A sign of its increasing authority was the resolution of the Brewer's Guild in 1422, that records would now be kept in English because English had already been "honorably enlarged and adorned" by the king.[4] 1440 is the date given for the

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[4] The fascinating statement by the Brewers is as follows:
Whereas our mother-tongue, to wit the English tongue, hath in modern days begun to be honorably enlarged and adorned, for that our most excellent lord, King Henry V, hath in his letters missive and divers affaris touching his own person, more willingly chosen to declare the secrets of his will, and for the better understanding of the people, hath with a diligent mind procured the common idiom (setting aside others) to be commended by the excersize of writing: and there are many of our craft of Brewers who have the knowledge of writing and reading in the said English idiom, but in others, to wit, the Latin and French, before these times used, they do not in any wise understand. For which causes with many others, it being considered how that the greater part of the Lords and trusty Commons have begun to make their matters to be noted down in our mother

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Prom ·*um parvulorum sive clericorum*, the first English-Latin dictionary, compiled by a Dom· ı friar in Lynn. Two other dictionaries—one a Latin-English word list—were produ ·oon after, signaling a change in the relationships between English and Latin. Whet· ıe Great Vowel Shift was a result of these forces or another sign of great lingu· ·ansformation is difficult to determine, but it is another factor that needs to be taken ıccount in thinking about the effect that these changes had on the writers as they work· ·h the material of their poetry, prose, and drama: their words.

·torical events and influences on authors are important, but the feynyng aesthetic does ·st in the minds of the writers and in the literature alone. For each of the indivi · or groups of texts under review, I have tried to understand the ways in which audier ·lso perceived the feynyng aesthetic in order to extend the parameters of this study ·lude a wider culture and populace. This involves a close reading of available histor ·vidence, of the texts themselves, of marginalia, of changes during recension; somet· , too, it involves arguments by analogy, in the last case attempting to understand the wa ıe set of texts might have been received by means of looking at the audience of anothe. ated set of texts. Overall, the inclusion of material concerning the historical and literar ·ıences on the authors, and the endeavor to perceive the reception of the texts by audie· ıre attempts to understand the implications of the feynyng aesthetic that go beyor ıdy of style alone and open up a study of poetics to other, broader cultural consi· ɔns.

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idea of feynyng is very close to Aristotle's formulation of *tekhne*. As Jacques Derric· shown, Aristotle's *tekhne* implies more than a skill or a technique. Rather, it is truly *morality* that is at stake, both in the sense of the opposition between good and evil, or good and bad, and in the sense of mores, public morals

---

ıe, so we also in our craft, following in some manner their steps, have decreed to commit to ɔry the needful things which concern us .... (Chambers and Daunt 139)

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> and social conventions. It is a question of knowing what is done and what is not done. This moral disquiet is in no way to be distinguished from questions of truth, memory, and dialectics. (73–75)

The present study is more than an examination of aesthetics, of style somehow separate from the ways in which people attempt to make sense of their world. To study feynyng, like an examination of *tekhne*, is necessarily also to study the whole process of what poets, prose writers, dramatists—and their audiences—know about the subject matter of their texts and their world, what they believe about their physical and mental situation for instance, and the reasons that it makes sense for them to present and to perceive subjects in particular ways.

In the history of literary criticism (especially recently with the influence of cultural studies), aesthetics and the ethos of a culture—its mores, preferences, desires—have rarely been separated completely. Literary analyses of fifteenth-century literature are no exception. Similarly, past histories of the events of the 1400s often include material on fifteenth-century culture and evaluate its historical phenomena in aesthetic terms. However, the fifteenth century holds a distinctive place in both the disciplines of literary and historical research. Part of the purpose of this study is to indicate the features of key fifteenth-century texts and their culture in order to rehabilitate their reputation in these two traditions whose judgments about the period closely coincide. As David Lawton and others point out, when literary scholars and historians have considered the period, they describe it as a decline, waning, or impoverishment of the culture that has come before. This situation is particularly acute in literary study. Fifteenth-century literature is probably the least-examined and least-taught of all centuries in English studies. Critics, when they have paid attention to the substantial body of texts of the century, have described it as "drab," dull," "prolix," and "incompetent."[5] More recently and in terms of the religious controversies of

[5] For summaries of the older tradition, see Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 3–18; Lawton, "Dullness" 761–62, 794 n. 3; and Lois Ebin, *Illuminator, Makar, Vates* x, 203–204 n.2.

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the time, this tradition continues, albeit in more subtle forms; the literature is said to be "constrained," working to contain unorthodox dissent, with the writers willingly imposing "self-censorship" on their works (A. Hunt 22–25, Dillon 58). A sensible but extremely common approach to studying the texts has been to compare them to those of the late-fourteenth century, Chaucer's works in particular, where they are, however, said to "narrow" a Chaucerian tradition of experimentation. In addition, the texts are said to "consolidate" the ideology of the Lancastrian court.[6] General surveys of English literature invariably omit the century altogether, skipping from the death of Geoffrey Chaucer in 1400 to Sir Thomas Wyatt or even later, Edmund Spenser, in the sixteenth century. Overall, the authors are little known, and no one has attempted a focused, equitable evaluation of the period's characteristics.[7]

Yet a word of caution is due about the idea of rehabilitating the reputation of fifteenth-century literature. Since Derek Pearsall's *John Lydgate* some thirty years ago, it has become an almost standard trope to begin with a complaint about the history of adverse criticism of fifteenth-century literature. The function of this trope is to cast the subject of the study, the literature, in a more positive light. While it was (and continues to be) a necessary rhetorical topos, argument from a history of negative analyses ultimately says little about what may lie behind the remarkably enduring criticisms, what it may be in the literature that gives rise to the censure. Fifteenth-century literature poses a formidable challenge to readers, and this challenge is obscured by merely noting and dismissing the stigma attached to it.

The features of its aesthetic, of its *tekhne*, call into question even some of the more open or accepting approaches to literature that have developed in more recent years. The

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[6] Paul Strohm, "Chaucer's"; Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power* 25, 298; and Nicholas Watson 826–29.

[7] An important correction to the paucity of anthologies is the recent volume edited by Pearsall, *Chaucer to Spenser*, which covers the years 1375–1575.

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four historically specific characteristics of the feynyng aesthetic are attributes so prevalent in fifteenth-century texts and so extreme that one is still tempted simply to label them as examples of "bad" writing. The feynyng aesthetic violates our sense of propriety; things are asymmetrical, even unnatural, in ways that are difficult to appreciate.[8] Moreover, it was not only Formalism or New Criticism that created such a predilection for a particular set of characteristics. Fifteenth-century English literature involves a departure from a sense of aesthetic and cultural decorum, which began in the ancient world, endures throughout the majority of the Middle Ages, and is reborn (ironically) in the Renaissance as a value by which to distance one's self from the intervening "middle." Thus, the departure in the early fifteenth century from a literary and cultural standard, termed *proprietas* by Roman authors, is a significant and fundamental difference in kind. Rehabilitation of fifteenth-century English literature's reputation therefore is a difficult, perhaps even unwanted task, one that requires us to alter or enlarge our implicit and explicit aesthetic preferences. The writers radically violate propriety in terms of style *and* thought: they embellish with rhetorical excess, implying a lack of focus on necessary content; they juxtapose unlike images and tones, indicating they lack coherence in terms of argument; they eschew structural variety for repetition, causing their reasoning to appear unconvincing; and they group words together in ways that violate accepted syntactical structures, suggesting they lack any meaning at all.

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[8] Lack of symmetry in particular is the focus of Charles Muscatine's remarkable conclusion to his book on Chaucer's relationship to French literature. Muscatine draws parallels between fifteenth-century French literature, late Gothic art, and, by implication, fifteenth-century literature in England. He describes them as containing "an unbalance, a conflict, or a disintegration of elements that the high Gothic had held in momentary poise," an "ostentatiousness which accentuates the lack of coherence," "extravagant display." "Facility" is valued to the extent that it "carries the practice of verbal ornament to ridiculous lengths," a "'bourgeois' frankness becomes more bold, with boisterousness, rawness, a crude sensualism and an impudent profanity." A "mixture of styles is overt," often only based on a "transiency of mood." The reasons for this he claims are a "loss of purposeful direction in the culture" and a lack of "moral underpinnings." He continues describing the aesthetic of this period:

> Its symbolism is merely gaud, its ceremony empty, its rhetoric only decorative. Its religion is incongruously stretched between ecstasies of mysticism and a profane, almost tactile familiarity with sacred matters. Its sense of fact is often spiritless or actually morbid. For all its boisterous play, the age is profoundly pessimistic; it is preoccupied with the irretrievable passage of time, with disorder, sickness, decay, and death. (245–46)

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A brief review of the inclination towards *proprietas* emphasizes the significant ways that fifteenth-century feynyng deviates from both aesthetic preferences and ingrained cultural, even philosophical, beliefs. Quintilian's harsh condemnation in the *Institutio oratoria* (a text that formed one of the bases of the trivium throughout the Middle Ages and beyond) of narratives that are overtly "arida," "ieiuna," "sinuosa," and "arcessitis descriptionibus . . . lascivat" ("dry," "jejune," "tortuous," and "revel in elaborate descriptions") represents a tradition of decorum challenged by at least some of the feynyng aesthetic's affectation (2.4). The prologue and first three chapters of Book 8 of his text consist of a long list of faults in which the words are out of proportion to the subject, are unnatural and affected, and so violate rhetoric as both an art and a virtue. The pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad C. Herennium* also indicates a dislike of characteristics that appear in early fifteenth-century poetry, prose, and drama. The author registers the vices that frequently arise in grand, middle, and simple styles: the grand style can be "sufflata," "turget," "inflata" ("swollen," "turgid," "inflated"); the middle "dissolutum," "fluctuans" ("slack," "drifting"); and the simple "exile," "aridum et exsangue" ("meagre," "dry and bloodless"), and repetitive (4.10–11).

Among others, Augustine, trained in classical rhetoric, transmits to the Middle Ages the preference for propriety in both style and thought that the feynyng aesthetic violates. Texts are not elegant or wise to him, one *or* the other, but are an aggregate: the eloquence is inseparable from the subject matter from which it arises. Any difficulties a writer may wish to create in a composition might proceed from the complexity of the subject matter but not its style or form (*De doctrina* 4.30, 62).

With the great resurgence of interest in rhetoric and the *ars poetriae* in the twelfth-century renaissance, a listing of faults of style continues and, as in Augustine, errors in style are again treated as inseparable from errors in thought. (Many of the same stylistic features are still considered "vices" today.) Matthew of Vendôme's *Ars poetriae* of about 1175 lists defects such as a "fluctuans et dissolutum" ("drifting and slack") style that is

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"partium discoherentium" ("lacking in cohesiveness"), a "turgidum et inflatum" ("turgid and inflated") style that employs "superflua verborum festivitate et oratione phalerata" ("needlessly high-flown words and ornate language") and causes "inania" ("vain obscurity"), an "aridum et exsangue" ("dry and bloodless") style that neglects "flosculos verborum et saporem sententiarum" ("flowers of diction and sweetness of thought") or errs in "similitudo ornatus et . . . verborum modesta" ("uniformity in embellishments and propriety in language"), and writing that is "diminutum" or "otiosum" ("scanty" or "prolix").[9] The subtly shifting targets of his criticisms are particularly remarkable in the following passage. Faults include

> obscurae brevitatis . . . superfluae loquacitatis excursus; decisae orationis anxietas; mentis fluitantis evagatio; scrupulosa sententiae difficultas; orationis infinita confusio; inexercitata ingenii sterilitas; linguae praecipitis indecens celeritas; verborum intercisa trepidatio; ignota dictionum significatio.
>
> (obscure brevity . . . digressing into superfluous loquacity; worrying over accepted language; wandering because of a doubtful mind; an overly scrupulous concern with meaning; boundless confusion of speech; a barren waste of talent; an unseemly hastening into linguistic disasters; a confused agitation over words; overlooking the meaning of expressions.) (4.25)

Where the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* noted that mixing the grand, middle, and simple styles was likely to benefit a composition due to the variety it would create (4.11), the Englishman John of Garland, writing soon after Matthew of Vendôme and compiling his own long list of vices to avoid in a composition, counsels that combining styles is likely to cause incongruity and should be avoided or the composition becomes useless (5.45–60). As A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott note in their study of medieval *accessūs* to authors,

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[9] 1.30–34. Translations of Matthew are by Aubrey Galyon.

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grammatical and rhetorical texts are not isolated in a separate aesthetic realm. They all "pertain to ethics" (12–15).

Classical and medieval traditions emphasize that style and subject-matter must be integrated and that stylistic excess of the type we find in the feynyng aesthetic not only makes for a bad composition (on formal, stylistic grounds) but impedes ideational clarity and inquiry. One of the most interesting formulations of such a concept coalesces in the twelfth-century renaissance. The *modistae*, those who studied grammar in terms of "modes" of signifying, argued that Latin grammar would reveal the rules according to which humans are able to think. For them, understanding of the world entails a correspondence between not only word and object but also between one word and the next. Hence, syntactical signification is important to thought and comprehension of the world (Burshill-Hall 40–54). One can see from this scheme not only problems for writers in vernacular languages generally but more specifically for fifteenth-century English writers for whom the conformity between not only word and meaning but also among words in a syntagmatic chain is often strained or of lesser importance.

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Part of the difficulty of a study such as this one is to judge exactly to what extent it is accurate to section off one period from another, in this case, to group texts from the fifteenth century under the rubric of the feynyng aesthetic and not others, especially those of Ricardian writers. It is up to the reader to decide whether the case is made for a cluster of characteristics that sufficiently differentiates the fifteenth from the fourteenth century, but part of the argument that follows is that, while it is possible to maintain that Chaucer's texts (in particular) contain certain incipient features of the feynyng aesthetic, these features do not dominate his texts as they will for early fifteenth-century writers. However, it is interesting that the presence of embryonic properties of the feynyng aesthetic in certain Ricardian texts has meant that past criticism traditionally has neglected—even scorned—the ornamentation, the lack of coherence, the repetition, and the self-conscious concern about

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language present in these poems, sometimes ignoring entire texts that contain these features.[10] Only recently are critics learning to appreciate some of these qualities in the poems and prose. Perhaps the best examples of Ricardian texts containing some of the features of the feynyng aesthetic are Chaucer's shorter and earlier poems: *Book of the Duchess*, *House of Fame*, *Parliament of Fowls*, and *Legend of Good Women*, works which, it has been argued, also challenge basic conceptions about poetry and knowledge.[11] It is likewise telling that many of these same fourteenth-century texts are precisely the texts fifteenth-century writers frequently looked back to, admired, and took as literary models to emulate, as Seth Lerer shows in *Chaucer and His Readers*.[12]

Lerer's study of these kinds of Chaucerian imitation marks an important moment in recent criticism of fifteenth-century English literature. Lerer notes a certain "secondary" aspect to the writings of John Clanvowe, Hoccleve, Lydgate, and Stephen Hawes; to the scribal activities of John Shirley and William Caxton; and to manuscript compilations such as MS Tanner 346. Cultural production after Chaucer, Lerer argues, is exactly that, after

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[10] John Dryden's famous description of Chaucer is revealing in this regard. He distinguishes Chaucer from an excessive poet and from fifteenth-century authors:

> *Chaucer* follow'd Nature every where; but was never so bold to go beyond her: And there is a great Difference of being *Poeta* and *nimis Poeta* [too much a poet], if we may believe *Catullus*, as much as betwixt a modest Behavior and Affectation. The Verse of *Chaucer*, I confess, is not Harmonious to us; but 'tis like the Eloquence of one whom *Tacitus* commends, it was *auribus istius temporis accommodata* [suitable to the ears of that time]: They who liv'd with him, and some time after him, thought it Musical; and it continues so even in our Judgment, if compar'd with the Numbers of *Lidgate* and *Gower* his Contemporaries: There is the rude Sweetness of a *Scotch* tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect. (528–29)

[11] See, for instance, on the *Book of the Duchess*: Barbara Nolan; Colleen Donnelly; Michael Herzog; Kathryn Lynch; Elaine Hansen, *Chaucer* 58–86; and Steven Kruger, "Medical and Moral." On the *House of Fame*: Sheila Delany, *Chaucer's House* 58–122; Jacqueline Miller; Piero Boitani; Martin Irvine, "Medieval Grammatical"; Lisa Kiser, "Eschatalogical"; Penelope Doob, *Idea* 307–39; Kruger, "Imagination"; Lara Ruffolo; Bernadette Vankeerbergen; and Michaela Grudin 35–47. On the *Parliament of Fowls*: Michael Kelley, "Antithesis"; David Aers, "*Parliament*"; A. C. Spearing, "'Al This Mene I'"; Robert Jordan 77–98; Michael Cherniss 119–47; Grudin 47–54; and Hugo Keiper. On the *Legend of Good Women*: Hansen, "Irony"; Kiser, *Telling* 50–70, 132–54; Russell Peck; Kruger, "Passion"; and Robert Edwards.

[12] Also see Caroline Spurgeon 1.x-xxi, lxxvi-lxxix; Denton Fox 393–99; Rossell Robbins 147–72; and Strohm, "Chaucer's" 5, 20–28.

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Chaucer, and the writers and compilers imitate him as though they are infants following a literary father, causing their writing to appear both subjugated and nostalgic. Concurrent with this "infantilization" are contemporary historical and political pressures that give rise to poems that adopt a pleading tone in their counsels to kings, dukes, and other patrons. These writings are purposely didactic, their quantity far exceeding those of the previous century.

Lerer's work draws on other important studies of fifteenth-century literature and its changing reputation: Lois Ebin on Scottish and English poetry of this period; Louise Fradenburg on Scottish poetry; Derek Pearsall, A. C. Spearing, and Richard Green on English poetry; and Lawton on the changing reputation of fifteenth-century poetry in twentieth-century criticism. Of these works, Ebin's focus on the Scots "makaris"—Robert Henryson and William Dunbar, who flourished in the second half of the fifteenth century—in terms of their "fenȝeit fabils" is particularly important to my study of the feynyng aesthetic in English literature. Ebin argues that Scottish "feȝnyng" necessarily centers on the poet's own role and position as an author, converging on his attempts to teach at the same time that he is drawn to the "enameled" surface of a poem's rhetorical techniques. Her selection of the feature of Scottish feȝnyng as significant to the great tradition of fifteenth-century Scottish poetry and her discussion of its characteristics provide an important correlation to the earlier situation in England.[13]

Yet Lerer's, Ebin's, Fradenburg's, Pearsall's, Spearing's, Green's, and Lawton's studies have certain limitations (often explicitly recognized by their authors). Despite the fact that they achieve extremely sensitive analyses of their respective subjects, attempting to situate each text with a great degree of historical acumen, all are studies of poetry alone and poetry in relation only to the courtly estate. Court poetry has become synecdochic of

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[13] *Illuminator, Makar, Vates* 49–90. The Scots are not included in my study because they belong to a separable region and culture. Fradenburg argues for a distinction between Scottish and English culture during this period and for important differences between English and Scottish poets.

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fifteenth-century literature, standing for the entire century's aesthetic. It is often difficult when reading these studies to imagine how the enormous quantity of contemporary texts belonging to other genres, such as the prose and drama that flower in the fifteenth century, and to other estates and aspects of the same culture, such as contemplative practices, the extensive productions of plays, sermons, and so on, relates to this court poetry. For these reasons I am particularly indebted to critics such as Sarah Beckwith, Gail Gibson, and others who have begun the difficult task of drawing together these different strands of fifteenth-century writing. In particular, Gibson's focus on the geographically specific area of East Anglia is stimulating in that it brings together the poetry, prose, drama, and art of one particular region to reveal what she calls an "incarnational aesthetic." Her focus is a precursor to more discussions that are sure to follow the advantageous path of geographic specificity.

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Finally, what has led these critics to return to these texts, and what can encourage those unfamiliar with the literature to appreciate it? In addition to the historical turn in literary studies, some recent analyses of literature of other periods and several aspects of contemporary critical theory exhibit an engagement with types of affectation that are similar to those of the feynyng aesthetic. Also, it is possible to discern affinities between the feynyng aesthetic of fifteenth-century literature and late-twentieth century art. Part of my own interest in the stylistic and historical features of fifteenth-century feynyng grew out of a fascination with these other periods' aesthetics and theoretical formations. James Mirollo and Patricia Fumerton offer important contributions to an engagement with excessive embellishment and disproportionate aesthetics in Mannerist texts of the sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, literature that, as Mirollo says, "reveals rather than conceals art . . . eschewing thematic expansion and settling for stylistic refinement or modulation" (68). Fumerton studies the "fragmentary, peripheral, and ornamental," following Angus Fletcher to argue that in the English Renaissance "[d]ecoration . . . allegorizes or alludes to a world

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of cultural value that could not otherwise be represented *except* by means of oblique, allusive ornament" (1–3, 21–26). Thomas Docherty, Richard Strier, Ronald Corthell, and others explore one area of Mannerist writing, John Donne's poetry, in order to examine the "difficulty of 'meaning' or 'intending' for a writer such as Donne in the late European Renaissance" (Docherty 6). The subjects of Donne's poems are "unsettled," the reader "pushed and pulled between identification with a particular ideological formation and discomfort . . . with this identification" ultimately because of a lack of depth in the poems and in their meanings. The subjects are "excessive," "overproduced" (Corthell 11–22, 134–66).

At least since 1968 literary theory has turned its attention to language and its material aspects, which has led to interest in self-conscious but also excessive texts. The writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari provide a good register of these two movements in recent critical theory. Deleuze describes succinctly the twentieth century's concentration on the presence of words when he says that "language consists in speaking only at the surface of things, and thereby in capturing the pure event and the combinations of events that take place on the surface. It becomes a question of reascending to the surface, of discovering surface entities . . ." (285). These "surface entities" are the subject of some of Deleuze and Guattari's other writings where they describe these entities as "rhizomic" chains with proliferating branches and roots rather than what they call "centered systems." Certain texts and objects have the potential to be machine-like and paratactic rather than ontological and concerned with "foundations . . . endings and beginnings" (3–38).

Finally, late-twentieth century plastic arts and literature also demonstrate a desire to produce objects that are excessive and appear affected. Self-consciousness is an obvious prominent feature of late-twentieth century art, but so too is a more interesting aspect related to the idea of the "surface." Fredric Jameson studies a variety of objects, such as the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, David Salle's paintings, and Hans Haacke's

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transformations of museum spaces, and attributes a "flatness or depthlessness" to recent art, what he calls "a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense, perhaps the supreme formal feature of all the postmodernisms" (6–16). Recent literature also exhibits a preference for a kind of unreconciled "superficiality," each text like "an archeological site, where the accreted objects of various civilizations lie in surprising juxtaposition" (Bergman xxi). Postmodern texts are overtly rhetorical and affected, each bringing "accreted objects" together to create a new kind of "elegance," the "elegance of combining many refined figures, and of stretching each" (Crase).

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The primary task of this study is to explore the aesthetics of feynyng in fifteenth-century English literature and culture while attempting to remain aware of what Hans Robert Jauss famously called the "alterity" of the Middle Ages. "Alterity" requires that people who study medieval literature and history keep in mind their irresolvable difference from the period and so also remember that their approach will always be shaped by present-day ideas and predispositions.[14] A more consciously theoretical study that follows from such an awareness of one's own "alterity" is actually analogous to the medievals' own interpretations of literature and history, which were always "ideologically based" and with a "sharply defined teleology" (Minnis and Scott viii-ix). Today, there still exists a separation in medieval criticism, one strand believing that an approach to the Middle Ages can be objectively historical and not theoretically informed, and another more consciously theoretical movement whose proponents believe that their studies can be non-historical. The first group relies on unexamined Enlightenment methods of empirical research to imagine across the many years that separate today from the Middle Ages. These methods are, perhaps ironically, quite foreign to a medieval person's own sense of history. The second group of critics often only searches for an underlying ambiguity, irony, or

[14] Jauss may not necessarily have had such an effect in mind. For an important critique that argues Jauss eventually attempts to reclaim a scientific objectivity, see Robert Holub 60.

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consciousness that is separate from temporal and historical conditions.[15] I attempt a necessarily conscious combination of the two, incorporating historical research and an inescapable late-twentieth century perspective in an effort to maintain the "alterity" of fifteenth-century English literature while making it more available to the modern reader.

[15] Steven Justice's introduction to *Writing and Rebellion* offers a succinct argument that the historical and theoretical approaches are not entirely unreconcilable (5–7).

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CHAPTER ONE

LABORIOUS PATRIOTISM, GROUNDLESS ELABORATION: HOCCLEVE'S AND LYDGATE'S *FÜRSTENSPIEGEL*-BEGGING POEMS

The most outstanding feature of the feynyng aesthetic of fifteenth-century English literature is excessive ornamentation: narratives are endlessly elaborated; images, ideas, and emotions vastly different in scale and importance are brought together; and descriptions are lavishly decorated, often with words culled from other languages. Thomas Hoccleve's and John Lydgate's *Fürstenspiegel*-begging poems provide some of the best examples of this aesthetic. The *Regement of Princes*, *Troy Book*, *Siege of Thebes*, and *Fall of Princes* consist of incessantly amplified historical stories along with detailed descriptions of the poets' personal lives in language that is full of tropes, figures, and aureation. Hoccleve and Lydgate write in this style at this particular time in an effort to contribute to a linguistic nationalism; it is in large measure upon the sovereignty of the English language that England bases its identity in the early fifteenth century. The poets' implicit and explicit rationale for feynyng is to produce linguistic evidence of a distinctly English national identity: the more writing there is in English and the more beautiful the language, the more recognizable and worthy England becomes. Hoccleve's and Lydgate's writing also bolsters Lancastrian authority by crediting their patrons, the kings and princes, with providing the impetus for this linguistic nationalism. Their poems identify the Lancastrians so closely with the vernacular that they are indistinguishable from England itself, keeping questions about Henry IV's usurpation and Henry V and VI's succession at bay.

Hoccleve and Lydgate may intend their writing to be patriotic, but the personal aspects of their poems contradict their claim that they are promoting national and royal identity. At the same time that they praise their Lancastrian patrons and defend England against its enemies, they detail their own indigence and the poverty in England, which affect their ability to write: England for them is a place characterized by lack of opportunity, corruption, and an unreliable economy. Hoccleve and Lydgate are insistently pragmatic in

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their approaches, arguing that poetic inspiration is difficult if not impossible without financial support, especially if they want to achieve heights of poetic floriation, and while it is surely a literary device to complain that they do not have enough money to survive and to write, they develop poverty into more than a topos in their poems, dwelling on and enumerating it in highly specific and concrete ways. Ironically, they express the desire to beautify the English language and English literature for the sake of the mother country and tongue, but England's material conditions make them unable to carry through with this project. Moreover, the country's poverty is not only monetary but also literary. England, they point out, has no literary precedents apart from Chaucer and a few others, and its geographic location is far removed from lands where literature once flourished and continues to thrive.

Hoccleve's and Lydgate's nationalist and royal justifications for their verse are undercut by the materiality of England, or rather England's failure to provide the money and the literary tradition needed to write. The thousands of lines of ornamental English poetry become quite literally groundless without England as their rationale. The feynyng aesthetic of the lines, therefore, has a strangely unmotivated quality and is without any structuring principle. Without a firm basis in the idea that they are furthering England's Englishness, Hoccleve and Lydgate expand their sources and select subjects seemingly at random, endlessly floriating and embellishing whatever is merely nearest at hand.

Writing as Patriotism

At the Council of Constance in 1417, Henry V's ambassadors asked "whether nation be understood as a people marked off from others by blood relations and habit of unity or by peculiarities of language, the most sure and positive sign and essence of a nation in divine and human law."[1] Seventeen years before, on 30 September, 1399,

[1] The Latin reads: "sive sumatur natio ut gens secundum cognationem et collectionem ab alia distincta, sive secundum diversitatem linguarum, quae maximam et verissimam probant nationem et ipsius essentiam, jure divino pariter et humano" (Hardt 5.92). The translation is by Louise Loomis (524–25).

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Henry's father, Henry IV, had presented the *fait accompli* to English Parliament that Richard had already abdicated the throne. Henry claimed the kingship for three reasons: by right, because he was descended from Henry III through Edmund Crouchback; by conquest, because he had, with the help of relations and friends, claimed it; and by reason of goodwill, because the realm was on the verge of disarray due to Richard's poor and unjust governance (*RP* 3.422–23). Henry's arguments and the usurpation were to cause so much mistrust and adversity throughout his reign that when Henry V took power in 1417 and sent his ambassadors to Constance to argue that England should have independent representation at the Council, the realm's arguments were the exact opposite of his father's claims to the throne. The ambassadors deny the importance of blood relations, thereby suppressing the idea that Edmund Crouchback, not Edward I, was the older son of Henry III (an idea that had been discredited almost immediately after 1399), and they reject the argument for "habit of unity," which would have been difficult to argue given the disarray of England itself. Instead, they maintain that it is upon language, "the most sure and positive sign and essence of a nation in divine and human law," that a country exists.

According to the ambassadors, to be English means to speak or write in English: linguistic ability determines nationality. Despite their argument's apparent lack of self-interest, they were sent by Henry as part of a continuing effort by the Lancastrians actively to promote the importance of the vernacular for their own ends. Since the beginning of their rule, continuing a practice begun by Richard, the Lancastrians aligned themselves with the use of English in spoken and written discourse in order to demonstrate to Parliament, which could grant or withhold money for the war effort and other expenses, and at least nominally to the middle strata and the rest of the country, that they shared a common culture. As Malcolm Richardson succinctly describes Henry V, "Henry was converted to the vernacular in 1417, the year in which, not incidentally, he launched his second invasion

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whose article, "Nationality at Council of Constance," provides an introduction to the issue of English nationality. See also F. R. H. du Boulay.

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of France." The evidence of this decision to turn to the vernacular consists of letters Henry sent from France to the mayor and aldermen of London, his warrants to the Chancery, his letters to the Privy Council, and his correspondence with his brother John, Duke of Bedford. Before 1417 these letters are in Latin or French. After 1417, the majority of his letters are in English.[2] The Lancastrian effort to establish themselves as the English royal household by sharing a language with Parliament and seeming more at one with the country's populace also helped distinguish the Lancastrians and their methods from Richard II, whose poor governance, it was alleged, arose out of acting independently of Parliament and the people. The earliest recorded addresses to Parliament in English are by the Mercer's Guild in 1388, but the next in 1397 and the two after that in 1399 concern the deposition of Richard II and his supporters. Most important, Henry's challenge to the throne on 30 September, 1399, is in English.[3]

The Lancastrians' vested interest in promoting the English language as the sign of English nationality and legitimate kingship creates a charged context for English literature. Bound up with royal gestures towards the vernacular is their support of English literature; because of the insecurity of the Lancastrian title, Larry Scanlon has argued, the "kingship's dependence on public modes of legitimation was greater than ever before."[4] This

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[2] Richardson, "Henry V" 727, 740–41. Arguments that a loss to France would entail the loss of the English language appear in Stubbs 480, *RP* 2.150b, *RP* 2.158b, and *RP* 2.362b, cited in John Fisher's "Chancery and the Emergence of Standard Written English in the Fifteenth Century" 879 n.32. The idea that Henry V's encouragement of English was to gain support for the war may also be found in Joyce Otway-Ruthven 28–29, 46; John Fisher, Malcolm Richardson, and Jane Fisher xv–xvi; John Fisher; and G. L. Harriss, Introduction 1–29. On Lancastrian fiscal difficulties see E. F. Jacob 76–78 and Harriss, "Financial Policy" 160–63. On Parliamentary restrictions of funds, see *RP* 3.623; also K. B. McFarlane 78–101; A. L. Brown, "Parliament *c.*1377–1422" and "The Commons and the Council"; and Harriss, "Management" 139–43.

[3] Addresses to Parliament in English, including Henry's challenge to the throne appear in *RP* 3.378, 424, 451, and 453, in Fisher 880. See also Fisher for English entries in the Parliamentary rolls to 1450 (880 n.37).

[4] "King's Two Voices" 226. This article is superseded by chapter 10 of Scanlon's *Narrative, Authority, and Power*. However, because the article and book locate Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes* and Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* in relation to different rhetorical modes and textual associations, they are substantially distinct arguments, and I will have recourse to both.

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"dependence," of course, came with a great deal of power, including the power to sponsor works of poetry that would help resolve or dispel questions about legitimation. Continuing a tradition that began at the end of the fourteenth century with Chaucer and Gower, Hoccleve, Lydgate, Adam of Usk, and others extended the vernacular support for kings from the Ricardian into the Lancastrian eras. Their involvement was to rely on two rhetorical modes, first attempting to resolve the problem of succession from Richard II to Henry IV and down the Lancastrian line, and second reinforcing and consolidating Lancastrian authority.[5] Patronage became prominent because it encouraged a literature that identified the royal body as closely as possible with the national language, which is arguably a patriotic practice in that the writers instantiate a representation of England united around language in opposition to France, domestic heresies, and rebellion. This is despite the fact that the kings' interests were invariably at odds with those of the majority of the population of England.

The feynyng aesthetic in the poetry is a product of the writers' support for their Lancastrian patrons and linguistic nationalism. The poets achieve patriotic writing first by recognizing a tradition of English letters and accentuating its importance, second by producing more poetry in the service of the nation and thereby furthering this English tradition, and third by making the English language a medium worthy of English literature by increasing its elegance and magnificence. The feynyng in the literature begins with the poets' reading practices and their sense of inadequacy in relation to their literary forebears (Chaucer in particular), and continues with the fact that a sheer quantity of lines is nationally significant despite the seemingly endless and directionless amplification this encourages, and that literary quality is based on linguistic quality. In all these instances the

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[5] On succession, in addition to the articles by Fisher and others cited previously, see Michael Bennett 16; Paul Strohm, *Hochon's* 75–94; Scanlon, "King's Two Voices" 216–26; Ambrisco and Strohm 40–57; and especially Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*. On bolstering Lancastrian power, see Richard Green, *Poets and Princepleasers* 153–67, 182–202; Strohm, "Chaucer's Fifteenth-Century Audience"; David Lawton, "Dullness" 789–94; Antony Hasler 167–76; Seth Lerer 14–16, 48–56; Derek Pearsall, "Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*"; David DeVries 410–18; and Judith Ferster 137–59.

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poets eschew standards like *proprietas*, especially formal symmetry or thematic-structural unity; instead, they aspire to gild and enamel the lines and verses, aureating words, descriptions, and whole stories for their Lancastrian patrons in order that the crown appear to be more closely aligned with a resplendent and admirable *vox populi* or (at least) *vox Parliamenti*.

The Chaucer Topos: Reading and Inadequacy

Hoccleve and Lydgate look back to Chaucer as the father of the English language and as a master rhetorician. To them he is a topos out of which they feyne panegyrics and encomia on his death and repeated protestations as to their own inadequate and plodding writing. Where Chaucer was able to exquisitely embellish the English language, Hoccleve and Lydgate merely go further and further wrong every time they move their pens, managing to translate or compose new verse that is monochromatic at best. Where Chaucer epitomizes a golden age of literary achievement now lost, Hoccleve and Lydgate live in a gray time when few if any people appreciate poetry. Hoccleve and Lydgate's poems are full of explicit references to Chaucer and discussions of his works; in other places their poetry incorporates Chaucerian plots, lines, phrases, and expressions to create a species of *bricolage* or a kind of imitative interpretation. The feynyng here is as apparent in their ways of reading as it is in their writing. Chaucer is not praised for his skill in creating a layered and complex persona, exploring contemporary issues, or complicating his thematics or sources. Rather, he is a stylist, a master polisher.

Chaucer is also a poet of the nation. This elevation of Chaucer to unattainable, even divine, heights of rhetorical achievement is indistinguishable from the nationalist project; each ultimately supports the other. In a Lancastrian age when to write well is to feyne the English language in order to increase its status as a worthy literary and national language, Chaucer as master embellisher is retrospectively patriotic. He is portrayed differently in Hoccleve than he is in Lydgate, but in both he is synecdochic of the country's linguistic

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achievement to the extent that their comments mark the beginning of canon formation. For Hoccleve, Chaucer is a recently departed companion discussed in intimate tones even if he is nearly a saint. For Lydgate, Chaucer is more distant, approachable only through his poetry, but his poetry's aesthetic power and rhetorical beauty have the ability to incorporate Lydgate within Chaucer's verse, transforming him into a character in a Chaucerian line.[6]

In Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes* Chaucer's name arises as if out of nowhere, but the invocation is tied closely to the purpose of the poem and the context of Lancastrian and nationalist linguistics. Hoccleve wrote the *Regement of Princes* for Henry, Prince of Wales, in the years immediately preceding his accession as Henry V in 1413, a *Fürstenspiegel* and begging poem that draws on a tradition established by Giles of Rome's *De regimine principium*, the *Secretum secretorum*, and other works, and which survives in over 40 manuscripts. The *Regement* is 5463 lines long, but nearly half (2107 lines) consists of a long prologue in the form of a dialogue between Hoccleve and an old beggar, a tangled mix of realistic, possibly autobiographical details and conventional lines often derived from other sources. In the tradition of the dialogue that appears in complaint and dream-vision poems, the beggar is unable to comprehend Hoccleve's troubles even though Hoccleve explains them clearly throughout.

The figure of the beggar allows Hoccleve to explore a variety of subject matters in the *Regement*, his lack of wisdom giving rise to conversations that are both individual and national, personal and public. Hoccleve's actual problem is that he doesn't have enough money, and it is not until the end of the prologue that the beggar finally understands. To resolve this problem the beggar suggests that Hoccleve write for the prince, saying, "If þat þou stonde in his beneuolence, / He may be salue vn-to þin indigence" (1825–34). The

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[6] Seth Lerer discusses Chaucer's reputation in *Chaucer and His Readers*. Lerer notes what he calls an "infantilization" before the father Chaucer in fifteenth-century English literature. See also Green, *Poets and Princepleasers* 177–78; Lee Patterson, "Making Identities" 75–77; Pearsall, "Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*" 398–408; Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power* 312–14, 332–34; and Strohm, *England's Empty Throne* 146–48.

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sugge ı, coming as it does from another and not Hoccleve, provides Hoccleve with a reaso ıddress Henry in such a way that he avoids hubris and directly asking the prince for m (Scanlon, "King's Two Voices" 236–37). For the remainder of the prologue, the be r and Hoccleve discuss what would be a fitting subject to write for the prince. It is see ·ly gratuitous that included in these last 185 lines is a discussion of the death of Chau

›wever, the descriptions of Hoccleve's acquaintance with Chaucer and what Chau symbolizes for Hoccleve are intricately linked to the Lancastrian concern to appear as clc · tied to a mother country and mother tongue as possible. Hoccleve suggests the need : Henry's involvement in the country's literature, especially now that Chaucer is gone. ı who better to stress the necessity and intimacy of Henry's connection with the verna .r than someone who actually knew Chaucer personally? Hoccleve does not direct ›ast that he knew Chaucer; instead, the beggar raises the topic within a conver ion flavored with the added credibility of surprise and secondhand information. In the : ogue the beggar finally asks after the name of his interlocutor and learns, "Hocc e, fadir myn, men clepen me." Immediately, the beggar responds:

> "Hoccleue, sone?" "I-wis, fadir, pat same."
>
> "I haue herd, or this, men speke of pe;
>
> Pou were aqueynted with Caucher [sic], pardee—
>
> God haue his soule best of any wight!" (1865–68).

hether Hoccleve actually knew Chaucer is not as important as the rhetorical effect of the sage in the context of the prologue. The fact that the beggar has heard of Hocc s acquaintance with Chaucer through other people ("'I haue herd, or this, men speke pe'") suggests both a literary community and a larger discursive context in Londc which the name of Chaucer has currency. If Henry acknowledges Hoccleve by payin · his poems, he is buying a prominent position in that community. In fact, on a certai el it is beside the point whether Henry pays for the poem because Hoccleve has

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already written Henry's involvement into the prologue. His name is already associated with the vernacular literary world, and so Henry can feel, as he undoubtedly would, that he is free to favor the scribbling poet or not. However, Henry's patronage would tie him more closely to Hoccleve, a poet whose name acts as a metonymic sign of Chaucer and other English writers in the minds of England's inhabitants. It would be a sound investment because it has the potential to multiply its returns at least among the society that Hoccleve intimates.

In Hoccleve's descriptions of Chaucer, nationalism and ornamental English rhetoric go hand in hand. Chaucer here is not, as he probably was, an exclusive poet known to a limited group of people who could afford to join a circle of royal acquaintances and the higher court, but a benefit to the whole realm because of his role in proclaiming the beauty of the English language.[7] The focus on the stylistic and verbal aspects of Chaucer's poetry also generates Hoccleve's own ornamental praise and eulogy, compounding English's splendor:

> "But weylaway! so is myn herte wo,
> That pe honour of englyssh tonge is deed,
> Of which I wont was han consail and reed.
>
> "O, maister deere, and fadir reuerent!
> Mi maister Chaucer, flour of eloquence,
> Mirour of fructuous entendement,
> O, vniuersel fadir in science!" (1958–67)

Chaucer is at once the personal friend who was able to "consail and reed" Hoccleve and the "honour of englyssh tonge," a universal benefit to the nation's language. He is indeed a

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[7] Discussion of Chaucer's audience appears in Strohm, "Chaucer's Audience" and "Chaucer's Fifteenth-Century Audience"; Pearsall, *Old and Middle English Poetry* 194–97; Anne Middleton; Green, *Poets and Princepleasers* 3–4; Janet Coleman 18–57; and Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power* 142–45.

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mirror whose benefits multiply as if by design ("entendement"); Chaucer causes Hoccleve's own elaborate eulogy, enriches the entire country's tongue, and by inference, benefits Henry.

Hoccleve modestly denies that Chaucer was in any way successful in helping Hoccleve to write better poetry, but Chaucer's benefits exceed the personal. Hoccleve continues in an apostrophe to Death, which conjures Chaucer's benefits out of Death's grip for the country:

> "O deth! pou didest naght harme singuleer,
> In slaghtere of him; but al pis land it smertith;
> But natheless, yit hast pou no power
> His name sle; his hy vertu astertith
> Vnslayn fro pe, which ay vs lyfly hertyth,
> With bookes of his ornat endytyng,
> That is to al pis land enlumynyng." (1968–74)

Chaucer's name is closely associated with his texts, whose virtue has the power to transcend mortality via a double synechdochic movement. Chaucer as person is dead, which "al pis land . . . smertith," but the ornate qualities of his work survive to illuminate the whole country. Who is this Hoccleve who wants to write for the prince? A personal acquaintance of Chaucer, who continues to function metonymically as the apotheosis of poetic achievement for the whole country. It is a compelling argument for the "beneuolence" and "salue" that Hoccleve wants, but it is also a persuasive explanation as to why Henry should appear as patron.

The same complimentary descriptions of Chaucer as intimate acquaintance of Hoccleve and nationalist, even universal, poet also significantly occurs in the section of the *Regement* on how kings should listen to a council's advice before acting. It is here in the margin of Harley 4866 that Hoccleve places the much-noted portrait of Chaucer.

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Chaucer's arm crosses the frame around the picture, his finger pointing next to the word "resemblaunce":

> Al-pogh his lyfe be queynt, pe resemblaunce
> Of him hap in me so fressh lyflynesse,
> Þat, to putte othir men in remembraunce
> Of his persone, I haue heere his lyknesse
> Do make, to pis ende in sothfastnesse,
> Þat pei pat haue of him lest pought & mynde,
> By pis peynture may ageyn him fynde.[8]

Hoccleve again conjures Chaucer for the nation out of a personal familiarity, except here Chaucer is bound even more closely to Hoccleve. His resemblance lives on *inside* Hoccleve in his "fressh" image. Hoccleve will make him available to all people, but this action is presented as though it has already happened; every mention of the benefits the portrait will have is retrospective, creating the illusion that all who read the *Regement* are already familiar with Chaucer: the portrait that comes out of Hoccleve's body is to *re*mind "othir men" of him, people who have already known him but who have "lest pought & mynde" of him and may "ageyn" find him.

Chaucer's portrait is also the occasion for Hoccleve to digress on the role of images in general, which serves two purposes: to raise Chaucer to the status of an object for religious veneration and to remind audiences of Henry's religious faith and devotion to literature. Having decorated his words with an illumination of Chaucer who already and quite literally "enlumynes" "al pis land," Hoccleve continues to dilate on the portrait. He likens Chaucer's portrait to images in churches, which "Maken folk penke on god & on his seyntes." "[I]f men take of it heede, / Thoght of pe lyknesse, it wil in hem brede." He

[8] 4992–98. The portrait appears in Harley 4866, which is not in Hoccleve's hand but may, according to M. C. Seymour, have been produced soon after he composed the *Regement* and under his supervision (Hoccleve, *Selections* 124). The portrait also appears in British Library MS Royal 17.D.vi and Philadelphia, Rosenbach MS 1083/3.

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augments this idea of Chaucer's hagiographical likeness breeding in "folk" with an orthodox defense of images. He opposes this orthodoxy to Wycliffites who "erren foule" in believing that "none ymages schuld I-maked be," a subject that is explicitly linked to Henry the only time it is brought up elsewhere in the poem (4999–5009). Here, in the digression on the portrait, the beggar suspects that Hoccleve's "hyd maladye" might lead him to despair, "pe fendes sly conclusioun." The beggar offers as a warning the recent example of John Badby, who was burned at Smithfield on 1 March, 1410. Apart from overt Wycliffite beliefs, Badby's flaw, according to the beggar, was too much thought. He tried to reason through his faith rather than simply trusting in Church interpretation of the Bible and Church doctrine. Hoccleve contrasts heresy with the true faith, as held by Henry, Prince of Wales, who apparently tried to save Badby at his burning by asking him to renounce his opinions, even bringing him the sacrament, a subject he would return to in another poem, "To Sir John Oldcastle."[9] Badby's "Lak of occupacioun," which led him to "Musep forper panne his wyt may strecche" and soon to "Dampnable errour" is far removed from Henry's "cheritable labour" in trying to save Badby (267–392). Recalling Hoccleve's own orthodoxy and Henry's devout benefits to the country in conjunction with the Chaucer portrait produces a powerful set of arguments that link Henry to true religious and literary faith. The benefits of a tradition of English poetry, as sponsored by the prince, are therefore equivalent to religious orthodoxy.

Hoccleve proposes that his body, his person, is the central link between Henry and Chaucer whereas John Lydgate's homage to Chaucer is more evident in his poetic style than in the content of his verse. In Lydgate the Chaucerian topos is a textual Chaucer whose lines interweave into the very fabric of his poetry. Chaucer does not live on in Lydgate since Lydgate had no personal knowledge of him. Instead, Chaucer is known through his poetry. However, as in Hoccleve, Chaucer's verse is the occasion for

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[9] "To Sir John Oldcastle" appears in M. C. Seymour's *Selections* (61–74).

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elaborate praise and amplification as an unsurpassable paragon of rhetoric for the nation. Again, this praise furthers Lancastrian linguistic nationalism both by depicting a tradition of indigenous literature that is renowned for its beautiful language and by continuing that tradition in texts closely associated with Henry IV, V, and VI. Lydgate was ordained a priest at the Benedictine abbey of Bury St. Edmund's in 1397 and soon went on to study at Gloucester College at Oxford where it is thought that he met Henry, Prince of Wales. Their meeting led to a life-long series of poems from Lydgate for Henry and then his son, Henry VI, with Lydgate becoming an official poet for the Lancastrians from 1420–1434. Lydgate had already composed several courtly and religious poems before his first commission to write the *Troy Book* for Henry, Prince of Wales, in 1411 or 1412, the same time that Hoccleve wrote his *Regement*. Whereas it is unclear whether Hoccleve's poem was even received by Henry, Lydgate's *Troy Book* was requested by the prince. In 1421–1422 Lydgate wrote another Greek story, the *Siege of Thebes*, presumably for Henry V right before his death, and in the years 1431–1438 he wrote the *Fall of Princes* for Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, uncle and protector of the young Henry VI and warden of England. As with the immensely popular *Regement*, all three texts were copied and excerpted extensively throughout the fifteenth century: the *Troy Book*, which is five books long, survives in 20 manuscripts; the *Siege of Thebes*, a much shorter poem, in 29 manuscripts; and the *Fall of Princes*, nine books and 36,365 lines long, in 34 manuscripts. For the remainder of the century and into the sixteenth century, the latter was used as an encyclopedia out of which many individual stories of fallen princes from the past were copied into other texts.

As with Hoccleve's *Regement*, Lydgate's *Troy Book* praises Chaucer as a national poet, and he does so in a lengthy and rhetorically elaborate feynyng style. He even reuses phrases from his own slightly earlier *Life of Our Lady* to praise Chaucer as "poete of Breteyne, / Amonge oure englisch pat made first to reyne / Þe gold dewe-dropis of rethorik so fyne, / Oure rude langage only tenlwmyne." This paean demonstrates Lydgate's

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ineptitude before his master, but it is *humilitas* that lasts for 36 lines, describing Lydgate's "crokid lynys rude" in comparison to Chaucer's "englische per[e]les" in metaphors of lead versus jewels, counterfeit versus true colors of rhetoric (2.4694–730). Similar praises and negative comparisons, in rhetorically elaborate styles, occur in five other places in the *Troy Book*.

However, it is Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* that most tellingly demonstrates Chaucer's function as a topos for Lydgate. In it, Lydgate transforms himself into a character in Chaucer's work, about as extreme a form of deference as possible. The *Siege* goes beyond merely referencing Chaucer in places (though specific tributes are included); the whole work is an amplification on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. In fact, the poem is so close a form of praise by imitation that it was thought to be a work by Chaucer until the eighteenth century. The whole frame of the *Siege* is a curious mix of Lydgate writing about *The Canterbury Tales* as a text and as reality. Not until the "roadside drama" theory of *The Canterbury Tales* in the twentieth century would the *Tales* as a book and the *Tales* as nonfiction be so merged. It is not that Lydgate thinks the *Tales* meant Chaucer actually went on a pilgrimage with the figures in the story, but after singling out the Cook, Miller, Reeve, Pardoner, and Friar and noting that they belong to Chaucer's "Canterbury talys," Lydgate then writes that he met up with the pilgrims as they set out for their return trip from Canterbury. The host requires him, "Lydgate, / Monk of Bery ny3 fyfty 3ere of age," to tell a tale, which he does: the story of the siege of Thebes.

Lydgate's *Siege* is an appendage, a rhetorical supplement to the *Canterbury Tales;* the whole poem is an embellishment on Chaucer's work, especially as he disregards the Parson's suggestion in the *Tales* that his might be the last tale on the pilgrimage and that there will be no collective story-telling on the return voyage. The *Siege* may follow the Parson's Tale chronologically within the frame of the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole, being the last tale a pilgrim tells, but it is also an addition to the front of Chaucer's work as the *Siege* is the story of the time before the Knight's Tale of Troy began. However, its most

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striking status as supplement to the *Tales*, which is even more closely indicative of the feynyng style of the early fifteenth century, is that Lydgate's own prologue to the *Siege* takes Chaucer's frame for the *Tales* and amplifies it. Where Chaucer's opening sentence is 18 lines long, consisting of two dependent "when" clauses followed by the independent clause that begins, "Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages," Lydgate's 65 lines of two dependent clauses expand Chaucer's discussion of the time of year and the season to a detailed astronomical and seasonal designation, elaborate descriptions of the characters' appearances and tales, and extensive praise for Chaucer's skill as "Floure of Poetes thorghout al breteyne." Lydgate is apparently so carried away by his introduction that the sentence does not have a main subject, no matter whether the editor punctuates it with a full stop at the end of 45 lines (as modern editors do) or more logically at the end of the adulation regarding Chaucer at line 65. As A. C. Spearing argues, throughout the poem Lydgate continues his Chaucerian embellishment through extensive use of "Latinate diction," "highly complex syntactical structures," "local beauty of thought and sound," and "the substitution of figurative for literal and straightforward modes of expression" ("Lydgate's" 341–50).

Like Hoccleve, Lydgate describes Chaucer as a rhetorician for the nation. Again, the retrospective acclamation of Chaucer's masterful use of language and style aims to institute a tradition of English literature that is particularly characterized by its linguistic benefits for the country. Chaucer "sothly hadde most of excellence / In rethorike and in eloquence," he was "Of wel seyinge firste in oure language," with a "Sugrid mouth," "enlumynyng pe trewe piked greyn / Be crafty writinge of his sawes swete" (36–65). The Host in Lydgate's prologue embodies the patriotic imperative to raise the status of English. His character closely resembles his appearance in the *Tales*, at once jocular and intimidating, except here he is even more domineering, instructing Lydgate to "leyn a-side thy professioun":

> "For non so proude that dar me denye,

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Knyght nor knaue Chanon prest ne nonne,

To telle a tale pleynyly as thei konne,

Whan I assigne and se tyme opportune." (126–45)

The Host is able to join together all the pilgrims, drawing the Lydgate character out of his monastic role so that he too is subordinated to the overarching goal of telling a tale. Rhetorically, the Host impels Lydgate the author to write after Chaucer despite his inability to reach Chaucerian heights of ornamentation. As a rhetorical device, the host is the personification of the linguistic nationalist project, the figure who "assigns" tales that further an undertaking that begins with Chaucer. It is no coincidence that Lydgate's additions to his source, the French *Roman de Thebes*, are moralizations on the *exempla* in the story that describe what a king may gain by behaving in particular ways. Lydgate's amplification on Chaucer in subsidiary form extends the ornamentation crucial to nation and king.

Enlarging (upon) and Improving (on) the Nation

The ambassadors' argument at the Council of Constance and Henry V's "conversion" to English rely on a recognizable body of written, not just spoken, English, something with which the Lancastrians could identify in order to demonstrate their linguistic affinities with Parliament and the realm. The Lancastrian promotion of English literature in conjunction with the English language not only leads Hoccleve and Lydgate to prize a vernacular tradition characterized by a floriated language, but it also provides them with a rationale or—as the *Siege*'s Host demonstrates—an imperial obligation to write. Quantity becomes more important than propriety in this context; the poet's principal object is to produce literature, material that shows the English language to be at least as noteworthy as other languages. Hence, the poems are feyned, endlessly prolonged, often in an overly ornate style, and with little formal structure unless it benefits the extension of the length. Again, the poets' choice of figures and techniques of amplification does not

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have to adhere to a strict program, and each of them approaches his subjects in individual ways. Hoccleve's prologue moves from topic to topic—personal, political, national, literary—and from the trivial to the consequential, with little structural logic or integrity. Lydgate is much more controlled, eschewing the personal in nearly every instance, but his capacity for amplification is unbounded: he is perhaps the most prolific poet in the English language, writing over 140,000 lines.

The more closely the Lancastrians could ally themselves with a quantity of linguistically accomplished literature, the better. Hoccleve's and Lydgate's *Fürstenspiegel*-begging poems must have been exactly what the Lancastrians were looking for as the combination of genres makes the princes and kings the material of the poems; they are literally written into the national literature and language. For the poets themselves, this political context provides subject matter. They can show the falls of princes and various other seemingly negative stories from the past as mirrors of advice for their patrons, but they can also write about the prince himself: his foresight in sponsoring poets, his own learnedness and particular interest in the vernacular, his generosity with regard to the poet's pecuniary rewards, his munificence in funding poetry that has national benefits. The appropriate feynyng style enriches the English language through aureating, floriating, and dignifying, but amplification on and of princes—both literary-historical and real—is of equal importance.

Hoccleve approaches the difficult subject of addressing Prince Henry by having the beggar suggest that he should do it. In the beggar's words Henry is depicted as a connoisseur of literature and one most likely to appreciate the skill with which Hoccleve can (at least aspire to) write. The beggar's counsel is at first vaguely indiscriminate about what subject matter Hoccleve should offer the prince, but he is clearer about what style Hoccleve should use:

> "Writte to hym a goodly tale or two,
> On which he may desporten hym by nyghte,

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And his fre grace schal vp-on pe lighte.

"Sharpe thi penne, and write on lustily;
Lat se, my sone, make it fresh and gay,
Oute thyn art if pou canst craftily;
His hye prudence hath insighte verray
To iuge if it be wel y-made or nay;
Wher-fore, sone, it is vn-to the neede,
Vn-to pi werk, take pe gretter heede." (1902–11)

Hoccleve's "goodly tale or two" is to be composed "craftily" if he can manage it, the beggar advising Hoccleve to take note of this artfulness because the prince is skilled in the matters of judging whether it is "wel y-made or nay." Henry is a seasoned reader of English literature. The casual tone of the beggar's advice nearly belies the focus on aptitude rather than subject matter. In fact, the mention of a "tale or two" and the recommendations about the style are both rather vague, suggesting that Hoccleve has a certain freedom, a rhetorical effect on Hoccleve's part as it makes what follows appear unselected, merely a matter of chance.

It is within this atmosphere of casual selection that the beggar directs Hoccleve's choice of subject matter when he returns to what Hoccleve should write a little later in the prologue. Up to now the dialogue between the beggar and Hoccleve has been about what is wrong with Hoccleve and many different religious and secular issues, but the question of what to write for the prince has not been raised. When the beggar now tells Hoccleve what to write, the effect is to introduce the idea of a regiment of princes as if the subject is merely appropriate and not ideologically driven:

"looke if pou fynde canst any tretice
Groundid on his estates holsumnesse;
Swych thing translate, and vnto his hynesse,

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As humblely as pat pou canst, present." (1949–52)

This is innocent enough: Hoccleve will find a text to translate into English and humbly present it to Henry. But how is Hoccleve to decide what text to select? The beggar directs Hoccleve to find a work that is "Groundid" on Henry's "estates holsumnesse," a text derived from the beneficial aspects of Henry's rank as prince and knight. Henry is not only the recipient of Hoccleve's poetry, he is the origin of Hoccleve's selection as well, the beginning and end of Hoccleve's English literature.

Between the beggar's vague and more specific advice is a *digressio* on flattery. It is typical of Hoccleve's feynyng aesthetic throughout the prologue that, in a place where the tone is one of intimate conversation, Hoccleve should turn to issues vastly different in scope and tone. The beggar's warnings against flattery derive from traditional sources, and a caution against it is a convention in every regiment of princes. The beggar warns Hoccleve not to try to flatter the prince, and he dryly lists several proverbs and maxims that warn against flattery's charms. Instead of Hoccleve trying this approach "pat sowneth into vice," he should look to the prince's "holsumnesse."[10]

Despite the somewhat gratuitous nature of the beggar's interjection, the particular situation of the Lancastrian usurpation of the throne resonates throughout the discussion, and this nationalist context also explains some of the unusual descriptions of flattery. Hoccleve's condemnations of flattery complement Henry by assuring him, via the beggar, that nothing of what follows is designed as sycophancy, but he is also consolidating Lancastrian legitimacy. The implication is that the prince would never stoop to flattery's charms unlike his father's predecessor, Richard.

The Articles of Deposition of Richard II, produced soon after the usurpation in 1399, demonstrate the persuasive force that charges of flattery could have on the public. The fact that the Articles are a Lancastrian-produced document that fabricates Richard's

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[10] 1912–50. Discussions of flattery may be found in Strohm, *England's Empty Throne* 185 and Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power* 240–41, 306–307, 319–21.

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willing abdication only strengthens the impression that the Lancastrians believed that flattery, as evidence that Richard deserved to step down, was a reason powerful enough to convince the Articles' readers. The very first Article of the document details Richard's isolation from the will of the people and his nepotism for court favorites: "it ys to putt aȝens Kyng Richard, that for his euyll gouernance in yevyng a way to vnworthy persons the goodes and possessions longyng to his Crovne, disparpelyng hem, and other goodes vndiscretly puttyng also; and oppressyng the peple by grete gaderynges, and other grete Importable Charges." Also, "the kyng with his covyne and helpers accordyng to his luste" threatened Parliament, who were intent on governing the realm well, in order that they "shuld stonde with hym in his wykked purpos." Later, Richard is accused of being "vntrewe" because he took loans and never paid them back. Crown revenues were "yovyn, grauntyd, and done away to dyuers persones full vndygne" and so many taxes instituted that the realm was impoverished. Moreover, Richard, inconsistent and untrustworthy, embarrassed the country. He was "contrarie to him sylff" and "hold so vntrewe and vnstable that hit turnyd nat only to sclaundre off his owne persone, but also off alle the Rewme, And namely amonge straunge nacions off alle the worlde havyng knowlich theroff."[11]

In the Articles, Richard is always described as surrounded by people, suggesting that he was assisted in his lack of discretion. The king's "covyne and helpers" were able to subvert the king so that he became unlike himself and an embarrassment to the realm and patriotism. Where Richard failed, Henry triumphs. The recent problems of Richard's court, as outlined in the Articles, explain the beggar's focus on faults with groups in court culture and the reasoning that flattery is treasonable: "The worldly riche men, han no knowleche / What pat thei bene of hir condicioun; / Thei ben so blent with fauelles gay

[11] Julius B II (pages 23–24, 30–31, 34). The Articles survive in various sources, most notably *RP* 3.416-45 and Julius B II, an early English translation. See G. O. Sayles for a discussion of its textual transmission. For a good analysis of the retrospective and revisionist nature of the Articles, see Caroline Barron, "The Deposition of Richard II."

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speche," "For vnneth a good word men speke of hem: / This false tresoun comon is and rif" (1933–41). Richard is guilty of neglecting distinctions among the strata of society while Henry, as the origin and end of Hoccleve's subject matter, provides from the "holsumnesse" of his estate. Hoccleve presents Henry as sincere in matters of the prince's behavior and the nation, acute in evaluating literature, the logical recipient of vernacular poetry, and the very source of writing in the vernacular. He is as far from Richard and as closely bound with the English language and English literature as possible. The message is reinforced by the prologue's dialogue form: Hoccleve doesn't state any of this directly to or about the prince, the anonymous and poor beggar does.

Lydgate's approach to his patrons is somewhat different. As a friend of Henry V and Henry VI, official court poet, and monk, his authority to address the prince or king is more established than Hoccleve's. Consequently, his mode of address is less fraught with anxious and unstructured searches for appropriate subject matter and form. Instead, his feynyng tends towards straightforward amplification. It is verse on a grand scale. Lydgate's feynyng is what I term "stately," assured and well-structured. It is also a stately feynyng because it is imbued with the Lancastrians' desire to identify with—or, more accurately—*as* the state by aligning themselves with the vernacular and an established body of English literature. Their motivation, their impetus, drives Lydgate's style. His main achievement in this regard, following both poets' identification of Chaucer as the beginning of the tradition, is the sheer bulk of his poetry. The thousands of lines found an essential presence of vernacular literature for his Lancastrian patrons, such a mass at the beginning of the fifteenth century that it affects nearly all writers who follow for years to come. Since this enactment of the stately vernacular body is his principal achievement, it is only in places that his accomplishment crystallizes in specific passages and themes in his verse. Nevertheless, his feat is as important as Hoccleve's if not more important: presenting Lancastrians, vernacular literature, and nation as equal to each other.

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The image that Lydgate creates of his patrons is very similar to that evoked by Hoccleve. In the *Troy Book* Henry is a learned man with an active interest in English literature, a healthful regard for it that is judicious and moral. In fact, the image he creates of Prince Henry in the *Troy Book* is so like the Henry of the contemporary *Regement* that a reader is tempted to credit these descriptions with objective truth until one remembers they are ascriptions of his character; they are also constructions Lydgate uses to describe all his Lancastrian patrons. Because of Lydgate's more advantageous social position, he does not need to create the figure of the wise old beggar to discuss his relationship with the prince nor does he need such a rhetorical strategy to articulate Henry's personality. However, the difficulty of writing for a person who—despite Lydgate's more favorable standing—is far above the poet in rank, still requires resolution. Lydgate solves the problem by invoking Henry's own desire to read just as Hoccleve includes as subject matter Henry's appetite for literary study. Lydgate's prologue to the *Troy Book* states that he writes:

> For to obeie with-oute variaunce
> My lordes byddyng fully and plesaunce,
> Whiche hath desire, sothly for to seyn,
> Of verray kny3thod to remembre ageyn
> The worthynes, 3if I schal nat lye,
> And the prowesse of olde chiualrie,
> By-cause he hath Ioye and gret deynte
> To rede in bokys of antiquite,
> To fyn only, vertu for to swe
> Be example of hem, and also for to eschewe
> The cursyd vice of slouthe and ydelnesse. (1.73–83)

The passage is slightly difficult to read because phrases merge into one another, obscuring the subjects of clauses and muddying the logic. It is not Henry exactly but Henry's "byddyng," his command to Lydgate to write the story of Troy in English, which has the

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desire to establish his "verray kny3thod" and to realize "virtu." This description of the voicing of the request comes dangerously close to exposing the desire within the king's voice, a Lancastrian desire to claim a true identity that is dependent on antique books. Lydgate deflects the attention away from the king's articulation and unmasking of his desire by couching his "byddyng" in terms that are repetitive not originary. Henry's command is not based on a new wish to find the worthiness of his knighthood; Henry wants merely to recall it as if it is a pre-existing given that he only has to "remembre ageyn."

According to Lydgate's depiction, the Prince's motivations for having him write the story of Troy also extend beyond Henry's own individual benefit. Henry is suitably generous, positioning himself as merely one part in a national project of linguistic patriotism, which nevertheless begins with his royal wish. Expanding on Henry's purposes, Lydgate states that Henry bids him to compose the *Troy Book*:

> By-cause he wolde that to hy3e and lowe
> The noble story openly wer knowe
> In oure tonge, aboute euery age,
> And y-writen as wel in oure langage
> As in latyn and in frensche it is;
> That of the story pe trouth[e] we nat mys
> No more than doth eche other nacioun:
> This was the fyn of his entencioun. (1. 111–18)

The Prince's request will benefit the whole country regardless of a person's estate. It won't necessarily be understood any better than in any "other nacioun," but it will be written in English. Incidentally, the phrase, "as wel in oure langage / As in latyn and in frensche it is," suggests an acknowledgment of Lydgate's dependence on foreign sources for his version. Yet elsewhere in the *Troy Book* Lydgate explicitly acknowledges his debt to Guido delle Colonne but "suppresses" Benoît de Sainte-Maure's version or another French version of the Troy story (Ambrisco and Strohm 40–47). It would be problematic

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for him to detail his dependence on a French source when he is explicitly writing to raise English as an appropriate literary language for patriotic ends, especially at a time when England is at war with France. But there is another meaning to Henry's intention that the story of Troy be as well known and comprehended in "oure tonge," "oure langage," as it is in Latin in French: that everything is relative among the three languages. It is merely a matter of having the text in English for it to be as famous and understood as it is in other countries. Henry's wish is no more, but certainly no less, than linguistic equivalence.

The *Fall of Princes* is similar to the *Regement of Princes* and the *Troy Book* in that in the *Fall* Lydgate depicts the addressee and patron, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, as a worthy knight whose identity is also constituted by his appreciation of literature, which has national benefits. Humphrey was in fact a great collector of books and an importer of humanist knowledge, and the descriptions of him demonstrate how central literature had become for the royal household.[12] The *Fall* was begun only a year after Henry VI had taken possession of the throne in 1430, as he was only nine months old when his father died in 1422. Humphrey was still warden of England from 1430 to 1432 because Henry was in France. The continuing ambiguity of the Lancastrian title, coupled with Humphrey's well-known learnedness, cause Lydgate to produce his most ambitious work, an amplification on a 1409 version by Laurent de Premierfait, which was itself an expansion of Boccaccio's *De casibus illustrium virorum.* Its massive size is the best evidence of its effectiveness as a piece of Lancastrian propaganda, instantiating a presence in the early fifteenth century that is as much a sign of the achievement of the house of Lancaster as a further consolidation of its legitimacy, but the discrete depictions of Humphrey's motivations and the ways these are linked to linguistic nationalism are also telling.

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[12] Information on Humphrey may be found in Kenneth Vickers; Eleanor Hammond; two texts by Roberto Weiss; R. W. Hunt and A. C. de la Mare; Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 223–30; Green, *Poets and Princepleasers* 71–100; and Jeanne Krochalis.

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Lydgate's national, literary, and personal projects in writing the *Fall of Princes* coincide in the figure of Humphrey in the poem. Following on from a discussion of Julius Caesar, Lydgate describes Humphrey first as the relative of the king who "hath the gouernaunce / Off our Breteyne"; then Lydgate writes that "Yat natwithstandyng his noble prouidence" in keeping the country at peace, he is also a knight; and then third, Humphrey excels in "hih lettrure." He "hath gret ioie with clerkis to comune: / And no man is mor expert off language, / Stable in study alwey he doth contune." Lydgate then restarts his elaborate *descriptio* of Humphrey, whose national importance, status, and scholarly aptitude are brought together again, this time in an odd picture of studious fearlessness: "[N]atwithstandyng his staat & dignite, / His corage neuer doth appalle / To studie in bookis off antiquite," a masculine bravery that, like Henry's activities in the *Regement of Princes* and the *Troy Book*, also staves off "vicious slothe." It is with this conjunction of knowledge and knighthood, "prudence" and "manheed," in the passage, that Humphrey defends the Church against Lollards, which is the subject Lydgate turns to next. Like Henry's efforts against Badby and other Lollards, Humphrey is "bothe manli and eek wis . . . That heretik dar noon come in his siht" (1.381–420). The suggestion is that Humphrey's commission of the *Fall of Princes* is a national project whose benefits extend beyond the poem's singular or immediate audience. Lydgate's stated intentions in writing the *Fall* also bolster the Lancastrian attempt to appear as indistinguishable from the nation as possible by identifying closely with the vernacular. Lydgate brings all estates together within the poem's objectives, a melding of estates and statuses within the pages of the book as if rank has little significance beyond perhaps only the imputed moral and monetary generosity of the royal household. Lydgate says that he intends the *Fall* for "comon profit," "Shewyng a merour how al the world shal faile":

> It is almesse to correct and a-mende
> The vicious folk off euery comounte,
> And bi exaumplis which that notable be

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Off pryncis olde, that whilom dede fall,
The lowere peeple from ther errour call.

Bi smale whelpis, as summe clerkis write,
Chastised is the myhti fers leoun,
And whan the suerd off vengaunce eek doth bite
Vpon pryncis for ther transgressioun,
The comon peeple in ther opynyoun,
For verray dreed[e] tremble don & quake,
And bi such mene ther vices thei forsake. (1.99–224)

Not only is the *Fall* to be a mirror for the princes and for "al," "every comounte," but it also generates a series of mirrorings and reciprocal relations within this overarching function. The "lowere peeple" are warned against "errour," forsaking their "vices" by the examples of princes, and the royal "myhti fers leoun" is "chastised" by means of the "smale whelpis." Disparities of power and differences of interest between those of "hih and louh estat" are subsumed under the universalizing discourse. Lydgate's mirror is designed to reflect Humphrey and other Lancastrian rulers, including Henry VI, in the people, and the populace in its rulers. It is a "merour to estatis all" where Lancastrian and nation symmetrically complement each other, erasing differences in social position as well as differences of interest in an imaginary space (2.22–28).

Lydgate's version of the *Fall* contains a translation of Laurent de Premierfait's *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes*, but he shapes and adds to his source. His principal additions are extended prologues such as the one about Humphrey, which tie the general project of the *De casibus* to the specific circumstances of Lydgate's writing, and moralizations on the multitudinous examples of people who fall as a result of fortune's wheel. Lydgate explicitly acknowledges the style of the project as an amplification, but, as in the discussions of reflections above, deflects attention away from the invested and

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specifically Lancastrian nature of his project by turning to generalizations. He justifies his simple object of providing a mass of literature by selecting and emphasizing Laurent's own defense for expanding Boccaccio. Lydgate praises Laurent's own prologue, especially where the French writer says:

> . . . that his entencioun
> Is to a-menden, correcten and declare;
> Nat to condempne off no presumpcioun,
> But to supporte, pleynli, and to spare
> Thyng touchid shortly off the story bare,
> Vndir a stile breeff and compendious,
> Hem to prolonge whan thei be vertuous:
>
> 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 ookis grete be nat doun ihewe
> First at a strok[e], but bi long processe,
> Nor longe stories a woord may not expresse. (1.85–98)

According to the French writer's rationale, a "pleyn" or full story is one that is long, and a story that is written with an economy of words suffers from a "lak of trouth." However, Lydgate's attempts to deflect attention away from the overt simplicity of his generation of a mere quantity of lines by emphasizing Laurent's justification is not altogether seamless. The metaphor of the oaks embodies rather than resolves this strange reversal of expectations: the oaks are cut down and whittled away by a "long processe," not built up and "prolonged" as is the case with Laurent's and Lydgate's expansions. Nevertheless, Lydgate is able to provide a rationale for his amplification of the story to 36,365 lines that

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transcends the particular politics of linguistic nationalism in the name of literary "trouth" and tradition. Long stories require long retellings.

Laurent also provides Lydgate with a less contradictory metaphor for the length and purpose of his *Fall* in the prologue of Book 2:

> The rounde dropis off the smothe reyn,
> Which that discende & falle from aloffte
> On stonys harde, at eye as it is seyn,
> Perceth ther hardnesse with ther fallyng offte,
> Al-be in touchyng, water is but soffte;
> The percyng causid be force nor puissaunce,
> But off fallyng be long contynuaunce.
>
> Semblabli, off riht I dar reherse,
> Offte reedyng on bookis fructuous
> The hertis sholde off prudent pryncis perse,
> Synke in ther mynde & make hem vertuous
> Teschewe all thynge that is vicious. (2.106–17)

No water torture, the *Fall* here is "fructuous," a positive quality that, as with the rain's "soffte" "percyng," can wear down the prince's resistance. This is the beginning of an important series of aquatic metaphors in the *Fall*. Again, Lydgate compliments Humphrey and Lancastrians more generally, this time by claiming that it is only "prudent" princes who will be affected by the water's action.

Hoccleve and Lydgate may not be able to flatter their patrons directly, but they can assist royal usurpation and consolidation, and show their support for linguistic nationalism, by ornamenting their English poems with rhetorical and verbal embellishment, furthering the beauty and the sheer quantity of English letters. As Richard Green first pointed out, it is an uncomfortable, even dangerous role for a poet to presume that he can not only address

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but also counsel a king.[13] The fact that embellishing the English tongue furthers royal and national causes provides Hoccleve and Lydgate with good reasons to write, approach, and represent people far above their stations. The assumption that advice of various sorts is appropriate and that writing to the king in English is also fitting enables Lydgate and Hoccleve to approach their patrons despite the poets' inferior social status. At times, the poets manage to counsel their royal addressees, but the move is always towards a generalization, an abstraction that softens the potential for critique, as Lydgate's image of the rain's gentle action suggests. The very size and the apparently innocent ornamentation of their stories helps to draw attention away from the poems' nationalist intentions.

There are, however, moments when specific and critical advice is offered, counsel that may have appeared at least potentially dangerous in that it expresses a desire to change the patron's behavior. Invariably, though, Hoccleve and Lydgate will direct the advice away from direct reference to contemporary circumstances by turning the exemplum into a general lesson or moral axiom. For example, Lydgate draws attention to characters and characters' actions that may serve as illustrations for how kings should behave throughout the *Siege of Thebes*. At one point, discussing Amphion, Lydgate notes the importance of appearances for the king, who should bear himself cheerfully, speak well to his subjects, and "nat to bene straunge ne soleyn / In contenaunce outward." Otherwise, the people will turn against him. Also, the king should not "disdeyn" or "despyse" the poor people as they are the "foot . . . Which berep hym vp." Mercury, he reasons, had more good fortune and was more "accepted" because of his "soote sugred harpe" than Mars with his "swerd whetted kene and sharpe" (1.244–85). The *Siege* was written near the end of Henry V's reign when he had signed the Treaty of Troyes with France (May, 1420), so Lydgate's advice would appear to be rather inoffensive. But this is to overestimate the consequences of the treaty. Henry started a series of sieges in the country around Paris the day after

[13] *Poets and Princepleasers* 135–202. See also Lawton, "Dullness" 778–79 and Ferster, Introduction.

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signing the treaty. He had been at war in France for almost three and a half years when he finally left for England at the end of 1420 with his new wife, Catherine of Valois. By summer 1421, perhaps while Lydgate was still writing the poem, Henry was back at war in France, having raised money in England while traveling the country with his new bride. He would die in France of illness the next year. To suggest, as Lydgate does, that Mercury's art would be more popular than Mars' may be read as a mildly pointed critique, perhaps reflecting some of England's dissatisfaction with the war in France. But it is also a call to Henry to attempt other indirect means of winning the public's affection, "public modes of legitimation" such as poetry, a self-interested invitation on Lydgate's part.

Later, in Book 3, Lydgate adds more direct advice, saying that it is bad for a prince to live in prosperity while his subjects are poor. If "bounte, Fredom, plente, and largesse" do not lead a prince, he warns, "of his puple whan he hath most nede, / He be defrauded." The ruler should banish "scarshed and couetise" from the court. Deciphering such passages often requires more knowledge of the financial situation of the country and Henry's policies than survives, but Lydgate does not state that the logical resolution of the lesson requires a prince to dispense wealth more justly. Instead, he dilutes the moral by suggesting that the prince should not covet money, and eventually he distills the lesson to the simplicity of a proverb: to trust love more than wealth: "For loue is mor than gold or gret richesse" (3.2688–736).

Hoccleve and Lydgate assist the Lancastrian attempt to give their own interests the appearance of a linguistic nationalism by consistently showing that their patrons' request for more writing in English benefits the morals of the entire realm. By writing Henry and Humphrey into their English *Fürstenspiegel*-begging poems, Hoccleve and Lydgate compose the country's rulers as vernacular rulers, men whose standing is not based on blood lineage or national unity but on linguistic participation. The two poets accomplish the Lancastrian's integration into a greater patriotism by feynyng in three principal ways: discovering and retrospectively elevating an English tradition begun by father Chaucer,

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beautifying English so that it is a language worthy of its royal patrons and their presence within it, and establishing the magnitude of English literature by swelling its quantity. Exactly how seamless this integration can be in poems of this length, verses designed as support but whose authors nevertheless are only marginally interested in careful design, remains to be seen.

Hoccleve's and Lydgate's Laborious Fürstenspiegel-*Begging Poems*

The necessity of furthering England's English for the support of their patrons and the realm offers compelling reasons for Hoccleve and Lydgate to write; to ornament and embellish English is to further its appropriateness as a national language. At the same time however, the begging elements of their poetry suggest that writing is bodily and mental labor; this is an explicit and recurring theme in their *Fürstenspiegel*-begging poems. Composing verse is beyond their poetic capacities, time-consuming, and underappreciated by readers and others. Their addressees may not recognize the difficulties of their labor and therefore might not sufficiently compensate them. Furthermore, the problem is the economic and geographic situation of England. Hoccleve and Lydgate frequently complain that it is precisely the nation that is to blame for their poverty and consequent lack of wit, ability, and spirit.

The poets' material existence undercuts the project of floriating English for the sake of the country so that their feynyng style is without a solid basis. The poetry feels inconsistent and contradictory because demonstrations of linguistic nationalism and dedications to Lancastrian patrons abut discussions of England's poetic-pecuniary poverty, severely weakening the nationalist rationale for writing. What then is the point of the poetry? It is as if the sheer quantity of feyned verse and the embellishment exist all on the surface, not as art for art's sake, but as strangely unmotivated poetry. All is extension, lines and lines of verse feyned on slender grounds, its justification subsumed, even surpassed, by the attention to style.

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To emphasize the telling degree to which these two early fifteenth-century writers contradict themselves in writing for their causes is to incline towards one side in a disagreement among present-day scholars of the literature. Recent evaluations of Hoccleve's and Lydgate's *Fürstenspiegel*-begging poems are divided on the issue of their complicity in or divergence from Lancastrian and nationalist projects. In one group may be placed Derek Pearsall, Larry Scanlon, and Paul Strohm, who argue that the autobiographical elements in the poetry "resolve or bypass (to resolve by bypassing) the constitutional tensions surrounding the Lancastrian monarchy" and that in the verse we "encounter a program of mollification, complicity, and what might politely be considered strategic unexceptionality" (Scanlon, "King's Two Voices" 233; Strohm 180). Agreeing with their perceptive readings are Lee Patterson and Judith Ferster, who, however, also emphasize a "skepticism" about each writer's "identity as a spokesman for Lancastrian interests, and perhaps even an acknowledgment that poetry and power can never be brought to a perfect identity of purpose" (Patterson 93). They observe that complicity paints a picture of the writers as "too quietistic, too tied into the ideology of monarchical power" (Ferster 140). Each side acknowledges its debt to recent literary and cultural criticism in formulating its interpretations, although the most obvious influence of New Historicism (or Cultural Poetics) is not mentioned.

A way to think about the problem is to note that the issue at hand is closely parallel to issues that arose in Cultural Poetics in the late 1980s. As in those debates, while one side argues for an "entrapment model," the other proposes a potential for "dissidence" because "the social order *cannot but produce* faultlines through which its own criteria of plausibility fall into contest and disarray."[14] The difficulty can be at least partially resolved

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[14] Sinfield 29–51. "Cultural poetics" first appears in Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (4–5) and is later defined in his *Shakespearean Negotiations* as the "study of the collective making of distinct cultural practices and inquiry into the relations among these practices," that is "How collective beliefs and experiences were shaped, moved from one medium to another, concentrated in manageable aesthetic form, offered for consumption [and] how the boundaries were marked between cultural practices understood to be art forms and other, contiguous, forms of expression" (5). See also his "Towards

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by ıg that as with literature of any period, responses that fall along a number of dif: ıt axes are possible among and even within particular defined social groups (the latt: which appears to be the case with the audience of Hoccleve's and Lydgate's tex: [5] This is not to posit a simple or unexamined "openness" to the rhetorical-social pote ıl of a given text, but to acknowledge that even when we can determine the likely reac. ; and listeners of particular medieval texts, their responses are often still unattainable. It is over-simplification to argue for mechanistic responses on the part of the writer as wel: ; the audience just as it is not useful to project an unbounded freedom onto texts and audi. ces. More specifically, for the texts under review, Hoccleve's and Lydgate's mix of influ. ıces, modes, and intentions in their verse means that the composition and disse:: ınation of their *Fürstenspiegel*-begging poems intimate multiple discursive fields, of whic: linguistic nationalism is one important part. However, the nation that requests their beau:: ying projects is not homogeneous. England is not just England at war with France, or En:land in opposition to heresies, or England as embodied by its ruler; England also provides the subject matter for the poems by its material presence, its role as an economic and ontological topos. For Hoccleve, the daily burdens of living in London are the predominant concern. For Lydgate, financial hardship in England is an important issue as well, but also England is his home, a place of origin that is debilitating.

The most important initial surprise a reader encounters in Hoccleve and Lydgate's verse ıs that the poets explicitly and repeatedly discuss the fact that writing poetry is work, whic deserves monetary compensation. Without it, they argue, they cannot think or

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a Poc s of Culture"; Louis Montrose, "Professing the Renaissance"; and Carolyn Porter, "Are We Being Hist: ıl Yet?" and "History and Literature."

[5] Hoccleve's and Lydgate's indications as to their intended audiences and the available evidence from itside their poems suggests that for Lydgate more than Hoccleve, the audience was a select group with: ociety: members of royal, ducal, or other noble households. See Green, *Poets and Princepleasers* 155– A. I. Doyle, "English Books In and Out of Court"; Krochalis, "Books and Reading of Henry V and His ıe"; and Pearsall, "Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*" 393–97. This does not hold true for every poem Hoccleve composes verse for other clerks and Lydgate writes mummings and other occasional poems for g s.

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generate enough inspiration to write. It is often shocking to comprehend how closely they tie poetic invention to money until one remembers that the concept of authorial independence was of little importance to medieval writers. However, again there are significant differences between these Lancastrian writers and Ricardians, including their literary model, Geoffrey Chaucer. In the fifteenth century Hoccleve and Lydgate raise the genre of the begging poem to new heights. Their discussions of financial hardship and their requests for fiscal reward are not contained in small isolated poems or relegated to codas on the ends of their poems. Ethan Knapp suggests that real "financial anxiety" is responsible for Hoccleve's introduction of these themes and it is interesting to trace particular causes for their introduction in both poets' work (65–67), but the discourse about money also reveals what audiences were interested in and what they found acceptable subject matter. The popularity of the poems, at least according to the number of manuscripts that survive, suggests that Hoccleve's and Lydgate's audiences found their discussions at least interesting.

In many of his poems Hoccleve discusses work and its attendant difficulties at great length, but he addresses its difficulties most explicitly and in the most detail in the *Regement*. At a certain point in the prologue Hoccleve complains about his low income, which is not regularly paid and which he is in danger of losing, causing his friends to ignore him. He says to the beggar that he earns 20 marks annuity (13 pounds) and other income of 6 marks (4 pounds) (801–80). Then he enters into a detailed description of his writing work, a distinct section of the poem that is worth exploring in some depth. He begins by explaining that he is unable to earn more because he has no knowledge of other trades and would be incapable of gaining money by physical work such as farming because of his bodily condition. He describes the minutiae of his predicament's conditions to the beggar, focusing on writing as physical labor:

> "My bak vnbuxum hath swich thyng forsworne,
> At instance of writyng, his Werreyour,

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That stowpyng hath hym spilt with his labour.

"Many men, fadir, wenen pat writynge
No trauaile is; pei hold it but a game:
Aart hath no foo but swich folk vnkonynge:
But who so list disport hym in pat same,
Let hym continue, and he schal fynd it grame;
It is wel gretter labour pan it seemeth;
De blynde man of coloures al wrong deemeth."

Writing is not only taxing on his back, but it is also a cause of grief and bitterness, "grame." Hoccleve has to argue against what must have been a widely held misconception, that writing is not work, explaining that its hardships surpass its appearance. In the next stanza he spells out why:

"A writer mot thre thynges to hym knytte,
And in tho may be no disseuerance;
Mynde, ee, and hand, non may fro othir flitte,
But in hem mot be ioynt continuance.
The mynde al hoole with-outen variaunce
On pe ee and hand awayte moot alway,
And pe two eek on hym; it is no nay."

The writer, separate from his mind, eye, and hand, must bind all together, the interlocking repetition and turning of the description itself expressing some of the difficulties of writing. The emphasis on all being "knytte" in "ioynt continuance," "al hoole with-outen variaunce," and each ready to serve or "awayte" on the other suggests the possibility that the writer can easily become distracted, a point that is reinforced as he continues:

"Who so schal wryte, may nat holde a tale
With hym and hym, ne synge this ne that;

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But al his wittes hoole, grete and smale,
Ther must appere, and halden hem ther-at;
And syn, he speke may, ne synge nat,
But bothe two he nedes moot forbere,
Hir labour to hym is pe alengere.

"This artificers, se I day be day,
In pe hotteste of al hir bysynesse
Talken and syng, and make game and play,
And forth hir labour passith with gladnesse;
But we labour in trauaillous stilnesse;
We stowpe and stare vp-on pe shepes skyn,
And keepe muste our song and wordes in."

Again, the writer needs to retain his concentration in order to hold his attention on the writing. The task is difficult, and it is tedious as well, made longer by the fact that the writers cannot sing as they "stowpe and stare vp-on pe shepes skyn" with aching backs.

The introduction of the first person plural "we" is interesting. Who comprises this group? Records show that Hoccleve was a scribe at the Privy Seal for most of his life, so presumably he is talking about his fellow scribes, but in the *Regement* Hoccleve draws little or no distinction between the labor of writing the poem, which deserves reward from Prince Henry, and the work he performs at the Privy Seal.[16] Writing poetry and writing as a scribe at the Privy Seal are equivalent under the burden of physically taxing labor.

[16] On Hoccleve's work as a copyist and scribe for his own poetry, see H. C. Schulz, "Thomas Hoccleve, Scribe"; A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, "The Production of Copies"; John Bowers, "Hoccleve's Huntington Holographs"; and Consuela Dutschke 146–47, 250–51. The 23 years that Hoccleve mentions would date the beginning of his time writing as 1388–1389, but he says 23 years "and more." The first record for payment of his 10 marks annuity is 1385–1387. See Frederick J. Furnivall's Foreword and Appendix to Hoccleve's *Minor Poems* and Richard Green, "Three Fifteenth-Century Notes," for documents relevant to Hoccleve's life. The best historical discussion of Hoccleve's physical situation is A. L. Brown, "The Privy Seal Clerks in the Early Fifteenth Century." I make use of these sources and others below.

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"Artificers," and here Hoccleve refers to manual laborers and farmers in particular, do not understand and actually have it easy by comparison. He repeats his emphasis on the material aspects of the labor by maintaining his focus on the physicality of the "shepes skyn." The very medium of his work is a cause of pain and consternation:

> "Wrytyng also doth grete annoyes thre,
> Of which ful fewe folkes taken heede
> Sauf we oure self; and thise, lo, pei be:
> Stomak is on, whom stowpyng out of dreede
> Annoyeth soore; and to our bakkes, neede
> Mot it be greuous; and pe thrid, our yen,
> Vp-on pe whyte mochel sorwe dryen."

He concludes with a stanza that summarizes the whole, returning to the image of his broken or "spilt" body:

> "What man pat thre & twenti yeere and more
> In wryting hath continued, as haue I,
> I dar wel seyn it smerteth hym ful sore
> In euere veyne and place of his body;
> And yen moost it greeueth trewely
> Of any crafte pat man can ymagyne:
> Fadir, in feth, it spilt hath wel ny myne." (985–1029)

As a professional scribe at the Privy Seal, copyist of Chaucer and other manuscripts, and a writer himself, Hoccleve would know of the physical demands on the eyes, hands, stomach, back, and "euere veyne and place of his body." The question becomes, what is the purpose of these passages in the poem? Is Hoccleve furthering a compliment to Henry by describing how he is sacrificing his body in his service? It is obviously designed to demonstrate that Hoccleve deserves reward for his labor, which is even more difficult than a field hand's work, but what else is revealed along the way?

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Significantly, Hoccleve ties his bodily and mental tasks back to his lack of money, knotting together poetic capabilities with financial sustenance to create a picture of monetary inspiration. The contrast between Hoccleve's focus on his head under his hood, his "dul wit," and Chaucer's earlier begging poem to Henry IV, the "Complaint to His Purse," is striking. In Chaucer's poem the purse is personified as the narrator's "lyght" lover whom he wishes to be heavy, and the personification is sustained throughout the poem in a whimsical style. Chaucer's envoy, judiciously claiming that Henry's conquest of the throne was "by lyne and free eleccion," is brief, concluding, "And ye, that mowen ale oure harmes amende, / Have mynde upon my supplicacion." In the *Regement* Hoccleve turns the personification inward so that his own head, heart, and wits are the object of discussion:

"I haue herd men seyn,
Who-so no good hath, pat he can no good;
And pat fynde I, a plat sooth and a pleyn;
For al-thogh that myn heed, vndir myn hood,
Was neuere wys, yit while it with me stood,
So pat I had siluer resonable,
My litil wytte was sumwhat couenable.

"But now, for that I haue but a lyte,
And lykly am heer-aftir to han lesse,
My dul wit can to me no-thyng profyte;
I am so drad of monyes scantnesse,
That myn hert is al nakid of lightnesse." (1233–44)

Hoccleve's lack of money, in contrast to Chaucer, is not presented as a lover's problem, but is a problem of Hoccleve's physical body. His head, wits, and heart are of no profit to him. The playfulness of Hoccleve's complaint comes about by the joining of these internal

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elements with economic necessity, which are intimately tied together and cleverly encapsulated in the play on words "siluer resonable." Hoccleve lacks a "resonable" amount of silver in the sense of payment, and it is the silver that enables his "reson." Without it, his "dul wit can . . . no-thyng profyte," neither money nor verse. Chaucer's poem focuses on a lack of money whereas for Hoccleve the financial problem relates to poetic production.

The difference between the speakers in the two poems reflects another difference between fourteenth- and fifteenth-century poetry. The attention in Chaucer's "Complaint to His Purse" is directed on the "lady dere," and the speaker of the complaint is the conventional lover. Even the voice in the envoy is at ease and simple. As in Chaucer's other poetry, the reader hesitates to identify the voice of the poem with the historical person, complicating issues of whether Chaucer really was in need of money in 1399 and 1400 or not.[17] By contrast and despite the word-play, Hoccleve, the speaker in the *Regement*, is all "nakid of lightnesse," and his lack of money has consequences for his ability to produce poetry and his ability to earn more money. Hoccleve's focus on himself and on the ability to produce more poetry suggests an uncertain and grim future. The speaker may be no less a persona, but his tone is quite different; it directs the reader's attention to the deadening reality of his problems rather than to a delight in his capricious ingenuity.

Hoccleve's is not an isolated example of the turn towards a discussion of seemingly real financial and poetic problems. This same intersection of money and creative abilities appears in Lydgate, who describes his writing as arduous, a description which jars against his claim for the importance of length. To take the *Fall of Princes* as an example, if the "rounde dropis off the smothe reyn / Which that discende & falle from aloffte" are necessary to change the prince's heart to make him virtuous, then length is valuable. The very magnitude of his project in writing the *Fall* also assists the Lancastrian desire to

[17] Discussion of Chaucer's situation in relation to the "Complaint" may be found in Laila Gross's notes to the poem in *The Riverside Chaucer* 1088.

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perceive themselves within a tradition of English literature. Yet despite these powerful arguments for length, 11,662 lines into the poem at the beginning of Book 3, Lydgate begins to complain about his task, and the question of patronage and money immediately arises. In the first 21 lines of Book 3 Lydgate likens himself to a pilgrim in the middle of a long journey with neither horse nor drink, "hot, drie [&] wery," and with no "socour fynde my rudnesse to redresse." No Muses are present to refresh him from their springs.

It is startling and revealing to recognize another contrast between Chaucer and his successors, who appear to be writing according to a different set of aesthetic criteria. At the beginning of the *Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer applies the Hippocratic *Ars longa, vita brevis* to the craft of love, saying, "The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne." In a move that is not only characteristic of Lydgate's style but also closely similar to Hoccleve's claims of "dul wit" and "drad of monyes scantnesse," Lydgate takes the same proverb and turns it inward towards his own lack of poetic ability in lines that are original to Lydgate and not from Laurent or Boccaccio:

> Our liff heer short, off wit the gret dulnesse,
> The heuy soule troublid with trauaile,
> And off memorie the glacyng brotilnesse,—
> Dreed & onkunnyng ha[ue] maad a strong bataile
> With werynesse my sperit to assaile,
> And with ther subtil crepyng in most queynte
> Ha[ue] maad my sperit in makyng for to feynte. (3.22–28)

Very soon the subject of money becomes intertwined with ideas about the author's lack of inspiration, just as it did for Hoccleve: "Support was non my dulnesse for to guie; / Pouert approchid." "Mi purs ay liht and void off al coignage. / Bachus ferr off" (64–70). Once again, the question has to be asked whether these are merely conventional complaints designed to appeal to a patron or whether they go further to intimate a reality that contradicts the nationalist imperative. Significantly, Lydgate's change of heart is not too

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distant and is like a change in the weather. The relief for poor versifying is economic recompense from his lord:

> But hope & trust to putte away despair
> Into my mynde off newe gan hem dresse;
> And cheeff off all to make the wethir fair,
> Mi lordis fredam and bounteuous largesse
> Into myn herte brouht in such gladnesse,
> That thoruh releuyng off his benygne grace,
> Fals Indigence list me no mor manace.
>
> A, how it is an hertli reioishyng
> To serue a prynce that list to aduertise
> Off ther seruauntis the feithful iust menyng,
> And list considre to guerdone ther seruise.
> And at a neede list hem nat despise,
> But from al daunger that sholde hem noye or greue
> Been euer redi to helpe hem and releue.
>
> And thus releued be the goodliheed,
> And thoruh the noblesse off this most knyhtli man,
> Alle mystis cleerid off disespeir & dreed,
> Trust, hope and feith into myn herte ran;
> And on my labour anon forthwith I gan:
> For be cleer support off my lordis grace,
> Al foreyn lettyng fro me I dede enchace. (3.71–91)

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There is no evidence outside these words that Humphrey really did pay Lydgate at this point in his writing of the *Fall of Princes*, but it appears that Humphrey's money has the potential to bring happiness to Lydgate's heart.

So are these complaints mere convention, the poet placing his body in the service of his lord as he should and Lydgate's descriptions of his body, therefore, subsumed teleologically as a means to the greater ends of Lancastrian service and pecuniary reward? The question is easier to answer with Hoccleve than Lydgate because Hoccleve spends so much space, the majority of his long prologue to the *Regement of Princes*, in registering and describing his problems, suggesting a conflict of interest on his part. With both authors the issue perhaps comes down to a question of the quantity of lines dedicated to the detailing of specific problems, which is much more difficult to measure in Lydgate. Logically, the discussions of Lydgate's financial obstacles are limited to the prologues, interludes, and envoys in the *Troy Book*, *Siege of Thebes*, and *Fall of Princes*. Often, as in the example from the *Fall*, the complaint of his lack of pecuniary-poetic inspiration precedes a turn to the patron for appeal, suggesting a subordination of the discussion for royal and financial ends. The idea that this subordination may also serve patriotic ends is strengthened in the poem because Humphrey's "cleer support" rids Lydgate of "foreyn lettyng" as though Lydgate's lack of inspiration is caused by enemy powers. Humphrey saves Lydgate from his poetic indigence, a failure to write which is potentially treasonable at a time of war against others. But the proximity of the money to Lydgate's heart in such descriptions and the frequency with which he returns to the problems also implies that they form a distinct subject. Discussions of this kind occur seven times in the *Fall*, sometimes without the gesture of the turn to the patron and often exploring the poets' indigence in great depth. Neither mere *humilitas*, *occupatio*, nor conventional complaint, Lydgate's discourses on the economic and attendant poetic problems are similar to Hoccleve's: whether intentional or not, they break through the gilded patina of the surface of the poems and reveal a problematic underside to the early fifteenth-century poetic project.

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England's English Problems

The passages that address pecuniary-poetic labor in Hoccleve's and Lydgate's poems are more than merely rhetorical means to Lancastrian ends, more than only forward-looking in the service of linguistic nationalism; rather, the poets' discussions are directed backwards at stubborn problems and their causes, lingering over the reasons why they lack financial inspiration. What are these causes, or, to adopt the writers' fiscal metaphor, what accounts do they afford as to why they are unable to create a greater aggregate of verse, and verse that is more beautiful? While their detailing of their work's difficulties suggests a contradiction with the nationalism they intend to support, their explanations as to the causes of these difficulties go even further: they are in these situations because of widespread social problems, reorienting the focus of their critiques from the personal to the public. Hoccleve points to the economic instability of London's financial center and suggests that the rulers and nation have caused it, and Lydgate blames his creative poverty on his temporally and geographically specified place of origin. By doing so, Hoccleve and Lydgate depict England as a place that stands in the way of their poetic-nationalist efforts, undercutting their ostensible rationale for writing. If England is the problem, then to what end do they write? The justification for their poetry severely weakened, the base that formally held the thousands of lines of ornate amplification up as part of a worthy, patriotic project is fissured, and the experience of reading them becomes strangely groundless and without sufficient motivation.

The reasons Hoccleve and Lydgate give for their financial poverty and poetic barrenness suggest autobiographical veracity, but, more importantly, they reveal the poets' beliefs about what explanations are legitimate and compelling. For instance, given the specific references to London's social life in Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*, it is no surprise that he details not only his labor and his poverty but also the causes of his creative indigence. The beggar in the poem is wrong in attributing Hoccleve's "hyd maladye" to a

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perilous excess of thought arising from a "lak of occupacioun" (262, 281). The opposite is true: Hoccleve has too much work but is not rewarded enough. He has "had habundance / Of welfare" in the past, but having worked "xx yeer / And iiij" at the Privy Seal, he is forced "now [to] stonde in pe plite / Of scarsetee" (1220–22, 801–805). As he says, while he had money, his wit was "sumwhat couenable," but now that he is poor, "My dul wit can to me no-thyng profyte" (1233–46). Debate about whether Hoccleve as author is actually telling the truth about his situation is not as important as the four explanations he offers as to why he is so poor. In this sense, his reasons are like signs in that they acquire their meaning only in relation to a historically dynamic system of concepts about finances and other issues in England. As Ferdinand de Saussure says of signs, they "function . . . not through their intrinsic value but through their relative position" (118). Hoccleve's explanations offer insights into the kinds of arguments available to a fifteenth-century author at this point, revealing his expectations about the beliefs and prejudices he could expect a contemporary audience to share. Given the popularity of the *Regement*, at least according to the number of manuscripts that survive, it would appear that these audiences identified with his discussions.

The first reason Hoccleve offers as to why he is unable to write more and better is quite simply that he does not have enough money. As part of his argument, he complains that his 13 pounds annuity and 4 pounds from other sources are difficult "to gete adayes" and that he is "with grete peyne vnneth," that is, scarcely, "paid" (825, 835–36). The fact that his claim contradicts records of payment to him (he was paid between 47 and 49 of 52 installments of his annuity) suggests that he thought it an argument that might win him some sympathy despite its lack of truth. When he talks about his friends leaving him and so on, he talks about these occurrences as future possibilities; complaints about his income draw attention to the fact that an annuity such as his could be taken away when he retired, if not earlier. A. L. Brown confirms the tenuousness of the clerk's position: salaries for clerks ended during Hoccleve's employment at the Privy Seal in 1399, clerks were often

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dependent on their job for all their necessary living expenses, and very few new annuities (which replaced wages) were granted incoming clerks after 1413 ("Privy Seal Clerks" 266–72). But Hoccleve does not depend on this one explanation of his situation and provides three other reasons to detail why he is unable to draw on his poetic-monetary resources: an inability to attain a benefice, his responsibilities as a married man, and, most significantly, extensive corruption and prejudice.

Gaining a benefice was a possibility for people working at the Privy Seal, who numbered 26 between 1399 and 1425, but few clerks, including Hoccleve, were able to attain one (Tout 5.110–12; Brown, "Privy Seal Clerks" 277). When Hoccleve then turns to the subject of his marriage and the burdens it entails for someone with meager and uncertain finances, he employs an unusual proverbial expression. He says, "'Tow on my distaf haue I for to spynne," and explains later that the "tow" is the marriage he turned to when he failed to receive a benefice (1226, 1450–54). The saying appears in Chaucer's Miller's Tale when Gervase the blacksmith playfully questions Absolon about why he is up so early in the morning, suggesting to Absolon that it is because of "Som gay gerl." Absolon doesn't care for the smith's teasing and does not answer him because "He hadde moore tow on his distaf / Than Gervase knew" (*Canterbury Tales* 1.3765–75). The phrase's simple meaning is that Absolon is preoccupied with some business (*tow* refers to fibers on the distaff that are unspun), but its obviously gendered and sexualized overtones are borne out by the fact that a man or woman guilty of sexual crimes, brawling, or "scolding" was required to parade through the city of London carrying a distaff covered in tow (Revard 168–70; Robertson, *Chaucer's London* 101–104). By referring to his marriage as tow, Hoccleve is not only indicating that he has brought more labor onto himself but also that he is financially emasculated by doing so. That his economic agency and manhood are harmed by this act is suggested in the way he continues describing his marriage: "And god it wot, it sore me agaste / To bynde me, where I was at my large; / But done it was; I toke on me pat charge" (1455–57). This attitude accords with the other

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concerns about masculinity that run throughout the *Regement* and his other poems, but what is important here is that Hoccleve feels justified in using the arguments that he was unable to gain a benefice, subsequently turned to marriage, and hence his labor has multiplied.[18] Seemingly, his material situation in the Privy Seal has been made more difficult due to his marriage, "the fairly rough, only modestly rewarded, money-grubbing world of the average clerk" (Brown, "Privy Seal Clerks" 281).

In the poem, it is the fees the clerks charged for other writing services which are the source that Hoccleve may have to rely on if his annuity is taken away or if he gets too old or sick to work (that is, his other 4 pounds). Evidence suggests that although it was the Privy Seal clerk's occupation to write letters for the king in large and small matters, if a member of the nobility or a merchant needed a letter from the king to settle a petition or a suit for instance, he or she would have to pay the clerk or clerks involved. Also, clerks could act on a freelance basis, charging fees ranging from a few shillings to several pounds (Brown, "Privy Seal Clerks" 269). Such a payment to Hoccleve is recorded in 1423 when he wrote a petition and warrant involving the Council, earl marshal, and Exchequer; the amount was two marks (1 1/3 pounds) (Kirby 196–97). Yet the source of this other income would have been uncertain, because, as one might think, of its piecemeal nature. However, Hoccleve goes into much more detail about the problems this situation can raise, focusing attention on the disinterest of lords and the dishonesty of intermediaries. No one will actually help the clerks, Hoccleve argues to the beggar, and in eight stanzas he details the extent of corruption in negotiations. It is important to notice that the blame for the situation falls on a range of people, including lords and their household and not just those

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[18] Issues of masculinity intersect with discussion of excessive clothing, which disturbs class order, and with the issue of flattery. See the *Regement* 407–553 and "The Remonstrance Against Oldcastle" in *Selections* 61–74. Also, see Strohm, who links these ideas to the Lancastrian project: "[A]n inauthentic and less wholesome alternative—whether heresy, effeminate fashion, female practices of reading and introspection, or false speech—is considered subversive of Lancastrian practice, which is stabilized around ideas of the orthodox, the identity of inner and outer, the refusal of debilitating speculation and misrepresentation in any of its forms" (*England's Empty Throne* 184–85).

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who work for them. Hoccleve places his argument about his economic problem in the context of a system of dishonesty that extends from lords down:

"So many a man as þei þis many a yeer
Han writen for, 3it fynde can þei non
So gentel, or of hir estat so cheer,
Þat onys liste for hem to ryde or gon,
Ne for hem speke a worde; but dombe as ston
Þei standen, where hir speche hem myght awayle;
For swiche folk is vnlusty to trauaile."

The people Hoccleve critiques as lazy are men of property, who are neither so "gentel" nor so "cheer" (satisfied, happy, generous) of their "estat" that they will associate with, or promote, the clerks through their influence. Another part of society that is the cause of problems is the lords' men:

"But if a wyght haue any cause to sue
To vs, som lordes man schal vndertake
To sue it out; & þat þat is vs due
For oure labour, hym deynep vs nat take;
He seip, his lord to þanke vs wole he make;
It touchip hym, it is a man of his;
Where þe reuers of þat, god wot, soop is.

"His letter he takip, and forp gop his way,
And byddep vs to dowten vs no-thyng
His lord schal þanken vs an oper day;
And if we han to sue to þe kyng,
His lord may þere haue al his askyng;
We schal be sped, as fer as þat oure bille

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Wole specifie pe effecte of our wylle."

It is difficult to follow Hoccleve's argument here, but what he suggests is that the lord's man takes on his master's case, which involves the Privy Seal clerks writing whatever is necessary for the lord. The man, however, declines to pay the clerks, arguing that the lord will "panken" them "an oper day." His thanks will be in the form of favor for the clerk if the clerk ever needs to appeal to the king because the lord is a favorite of the king and will have the clerk's wish granted. Hoccleve emphasizes the difficulties such a situation can cause by exposing the prejudices that exist in courtly society and that are the fault of those of higher status:

"What schol we do? we dar non argument
Make a-geyn him, but fayre & wel him trete,
Leste he roporte amys, & make vs schent;
To haue his wil, we suffren him, & lete;
Hard is, be holden suspect with pe grete:
His tale schal be leeued, but nat ourys,
And pat conclusioun to vs ful soure is."

Yet Hoccleve is not finished and continues by describing what appears to be a common problem. Again, part of the fault in the whole situation is class-based partiality of lords in general, which is strong enough to make the clerks fearful:

"And whan pe mater is to ende I-broght,
Of pe straunger, for whom pe suyte hap be,
Dan is he to pe lord knowen right noght;
He is to him as vn-knowen as we;
De lord not wot of al pis sotilte;
Ne we nat dar lete him of it to knowe,

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Lest oure compleynte oure seluen ouerthrowe."[19]

The attention for the remaining three stanzas turns exclusively to the faults of the lords' men, who carry out their deceptions all for their own financial reward, indicating that the beginnings of the middle strata had subtle but important distinctions between individuals closer to a powerful figure and a slightly lower stratum. As in a fully developed bourgeoisie, part of the means of attaining and retaining power is through conversation and gossip. Note in the next stanza that the lord's man, designated as a "bribour," reinforces his advantage by spreading an untrue rumor to others, though who these others might be is only suggested:

"And where þis bribour hap no peny payed
In oure office, he seip be-hynde our bak,
'He payde, I not what': þus ben we bytrayed,
And disclaundrid, and put in wyte and lak,
Ful gilteles; & eeke by swiche a knak
Þe man for whom þe suyte is, is deceyued,
He wenep we han of his gold receyued.

"Ful many swyche pursuours þere ben,
Þat for vs take, & ȝeue vs nat a myte:
Þis makiþ vs þat we may neuer þeen."

The city is apparently rife with these "pursours," who slander and disparage ("put in wyte and lak") the clerks so they can never succeed ("þeen"). When the clerks work directly for the lord, the situation is effectively the same:

"Eek where as lordes bydde hir men vs quyte,

[19] It is necessary to read the "knowen" and "vn-knowen" in the stanza not in the sense that the lord does not literally know the man or that the clerks do not literally know the man, but that the man's actions are not fully understood by the lord, just as the lord is unaware that the clerks have done work for him.

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Whan pat we for hemself laboure and write,
And ben a-lowed for oure payement,
Oure handes per-of ben ful Innocent.

"I seye nat, al lordes men pus do
Þat sue vnto oure court; but many, I seye,
Han pus don ofte. lo! my fadir, lo!
Þus bothe oure panke & lucre gon a-weye:
God ȝeue hem sorowe pat so with vs pleye!
For we it fynden ernest at pe fulle;
Þis makyth vs of oure labour to dulle." (1492–1547)

Hoccleve depicts the "money-grubbing world of the average clerk" but also the grubby world of a working life for members of the lower-middle stratum in London. In his portrayal, lords' men can take full advantage of the clerks. But the lords themselves are also at fault for being too lazy to aid the clerks and so untrusting of the lower orders that they would not believe them if they revealed the corruption of those who work on their behalf. Thus, according to Hoccleve, the financial uncertainty of clerical life in London causes the general dullness of the clerk's and the poet's writing, the same labor which is seen as patriotic elsewhere.

It is clear to me that such passages in Hoccleve's (and Lydgate's) *Fürstenspiegel*-begging poems are not merely topoi. The extent of the detail in the descriptions and their insistent tone are evidence that even if the authorial intent was merely to demonstrate the endemic nature of the poet's poverty so the patron will sympathize, it is far from self-evident that detailing such problems will result in reward, especially when the fault lies with the lords and not just their men. Will Hoccleve win Henry's favor by pointing out the laziness and distrust of his estate and those associated with it? Moreover, the specificity of the passages encourages a reader's attention to focus on the problems and not just consider

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them as a pose for a transcendent literary or social end. For example, remarkably specific details about Hoccleve's and England's economic problems are discussed later in the poem when the beggar says:

> "Syn pou maist nat be paied in thescheqer,
> Vnto my lord pe prince make instance
> Þat pi patent in-to pe hanaper
> May chaunged be."

and Hoccleve replies

> "fader, by your suffrance,
> It may not so, bi-cause of pe ordenance;
> 'Longe aftir pis schal no grant chargeable
> Out passe'; fadir myn, this is no fable." (1877–83)

The beggar thinks that Hoccleve's "patent," his annuity, could be paid out of the Hanaper, which was a branch of the Chancery, rather than the Exchequer. However, Hoccleve specifies an "ordenance" that forbids it. The ordinance that "'Longe aftir pis schal no grant chargeable / Out passe'" refers to the Parliament of 1410, at the time or soon before Hoccleve was writing the *Regement*, which demanded that revenue to the crown not be granted away in annuities. Henry IV's war against France, Wales, and heretics was costing the country a huge amount, as were his household and other expenses; at the same time, royal income was dropping. Henry IV, although nominally arguing to Parliament in 1399 that Richard's fiscal irresponsibility was unbearable, actually surpassed Richard in terms of expenses and financial imbalance. Parliament's ordinance for financial constraint and accountability is a sign of the desire to restrain excesses.[20] Does Hoccleve hope to ingratiate himself to Henry by detailing the economic problems of the country, his father's and the prince's own responsibility?

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[20] See note 2 for sources on England's finance and relations between Lancastrians and Parliament.

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Hoccleve's specific references to the endemic nature of the country's fiscal problems, corruption, and lords' torpid prejudices, as well as his indolence, are frequent and recurring in the prologue to his *Regement of Princes*. Certainly these allusions are in part designed to correct the prince's behavior, an aim that parallels the overall intent of the *Fürstenspiegel* genre. Also, the extent of the problems emphasizes the necessity that the prince act remarkably and break the system in order to reward the poet. However, the effect of these complaints is to dull the poet's ability to produce verse and to make the English of the poetry more beautiful, results that detract from linguistic nationalism and Lancastrian interests. Moreover, pointing out that the problems are inherent and extensive within England's economic and social systems is to be critical of the nation and, by extension, its rulers.

Lydgate also itemizes the hardships that increase the difficulties of his poetic-patriotic labor. As with his contemporary, England's royal and national fiscal problems threaten his livelihood and his ability to write. Lydgate directly addresses these issues using the metaphor of liquids for the lack of both poetic and financial inspiration. In Book 3 of the *Fall of Princes* Lydgate interjects a "chapter," which is not in Laurent de Premierfait or Boccaccio, on "pe gouernance of Poetis," whom Lydgate argues should be freed from the world's cares and have the financial support of princes, variations on "Support of princis to fynde hem ther dispence" providing a refrain for the five stanzas of the "chapter." At present, Lydgate writes, poets have no land, possessions, and often go without food so that their "corage dullith." In contrast to lords who have "domynacioun," churchmen who have gold, knights who have goods because of their renown, and merchants who, punningly, have a "souereyn aqueyntaunce," poets "now-adaies for ther impotence, / For lakke of support go begge ther dispence." "Now-adaies" is also contrasted with the golden age of Dante, Virgil, Petrarch, and Chaucer, who received compensation. Lydgate appeals to Humphrey to relieve his "hertis greuaunce," "Oppressid with pouert" (3.3837–71). The "chapter" is preceded by another chapter on "men doing

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Such thing as pey be dispo[s]ed to," which includes description of poets, who should spend their time walking near springs of inspiration and climbing Phoebus' mountains. The story of Machaeus, whose lesson is to warn rulers against being tyrannical, follows the "chapitle of pe gouernance of Poetis." Framed by these two lessons, the "chapitle" stands out as a personal petition to Humphrey but also as a critique of the present state of England, whose financial obstacles force poets into a position that is worse than other groups of people in early fifteenth-century England and worse than the recent—and Ricardian—past of Chaucer's day.

Elsewhere in the poem, and despite his reasoning in the *Fall* that plain stories are long and an economical use of words leads to a "lak of trouth," Lydgate states that he is writing without eloquence, conservatively translating and amplifying his source without any alteration in its substance. But it is important not to take him at his word because he continually expands on his sources and actually acquires the trope of translational conservatism from Laurent and Boccaccio. To a certain extent, he also obtains the germ of the idea that he is without the vivifying springs of inspiration and that he is rejected by the Muses from convention and his sources, but significantly he adds money and Humphrey as viable sources of inspiration.

The fluid metaphors, the Muses, and money converge at the end of the *Fall of Princes* in two envoys to Humphrey, which are original to Lydgate, the first an *apologia* and the second consisting of more advice. They are fascinating examples of the confluence of poetic and financial metaphors, but they also specifically indicate England's material situation as the source of Lydgate's problems. In the first envoy Lydgate complains that he despaired at writing for such a learned man and in following his highly-skilled authors. Bacchus' vines are "seared," he says, and Midas' "aureat lycour" and Juno's wells dried up. Bacchus, Midas, Juno, a confluence of inspiration, money, and Saturnalian uncertainty: what will cure this lack of poetic-pecuniary inspiration? The answer is Humphrey's "liberal largesse" of a daily wage, a "cotidien":

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Trustyng ageynward your liberal largesse,
Off this cotidien shal relevyn me,
Hope hath brought tydyng to recure myn accesse;
Afftir this ebbe of froward skarsete
Shal folwe a spryng flood of gracious plente,
To wasshe a-way be plentevous inffluence
Al:ground ebbys of constreyned indigence. (9.3347–51)

lope brings the news of Humphrey's money, which will cure him of his fever accesse"). Despite his protestations that he attempts to follow assiduously his sources nd that he can only write without eloquence, he reasons that the tide of favor will change ıth Humphrey's patronage. Even though he speaks in "bare and pleyn" words, he hopes ɔr reward (9.3369).

Lydgate is perhaps most famously (or infamously) known for his aureate style. trictly, aureation is the use of a heavily Latinate vocabulary, verging on the macaronic, ıd it most frequently occurs in his Marian poems. Because of Lydgate's use of aureate nguage, he is responsible for the first occurrence of many Latin words in English poems, ords such as "consigned," "vinery," and so on. Aureation is often accompanied by literation, stretched metaphors, and repeated, often simple, syntax.[21] More broadly, reation also includes a general stylistic gilding of the kind that we find so often in occleve's and Lydgate's *Fürstenspiegel*-begging poems, and it is through association th rhetorical coloration, floriation, and ornamentation that linguistic and stylistic ecoration are brought together. The first envoy displays this union of phonological and ylistic elements, but Lydgate extends the aureate metaphor in a remarkable way, turning the metaphor inside out to reveal its fiscal basis. He does so when he self-consciously escribes his entire work, the *Fall of Princes*:

[21] Studies of Lydgate's aureation appear in John Norton-Smith 192–95 and Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 2–63 and 268–75.

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To alle thoo that shal this book be-holde,
I them be-seke to haue compassyoun,
And ther-with-al I prey hem that they wolde
Favoure the metre and do correccyoun;
Off gold nor asewr I hadde no foysoun,
Nor othir colours this processe tenlvmyne,
Sauff whyte and blak; and they but dully shyne.

When he continues, the same mix of monetary and inspirational metaphors characterizes the description of the list of poets Lydgate says were not available to him: Dares with his "goldene style" and Chaucer with his "souereyn balladys" (9.3394–421).

Throughout the *Fall of Princes*, Lydgate apologizes for his failure to write more beautifully, which is not only a poetic problem but also a financial one. The issue here is a lack of money although part of it is a deficiency in English, a lack of rhymes. At one point he says, "I nat expert nor stuffyd with language, / Seyn howh that Ynglyssh in ryme hath skarsete" (9.3311–12). But also important is Lydgate's lack of familiarity with the Muses and, more specifically, the places they inhabit, revealing a problem that profoundly threatens linguistic patriotism and Lancastrianism. In his prologue to Book 8, Lydgate returns to the theme of exhaustion at the scale of his project that he raised in the prologue of Book 3. Lydgate frequently complains that he lacks the ability to use rhetorical colors in his writing, a trope that is belied by his writing, but one that deserves further attention. He is:

. . . fordullid with rudnesse,
Mor than thre score yeeris set my date,
Lust of youthe passid [with] his freshnesse;
Colours of rethorik to helpe me translate
Wer fadid awey: I was borne in Lidgate,
Wher Bachus licour doth ful scarsli fleete,

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My drie soule for to dewe & weete. (8.190–96)

Lydgate turns to his birthplace, Lydgate, as the reason for his writing's want of rhetorical colors. Bacchus' fountainhead is barely present in the town.[22] He is unable to draw on his place of origin and the origin of his name to carry out his task of translating Laurent into a beautiful English.

While it is significant that Lydgate employs a modesty topos when he complains about his origins, it is crucial to distinguish between the town's aridity as mere literary trope and the town's failings as subject matter. The modern punctuation of the colon before "I was borne in Lidgate" certainly strengthens the straightforward nature of the half-line, but the striking and realistic impression remains even without it because of the syntax in the lines and the contrast between the series of laments that precedes the half-line and the mytho-poetic places that follow. When Lydgate says "I was borne in Lidgate," the statement is effective not because of its rhetorical sophistication but because of its simplicity. Combined with the mention of his age, the reference to his birth in Lidgate is convincing, a stubborn fact that appears as a statement of the truth.

There is one instance in Lydgate's *Isopes Fabules* when the subject of his town is arguably just a topos. Lydgate mentions it just in passing although, as in the *Fall*, it is linked to his lack of poetic ability: "And pough I haue no rethoryk swete, / Haue me excusyd: I was born in Lydgate; / Of Tullius gardeyn I passyd nat pe gate" (31–33). But the subject matter is more than mere *humilitas* when Lydgate returns to it for the second time in the first envoy to the *Fall of Princes*. Lydgate dwells upon his birthplace at some length, locating it geographically and temporally, a form of realism. Keeping with the theme of the Muses, Lydgate compares his writing of the *Fall* to other versions, such as Boccaccio's, Laurent's, and Chaucer's Monk's Tale, saying:

. . . I that stonde lowe doun in the vale,

[22] Lydgate is a small village eight miles southwest of Bury St. Edmunds. It was the norm for boys entering monastic life to take the name of their village (Pearsall, *John Lydgate (1371–1449)* 12).

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So greet a book in Ynglyssh to translate,
Did it be constreynt and no presumpcioun.
Born in a vyllage which callyd is Lydgate,
Be old[e] tyme a famous castel toun;
In Danys tyme it was bete doun,
Tyme whan Seynt Edmond, martir, mayde and kyng,
Was slayn at Oxne, be record of wrytyng.

I me excuse, now this book is I-doo,
How I was nevir yit at Cytheroun,
Nor on the mounteyn callyd Pernaso,
Wheer nyne musys haue ther mansyoun.
But to conclude myn entencioun,
I wyl procede forth with whyte and blak;
And where I faylle let Lydgate ber the lak. (9.3428–42)

The explanation of the recorded history of nearby Bury and Edmund's martyrdom in the ninth century strengthens the suggestion that the village and its responsibility for Lydgate's poetic dullness is more than a trope, that he is pointing to the geographically and historically located village. Lydgate was engaged in writing the *Life of St. Edmund* at the same time that he wrote the *Fall*, a work designed to celebrate Henry VI's stay at Bury in 1433–1434 and a text that contains the story of Edmund's rise to the East Anglian throne, his defeat of the Danes, and his subsequent martyrdom. Casting the blame for his poor writing on the village of Lydgate "lowe doun in the vale," which is far from high mountains where Muses live, is to imply that this seemingly innocent village is responsible for his poor poetry. The very location and the specific history of this English place forbids

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poetic inspiration. By extension, the whole of England as place of origin stands against his efforts.

Just as London's and the country's economy account for the inspirational and poetic dullness of which Hoccleve and Lydgate complain throughout their poems, in Lydgate's envoys to the *Fall* England itself is responsible for the poverty of Lydgate's poetry. In both economic and regional terms England stands in the way of its own nationalist aspirations. England itself opposes the Lancastrian and patriotic ambition to raise English to be a beautiful and worthy poetic language. England's financial and geographical situation—its failure to offer pecuniary inspiration, its history with no Muses, its distance from Cytheron and Parnassus—won't allow the poets to carry out their tasks.

This undercutting of patriotic labor accounts for the strange critical reaction to Hoccleve's and Lydgate's poetry. Designation of the poetry as "mere flamboyant display," "pompous and grandiloquent," "metafictional," and in the "high style" is, as Lawton says, "condescending," an approach that "distorts" because it focuses only on the form of the poetry and removes it from its historical context.[23] However, the picture of the materiality of England turning against the Lancastrian and national attempts to further English for that England provides the history that accounts for the impression that the poetry is without sufficient foundation. The poetry contains, as Paul Strohm acknowledges, "an extreme surface deference" to Lancastrian claims, a "deceptively placid surface" that is "[c]ontinually at strife with its own professions" and "always striving but never succeeding in reconciling its placid surface with its external entanglements and its internal contradictions" (*England's Empty Throne* 191–95). While it is possible to doubt that Hoccleve and Lydgate intend to detract from their support of national and royal linguistic projects, the effect nevertheless is to radically undercut the nationalist rationale for their projects. What then is the reason for their writing, for the attempt to increase the quality

[23] The phrases appear in Pearsall, *Old English* 235; Green, *Poets and Princepleasers* 177; Markus 120; and Ebin, *John Lydgate* ii–iii. Lawton's important critique appears in "Dullness" 774–75.

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(and quantity) of English? Without an English basis, the thousands of lines of ornamentation become quite literally groundless, a stylistically floriated language that is all surface display.

The first impression upon reading Hoccleve's and Lydgate's *Fürstenspiegel*-begging poems is that the poets are performing for their Lancastrian patrons, and that, when they bemoan their lack of poetic-pecuniary inspiration, they do so in order to receive payment. They establish a literary history that identifies Chaucer almost exclusively as a master rhetorician whose primary talent was to make English a worthy and beautiful literary language. Then they advance this tradition by writing more in English and doing so in as feynyng a style as possible, thereby increasing the weight and value of a golden English tradition. Given the war against France and others, the anxieties produced by Lancastrian usurpation, and Parliament's growing power in relation to the king, Hoccleve and Lydgate's assistance in a Lancastrian attempt to identify as closely with the vernacular as possible takes on added importance. The majority of their attempts are successful, especially when the patron is written into their verses, described as a master reader and patron of English literature, and literally inscribed in the project of creating more English verse. It appears, however, that linguistic and stylistic ornamentation are nearly exclusive as the criteria for judging literary worth; propriety, formal and thematic uniformity among the different parts of a poem, is not part of this feynyng aesthetic. When Hoccleve and Lydgate amplify on their apologies for their lack of inspiration and poetic acumen, they tend to do so indiscriminately, without paying attention to the thematic unity of the work as a whole. In conjunction with their patriotic efforts, they detail England's problems, which extend to precisely the kinds of issues that, for a project of linguistic nationalism, would be best left unsaid: England is in deep financial difficulty and the very location of the country precludes great literary production. The patriotic rationale for the feynyng style, most frequently undermined in the prologues and envoys to the poems, makes what follows

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appear to be without cause, all addition without substantial foundation, an English without good English ground.

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CHAPTER TWO

PSYCHOSOMATIC ILLNESS AND IDENTITY IN LONDON, 1416–1421: HOCCLEVE'S *COMPLAINT* AND *DIALOGUE WITH A FRIEND*

In order to write a narrative of the self that presents this self as coherent, Thomas Hoccleve in the first two poems of his *Series*— the *Complaint* and *Dialogue with a Friend*—attempts to make use of particular discourses that will show he is sane and that his self is not unstable, fractured, disparate. He tries to argue that his body appears and behaves in the ways it should appear and act according to contemporary legal, medical, and class-related discourses and conventions about the body. And he tries to show that his self, separate from external appearances, is sane and has a coherent identity according to discourses about madness in romance and consolation literature. However, because of particular historical circumstances and the setting of the poems, London in 1416–1421, his attempts are unsuccessful. In particular, the city complicates the recovery offered by the romance tradition, and offers only a contested, divided, incoherent space for Hoccleve, who lives, works, goes mad, and writes there. At the beginning of stories about the self in English, Hoccleve attempts to authorize a stable self but instead feynes a fragmented and incoherent identity, one characterized by illness instead of integrity.

Hoccleve's presentation of a diffuse identity engenders the presence of what Starobinski calls "spontaneous" elements in the texture of the *Series* to the extent that the narrative often does not cohere, is non-unified (80–81). In place after place the poem goes from high to low style, from religious to secular themes, from anagogic to literal interpretations. Jerome Mitchell describes the poem as "rambling" and full of "detail" (17). Mary Pryor notes a "sense of immediacy and of shrewd observation" when Hoccleve "purports to speak of his own experience," and she argues for his "loyalty to the facts of his life" (26-27). J. A. Burrow describes the *Complaint* as making "rambling, repetitive progress" ("Hoccleve's" 262). David Mills describes the *Series* as containing "abrupt changes in local style and overall direction" (107). It "challenges conventional notions of

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structure, sequence and social and literary values" (86). This lack of concern for coherence among different stylistic elements, even tropes and themes, is an integral characteristic of the feynyng aesthetic of early fifteenth-century literature. Ultimately, Hoccleve has to show the world of London about him that there is no difference between his inner self and outer appearance. However, God does not require such a concern for public appearances, so he can retain the division even though he cannot reveal this publicly. But beyond these intended maneuvers are more internal differences, differences between one self and another and another. The intended differences go some way to creating a feynyng style—disguise, dissembling, and evasion—but the less intentional, dissonant aspects of his identity go even further, creating lack of coherence as the *Complaint* and *Dialogue* progress.

When compared with medieval literature outside contemplative traditions, the *Complaint* and *Dialogue with a Friend* are extraordinary. They are unusual not only in their insistent focus on the self as a person identifiable as Thomas Hoccleve rather than a self that is a persona or allegorical figure but also because the *Complaint* and *Dialogue* are stories of this self's psychosomatic illness. These two characteristics have led critics to study Hoccleve's writing, in a constrictive and simplistic sense, as autobiography, trying to decide to what extent the poems contain facts about his life or are merely conventional. Yet, as Larry Scanlon argues in reference to his earlier poem, the *Regement of Princes*, "His autobiographical turns are decidedly not the expressions of some unitary private self in a pre-social or pre-ideological state. They are continually framed both by his position at court as a Clerk of the Privy Seal, and by the traditions he draws upon to articulate them."[1] It is my intention to examine the discourses which "frame" Hoccleve's autobiographical "turns" in order to explore the powerful intersection of two newly emergent literary and social forces: writing about the self and the presence of London.

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[1] *Narrative* 300. For discussions of autobiography and the *Series*, see Scanlon's list of sources, 299 n. 2. In addition, see Frederick J. Furnivall's foreword in his and I. Gollancz's edition of *The Minor Poems* (xxi–xxvi). See also Eva Thornley (295–321), Mary Ruth Pryor's introduction to her edition (12, 23–29), Jerome Mitchell (1–19), Stephen Medcalf (124–40), Malcolm Richardson ("Hoccleve" 313–22), and Stephan Kohl (115–27).

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Hoccleve's feynyng and reasons for feynyng in the *Complaint* and *Dialogue* are similar to those of his earlier *Regement* and Lydgate's *Troy Book*, *Siege of Thebes*, and *Fall of Princes*. The poets' *Fürstenspiegel*-begging poems were also structurally and thematically inconsistent, their lack of formal decorum begetting a tendency to detail problems with England that undermined the nationalist rationale for their elaborate ornmanentation. In the *Regement* Hoccleve was interested in discussing his self, his pecuniary-poetic ability to write, and he focused on London's economics. However, the poems from the *Series* are different in that Hoccleve does not attempt to beautify English for the sake of a patron. He remains highly aware of the language he uses, and he is very interested in the *Series'* effect on his audience, but his impulse is directed towards a logical line of thought, the reasonable language in the poems reflecting his efforts. London is again a negative, debilitating space, although not for economic reasons. It affects him directly and psychosomatically via a set of urban discourses, which intensify the conflictual, irregular characteristics of his feynyng.

Some of these elements in the poem are accountable by considering Hoccleve's sources in describing his insanity. A. G. Rigg (564–74) and J. A. Burrow ("Hoccleve's" 424–28) have shown the importance of Isidore of Seville's *Synonyma* (an allegory of spiritual consolation), and Lillian Feder argues for Boethius' *Consolatio* as an influence (99–110). The consolation tradition is obviously important in the *Series*, and we will return to it, but, as Burrow notes, the "publication" of Hoccleve's confession of madness and assertions of recovery are "abnormal" ("Hoccleve's 268–69). My focus is not a study of sources. Instead, I attempt to place Hoccleve in a discursive context, a context that includes not only books of consolation but also discourse about law, medicine, profession, romance, and a new urban literature. In this way it is a synchronic study of an author belonging to the "middle strata" in London in the years 1416 to 1421,[2] but it also takes into

[2] Arguments for the importance of class-related social forces can be found in Sylvia Thrupp (288–319); Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (1–23); and D. M. Palliser (132–49).

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account diachronic elements, primarily the importance of temporal order and narrative development in the *Complaint* and *Dialogue*, and dynamic changes that were occurring in London at this time. This examination of Hoccleve's *Series* complements the previous analysis of his earlier *Regement of Princes* in that it situates his poetry in contexts that are different from the court and the nation. It is important to do so at this particular moment in criticism because the large quantity of writing on his and Lydgate's style in relation to Lancastrian and patriotic events threatens to obscure other significant historical developments.

Madness and Law, Medicine, Class, and Romance: Urban Complications

In 1421 Thomas Hoccleve wrote the group of five interrelated poems known as the *Series*: the *Complaint*, *Dialogue with a Friend*, *Tale of Jereslaus' Wife*, *How to Learn to Die*, and *Tale of Jonathas*. Hoccleve depicts and comments upon four distinct times in the *Complaint*: the time before he was sick when he was on good terms with his friends; the period when he was "brain seke" (129); the five years since he got better, beginning with the return of his memory on 1 November, 1416; and the present winter time of the poem's composition.[3] The crucial turning-point in his life is the sickness. As he suggests, "the substaunce / of my memory // Went to pley / as for a certayne space," until God "Made it to returne / in to the place // Whens it cam / whiche was at all hallwe messe // Was five yeere / neyther more ne lesse."[4] The trouble for Hoccleve is that in the five years since his sickness, many people have not believed his illness has passed. They either think he is still

[3] Alternative dates for Hoccleve's life and works are posited in Burrow, "Thomas." I am not altogether convinced by Burrow's arguments: that the stanza about coin-clipping in the *Dialogue* is an interpolated postscript and that the writing referred to on line 134 of the *Dialogue* ("When I this wrote") is not, after all, the *Complaint*.

[4] 50–56. Quotations and references to Hoccleve's *Series* throughout are from Pryor's edition by line numbers. I retain the virgules from the manuscript and dissertation. For short quotations from Hoccleve I use a double slash (//) to denote line breaks.

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sick or that he will become sick again. Hoccleve's principal intention in writing the *Complaint* and the entire *Series* is to prove his recently regained sanity.

One of the most striking aspects of the *Complaint* is the tangible, even "raw" presence of the city and its inhabitants. Again and again Hoccleve describes the experience of being mad in a populated area where people are present to observe, judge, and comment on his appearance and behavior:

> Witnes uppon the wyld infirmytie
> Which that I had / as many a man well knewe
> And whiche me owt of my selfe / cast and threw
>
> It was so knowen to the people / and kouthe
> That cownsell was it none / ne none be myght
> How it with me stode / was in every mans mowthe
> And that full sore / my frynds affright (40–46)

He acts like a wild animal, a deer, behavior which had been perceived by people in the street and then reported to Hoccleve later when he was presumably recovered:

> Men seyden I loked / as a wilde steer
> And so my loke abowt I gan to throwe
> Myne heed to hie / a nother seide I beer
> Ful bukkyshe is his brayne / well may I trowe
> And seyde the thirde / and apt is in the rowe
> To site of them / that a resounles reed
> Can geve / no sadnesse is in his heed
>
> Chaungid had I my pas / some seiden eke
> For here and there / forthe stirte I as a Roo
> None abode / none arrest but all brain seke

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A nother spake / and of me seide also
My feete weren aye / wavynge to and fro
Whane that I stonde shulde / and withe men talke
And that myne eyne / sowghten every halke (120–33)

Richard Bernheimer, Penelope Doob, and David Spurgeon, writing on madness in medieval literature, argue that the origins of medieval descriptions of madness and the wild man in particular lie in romance and hagiographical traditions. But here the central figure in the poem, Hoccleve, remains in the city and does not make that escape to the wilderness which is an invariable feature of romance. Instead, the expanse of nature that would usually be present in the text—the desert or forest, the trees and fauna, "resounles reed" and starting roe—is all located in, contracts to, Hoccleve's body and behavior. This is a good example of a stage in the developing history of the wild man, wildness gradually becoming, as Hayden White says, "despatialized" and the "despatialization . . . attended by a compensatory process of psychic interiorization" ("Forms" 7). The specific site of his illness and wildness is his brain. Also, what is not such an important part of the romance and hagiographical traditions but which is so significant here, is that other people observe Hoccleve.

The effect of this observation isn't all one way. Not only do the people in the streets of London look at and judge Hoccleve but Hoccleve is affected by his friends' and others' observations of his appearance. The people's attentions and comments lead him to change his behavior and his thinking:

My sprites / laboryd bysyly
To peinte countinaunce / chere and loke
For that men spake of me / so wonderingly
And for the very shame / and fere I qwoke (148–51)

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The principal reason why the embodiment of the wildness and wilderness of the wild-man tradition is significant for Hoccleve is that people see it. The social world judges, and Hoccleve is affected by their judgments.

For over a century the law and people of England had recognized madness by publicly judging the appearance and behavior of the person in question. From the 1300s to 1540 English law was relatively clear on this point. It drew a distinction between the "natural fool" or "idiota," who is congenitally insane, and the lunatic, who has been sane before or only has periods of insanity. The distinction is important because the crown could claim the profits of an idiot's land while he or she was alive but in the case of a lunatic was required to "sustain both the disabled individual and his family with the income from his estates according to his degree and station." What is most interesting in relation to Hoccleve's behavior is the difference in the testing for idiocy versus lunacy. Idiocy was often measured by the ability to carry out numerical and monetary computations, and sometimes by testing literacy (although this last may be a sixteenth-century addition). On the other hand, inquisitions into lunacy were different: "greater efforts were made to detect any signs of behavioral disorder. Verdicts discharging a case often refer to the subject's 'sober and discreet carriage and behaviour.' A 'civil and quiet manner' was important." As appears to have been the norm, inquisitions were carried out in front of local people familiar with the facts of the case as well as those directly affected by it.[5] Hoccleve's emphasis on his "countinaunce" and behavior, and the public's reaction, are in line with such legal description and categorization of lunacy. He and the London population are

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[5] Richard Neugebauer, "Treatment." The same arguments are made in Neugebauer, "Diagnosis." See also David Roffe and Christine Roffe. Neugebauer quotes the *Wards Archives* of the Chancery Lane Branch of the Public Record Office in London, upon which he bases a significant amount of his argumentation. For complete bibliographical information for the *Wards Archives*, see "Treatment" 168 n. 23. Judith Neaman notes that the beginnings of the distinction between idiot and lunatic is in Isidore of Seville, and discusses twelfth-century continental and English law on this point (14–15, 67–110). See also Basil Clarke's discussion of English law (58–61). Edward Kealey observes that even earlier, during the years 1100–1154, laws required mentally ill people to be treated "compassionately" (16).

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used to thinking of lunacy in terms of the visible behavioral signs of inner psychosomatic illness.[6]

Examples of people noting Hoccleve's behavior are not only numerous but detailed. At one point in the poem, when Hoccleve knows he is well again but others do not believe it, he thinks how foolish he is to appear in public. I quote at length to demonstrate how the stanza breaks emphasize the antagonistic and painful nature of his predicament:

> Sythen I recoveryd was / have I full ofte
> Cawse had of angre / and ympacience
> Where I borne have it / esely and softe
> Sufferynge wronge be done to me and offence
> And nowght answeryd ageyn / but kept sylence
> Lest that men of me / deme would and seyne
> Se how this man / is fallen in agayne
>
> As that I ones / fro westmynstar cam
> Vexid full grevously / withe thowghtfull hete
> Thus thowght I / a great fole I am
> This pavyment / a dayes thus to bete
> And in and out / labour fast and swete
> Wonderinge / and hevynes to purchace
> Sythen I stand out / of all favour and grace
>
> And then thowght I / on that othar syde

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[6] For a review of the scholarship on stigma related to psychosomatic conditions in ancient to modern societies, see the sequential articles by Horacio Fabrega, Jr. Michel Foucault's discussion of isolation in hospitals and *Narrenschiffe* for the insane in the Middle Ages provides an interesting counter-point to the community basis of English law, but his discussion of the madman's "*liminal* position" still applies (8–11). It is this double position, both marginal and interior, which Hoccleve occupies.

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If that I not be sene / amonge the prees
Men deme wele / that I myne heade hyde
And am werse than I am / it is no lees
O lorde so my spirite / was restles
I sowght reste / and I not it found
But aye was trouble / redy at myn hond (176–96)

It is not only that Hoccleve is aware of other people around him but also that the proximity of other people, the "prees" in the street, becomes part of the action. It is estimated that by 1377 London's population was approximately 40,000.[7] Hoccleve writes that, as he walks by people,

I leide an ere aye to / as I be wente
And herde all / and thus in myne herte I cast
Of longe abydynge here / I may repent
Leste of hastinesse / I at the last
Answere a myse / best is hens hye faste
For yf I in this preace / a mysse me gye
To harme will it me turne / and to folly

And this I demyd well / and knew well eke
What so evar I shuld answere or sey
They wold not have holde it worthe a leke
For why / as I hadd lost my tonges key
Kepte I me cloos / and trussyd me my wey

[7] The Black Death and other factors make the estimation of population forwards or backwards from more precisely calculable figures difficult. See Jan de Vries' study for a discussion of the problems. De Vries estimates London's population to be 40,000 in 1500 (17–27, 152). Caroline Barron summarizes primary and secondary sources as estimating London's population to be approximately 35,000 in 1377 and in 1500 "conservatively estimated at 35,000 and expansively at 67,744" ("The Later Middle Ages" 56).

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Drowpynge and hevye / and all woo bystad

Small cause had I / me thowght to be glade (134–47)

Because of the "prees" or "preace," Hoccleve overhears people assert that he is still not well.

The social and urban appearance of madness had been a legal concern for a century, but it is a new theme in literature. Hoccleve may have found ideas and language for exploring this theme not only from the congestion of the urban population or legal conceptions of mental illness but also from the greater prominence of the medical profession and its discourse in London. Medicine, including the treatment of psychosomatic illnesses, was gradually becoming more professional with the rise of merchant classes in urban areas (Gottfried 5, 8, 245–78). In terms of sheer numbers it is estimated that between 1420 and 1450 there were 435 medical practitioners in England, nearly half of whom practiced in London. The ratio of doctors to patients in London during this period was to remain constant until the sixteenth century: "three times greater than the corresponding figure for 1980." Many medical practitioners in this period owned books, and a substantial proportion even wrote medical treatises (Gottfried 253, 260–64). Over 7,000 Middle English—not Latin—scientific and medical writings survive from the mid-fourteenth to fifteenth centuries (Voigts 183–88). Writers of literature at this time, including Chaucer, are proficient in using humoral and scientific material. An interesting example is provided by John Metham's mid-fifteenth century *Physiognomy*, about "the most trwe werkyng off nature . . . in a mannys face," which was written for a non-medical gentleman and lady (118). The availability and prominence of medical discourse are thus concurrent with Hoccleve's own career within the middle strata of London.

When Hoccleve describes the particular nature of his madness, he says "the substaunce / of my memory // Went to pley / as for a certayne space" (50–51). While I can not find a description of memory going "to pley" in a medieval text, including medical texts, the Middle English translation of Guy de Chauliac's *Treatise on Wounds* (ca. 1425)

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includes a description of a wound to the back of the head, where the faculty of memory was thought to be located: "Of the which partie went ut a litel of the substance of the brayne, which [was] knowen by hurting in the memorie .i. mynde, which he recouered after the cure" (10–11). In addition, Doob attributes Hoccleve's recounting of the people's descriptions of his deer-like behaviors to Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum* (*Nebuchadnezzar's* 221). The sheer profusion of medical literature in London makes it extremely likely that Hoccleve and possibly his peers are aware of, if not familiar with, medical discourses surrounding psychosomatic illnesses. It should come as no surprise then that Hoccleve thinks of himself in terms of this medical and primarily urban literature.

Richard Bernheimer reasons that the popularity of the wild man material in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was due to the growing bourgeoisie and larger urban population. Bernheimer states that the wild man, as a composite of folk and courtly traditions, appealed to both the aristocracy (for whom the ideals of knighthood and ladyhood were increasingly unrealistic) and the emerging middle strata (people with newly acquired power and status). These groups turned to games in order to escape the unrealistic hollowness of their conventions and particularly to an "attitude" of identification with the wild man, a symbolic rejection of courtly rules and ideals.[8] If Hoccleve is trying to align himself with noble or middle-class discourses, as his dedications and other supplicating poems indicate, he is correct to include some wild man material, material he could reasonably expect to be popular among contemporaries.

However, his identification with wildness in the *Complaint* is crucially different. It is neither an "attitude" nor a symbolic embodiment and rejection. Elaine Scarry says of pain that

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[8] 143–46. Mary Wack points to a closely parallel movement occurring in aristocratic attitudes toward lovesickness in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. She states: "the lover's malady was a social and psychological response to historical contradictions in late-medieval aristocratic culture. It offered a way of controlling a historically- and socially-conditioned experience of eros that was felt to threaten the normative hierarchy of gender and power" (147–48).

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> at particular moments when there is within a society a crisis of belief—that is, when some central idea or ideology or cultural construct has ceased to elicit a population's belief either because it is manifestly fictitious or because it has for some reason been divested of ordinary forms of substantiation—the sheer material factualness of the human body will be borrowed to lend that cultural construct the aura of "realness" and "certainty." (14)

This is what Hoccleve is doing, bringing his body forward to lend the ideals of knighthood and its game of identification with the wild man a genuine corporeality. Yet his mad body turns out to transgress in an important way. The sanctioned purpose of identifying with the wild man is not to stress wildness as an end in itself, an end that challenges courtly mores. The wild man may be used by the court but only as an "attitude," a "game," never as something that it may turn out to be difficult to reject. This is the difference between what Seth Lerer describes as Chaucer's "strategy" of presenting his self as a persona to shield him from criticism and Hoccleve's presentation of his self (10–11). For Chaucer the gesture is a kind of mask, but Hoccleve's self and his madness are apparently neither a persona nor merely strategic. Hoccleve's transgression is exacerbated by displaying his wildness in an inappropriate setting. The street corners of London are not a separate, special place opposed to the city for the symbolic performance of animality. He has crossed the boundary between the symbolic space and real space that allows the nobility eventually to return to its real: the civilized and not wild. In so doing he has figured wildness and violence at the center of the civilized world's rules and ideals.

Even the appearance of the manuscript hand signals that the *Series* belongs to a certain class. It is unusual that we have evidence of a poet's own handwriting, but the three manuscripts containing significant parts of the *Series* as well as other poems and writings are in Hoccleve's own hand. This is a court or business hand as opposed to a book hand, reflecting his employment in the "commercial scriptoria" of the Privy Seal and his class (Schulz 1–3; Pryor 1–3). Hoccleve's handwriting is "commercial" and belongs to

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a lower-middle stratum; it is not a book hand designed for a work of self-consciously literary value and great expense.

That Hoccleve is not writing a romance or a consolation and does not leave the city also complicates his recovery. The opening of the *Complaint* and its description of seasonal change signal that Hoccleve is producing something slightly unconventional:

> After that hervest Inned had his sheves
> And that the broune season of myhelmesse
> Was come and gan the trees robbe of ther leves
> That grene had bene / and in lusty fresshnesse
> And them into colowre / of yelownesse
> Hadd dyen / and doune throwne undar foote
> That chaunge sange / into myne herte roote (1–7)

Like the opening of the *Canterbury Tales*, this seasonal change is causal. However, because it is winter, the effect is not expansive, with people going on a pilgrimage, nor does the change of season signal the beginning of a restorative *consolatio* such as occurs in the dispelling of darkness and sorrow at the beginning of Chaucer's translation of *De consolatione philosophiae* (1.pr 2.21–1.pr 3.7). Instead, the effect is reductive, conservative.[9] The season has robbed the trees of their leaves and dyed the trees with yellowness before throwing the leaves under foot. Hoccleve says these signs of seasonal change "sange / into myne herte roote." The change penetrates his body and leads to his "wyld infirmytie," which causes him to act in strange ways. The weather causes the illness, which finally causes the writing:

> I see well sythen I with sycknes last
> Was scourged / clowdy hath bene the favoure
> That shone on me / full bright in tymes past

[9] Pryor 393, note to lines 1–14 and Burrow, "Hoccleve's" 261.

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The sonne abatid / and the derke showre
Hildyd downe right on me / and in langour
He made swyme / so that my wite
To lyve / no lust hadd ne delyte

The grefe abowte / my harte so swal
And bolned evar / to and to so sore
That nedes / oute I must there with all[10]

His *friends* go on pilgrimages for him (43–49), and even his mind becomes a kind of pilgrim ("thowghe my witt / were a pilgrime // And went fer fro home / he cam agayne" [232–33]), but he physically remains in London. Unlike the characters in romances, he does not escape outside the city walls to the world of the forest and wilderness.

Not only does this lead to people observing his wildness, but Hoccleve does not have the literary, or literary-therapeutic, device of a retreat to the forest to regain his sanity. In fact, the place in which he experiences his "wyld infirmytie" is not distinct from the place he usually lives in health. Wildness and the wilderness are here in the same space as the rest of his life, which is also a place of civilization. Consequently, his recovery can be neither simple nor clear cut. Even when Hoccleve is helped to recover by God, he does not cease to embody wildness and the animal. Instead, these are transformed through domestication. At the end of the *Complaint*, and retrospectively, Hoccleve suggests that the illness was a bone given to him by God and that he was a dog set to "knaw" upon the bone because he did not follow God's will:

Thrwghe gods iust dome / and his iudgement
And for my best / now I take and deme

[10] 22–31. An interesting contrast to Hoccleve's description of his reactions to the rain is suggested by Bernheimer, who argues that in thirteenth-century troubadour poetry and then in later French and Italian poetry a wild man was supposed to show sound wisdom by enjoying the bad weather, specifically smiling and laughing when it rained, because he knew it would get fine later (31–33).

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Gave that good lorde / me my punishement
In welthe I toke of hym / none hede or yeme
Hym for to please / and hym honoure and queme
And he me gave abone / on for to knaw
Me to correcte / and of hym to have awe (393–99)

First, wild roe, then, domesticated, cowering animal, he remains in both cases in one place: the streets of fifteenth-century London.

There are precedents in medieval romances for a taking of wilderness into the body that does not lead to a cure, a rejection of wildness, and a departure from the wilderness. An extensive treatment of madness occurs in Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *Vita Merlini* in which Merlin is mad for two-thirds of the poem, repeatedly shuttling back and forth between the court and the woods. Similarly, Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* raises rather than solves the problem of recovery from grief. But here, Hoccleve's intent is to show how he is recovered, how the illness is firmly there in the past and separate from his life in the present. While it is part of the penitential process for a romance character to embody nature while he is in the wilderness, it is inappropriate for Hoccleve to do the same in the city. In Hoccleve's case the wilderness is only in his body, which publicly appears wild in the heart of London.

In addition, in setting the poem in the streets and daily life of the city, Hoccleve is attempting to argue for a coherence of self in a space that is itself divided. This also stands in the way of an easy recovery. Gail Kern Paster argues that ancient, medieval, and Renaissance literature about the city contains an "antithetical" image of the urban space: as paradise on earth but also as place of evil, fratricide, and conflict. In this way the city is often "its own counter-statement." "The city arouses a profoundly ambivalent response in those who fear what it represents as much as they desire it. It stimulates and therefore comes to symbolize self-division and self-loathing" (3–4). Louise Fradenburg, writing on fourteenth-, fifteenth-, and sixteenth-century Edinburgh, discusses how the very "idea of

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the city seems so often to raises the specter of ontological crisis." The city "poses the problem of how human beings construct and produce their world." William Dunbar, in her argument, is able to align himself in support of the court's idea of the city as a place of "disorder" separate from the idyllic space of the court (3–19). But Hoccleve does not have such an idyllic space. More immediately pertinent to Hoccleve is David Wallace's observation that London is generally "absent" in Chaucer's writing and, more generally, "in English texts." He concludes that where London actually makes an appearance (as in the Cook's Tale):

> Perhaps the city can only be imagined as a discourse of fragments, discontinuities, and contradictions. . . . There is no idea of a city for all the inhabitants of a space called London to pay allegiance to; there are only conflicts of associational, hierarchical, and antiassociational discourses acted out within and across the boundaries of a city wall or the fragments of a text called the *Canterbury Tales*. (*Chaucerian* 177–79)

Following Wallace, Paul Strohm's analysis of an accusation or appeal of murder against Hochon of Liverpool by the mayor of London in 1387 reveals "a set of commonly held ideas about factional strife," which is "real and likely to boil up in everyday interaction" in the city. He states: "These are the kinds of interpretative structures within which London citizens of the 1380s made sense of their world and organized themselves as participants in its social struggles."[11]

Hoccleve in London in the early fifteenth century is indeed trying to "make sense of a world" which is fragmented, discontinuous, contradictory. But whereas in Chaucer the city is largely "absent," in Hoccleve some thirty years later it is startlingly real and present. Its "prees" physically and psychologically presses on Hoccleve. In the *Regement of Princes* London is a place of deficiency—of opportunity, of compassion from lords, of

[11] *Hochon's* 11–31. See also David DeVries' discussion of London as "double" in Lydgate's poems from the 1430s and in the minds of its inhabitants at this time.

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honesty and trust among the middle strata. But in the *Complaint* it is not a solid, identifiable entity, something simple against which Hoccleve can easily argue. He tries to employ its legal, medical, and class-based discourses to argue for his well-being, but the city, though present as a set of employable arguments, has no unified presence. The urban conflict, which is only marginally part of many fourteenth-century texts, is embodied in Hoccleve's psychosomatic identity as it is figured in the *Series*, leading to the incoherent feynyng that will characterize his text.

Internal Difference and the Consolation Tradition

Hoccleve, who lives, works, writes, and goes mad in London, knows and overhears that his behavior is inappropriate and so wants to make sure he appears sane. This focus on Hoccleve's desire leads me to disagree with A. C. Spearing's otherwise insightful overview of "The Poetic Subject from Chaucer to Spenser," which includes Hoccleve. Spearing describes the development of the poetic subject from persona in Chaucer to a "foregrounded" subject and autobiographical writing in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He describes this subject as always "shifting, divided, transient, and always liable to dissolve." But he also suggests that the poet is somehow comfortable with or even desirous of this fragmentation.[12] In contrast, consider a passage often noted by critics, wherein Hoccleve writes about checking his appearance in a mirror in his room at home "To loke how that me / of my chere thowght // Yf any othir were it / than it owght" (158–59). The "owght" here implies social obligation. He has to appear in the way that others accept as normal:

> Many a sawte made I to this myrrowre
> Thinkynge yf that I loke in this manere
> Amonge folke / as I now do none errowr

[12] For general comments about the medieval subject, see also Lee Patterson, "On the Margin," and David Aers, "Whisper".

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Of suspecte loke / may in my face appere
This continance I am sure and this chere
If I forthe use / is no thinge reprevable
To them that have / conseytes resonable (162–68)

Hoccleve observes himself, trying to match the view of others who have "reasonable" thoughts and conceptions of how a person should appear. He checks himself against society's expectations. David Mills describes the mirror as a "text which [Hoccleve] seeks to read as others read it" (96). And Albrecht Classen writes that he "endeavors to rediscover his own self or at least to develop an image of his own self adequate for what people expect from a 'normal' person" ("Autobiographical" 304). Hoccleve's attempts to control his facial expressions and behavior make sense when we consider the texts and expectations—the legal, medical, and class-related discourses—about faces, bodies, and wildness in early fifteenth-century London. Hoccleve's trouble is that at this point he is not confident he is fully in control of this appearance. Indeed, that he makes "Many a sawte" (from the French "sauter," "to leap or jump") implies an unwilled, obsessive concern.

Hoccleve is aware that the appearance of his external self is different from the identity of his internal self, and at this point in the poem he acknowledges the importance of appearances and the external. The recognition of the importance of public appearances is not, however, the terminal point of his explorations. Ultimately, Hoccleve rejects the discourses of law, medicine, and status, the arguments of the "prees" that the external man is the correct measure of the internal man. He first tries to measure up to other people's expectations, but, when the poem continues after this mirror episode, he says he has recovered, whether it is obvious or not (176). In extended discussions following this assertion of recovery (197–217 and 239–45) he states that in the end he is not so concerned about appearances. People should not judge him by appearances, but by his actions and more extended conversation, for "by the prefe / bene things knowne and wiste" (200). He says that people who believe he is

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. . . not well / may as I by them goo
Taste and assay / yf it be so or noo

Upon a looke / is harde men them to grownde
What a man is / there by the sothe is hid
Whither his wittes / seke bene or sounde
By cowntynaunce / it is not wist ne kyd (209–14)

Appearances are put lower in an order of significance than is putting one's "wittes" "at the prefe" (245).

However, the desire to appear sane that Hoccleve initially feels, notes in the mirror episode, and then rejects engenders a divided self within, not just a split between the public appearance of the self and a private, inner well-being. It is as though the first crack leads to a network of fissures. There is also division and difference within the now-privileged, inner man. The most striking passages in the *Complaint* are the assertions of difference within and even from an inner self, which are of a different kind than the difference between public appearance and inner certainty. These passages are particularly disturbing because they occur when Hoccleve is describing how he is recovered ("Sythen I recoveryd was"), but they still recognize the potential for if not the existence of what Hoccleve calls "dysseveraunce" (248). His explicit intention in these places is to show that the splitting is in the past, but at the time of writing the poem, the present when he is supposedly recovered, he still objectifies parts of his self. Hoccleve argues that he is sane *now*, the present time in which the poem is written, but he still repeats the distinction of the self from the self through an objectification of the "I". He writes: "Debate is now none / bytwyxt me and my wit" and "Not have I wyst / how in my skynne to turne // But now my selfe / to my selfe have ensured" (247, 303–304). Though Hoccleve's intention here is to assert the coherence of the self, we may still recognize—against his intention—distinctions between

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self and self. At the time of writing there are two selves even though these are said to be reintegrated in the recovery of health.

The style of his writing reflects this internal division. Again, it is perhaps against Hoccleve's intention that he should write in contradictory, unresolved ways, progressing further and further into trouble as he continues, but it is part of the poetic mode of the time not to care for formal decorum. In the *Regement of Princes* this aspect of the feynyng aesthetic allows him to detail and explore the reasons behind his inability to assist in the linguistic patriotism his patrons desire. Here in the *Series* the lack of *proprietas* frees him to explore the problems with his self . . . to a fault. Contradictions, inconsistencies, disharmonies are embodied rather than discussed and rejected to a distinct and separate past. The meaning of "feynyng" in the sense of "adulterating" and "dissembling" comes closest to describing Hoccleve's difficulties here.

Northrop Frye's discussion of wildness and the wild man in literature includes the argument that when the wild man returns to civilization, he must get rid of any disguise, including wildness and animality. At this point, Frye says, the double figure, the "twin image," which "darkens into a sinister doppelgänger figure, the hero's shadow and the portent of his own death or isolation," is cast off, even killed off (140–44). Like the "lothly" lady in Gower's *Tale of Florent* and Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale, at this point Hoccleve should escape from the threat of the malevolently misbehaving wild Hoccleve from the past. But this does not happen in the *Complaint*: "me and my wit" and "my selfe / to my selfe" are still recognized in the present time of writing the poem.

If society's observation of Hoccleve makes it necessary for him to behave in particular ways, it is not the only mirror in which Hoccleve can perceive himself. The consolation and contemplative traditions provide him with an alternative model for a mirror and hence a rationale and cure: the self appearing under God. These two bodies of texts are perhaps the most obvious precursors for Hoccleve's exploration of his self. We need to remember that the *Series* includes *How to Learn to Die*, a version of Heinrich Suso's

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Horologium sapientiae.[13] Indeed, it appears Hoccleve finds supporting reasons from these traditions for maintaining an inner self different from the outer—God has repaired the private self, and onlookers are deceived:

> What nedethe it / my feble wit appeire
> Sythe god hathe made / myne helthe home repayre
> Blessed be he / and what men deme or speke
> Suffre it thinke I / and me not on me wreke (277–80)

Also, God can cure him of his illness: "God me voydyd / of this grevous venyme // That had enfectyd / and wildyd my brayne." He is the "leche moste sovereyne," who "gevythe medisyne" (234–38). He is also the giver of the "venyme" itself in the first place. Feder, in her arguments about the significance of a Boethian tradition for Hoccleve, describes the necessity that Hoccleve first experience "torment" in order to be "cured of mental distress and confusion" (105). And, indeed, this process fits into the *consolatio* tradition of the penitential lyric, a fact first noted by Eva Thornley. In addition, Hoccleve describes how, at a certain point in his recovery, he reads in a book about Reason's advice to a "wofull man" (310) whose life is "full enconberows // For whithar / or un to what place I flye // My wyckednesses / evar followe me" (318–20). The book Hoccleve reads has been identified as a version of Isidore of Seville's consolatory work, the *Synonyma* (Rigg; Burrow, "Hoccleve's" 424-28). In the book the man is told by Reason that he has been sent his misery by God to be tested, just as other men are: "Suche sufferaunce is / of mans gylt clensynge // And them inablethe / to loye evarlastinge" (349–50). Ironically, the book is taken back before Hoccleve can finish it, but he does have time to realize that he too has been sent "sufferaunce" because he rebelled against His authority. Hoccleve ignored God when he was wealthy and therefore foolish. God took his wit away and then "gave agayne

[13] Though *How to Learn to Die* is one of the later items in the *Series*, Hoccleve says he intends to write it, at the request of a "devout" man, quite early in the *Dialogue* (204–38).

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/ when it was to his pay" (393–406). The reason for his survival and his consolation is that he accepted and still accepts God's punishment as just.

However, what is in fact apparent in the poem is precisely the continuation of confusion—particularly the difference between the inner self and the outer, and confusion within the self—even after God has "voydyd" the "venyme" from him. The "I" in the *Complaint* differs from the "I" of consolation and contemplative discourses because he is not cured. The point could be made that this lack of clear certainty about his recovery is also theologically sound. Hoccleve would be presuming too much of God's knowledge and mercy to think himself permanently cured. It is arguable, therefore, that his inner "confusion" is intentionally depicted, even lasting long into the time when he is supposed to be "cured." But the more disturbing aspect of the poem is the way the fractured identity asserts itself against the philosphical context within which Hoccleve is insisting on wholeness. As Spearing notes, "Hoccleve's fideism seems . . . insistent rather than serene" ("Poetic" 24).

The problems arise through a temporal confusion, which reveals the feynyng aesthetic's lack of concern for consistency along formal but also thematic lines. Though Hoccleve's intent is to keep the four times depicted in the poem distinct and in the correct order so the sickness can be confidently placed in the past, he does not keep the time of the recovery from his "infirmytie" clearly in the past (the recovery is dated to 1 November, 1416). It slips into the present and the future. When he first introduces the illness, he says "I see well sythen I with sycknes last // Was scourged" (22–23). Does this mean since he was *last* sick, implying that it has happened more than once? While this reading may be placing too much stress on one word, "last," where it might only be meaning one time, he repeats this temporal imprecision elsewhere in the *Complaint*. He wishes, hopes, that the sickness occurs only once, rather than asserting this as a fact: "Thowghe a man harde / have ones bene bityde // God shilde it shuld / on hym contynue alway" (215–16). In a

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concluding stanza he even sees the time when he will be well and when his former self will return as lying in the future:

> With pacience / I hens forthe thinke unpike
> Of suche thowghtfull dissease and woo / the lok
> And let them out / that have me made to sike
> Here aftar owr lorde god / may yf hym lyke
> Make all myne olde affection resorte
> And in hope of that / woll I me comforte (387–92)

The logic of Hoccleve's argument—that he has recovered and that the people around him in the city are wrong—relies on his assertion that God made his "memory" and "olde affection" "returne / in to the place // Whens it cam / whiche was at all hallwe messe // Was five yeere / neyther more ne lesse" (54–56). But here he is looking forward to his "olde affection," his old, well self, returning. It is this unintentional disturbance of the temporal order that is the underside of his assertions of recovery and his suggestive claims about the return of the self to the self. We will see more of this "underside" in the *Dialogue with a Friend.*

Incoherence in the Dialogue with a Friend

The *Dialogue with a Friend* continues and further complicates the problems of the *Complaint.* Where the *Complaint* is a narrative of Hoccleve's psychosomatic illness with accompanying interpretation of the events, the *Dialogue*'s style is more pedagogical. It is comprised of a loose series of five arguments presented by Hoccleve to his friend and the friend's replies. Hoccleve's intent in the *Dialogue* is to make the earlier poem, the *Complaint,* public, to show it to friends and to present it to a patron or authority figure. By doing so, he hopes to prove to the still-doubting public that he is not ill anymore. However, an overriding individualism, an insistence on singularity which conflicts with this move towards publication, affects the logic of the arguments in the *Dialogue* to the

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extent that the poem's persuasiveness is undercut, making the whole incoherent. The *Dialogue* makes the focus on the self even more deeply imbricated in the making of the *Series* than the *Complaint*. That the poet's identity should be the explicit subject of the poem and that this identity should be dependent on the arguments and rhetoric contained within its lines, is a telling feature of the feynyng aesthetic. Hoccleve's lack of concern for decorum complicates his presentation of that self and parallels the kinds of inconsistencies and antagonistic arguments in early fifteenth-century *Fürstenspiegel*-begging poems.

A word of caution is due about the focus of several critics, who have argued that lines in the *Dialogue* signal that the *Complaint* and *Dialogue*, if not the whole *Series*, are "about" writing. It has struck many that to read in the *Dialogue* that "hoccleve," named in the second poem, is interrupted from writing the *Complaint*, complicates the reader's relationship with the poem he or she has just read.[14] The *Complaint*, which used to have a direct relation to the reader, is now an object that is read aloud to "hoccleve's" anonymous friend. The *Dialogue* begins on the top of a new leaf in the Durham manuscript, but it begins with a conjunction, explicitly linking the two poems: "And endyd my complaynt / in this manere // One knocked / at my chambre dore sore // And cryed a lowde / howe hoccleve arte thow here" (1–3). The friend asks what Hoccleve was doing when he knocked, and Hoccleve reveals his poem: "To my good frind / not thowght I to make queinte // Ne my labowre / from hym to hyde or leyne // And right anon / I redd hym my complaynt" (15–17). While there is more evidence of this self-referentiality in the poem and the *Series* as a whole, the arguments in the *Dialogue* do not stop at self-referentiality. Instead, they continue to explore the problems associated with the disjunction between private and public, social selves and with figuring these according to discourses present in London during Hoccleve's writing. The question becomes who will read the poem and how or whether the poem will persuade Hoccleve's intended audience: the new, urban,

[14] See Manfred Markus, "Truth" 117–39; Burrow, "Hoccleve's" 260–70; D. C. Greetham (244); Classen, "Autobiographical" 306–308; and Mills (107).

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literate middle strata and the more traditional court, Church, and women. In other words, will it work, as Scanlon argues of the *Regement of Princes*, to "produce" or "enact" Hoccleve's "cultural authority" (3–26, 298–322).

The friend depicted in the *Dialogue* is the first member of the public to read or hear the *Complaint;* in addition, the dialogue form also shifts the poem into a social context rather than the private monologue of the *Complaint*. These are the first steps in publication that will eventually be extended to include a wider group of people. The friend states that he will talk with Hoccleve about the poem because they are alone: "thus he seyde sen we twayne // Bene here / and no mo folke / for gods peyne // Thomas soffar me speke" (18–20). But the implication is that the friend-figure is a way for Hoccleve the author to make clear his reasons for making the poem public by recontextualizing the *Complaint* in a social setting. Indeed, the friend repeats the concerns of and, in effect, embodies the society that has been such a problem for Hoccleve in the *Complaint*. Although there is no indication precisely who the friend might be or even if he is a real person with whom Hoccleve actually might have had a similar discussion, he is addressed in a familiar, colloquial manner. This suggests he is of the same status as Hoccleve, perhaps even one of the many clerks frequently named in association with Hoccleve in the *Privy-Council Proceedings and Ordinances*, the *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, the *Pells Issue Rolls*, and the accounts for the Keeper of the Great Wardrobe for the years ca. 1385–1427: Robert Frye, John Hethe, William Flete, Richard Clifford, John Weld (Hoccleve's own clerk), or Richard Prior (his successor at the Privy Seal).[15]

Having read the poem to his friend, Hoccleve makes the first two of five arguments why he should publicize the *Complaint:* to counter rumor and to show God's grace. However, both of Hoccleve's ideas flatly contradict the *Complaint*'s central tenet, that he is in fact well. First the friend advises that the publication of the poem will not make

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[15] Furnivall, introduction, *Hoccleve's Works*, li–lxxii; and Richard Green, "Three" 14.

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Hoccleve's case any better. He asks whether Hoccleve has made "this complaynte / forthe to goo // Amonge the people," and Hoccleve responds, "ye friend so I ment // What ells." The friend then counsels him otherwise, claiming that the people have forgotten his illness and now think of Hoccleve in the best light: "Men have forget it / it is owt of mynd // That thou towche there of." In doing so the friend appeals to Hoccleve's social standing, "Kepe all that [matter of the poem] cloos / for thyn honours sake" (23–35).

But Hoccleve insists people in London do not believe he is well, so he needs to make his poetry public. Using circular reasoning, the evidence he offers of people's mistrust of him is what he has written in the *Complaint* itself. Hoccleve even asks the friend why he questions him when the friend has just now heard the *Complaint:*

> I wott what men have seyde / and seyne of me
> Ther words have I not / as yet forgote
> But greate marvayle have I / of yow that ye
> No bet of my compleynte / avysed be
> Sythen mafey / I not redd it unto yow
> So longe a gone / for it was but right now
>
> If ye toke hede / it makethe mention
> That men of me speke / in myne audience (37–44)

In addition to this "evidence" Hoccleve also repeats the idea, which appeared in the *Complaint*, that God was the cause and cure of illness. Because of this, he argues, he is not ashamed to make his illness public. In fact he will balance the publicity of his "wildhede" with his own publicity of God's cure (50–63). These two related arguments are Hoccleve's explicit reasons in the *Dialogue* for making the *Complaint* public.

The friend therefore turns to another argument: that although Hoccleve's "entente" is sound for many reasons, it was writing that first made Hoccleve suddenly ill before 1 November, 1416:

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Yis Thomas yis / thow hast a good entente
But thy werk / hard is to parfourme I dreede
Thy brayn par cas / ther to nat wole assente
And wel thow woost / it moot assente neede
Or thow aboute brynge swich a deede
. . . . . .
Thy bisy studie aboute swich mateere
Hath causid thee / to stirte in to the plyt
That thow were in[16]

It is at this point that the logic of Hoccleve's *Dialogue* takes an even more disturbing turn. Hoccleve denies that it was writing that made him ill and insists instead that the cause was his own "long seeknesse":

Where as that yee deemen of me and trowe
That y of studie my disese tooke
Which conceit eeke / among the peple is sowe /
Trustith right wel / that nevere studie in booke
Was cause / why my mynde me forsooke
But it was causid of my long seeknesse
And othir wyse nat / in soothfastnesse (421–27)

His argument is that the long sickness may affect the writing, but the writing does not affect the sickness. He even states that he has been hesitant to write recently, over the last two months, because "seeknesse and unlust / and othir mo // Han be the causes of impediment" (537–38). To admit he still has a long-standing, even recurring sickness, contradicts his arguments for recovery in the *Complaint*. He is not well, his sickness can return, and even God cannot and indeed has not cured him. We have returned to the

[16] 295–304. I am aware that I do not address the stanzas on coin-clipping in the *Dialogue*. For an insightful discussion of these passages, see Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, especially 141–48.

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unsettling suggestions in the *Complaint* that his discussions of illness may be only about the *last* time he was sick and that he actually has need to wish and hope that the wildness not return. The lack of crucial temporal distinctions we saw in the *Complaint*, which would keep his illness in the past, now has a rationale. He is not well.

While the assertions in the *Dialogue* reflect back on the *Complaint* in unsettling ways, they also disturb the center of the *Dialogue*. For what, given his admissions of sickness, is the point of the *Dialogue*? His overall "entente" was to make the *Complaint* public to counter rumor and to show God's grace. But the reasoning behind both those intentions was that he is well. By raising the possibility that he is not well, Hoccleve undercuts the point of publicizing the earlier poem.

It is important to recognize that Hoccleve's intentions in writing the *Dialogue* are similar to his intentions for the *Complaint*: to have particular arguments recognized and affirmed by the public, that is, in public discourse. The friend's doubts raise questions as to the efficacy of that move. In what is an excessive layering of argument upon argument, Hoccleve now turns from one trope to another to affirm the necessity that he write and make his writing public. He supplies three more quite different reasons for writing. During the course of the *Dialogue*, he suggests first that a "devout man" has urged him to write or translate the *Learn to Die* (232–38); then, that, as his friend reminds him, the September just past he has promised a book to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, perhaps celebrating Humphrey's valorous knighthood (526–619); and last, that he needs to make amends to women, having offended them in the past because he wrote *The Letter of Cupid*, a version of Christine de Pisan's poem (661–700). All five of Hoccleve's reasons suggest ways in which he can be reinscribed into a community, a literary-social world. He insists people still do not believe he is well, and so he must publicize the *Complaint;* he insists it was not writing that made him ill, and so he needs to correct that misapprehension; and a devout man (that is, a religious), Humphrey (that is, a knight), and women (in particular, the courtly) require different texts. His audiences, from immediate friends such as the

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interlocutor in the *Dialogue* and the "prees" of London and Westminster, to courtly and aristocratic (secular and religious) literary society oblige him to write, each for very different, perhaps even conflicting reasons. Social obligations evoke a binding literary, almost legal, contract that would shift Hoccleve out of the solitary and isolated world of the *Complaint* and his "chambre" with its insufficiently social mirror into the world of contemporary London and a society where the role of the poet is recognized. Still, none of the reasons for writing will cure him of his "long seeknesse."

If the first two reasons are seriously compromised by his continuing illness and the temporal uncertainty in the poem, the last three are also unconvincing. Who the "devout man" who requested the *Learn to Die* translation might be is unclear; Hoccleve does not write a text describing Humphrey's valor in the *Series;* and it is unclear whether he writes anything in the *Series* that might correct women's misapprehensions of him. Repeatedly, Hoccleve keeps returning to the friend for help; each of these three other reasons for writing and publicizing are offered to the friend as suggestions: "good freend / telle on what is best // Me for to make / and folwe it am I prest" (552–53). But the efficacy of his friend's advice is questioned and rejected. Hoccleve argues that no one, including his friend, can judge whether he is ready to write. Addressing his friend's argument that following others' advice is good, Hoccleve states:

> Freend as to that he lyveth nat that can
> Knowe / how it standith with an othir wight
> So wel as him self / al thogh many a man
> Take on him more / than lyth in his might
> To knowe / that man is nat ruled right
> That so presumeth in his iugement
> Beforn the doom / good were avisament (477–83)

The argument is difficult to follow because of the parenthetical phrase "al thogh many a man // Take on him more / than lyth in his might // To knowe." Its reasoning is that

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although many men take on more than lies in their might, it is not correct to presume that people's advice is necessary before a particular decision. In the end no one can know a person better than him or herself. The problem is that this reasoning not only directly contradicts the excessive layering of reason after reason, the five arguments, for publication, but also the whole *Dialogue* structure. Underlying the publicity of the *Complaint* is the idea that nothing but one's own self is needed to make judgments. The obligation to others, even only the turning over of his will to his friend's discretion, is here negated. Hoccleve can know what to do without advice, and he can also know better than anyone else. The reasoning returns the argument of the poem back to a solitary and private person: Hoccleve himself. Ironically, the *Dialogue*, although ostensibly a dialogue, insists upon singularity.

This solipsistic reasoning makes Hoccleve and not the discourses of early fifteenth-century London the authority. If we bring this argument together with the assertions about his long-standing and recent lack of health, we are also required to trust an *auctor* whose capacities are in question. As he says elsewhere, he is old, slow, and "all a nother":

> Of age am I fifty winter and thre
> Ripenesse of dethe / faste upon me hastethe
> My lymes sumdell / now unweldy be
> All my syght apperithe faste and wastithe
> And my conceyte / a dayes now / not tastethe
> As it hathe done / in yeres precedent
> Now all a nother is my sentement (246–52)

Hoccleve's ultimate reasons for his behavior are based on what he has denied all along: that he is still sick and that the sickness may recur. Attempts at publication are undercut by the privileging of self-knowledge. Lying, as it were, on top of this singularity are what have become unnecessary arguments. Each reason Hoccleve gives that he has to make his *Complaint* public and continue writing the *Series* adulterates the previous one,

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weakening the impression that there is *any* actual reason for writing any of the poems in the *Series* or making any of them public. As Derek Pearsall states, when, after this long discussion with his friendly advisor, he finally settles on a story from the *Gesta Romanorum* (the story of Jereslaus's wife) and on a moral discourse on holy dying, these decisions, though not random, are frankly advertised as secondary to that initial desire "to make a longish poem" (*Old* 237). The *Dialogue* therefore gives the impression that it is merely an exercise in presenting arguments. What is the motivation and intent? To shift the terms of the debate and the content of the *Series* from the private of the *Complaint* to the public discourse of the *Dialogue* and early fifteenth-century English society. What is revealed in the *Dialogue*? That only the self and not the public can have knowledge of the self, and that self is not well.

Hoccleve must feyne, that is, make a poem in order to prove his health, but this feynyng is not a simple activity for him. Part of the medieval meaning of the verb "to feyne" is to hesitate, emotionally to hold back before a certain task: he must feyne (make), but he feynes (hesitates) the writing. Hoccleve's "making" embodies the ambivalence of composing yet being checked. In this, his *Series* does not have the tenor of Chaucer's naive but ultimately crafty maker, nor does it have the conventionally naive or dull characteristics of Gower's narrator in the prologue to the *Confession Amantis*. This is equivocation not towards just any task as a character might feyne in a story but the writer's ambivalence before the act of composition. Hoccleve locates this hesitancy at the heart of his motivation. In the end inertia will make this his last composition:

> I may not labowr / as I dyd and swinke
> My lust is not there to / so well applied
> As it hathe bene / it is ny mortifyied
> Wherefore I cesse thinke / be this done (241–44)

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The remainder of the *Series* moves farther and farther away from the focus on Hoccleve and psychosomatic illness, and it even diverges in its style. The extent of the aesthetic lack of coherence decreases. At least one critic, Karen Winstead, has identified a unity in the themes of *The Tale of Jereslaus's Wife* and *The Tale of Jonathas*, reading them as not apologetic to women but actually making fun of those who would defend women against misogynist criticism, including Christine de Pisan. This implies an accomplished logic that has been absent from the *Dialogue* and a symmetry and balance that was absent in the *Complaint*. However, some feynyng does survive. Indeed, *The Tale of Jereslaus's Wife*, *Learn to Die*, and *The Tale of Jonathas* are all linked by the somewhat willful desires of the friend. Even when Hoccleve writes in the *Dialogue* that the *Learn to Die* will be the last poem in the *Series* (199–245), the friend makes him change his mind so that "Cleene out of that purpos hath he me broght" (*Jonathas* 1–3). The friend functions rhetorically to encourage Hoccleve to continue: he goes on to write the *Tale of Jonathas*. This willfulness. and so the overall arbitrary nature of the collection of poems that make up the *Series* does reflect something of the problems raised by the first two poems in the *Series*, but the central topos of psychosomatic illness as it relates to contemporary discourse becomes more and more distant.

It is tempting to think of the *Complaint* and *Dialogue*, which bring together autobiographical writing, an incoherent self, and urban discourse, in terms of questions of modernity and the modern subject: Hoccleve as a forerunner of Walter Benjamin's flâneur or his Baudelaire, or the modern subject born at the moment of awareness of urban surveillance as Michel Foucault might have it. But it is also important to pause before these larger speculations. David Wallace speaks of a desire "to restore the text to the movement of history," and I attempt something similar here by placing Hoccleve's *Complaint* and *Dialogue* in the context of his other texts and those of Lydgate and other authors, and in the context of early fifteenth-century aesthetics (*Chaucerian* xvii). Ultimately, Hoccleve's self-consciousness in the *Complaint* may also be found in the compositions of those both within

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the boundaries of his social world and people outside London. The repetitiveness of his appeals to authority in the *Dialogue*, a sign of the lack of coherence in "subject matter" and style, is also evident in the elaborate floriation of these other texts when their authors approach their judgmental and superior audiences. These appeals take a different form in the writings of the author who is closest to Hoccleve in style and subject matter, Margery Kempe.

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CHAPTER THREE

READING REPETITION: THE STRUCTURE AND RECEPTION OF *THE BOOK OF MARGERY KEMPE*

Events in *The Book of Margery Kempe* (1436–1438) are retold for a particular end: to show that Kempe is truly "visited" by God. Tests of Kempe's faith—to show that she is not mentally ill, that her visitations are from God, that she is not deceived by devils or that she is orthodox—always occur in front of witnesses. Her spirituality, finally, is not determined by a one-on-one relationship with God or Christ, a dialogue which would take place along a vertical line between Kempe and God. Instead, her spiritual authority is established in relation to this world. The episodes in the *Book* take place on a horizontal plane in the social world of the people, towns, and roads of fifteenth-century England, Europe, and Jerusalem. Kempe has good reasons to be conscious of the public as the accusations of Lollardy, townspeople's animosity, and clerics who threaten her are real and dangerous threats. But these problems mean the truth of her claims to intimacy with Jesus is always predicated on the people of this world.

Part of the reason why Kempe's narratives remain unconvincing is explained in Sarah Beckwith's article, "Problems of Authority in Late Medieval English Mysticism." In it Beckwith argues for a thorough examination of Kempe's "self-production" in the context of fifteenth-century England. She takes issue with twentieth-century critical reactions to Kempe that argue either that Kempe does not simply transcribe God's word and so is not a "true mystic," or that she does not express a self-sufficient, non-dialogic personality, and so falls short of writing a bourgeois individualist autobiography (173–79). Beckwith writes:

> One strand of criticism sees Kempe as failing the test of the mystic, for she doesn't so much show forth the glory of God as compete with him for divinity. For this strand of criticism her personality is a barrier to her function as transparent and empty vessel of God. The other strand sees the

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> work as a pure emanation not of God, but of her own self-sufficient spirit, the spirit of her personality. This strand is blind to the structural interdependencies in which subjectivities are produced, the others (including God) through which the self defines itself. . . . The two strands of reaction to Kempe . . . actually reveal a parallel structure and indicate the complicity of the idealism of bourgeois versions of the self with its spiritualistic ground. Both are "expressions of spirit"—the spirit either of God or of human personality itself. (179)

Instead of these two approaches, Beckwith proposes an examination of the ways Kempe "makes" or "negotiates" herself in the *Book* and in the context of late-medieval mysticism, gender relations, and the polemics surrounding Lollardy. Kempe is, in Bakhtin's sense of the term, "double-voiced": the *Book* "provides a massive variety of different ways of incorporating the voice of others, from abasement before the authoritative word to a profaning and parodic decrowning of that same word."[1] This self-making is "embarassingly [sic] foregrounded" in Kempe's text (174), and it is this inability or unwillingness to "cover over the traces" of a dialogic and "inevitably partial" formulation of the self (179), which aligns Kempe with Hoccleve and the *Book* with the feynyng aesthetic. In terms of style the *Book* fails to hide the ways in which it renders the author's identity and the ways it is constructed as a text.

Beckwith and other more recent critics, particularly those conscious of feminist theories of agency and history, have begun to document examples of this self-production and the many voices in Kempe's text. I want to continue this work by examining the text's structural characteristics to see whether there is indeed a "massive variety of different ways" of rendering Kempe's "double-voiced" identity. Not only will I look at reactions to

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[1] 189. Beckwith's argument is principally based on V. N. Voloshinov, Raymond Williams, Theodor Adorno, Michel de Certeau, and Mikhail Bakhtin. Here she uses Bakhtin's "double-voice" from *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics* 195.

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Margery Kempe in the *Book*, but I will also examine medieval readers' reactions to the *Book* as a textual object with a style and structure. Beckwith's ideas suggest that Kempe's "self-making" raises doubts about the *Book*'s ability to convince readers today. I would suggest that this reaction is reinforced by a repetition in the structure of the various episodes that constitute the *Book*. However, this is not simply a structural analysis as I am interested in the feynyng aesthetic not only as something we might feel or perceive today, but also as something that existed for writers and audiences in the fifteenth century. Therefore, I want to contextualize and historicize this reaction to the *Book*. First I intend to show how all of Kempe's actions are *inter*actions between her verbal cries, sounds, speaking, and so on, and the social world of the England and continent. Then I want to show the structure of the interactions, *how* they occur in the *Book*. Here I want to stress the constructed nature of the *Book*, that it is not simply a transcription of events but a told, indeed a retold, narrative. I will argue that the various episodes in the *Book* have the same structure. Finally, the repetitiveness of the structure raises doubts about its effectiveness for readers today, but I will show that fifteenth-century readers of the *Book* also perceived this characteristic of the structure and reacted to it in various ways. Contemporary responses to the structure of the *Book* come from three groups: the two scribes, the annotators, and the earliest editors of Kempe for print.

The purpose of this study of responses to the structure of the *Book* is to show that many of the readers were able to perceive the same feature in Kempe's text as we perceive today. More important, it has implications for the study of the feynyng aesthetic. Earlier readers, particularly the scribes who are part of the *Book*'s production, respond according to the same set of conventions and expectations as Kempe herself. That is, they appear to react positively to the foregrounding of the construction of identity. Like Hoccleve and like Kempe, they appear to read and write according to the styles and conventions of the feynyng aesthetic. They too employ a repetitive style, which makes apparent their rhetorical strategies and so the construction of their own authority.

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The Verbal and the Social

For many years Margery Kempe had wanted to turn to God and, at a certain stage in her life, it happened. Out of pity and compassion for her, Jesus finally granted her her desires "to folwyn [oure] Savyour" (1). The introductory section of the *Book* describes how he:

> turnyd helth in-to sekenesse, prosperyte in-to aduersyte, worshep in-to repref, & love in-to hatered. Thus alle þis thyngys turnyng vp-so-down, þis creatur whych many 3erys had gon wyl [willfully] & euyr ben vnstable was parfythly drawen & steryd to entren þe wey of hy perfeccyon, whech parfyth wey Cryst ower Savyowr in hys propyr persoone examplyd. . . . Than þis creatur, of whom thys tretys thorw þe mercy of Ihesu schal schewen in party þe leuyng, [was] towched be þe hand of owyr Lord wyth grett bodyly sekenesse, wher-thorw sche lost reson & her wyttes a long tym tyl ower Lord be grace restoryd her a-geyn. (1–2)

This bodily sickness and lost reason causes Kempe to forfeit her worldly goods and to be reproved by her family and friends. She turns to the Church and her confessor. After "gret bodyly penawns," God intercedes. Kempe's term for the intercession is "visited": God "vysytyd þis creatur wyth plentyuows teerys of contricyon day be day" (2). Tears are an important feature of late-medieval religious piety. They are a sign of the actions of the Holy Ghost in the body, are part of the tradition of *imitatio Christi*, and may also be in imitation of the Virgin at the foot of the cross at Calvary.[2] Sometimes they accompany her crying out loud and her roarings; sometimes she only weeps.

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[2] See Meech and Hope Allen's note on page 2, line 20 and subsequent notes mentioned there for the complex taxonomy of tears that developed around contemplatives. On the tradition of tears, see also Herbert Thurston 449–50; Clarissa Atkinson 58–65; and particularly Sandra McEntire, *Doctrine* 151–61. Karma Lochrie argues for tears as part of a tradition of the imitation of the Virgin's grief (7–8, 177–93), and Elizabeth Armstrong discusses Kempe's tears as a "sign of her power" (40–44).

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This introductory description of the causes of her vocal outbursts in the Proem suggests one of the main themes of Kempe's *Book*: the relation of private to public. Note the process: God gives sickness, people are estranged from her and criticize her, she seeks solace in the institution of the Church, and she is granted the gift of tears. It is at once an intensely personal, bodily process and a social one. As with Hoccleve, the social sphere—in this case Kempe's economic standing among the people of Lynn—is an important part of the transformation. Without economic loss and estrangement from the people around her, which challenge her position as a member of the upper-middle stratum, she may have never turned from the world to the Church.[3]

Following the five manuscript pages of the Proem and one manuscript page of the Preface, the first eight chapters of the *Book* break the narrative of this part of her life into sections, and each is described in detail. *Divisio* and *amplificatio* are two parts of a composition technique common in the later Middle Ages, and, as they are employed here, the *amplificationes* emphasize the importance of the social once more.

The stories of her failure to confess, her pride in her clothes, and her sexual temptation in these first eight chapters are three different examples of the same process and narrative: her mental illness and depravity affect her appearance and verbal behavior which, in turn, affect public perceptions and rumor. This narrative moves in one direction, out to the public from inside her body. We have already seen that the way in which the body affects the social world is a prominent theme in Hoccleve's *Complaint* and *Dialogue with a Friend*. Hoccleve's legs wave to and fro, and his eyes seek dark corners, actions which are out of the norm and which his peers see and to which they react. But Hoccleve is also greatly affected by the public's responses. He sees the people looking at him and rushes home to try to tame his appearance. Initially at least, in the *Dialogue*, he appears to be concerned about his friend's reactions to his *Complaint*, writing the whole *Series* to prove

[3] See Appendix III.2 and 3 (359–68) in the *Book* for records concerning Kempe' father, husband, and father-in-law.

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to the public that he is not ill. He contradicts this enterprise as he attempts it, but his desire to present himself according to the conventions of his day is powerful testament to their effect on him. Margery Kempe's *Book* also contains the mirror of the process wherein her psychosomatic illness affects the public, a narrative that moves in the opposite direction: the social world, including rumor, affects Kempe's spiritual, inner life. In 1413 Kempe secured a vow of chastity from her husband after 20 years of marriage and having borne fourteen children, but she continues actively and visibly in the public eye. Unlike some of the contemplatives that preceded and were contemporary with her such as Julian of Norwich, Kempe never withdraws from public, secular life.

Early scholarly reaction to Kempe critiqued her on three points: on her literalizing and concretizing of the tradition of intimacy with the figures in her visions, on the excessiveness and "hysteria" of her cries and tears, and in comparison to her contemporary—Julian—or the negative theology of the pseudo-Dionysian tradition. This last argument compared Kempe to Julian and others, such as the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, and saw Kempe's continued life in the world of England and constant display of her tears and cries as a failure, an inability to behave according to the process of withdrawal demonstrated by Julian's life and outlined in pseudo-Dionysian treatises. A more recent generation of critics has documented, analyzed, and overturned many of the assumptions and arguments of these approaches, and it is not necessary for me to retrace their steps.[4] However, a few brief comparisons, first between Kempe's "publicity" and some of the principal figures in women's mysticism, second between Kempe and ideas about the mixed life from some of the mystics who are mentioned in the *Book*, and finally

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[4] In defense of Kempe's "concretizing" of contemplation, see Stephen Medcalf 118–19, 123 and Susan Dickman, "English." Explanations for Kempe's "hysteria" and the violence of her cries are made in combination with a distinction between the tradition of negative theology and affective theology of the type Kempe follows. See Clarissa Atkinson 202–207; Hope Weissman; Maureen Fries 227–30; David Wallace, "Mystics"; Susan Dickman, "Continental"; Sarah Beckwith, "Very" 38–40; David Aers, 74–75; Roger Ellis; Nancy Partner, 60–66; Karma Lochrie, 5–6, 30–37; Sandra McEntire, *Margery* ix–xii; and Lynn Staley 101.

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between Kempe's creative life and Nicholas Love's *Mirror*, will show that Kempe had authority to continue actively in the public eye.

Kempe's Publicity: Women Contemplatives, the Mixed Life, Mount Grace

Angela of Foligno (c. 1248–1309) was a wealthy married woman, who continued an active public life after receiving the gift of crying out loud and after her mother, husband, and children had died, which, as it says in the story of her life, the *Liber de Vere Fidelium Experientia*, was a "great consolation" to her (256). She also appears to have struggled with public perceptions of her cries (159–60). Catherine of Siena (1347–1380) never married, became a Dominican tertiary and was active and very influential in Church reform. She was a leader in the cause to end the Great Schism by returning the papacy to Rome. David Wallace stresses that the similarities between Kempe and Catherine are precisely in their continuing to live actively in the secular world ("Mystics" 169–77, 183–86). Dorothea of Montau (1347–1394) was married, had nine children and traveled on pilgrimages, but when her husband died, she became an enclosed recluse. Kempe's scribe reads Jacques de Vitry's life of Marie d'Oignies (c. 1177–1213), which restores his trust in Kempe's cries (152–53), but Marie left her husband to live in a cell. The scribe's belief in Kempe is also bolstered by reading about Elizabeth of Hungary (1207–1231), daughter of Andrew II of Hungary who, after her husband's death, became a Franciscan tertiary, helped the poor, founded hospitals and lived an active life.[5]

Kempe knew of Birgitta of Sweden (1303–1373) and had read (or had had read to her) Birgitta's *Revelations* (39, 143). Kempe knew enough about her life to seek out her maid, who was still alive and living in Rome when Kempe visited (94–95). Birgitta was

[5] 154. Exactly which "Eli3abeth of Hungry" this is has been called into question. In her introduction to an edition of the *Revelations* Sarah McNamer argues it may, in fact, be another Elizabeth of Hungary (1294–1336), great-niece of the daughter of Andrew, who lived as a Dominican nun at Töss, had many illnesses and copious tears (9–16). See also her introduction (40–48) and notes for a discussion of the influence of the *Revelations* in England and on Kempe. Alexandra Barratt also analyzes the problem of authorship of the *Revelations* ("*Revelations*"), and Elizabeth's influence on Kempe ("Margery").

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married, had eight children, became extremely influential in public affairs, traveled widely and founded an order of nuns. As Gunnel Cleve points out, Kempe appears to have been more interested in Birgitta's struggles against matrimony, her pilgrimages, and her spiritual life than in her status as a member of the royal house and as an economically and politically powerful figure.[6] Cleve shows the many similarities between their lives, which include Birgitta and her husband Ulf's commitment to chastity, and Birgitta's wearing of a hair shirt before marriage and dedication to prayer. Both women went on pilgrimages to the same sites: Jerusalem, Rome, and Santiago. Kempe's revelations are very similar to Birgitta's: marriage to Christ, and presence at the birth and adoration of Christ. Unlike Kempe, Birgitta rarely wept, but one of the times she did cry was at Calvary. Both women are told by Jesus to carry out similar "missions."[7] Kempe learns how "goodly & meke to euery creatur" Birgitta was and visits the room in which she died (95).

In addition to Birgitta's *Revelations*, Kempe also read Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection* (c. 1375), the *Stimulus amoris* (a late fourteenth-century compilation attributed to Bonaventure and translated into English as *The Prickynge of Love*) and Richard Rolle's *Incendium Amoris* of 1330–1340 (39, 143). In the *Incendium*, *Emendatio vitae* (c. 1348), and "The Form of Living" (c. 1348) Rolle instructs his audiences to turn away from love of the world to love of God, but he does not necessarily tell them to turn away from life in the world. In Richard Misyn's translation of the *Incendium*, *The Fire of Love* (1435), Rolle repeatedly emphasizes preference for a solitary hermit's life, but he also recognizes that a person's holiness depends on the will rather than on a distinction between active and contemplative life (48). In "The Form of Living," written in English to Margaret of Kirkby, a recluse enclosed at Hampole, Rolle states:

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[6] 163. Some of the story of Birgitta's life is contained in the English translation of "A Life of St. Bridget," the first six manuscript pages of her *Liber Celestis*.

[7] 165–77. See also Julia Holloway.

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> I wold nat pat pou wene pat al ben holy pat haue pe habite of holynesse and be nat occupied with pe world, ne pat al bene il that ocupien ham with erthly bisynesse. Bot pei ben oonly holy, what estate or degree pei bene in, pe which despiseth al erthly thynges, pat is to sey loueth hit nat, and brandyn in pe loue of Ihesu Criste, and al har desire is sette to pe ioies of heuyn, and hatyn al syn, and cessen nat of good workes, and felen [a] swettnesse in har herte of pe lyf withouten end; and neuerpelattre pei thynken ham self vilest of al, and holden ham wrochedest, leest and loweste. This is holy mennys lyf; folow hit and be holy. (9)

Holiness in Rolle's formulation does not require a person to give up the active life.

Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, a book to an anchoress, although also written with the contemplative life as its principal subject, does not condemn the active life. "Charity"—whether a person goes on pilgrimages; forsakes all interest in the world; fasts or preaches in his capacity as a clerk; builds churches, abbeys, or hospitals; or is only able to have a good will because that person is poor—is what distinguishes one person from another (2.1–10, 65.1–15, 66.1–21, 67.1–3). His *On Mixed Life* also stresses charity whether one's life is active, contemplative, or "mixed." In fact, the focus of the treatise is to show how the mixed life can be worthy of God's grace. Hilton asserts that this was the life Mary, Martha, and Jesus lived. It is the life his addressee lives, a "worldli lord" in the Vernon manuscript (264–69, 271).

The Prickynge of Love does not discuss the mixed life. However, it does state that an active person can serve in this world and therefore serve God. This can be achieved through helping the sick, but, if that is not possible, "at pe leeste it is good pat we haue compassioun in oure herte generalli to alle. and specialli to hem pat we knowe" (106). The author does not suggest that those in contemplative or monastic lives should go out and live the active life as they can receive grace through their contemplative lives. But *The Prickynge* does make the argument that an active person can have "contemplation" of God

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through good works (104–108). Neither the *Prickynge* nor Kempe's other direct sources condemn continuing in an active or mixed life.

The manuscript of *The Book of Margery Kempe* was owned and glossed by monks at the Carthusian monastery of Mount Grace in Yorkshire. The Carthusians were an ascetic and secluded order but were nevertheless very influential in the composition and transmission of contemplative texts. Nicholas Love, Prior of Mount Grace in the early fifteenth century and author of the *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* (1409 or 1412)—a translation of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*—was active in support of Archbishop Arundel's campaign against Lollards. The *Mirror* achieved a "quasi-official status as an approved vernacular theology" through Arundel's order that it be copied and distributed throughout England (Watson 854–55). Michael Sargent writes in his introduction to the *Mirror* that the book was central in spreading Franciscan devotional meditation on the life and Passion of Christ in England (xx). Love implies that his text is written for a recluse (34), but he also directs it to "symple creatures þe which as childryn hauen nede to be fedde with mylke of lyȝte doctryne & not with sadde mete of grete clargye & of hye contemplacion," suggesting an unlearned, possibly secular audience (10). Elsewhere he does not condemn the active life but says a person may follow a three-stage process, which begins with an active life of prayers, turning away from sin, study of scripture, and performing of charitable deeds. Next is a period of contemplative living, including withdrawal, solitude, and communing with God. Finally, is a return to the active life in order to help, teach, and govern others (120–21). He also repeats the example of Mary and Martha, saying that although Jesus seemed to favor Mary (the example of a person who led a contemplative life) over Martha (active), it is unknown which of them would receive greater reward in heaven (123). He leaves out the long traditional excursus on Mary and Martha from his source and instead substitutes these interpretations of their lives in terms of the active and mixed lives. Wallace argues that "Margery's allegiance [to the *Meditationes* tradition] is more radical than this: her whole *Book* reads like an obedient

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response to the *Meditationes*' religious imperatives" to actively participate in "divine dramas" and to endure public ridicule ("Mystics" 180–81). This should have been evidence enough for critics who, in the past, have charged Kempe with leading a too-active life. Kempe draws upon the tradition of affective piety rather than the negative theology of the *Cloud*-author. It allows her to continue on pilgrimages, travel around England visiting spiritual advisors, maintain contact with secular life, and may even have suggested to her an ability to speak on political and religious matters. However, it is this public life that causes so much trouble for Kempe's contemplative life. The two are not separate or separable but are co-dependent but co-dependent in a way that is fraught with danger for her.

Kempe's Social Authenticity

After Kempe has confessed to the priest and is visited with the gift of tears, people turn against her. In the Proem of the *Book*, the people of Lynn are described as thinking her able to cry according to her own will, that is, when it suits her. The troubles this judgment causes for Kempe are instrumental in confirming to her that her pride has ended and that she is chosen by God:

> Sche was so vsyd to be slawndred & repreued, to be cheden & rebuked of pe world for grace & vertu wyth whech sche was indued thorw pe strength of pe Holy Gost pat it was to her in a maner of solas & comfort whan sche sufferyd any dysese for pe lofe of God & for pe grace pat God wrowht in hyr. For euyr pe mor slawnder & repref pat sche sufferyd, pe mor sche incresyd in grace & in deuocyon of holy medytacyon of hy contemplacyon & of wonderful spechys & dalyawns whech owr Lord spak and dalyid to hyr sowle, techyng hyr how sche schuld be despysed for hys lofe, how sche schuld han pacyens, settyng all hyr trost, alle hyr lofe, and alle hyr affeccyon in hym only. (2)

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Roland Maisonneuve places Kempe in the tradition of the "perfect fool," God's fool, part of which is an *imitatio Christi*, particularly imitation of Christ during his mockery by the soldiers.[8] The verbal assaults on Kempe by the people around her are confirmation that her exalted public standing has ended and that she is the recipient of God's grace. Public humiliation and the enmity of the people become signs of this grace, and they are causal; they lead her to be more honored by God. When she is weeping, "ful many forsokyn hir pat louyd hir be-for whyl sche was in pe world & wold not knowyn hir, & euyr sche thankyd God of alle, no-thyng desyryng but mercy and forȝefnes of synne" (13). The important thing to recognize here is that no matter whether it is the illness affecting the external and public, or the social affecting the inner life, Kempe's experiences are always relational. Her inner and spiritual life is never just private or between her and God but is always social. As with Hoccleve, her autobiography is a social and ideological document and not some isolated or insular expression of a pre-social unity or even a pre- or extrasocial dialogue between her and God (Scanlon 299–300). And I would go further. Her grace and devotion are dependent on public witnesses.

Some scholars have noted this interdependence. Gail Gibson says that Kempe's "despisings are not only reported as proof of her future sanctity and triumph . . . but also as the source of much of her privileged spiritual knowledge" (48). She notes that Kempe's accounts of her "sufferings and trials" at the hands of others show a "verbal" and "typological" "indebtedness" to *imitatio Christi* (from Passion narratives), to the model of "spiritual exercises" (from the *Meditationes* tradition), and to "popular late medieval texts and images and to relics" (from the "folk" tradition of the mystery plays) (47–65). More recently, Beckwith argues for the importance of the "discernment of spirits" whereby Kempe could prove her sanctity by having a clergyman authenticate her visions or by

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[8] 2. See also Karma Lochrie's suggestion that Kempe "envisions herself as a holy fool and that others do as well" (157–60).

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imitating Christ's suffering and the scorn he received.[9] Her tears are public and a symbol of compassion (*Christ's* 88–91). Susan Dickman also shows how Kempe turns to the public world "for confirmation of her devotion," which disrupts the social world because of her cries and tears, leads to slander and humiliation, and becomes a comfort to Kempe ("English" 166–72). She goes so far as to argue that "shame" is a way for the mystic in general and Kempe in particular to punish her pride but that it also "gratifies" her "*social* pride and desire for attention" ("Continental" 164–65). Many others have noted how the tears and cries function to prove her authenticity by forcing the recognition of her inner experience in the social world.[10] However, few have noted the pervasiveness of this interdependence or how integral it is to Kempe's development.

One reason for the slander is the people's mistaken diagnosis of her condition. In Hoccleve's case, people fail to see he is well again, he struggles to express the exact nature of illness, and part of the intent of writing the *Complaint* and *Dialogue* is to explain his illness. Kempe is similar in the last two respects. In particular the people around her fail to understand the true nature of her illness: "mech pepyl slawndryd hir, not leuyng it was pe werke of God but pat sum euyl spyrit vexid hir in hir body er ellys pat sche had sum bodyly sekenesse" (40). These perceptions of her body are gathered (as in Hoccleve's situation and in the contemporary medical and legal treatises), by the people of Lynn and the other people with whom she comes in contact, from her appearance. "Sum seyde pat sche had pe fallyng euyl, for sche wyth pe crying wrestyd hir body turnyng fro pe o syde in-to pe oper & wex al blew & al blo as it had ben colowr of leed" (105). But they are wrong. Unlike Hoccleve, Kempe is more consistently certain about the nature of her illness. When she recounts how Christ characterizes it as "gret" grace and a "myracle" that

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[9] *Christ's* 80–83, 96–97, 157 n. 8. See also Allen's Prefatory Note (lvii–lviii) and the Notes to the edition of Kempe (257, 279). Beckwith follows Clarissa Atkinson (120–28).

[10] See Atkinson 120–28; Janet Mueller 157–58; Lochrie 196–98, 203; Timea Szell 74–87; Staley 87; and Julian Yates 86–91.

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she is able to maintain her bodily wits in the face of her tribulations, she does so with two intentions: to emphasize his role in her sickness and to delineate clearly the difference between his "chastisement" and a simple psychosomatic problem originating in her body:

> I haue chastysed pe my-self as I wolde be many gret dredys & turmentrijs pat pu hast had wyth euyl spyritys bopin slepyng & wakyng many ȝerys .... [I]t is gret grace & myracle pat pu hast thy bodyly wyttys for pe vexacyon pat pu hast had wyth hem a-for-tyme. I haue also, dowtyr, chastised pe wyth pe drede of my Godhede, & many tymes haue I feryd pe wyth gret tempestys of wyndys pat pu wendyst veniawns xuld a fallyn on pe for synne. I haue preuyd pe be many tribulacyons, many gret heuynes, & many grevows sekenes in so mech pat pu hast ben a-noy[n]ted for deed, & al thorw my grace hast pu skapyd. (51)

Kempe's vocal outbursts take many forms. She describes herself as experiencing "boystows sobbynyg," tears, and "seyng" earlier in her life (40). However, it is "krying" and "roryng," which do not begin until later in her life and which have a more powerful and particular significance for her. Although there are several examples of times when she experiences "krying" and "roryng" in the *Book*, I will focus on two instances that are the most important for Kempe's life and for her narrative, one from chapter 28 and the other from chapter 77. In addition, these two moments draw attention to the fact that the significance of crying aloud is not based on an expressive theory of articulation. It is insufficient that Kempe's inner pain or contemplations be simply let out; it is not of paramount importance to Kempe that she simply express her love and grace through crying aloud but that she cry aloud *in public*. It is through her articulations that Kempe interacts with the public which, in Beckwith's words, "foregrounds" the importance of "self-making" and "negotiating" in her narrative. Her crying is social, and it is the public witnessing that supports Kempe's feeling and understanding of the "strength" of her grace and God's "solas & comfort."

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Kempe's pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1413 and 1414 is fraught with many difficulties, not the least of which is the outright animosity of her traveling companions. She has taken a vow to abstain from eating meat, which bothers them, but it is her continual weeping and talking of Christ's love and goodness that annoys them the most. They dress her like a fool and try to leave her at Constance and then again at Venice (61–66). It is not until she is at Calvary that she first uses the words "krying" and "roryng" to describe her actions in the *Book*. When she is led around by the friars of the temple with a group of pilgrims, she has a vision of the Passion at the foot of the Mount, a fifteen-foot high rock inside the temple:

> . . . sche fel down pat sche mygth not stondyn ne knelyn but walwyd & wrestyd wyth hir body, spredyng hir armys a-brode, & cryed wyth a lowde voys as pow hir hert xulde a brostyn a-sundyr, for in pe cite of hir sowle sche saw veryly & freschly how owyr Lord was crucifyed. . . . & sche had so gret compassyon & so gret peyn to se owyr Lordys peyn pat sche myt not kepe hir-self fro krying & roryng pow sche xuld a be ded perfor. And pis was pe fyrst cry pat euyr sche cryed in any contemplacyon. And pis maner of crying enduryd many 3erys aftyr pis tyme for owt pat any man myt do, & perfor sufferyd sche mych despyte & mech reprefe. Pe cryeng was so lowde & so wondyrful pat it made pe pepyl astoynd les pan pei had herd it be-forn & er elly[s] pat pei knew pe cawse of pe crying. (68)

This event in 1413 signals a turning point in her spiritual life, linking her explicitly with the virgin at the foot of the cross and with Christ by identifying with his cry on the cross (Meech and Allen 290). As the chapter continues, it at first appears she will have more cryings and roarings after this time in private in her room or alone in a field:

> Fyrst whan sche had hir cryingys at Ierusalem, sche had hem oftyn-tymes, & in Rome also. &, whan sche come hom in-to Inglonde, fyrst at hir comyng hom it comyn but seldom as it wer onys in a moneth, sythen onys

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> in pe weke, aftyrward cotidianly, & onys sche had xiiij on o day, & an-oper day sche had vij, & so as God wolde visiten hir, sumtyme in pe cherch, sumtyme in pe strete, sumtym in pe chawmbre, sumtyme in pe felde. . . . &, as sone as sche parceyvyd pat sche xulde crye, sche wolde kepyn it in as mech as sche myth pat pe pepyl xulde not an herd it for noyng of hem. (69)

However, the only occurrences of crying and roaring recounted in the *Book* are in public. Lochrie compares Kempe's tears with Julian of Norwich's and argues that the difference between their practices is that Kempe makes her tears public: "Kempe's weeping never retreats to private prayer" (196–98). Kempe never describes a time when she cries or roars in her room or alone. Careful selection has occurred in the making of the *Book*, some twenty years after the events, which emphasizes social effects. We can note this in the description of her experiences at Calvary in the unusual way the focus of the passage contextualizes her crying and roaring. The passage begins with talking about her experience at Calvary but then synecdochically broadens this single experience to stand as the origin of many such times ("And pis was pe fyrst cry," "And pis maner of crying enduryd many 3erys aftyr pis tyme"). It also contextualizes the one time at Calvary and these other times in relation to audience ("it made pe pepyl astonyd les pan pei had herd it be-forn & er elly[s] pat pei knew pe cawse of pe crying"). That people hear the crying is as important as her bursting heart. Because of this, "sufferyd sche mych despyte & mech reprefe." With both these ways of contextualizing, the experience of her relationship with Christ is quickly set in fifteenth-century European culture. No one can stop her from crying and *therefore* she is slandered.

Kempe asserts that she is able to cry in private, but she only recounts two narratives in the *Book* when she appears to cry without an audience. And both are told with the explicit intention of proving she can cry alone. They relate times when she is tested by priests on this very point. The first episode takes place while she is in Rome on the return

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trip from Jerusalem. The German priest Wenslawe at the Church of St. John Lateran initially believes that Kempe's cries are not simply a performance. At a certain point, she is able to confess all the sins of her life to Wenslawe. She tells him of her "reuelacyonys" and "contemplacyons" of the Passion which, in reminding her of the Passion, cause her to fall down, weep, sob and cry "ful lowde & horybly." The people who are there, presumably in the church, react as they often do in the *Book*, thinking she is possessed by an "euyl spiryt er a sodeyn sekenes, er ellys symulacyon & ypocrisy falsly feyned of hir owyn self" (83). They just want her to be quiet, and they side against her and the priest. The problem quickly becomes one of the public nature of her crying, particularly on the following Sundays in church, so much so that the priest begins to doubt her. He decides upon a test:

> pan pis good man, seyng pis woman so wondirfully sobbyn & cryin, and specialy on Sondays whan sche xuld ben howselde a-mong alle pe pepyl, purposyd hym to preuyn whepyr it wer pe 3yfte of God, as sche seyd, er ellys hir owyn feynyng by ypocrisy, as pe pepyl seyd, & toke hir a-lone an-oper Sonday in-to an-oper chirche whan Mes was don & alle pe pepil was hom, no man wetyng perof saf hym-self & pe clerk only. &, whan he schulde how-selyn hir, sche wept so plentyvowsly & sobbyd & cryed so lowde pat he was astoyned hym-self, for it semyd to hys heryng pat sche cryed neuyr so lowde be-for pat tyme. & pan he beleuyd fully pat it was pe werkyng of pe Holy Gost & neipyr feynyng ne ypocrise of hir owyn self. (84)

Even in this instance she is not without witnesses when she is tested. The priest and clerk are there to test her. Also, the social nature of this incident is not only emphasized by their presence, but also that Kempe chooses to recount this incident in the *Book*. The intention behind *retelling* the event is not to emphasize a singular, insular correspondence between Kempe's thoughts about Christ's body in the form of the host and her emotions and

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crying. Instead, it is to show to readers or listeners, that is, again *publicly*, that she cries in private.

Later in the *Book* Kempe tells of another time when two priests test whether her crying really is a sign of her relationship with God rather than her concerns about whether people are watching her by taking her to a church in a field far from any house. After they have prayed a while, Kempe "brast owt in boistows wepyng & sobbyng & cryid as lowde er ellys lowder as sche dede whan sche was a-mongys pe pepil at hom, & sche cowde not restreyn hir-selfe perfro" (200). Again she is not totally alone. Not only are the two priests in the church with her, but a child is with them, an innocent and independent witness. After this incident, the priests, who trusted her before, "haddyn pe mor trust pat it was ryth wel wyth hir whan pei herd hir cryin in preuy place as wel as in opyn place & in pe feld as in pe town" (200). We need to remember that Kempe is narrating these events some twenty years after they occurred. Both these attempts to show the crying is not "feyned of hir owyn self" are somewhat belied by the intent with which she recounts the incidents. They are good examples of what Beckwith describes as the way Kempe's self-making is "embarassingly [sic] foregrounded" (174) and her inability or unwillingness to "cover over the traces" of a dialogic and "inevitably partial" formulation of the self (179).

The second important example of Kempe's concern with "krying & roryng" occurs in chapter 77. This is the next time after her first cryings at Jerusalem that she returns to an explicit discussion of these new types of vocalization, and she expands on the problems associated with the public nature of these outbursts. The narrative is revealing for a number of reasons. Kempe requests Jesus that her cries be restricted to private places to avoid the slander and danger her public crying engenders. Jesus refuses, and his refusal implies Kempe's crying and roaring are a natural and necessary outcome of Jesus' grace. This would suggest that the significant relationship for Kempe is a dialogue between her and God regardless of the world. However, we will see that it is still the very earthly world of fifteenth-century England, with its slander and humiliations for Kempe, that

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matters in the end. Kempe tells how she tries to have her cryings and roarings restricted to private places:

> Whan pe seyd creatur had first hyr wondirful cryis & on a tyme was in gostly dalyawns wyth hir souereyn Lord Crist Ihesu, sche seyd, "Lord, why wilt pu 3yf me swech crying pat pe pepil wondryth on me perfor? . . . Lord, pe worlde may not suffyr me to do thy wil ne to folwyn aftyr pi steryng, & perfor I prey pe, 3yf it be thy wil, take pes cryingys fro me in pe tyme of sermownys pat I cry not at pin holy prechyng & late me hauyn hem be my-self alone so pat I be not putt fro heryng of pin holy prechyng & of pin holy wordys. . . . And, good Lord, 3yf pu wilt al-gate pat I crye, I prey pe 3eue me it alone in my chambyr as meche as euyr pu wilt & spar me amongys pe pepil, 3yf it plese pe." (181–82)

Being "putt fro heryng" of sermons actually happens to Kempe. On one occasion while she is in Lynn, she is given the Eucharist in private because of the noise she makes among the people (138). Another time, she is banned for some years from hearing the sermon of a well-known friar-preacher, who had moved to Lynn, because she disturbs him and the people in the church (148–52). But when she asks in this passage to have her crying aloud restricted to private places, Jesus refuses. In an extended monologue, Jesus argues that she must cry aloud according to *his* will. He begins by denying her request: "Dowtyr, prey not perfor; pu xalt not han thy desyr in pis thow my Modyr & alle pe seyntys in Heuyn preye for pe, for I xal make pe buxom to my wil pat pu xalt criyn whan I wil, wher I wil, bothyn lowde & stille" (182).

Jesus' monologue continues, drawing analogies between, on the one hand, how and why Kempe receives from Jesus the motivation for her public crying and roaring and, on the other, natural phenomena. Where Hoccleve's descriptions are influenced by romance wildness, Kempe recalls Jesus' analogies in peculiarly natural terms. After denying her request, Jesus argues at some length that just as he controls the planets, and

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just as thunder, lightning, winds, and rain bring swift and fearful destruction to trees, houses, and even churches, so he enters her soul. In addition, he says that like earthquakes, which he sends to make people fear him, so he "turne[s] pe erthe of her hertys vp-so-down & make[s] hem sore a-feerd pat pei dredyn veniawnce xulde fallyn on hem for her synnys," and this he did to Kempe when she first turned from him. He continues by saying that just as she can be certain that the sun is shining when she feels it, so she can be certain about God's love. Finally, he compares different kinds of rain ("gret reynys & scharp schowerys, & sumtyme but smale & softe dropis") and her weeping, tears, crying aloud, and roaring, which are "to makyn pe pepil a-ferd wyth pe grace pat I putte in pe" and to remind "men & women" of Mary's, his mother's, sorrow (182–83). The choice of metaphors in this series of analogies suggests that Kempe's cries in public are natural, that they are like uncontrollable phenomena which strike at seemingly arbitrary times, and are, therefore, a sign of Jesus' power, and Kempe's and Jesus' exclusive relationship. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why Kempe chose to recount this monologue in the *Book*. However, we should not overlook the fact that both parts of the analogies are designed as, what are called in the chapter, "tokens" to have particular effects on the people around Kempe in England (183).

Chapter 77 ends with Kempe making this point explicit. Kempe, convinced by Jesus' arguments, completely reverses her initial desires. Where the chapter as a whole begins with her wish to cry only in private, now she imagines a time when she might be degraded and humiliated in public as much as possible. Again, the social, worldly humiliation confirms her special spiritual grace. In the scenario she desires, she will not even have to talk, cry, or roar. People will know enough about her to realize that she is deserving of public humiliation: "And I wolde, Lord, for pi lofe be leyd nakyd on an hyrdil [cart], alle men to wonderyn on me for pi loue, so it wer no perel to her sowlys, & pei to castyn slory & slugge on me, & be drawyn fro town to town euery day my lyfe-tyme, 3yf pu wer plesyd perby & no mannys sowle hyndryd, pi wil mote be fulfillyd & not myn"

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(184). It is a dream that is metonymic of every episode of Kempe's own life, at least as the narratives are recounted in the *Book*. Public humiliation on earth is the path to greater grace with God. Kempe *wishes* for slander and reproof in order to establish her "vertically oriented" relationship with Jesus.

Throughout this process, Kempe has been able not only to achieve "self-validation" of her sanctity through public display (Szell 74) but also to provide arguments against the public perceptions that she is insane. Her "spirits" are "discerned" to prove the religious truth of her experience. But they are also discerned, or rather reevaluated, to prove she is not "owt of hir mende" (as when she fails to confess) and to prove that she does not have "sum bodyly sekenesse" (as the people around her think). The most convincing argument for her psychosomatic well-being is when she cures a sick woman towards the conclusion of Book One. The woman's symptoms are almost exactly the same as Kempe's when she first became ill. The woman is "owt hir mende" following the birth of her child. Just as Kempe poured scorn on her husband and the community around her when she went "owt of hir mende," so too this woman "knowyth not" her husband and her neighbors (6–9, 177–78). And just as Kempe had to be restrained to stop her tearing herself with her nails, so too this woman "wyl bope smytyn & bityn, & perfor is sche manykyld on hir wristys." The only difference is that Kempe does not describe herself as "krying" and "roryng" until her experience at the foot of the Mount at Calvary. The woman's husband asks Kempe to help and tells her that his wife "roryth & cryith so pat sche makith folk euyl a-feerd." In fact, "sche roryd and cryid so bope nyth & day for pe most part pat men wolde not suffyr hir to dwellyn a-mongys hem, sche was so tediows to hem." The woman has been removed to the "forthest ende of pe town in-to a chambyr pat pe pepil xulde not heryn hir cryin" (178).

Gail Gibson is correct when she calls Kempe's visits to heal the woman the "central 'miracle'" in the *Book* (64). Kempe's visits, praying, and weeping for the woman cure her. Kempe, the one who cries aloud and roars in compassion and not because of

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psychosomatic illness, cures the woman who, because she is only mad, listens to Kempe "wyth-owtyn any roryng er crying." The woman's crying is silenced because it is clearly different from Kempe's. Illness is distinguished from religious verity. As Gibson says, Kempe has "fully asserted her own spiritual health" (65). What is perhaps most significant about this incident is that Kempe's actions are also witnessed by her scribe: "It was, as hem thowt pat knewyn it, a ryth gret myrakyl, for he pat wrot pis boke had neuyr be-for pat tyme sey man ne woman, as hym thowt, so fer owt of hir-self as pis woman ne so euyl to rewlyn ne to gouernyn, & sithyn he sey hir sad & sobyr a-now, worschip & preysyng be to owr Lord" (178–79). The scribe's description of just how mad this woman is emphasizes Kempe's healing power. Kempe is not only well but can cure others who are like her former self. The distance between these two selves is clearly perceived by the scribe, who adds his presence, his signature as it were, to the event in the *Book*.

Self-Appearance and the Structure of the Book

The social world of fifteenth-century English religious, secular, and gender politics and culture is consistently invoked to prove Kempe's spiritual truth. However, it remains to be seen exactly *how* this world functions in the episodes narrated in the *Book*; that is, it is necessary to consider the structure of each "mini-drama" (Staley 40) to see how the social functions in them. What I hope to prove is that each section is remarkably similar in structure, a structure that was pervasive in medieval literature. Each begins with Kempe's certainty, which is then tested by the fifteenth-century public and social world, and eventually concludes with Kempe's spiritual worth reconfirmed. Each episode makes a circle that begins and ends with Kempe's religious convictions, but the farthest edge of the circle—in a sense Kempe's Other—is a political, earthly world of England, the continent, and Jerusalem.

The repeated reliance on the same rhetorical structure to confirm her identity makes Kempe's efforts transparent. Authority is not just a given, something upon which she can

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build but is the very subject of her text. Why, if she wanted to establish credence for herself, did she not disguise her efforts by varying her methods and techniques? The answer lies in looking at her contemporaries, who repeatedly return to subjects that would best be left hidden. The self as subject of the writings, because of the traditions within which they write, the immediate contemporary situations with which they interact, and the pressure exerted by such divisive forces as urban discourses or secular or religious dissent and its repression, appears unable to contain or reconcile the competing elements. Kempe's text reveals the difficulty of such an attempt. It is a text whose feynyng is all at the surface, self-apparent in the sense that its making of the self is obvious.

A particular group of scholars have discussed Kempe's role in exploring the "tensions" of late-medieval urban society in her text. Anthony Goodman was the first to argue that Kempe

> reveals a glimpse of what may have been a significant division of opinion between conservative burgesses and people of Lynn, encouraged by like-minded clerics, and a group of clerical radicals drawn together from various religious disciplines. The latter backed what were to turn out to be losing modes of piety, too individual and unsocial to appeal widely within, and to regenerate spiritually, a tense, fissured urban society, looking for modes of religious expression which affirmed rather than threatened its secular values, and strengthened its fragile communal cohesiveness. (357)

Many scholars have followed Goodman's view of Lynn as a place where certain parts of the Church joined with the powerful burgesses to promote community hegemony over individualism. Several have tried to reason through whether, or how, Kempe succeeds in resolving such fissurings, especially as she experiences a certain "anxiety" because she repeatedly challenges audiences with antagonistic religious critiques and yet is the daughter of one of the most prominent merchants in town and is herself elected to the Trinity Guild

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in 1438, the year the second part of the *Book* was written.[11] Also, others have debated whether, or how, Kempe disentangles and articulates her identity as a woman who has money, reputation and therefore power, and yet who also is denied power because of fifteenth-century misogyny. Most important to these studies are the marriage laws, which sanctioned "legal rape."[12]

These discussions are important and suggestive, but an element that critics have only begun to explore, if at all, is the literary aspect of the *Book*. I want to focus on the *Book* as a text that was written and shaped twenty years after the experiences, examining in particular its overall structure and the structure of its episodes. This is not to make any strange separation between form and content or between aesthetic and historical concerns, both impossible tasks. In the first place a focus on the *Book*'s texture necessarily includes a study of Kempe's role in shaping her recollections. Second, I will deliberately historicize Kempe's composition and shaping of the *Book* to problematize what critics have read as natural and ahistorical techniques. I hope to show not only that there is a design common to each episode that exposes Kempe's attempt to fashion herself, which is repeated throughout the *Book*, but also to examine the ways medieval readers might respond to such a structure and such repetition. Did they actually perceive it? And did the scribes, annotators, and editors of the *Book* note that this—in Beckwith's phrase—"embarrassingly foregrounds" self-making, the feynyng of Kempe's "inevitably partial" identity?

The few scholars who have tried to account for the structure of the *Book* have offered a range of suggestions. Janel Mueller argues for a mix of designs and reasons for the "blocks or sequences of narrative." They are typological, reflecting the stories of saints' lives, but more strikingly "circumstantial, experiential, autobiographical" (158–68).

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[11] See Susan Dickman; "English"; Richard Kieckhefer 189–92; Janel Mueller 156–68; Dickman, "Continental" 156–68; Elizabeth Petroff 45–48; Aers 108–13; Lochrie 196–98, 226–28; Szell; Beckwith, *Christ's* 83–88, 94–111; Staley 39–82; and Julian Yates 85–93.

[12] Sheila Delany 84–92. See also Hope Weissman; Maureen Fries 230–234; Beckwith, "Very"; Nancy Partner 52–66; and Deborah Ellis.

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Maureen Fries sees a parallel between both Book One's and Book Two's overall structures and the quest: there is an "alternation of periods at home and periods of journey/pilgrimage, either domestic or foreign, with certain returns home punctuated by sickness." Either conversion or "personal trouble" impels the journeys (218–19). Sue Ellen Holbrook directly addresses the question of structure in her essay "Order and Coherence in *The Book of Margery Kempe*." But her observation that the "events and images" are "clustered" around the "four salient points" of "sex, words, food, and tears" is unconvincing (97–98). It is to observe either too much or too little. These four "points" are important to nearly all contemplative texts by women and are mingled together in a distinctly *dis*ordered manner in Kempe's text. Nancy Partner attempts to break with historical and mystical readings completely with a return to a psychoanalytic approach in the Thurston-Riehle-Weissman tradition, but her conclusion that Kempe's "hysteria" is an appropriate response to sexual desires that were thwarted by medieval society is to place both her desire and her hysteria in an ahistorical space, the hysteria reactive at best. However, her idea that there is a "kind of formal repetition" to each episode is interesting, although I disagree that the "narrative structure is governed by Margery's entry into the bed, and her leap out of it" (44).

Janel Mueller's overall point that the design of the episodes helps constitute Kempe's authority comes closest to my reading of the *Book*. However, I think the structure is at once more apparent, "foregrounded" in Sarah Beckwith's terms, and not as uncrafted or spontaneous as Mueller's ideas suggest. When seen in the tradition of feynyng, this foregrounding of craftedness make sense. Part of the effect of the feynyng aesthetic is its destabilizing and unsettling aspects, a feature noted in reactions to early fifteenth-century literature today. Beckwith's discussion of twentieth-century responses to Kempe offers some telling present-day examples of the unsettling effects of Kempe's aesthetic. These responses, she says, have discussed Kempe's "obvious negotiation" of her self in the *Book* in negative terms. Kempe is "a fraudulent and histrionic personality, an actress, a thespian par excellence," neither a "true" mystic nor an autobiographer telling

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the truth ("Problems" 173–79). Readers today feel the text is unconvincing, fake, even that the author is not in control of her text. Indeed, part of the definition of feynyng is that authors are "making something up," an ambiguous characteristic of their texts towards which they draw the reader's attention. Fifteenth-century authors are not the only ones to evoke this impression, but it is significant that these characteristics are common and salient in the writing of a coherent group of authors at this time. Kempe's *Book* provides evidence that this effect on readers also existed in her day, a point I will return to after analysis of her self-apparent structure.

Understanding the context of preceptive theories of composition provides insight into the order of the material in Kempe's *Book*. Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova* (1208–1213), a rhetorical guidebook for composing verse, had a lasting influence on poets and other writers for several centuries. Its title is a combination of Horace's *Ars poetriae* and the *Rhetorica nova*, the latter thought to be the "new" work by Cicero known today as the *Rhetorica ad C. Herennium*. The *Poetria Nova*'s precepts for composing poems follow the Ciceronian and the *Rhetorica ad C. Herennium*'s five parts of rhetoric: *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, *pronuntiatio*. Geoffrey's famous metaphors of house-planning and building are in the first chapter on invention, but I want to note his discussion of the arrangement of material, *dispositio*, in the next chapter. According to his model, the order of material may proceed in one of two ways. It may be structured "from nature," which means the sequence of events in the narrative follows the sequence of events as they occurred. Or the composition can be ordered "according to art," which means the temporal order is rearranged, the narrative beginning at any point in time. Ordering "according to art," Geoffrey argues, is an "aptior ordo," "ipso / Rem melius ponat" and "[c]ivilior ordine recto / Et longe prior est" ("a more effective order," "it disposes the material to better effect" and it "is more elegant than natural order, and in excellence far ahead"). Art here has a

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positive function, transforming material so that, "fiunt . . . vilia cara" ("worthless things are made precious").[13]

As the scribe explicitly acknowledges both in the Proem and the Preface (the short paragraph between the Proem and the first chapter), the *Book* is not written in strict temporal order. In the Proem he writes:

> Thys boke is not wretyn in ordyr, euery thyng aftyr oper as it wer don, but lych as pe mater cam to pe creatur in mend whan it schuld be wretyn, for it was so long er it was wretyn pat sche had for-getyn pe tyme & pe ordyr whan thyngys befellyn. And perfor sche dede no ping wryten but pat sche knew rygth wel for very trewth. (5)

And in the short Preface he says that it was written "not in ordyr as it fellyn but as pe creatur cowd han mend of hem whan it wer wretyn, for it was xx 3er & mor fro tym pis creatur had forsake pe world and besyly clef on-to ower Lord or pis boke was wretyn" (6). Both statements about arrangement stress Kempe's involvement in the process of composition. While there has been debate about her role in the making of the *Book*, critics make the point that it is her story and that she exercised control over the selection of material, its order, and its transformation into a "more effective" and "elegant" text. However, nearly all scholars assume the order of the material in the *Book* to be an ahistorical, "purely subjective process of retrieval and interpretation."[14] I argue that we need to read the prefatory statements as suggesting that the *Book* is not simply mimetic of an external, historical reality nor is it mimetic of an ahistorical mind. Instead, as Geoffrey

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[13] 2.91, 98–100, 125. Translations of Geoffrey are by Margaret Nims (18–20).

[14] The phrase is from Lynn Staley, who somewhat contradictorily cites Mary Carruthers' book on the learned and historical techniques of memory (86). On Kempe's control over her material, see the differing opinions of John Hirsh; Goodman 347–51; Atkinson 21–28, 36–37; Fries 227–28; Lochrie 6–7, 97–134, 226; and more from Staley 31–38. On the presumption of a "purely subjective process" of composition in particular, see Goodman 350; Atkinson 27–28; Holbrook, "Order" 97–98; and Partner 42–43.

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would have it, it is artistically arranged for particular ends. Emphasizing the emotional, intellectual, and moral effectiveness of a text was a priority throughout the Middle Ages.

We should be wary of statements about the spontaneous nature of Kempe's recollections, that they were set down "as they came to her mind." In one way the manner of recollection supports readings of the *Book* as exhibiting the autobiographical style as described by Jean Starobinski.[15] But if the text is informed by rhetorical concepts, then it may also be influenced by ideas about *memoria*. Memory, it was stressed in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, was not only the "thesaurum inventorum," the collection of ideas got by means of *inventio*, but also the guardian, the "custos" of the memories (3.16.28–29). This custodian helped to remember the ideas to keep them there but also to make sure they were usable and available for the purpose of making a speech or piece of writing effective. Memory had a teleological function: to provide material that was powerful enough to convince an audience. It did not exist for its own sake. It is possible this function of memory complicates the idea that Kempe's class and gender "anxiety" needed expression in some form, an idea which sounds, in the criticism's formulations, both post-Marxian and post-Freudian. Kempe's memories might be spontaneous to a certain extent, but the *only* ones recounted in the *Book* are written "for very trewth," truth here meaning not so much objective truth as spiritual, moral, and—as Geoffrey says—artistic truth. Given the emphasis on the instructive effects of all parts of rhetoric, including *dispositio* and *memoria*, it should not surprise us that incidents are selected and "arranged" for particular effects.

The public, social trials of Kempe's faith are crucial in proving the truth of her contemplations. These trials occur with each instance of her speaking, crying, and roaring. The *way* the episodes are "disposed" is common to the various incidents retold in the *Book*. I will only analyze two narratives from the text as proof, but my point is that nearly

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[15] See Introduction, note 3.

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all the episodes in the *Book* have the same structure. In fact, we have already had brief examples of this structure in the Proem, where "slander and reproof" was a comfort to Kempe, and in the first stories of her mental illness and incomplete confession, her pride in her clothes, and the problems that caused. This repetition signals that Kempe has actively ordered the material in her recollection and composition. It is less mimetic in this sense than it is rhetorical.

The dangers Kempe encountered in her travels around England were very real. In 1417, Kempe had visited the Blood at Hayles in Gloucester, an act that was considered a "statement of orthodoxy" as Lollards denied the significance of the blood (Atkinson 56 n.17). While passing through Leicester from Gloucester, Kempe is arrested by the Mayor, who accuses her of being a "fals strumpet, a fals loller, & a fals deceyuer of pe pepyl" (112). The particular reason why she is arrested is not explained, but it may be because she is wearing white clothes at this time—as she has been instructed to do by God—and that this upsets people's preconceptions because she is not a virgin and has a husband.[16] So far, then, the episode begins with Kempe confirming to herself and others that she is orthodox. Upon entering a new area at the beginning of chapter 46, she is then accused of being unfaithful, a Lollard. While being kept a prisoner in Leicester, she is brought before the Steward and many priests, who question her in a more direct manner about her faith. Unable to catch her out, the Steward takes her alone into his chamber and first threatens and then tries to rape her, saying "Þu xalt telle me whepyr pu hast þis speche of God er of pe Devyl." Kempe escapes and manages to convince him that she "had hyr speche & hir dalyawns of pe Holy Gost & not of hir owyn cunnyng" (113). Here is a kind of sub-episode, in which Kempe is physically threatened because of her gender and in which she

[16] Meech and Allen also note records concerning a sect of "very bloody self-scourging" flagellants, who dressed all in white and were banned from England in a royal proclamation in 1399. The members of this sect, they say, "were so manifestly different from Margery that the danger of her being associated with them would be in general slight" (314–315, n.124/13). See also 308, n.104/22. The Mayor would have known the difference, but perhaps rumors of the sect influenced a more popular perception, at least of Kempe's appearance.

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is able to prove her orthodoxy by cleverly playing down her agency and authority. Finally, some days later, she is examined before the Abbot of Leicester, some of his canons, the Dean of Leicester, several friars and priests, the Mayor, and many people of the town in the Church of All Hallows. In fact, "Der was so meche pepyl pat pei stodyn vp-on stolys for to beheldyn hir & wonderyn vp-on hir" (114). The questions move away from the secular to ones of orthodoxy when Kempe is questioned on her articles of faith to determine if she is a Lollard or not. In front of the priests and the people, Kempe answers them, succinctly and accurately replying with exact and orthodox responses, including the precise and correct response about the nature of the Eucharist. She also tells them that God instructed her to wear white clothes and that her own confessor and priest have told her, therefore, to wear them. The religious men and possibly the people are convinced about her religious orthodoxy. From her orthodoxy, recently confirmed at Hayles, to a public doubt and trial of her faith and back to orthodoxy, also publicly reconfirmed—such is the shape of this narrative. This part of the chapter is followed by another even more powerful reconfirmation of this point, which is needed to convince the mayor.

The religious men tell the Mayor that she has been told to wear the clothes by her priests, but the Mayor is not convinced (115–17). In the same way as she has persuaded her audience's religious members, so too she must confirm her orthodoxy to its secular rulers. The mayor requires her to get a letter from the Bishop of Lincoln. She goes to the Bishop, Philip Repyngdon, who had been sympathetic to Kempe's petition in late 1413 or early 1414 to live chastely with her husband. He had been moved to do so at that time because "sche schewyd hym hyr medytacyons, & hy contemplacyons, & oper secret thyngys bope of qwyk & of ded as owyr Lord schewyd to hir sowle" (33–34). He is also appropriate as he was a "strictly orthodox churchman" and "a persecutor of Lollards" (Meech and Allen 273–74, n.33). It was at this time that she had also gone to Archbishop Arundel, who is famous for his trials against Lollards. Upon talking with her, he had granted, in writing, her desire to choose her confessor and to receive the Eucharist every

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Sunday. Kempe has powerful and publicly ratified evidence of her orthodoxy. Her contemplations are to be believed. She receives the letter from the Bishop, returns to Leicester, and is given safe passage by the Mayor (118–19). This short journey to Lincoln and back provides her with powerful reconfirmation. Kempe then continues on her journeys around the countryside, moving on to York. At York the same process is to occur.

In Leicester and then again in York it is unclear what leads to Kempe's arrest. Here, as elsewhere, the people of Leicester do not even have direct contact with Kempe's crying and roaring, yet they despise her and doubt her truth. At other points in the *Book* people hear about her through rumor and reputation. In Jerusalem a Grey Friar asks after "pe woman of Inglond þe which þei had herd seyd spak wyth God" (73). This confirms to Kempe what God had told her: he would make her known throughout the world, and people would worship him through her (17, 73). While in Rome in 1414, a gentlewoman asks Kempe to be godmother to her child. Moreover, many people "love" and "favor" her because she is so well-known (94). Most remarkably, at this time a priest, coming to Rome from England, seeks her out because he has heard about her activities in Rome. Her reputation has made it all the way back to England (96). It is, however, more frequent that knowledge of her actions engenders a negative and even threatening response. After leaving York, she is arrested by John, Duke of Bedford's men, who say she is "holdyn þe grettest loller in al þis cuntre er a-bowte London eythyr" (129).

The second narrative I want to examine occurs in Book Two, which details Kempe's travel to Danzig with her daughter-in-law after her son's death and her long and arduous journey back to England in 1433 and 1434. I choose it, like the first passage, almost at random in order to show the similarity of the structure of the narratives among the episodes in the *Book*. It too describes a circle from Kempe's own belief in her self-worth and sanctity, out to doubt and public criticism and humiliation through slander, and back to Kempe's public vindication, which includes the reconfirmation of her spirituality. I have

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purposely taken it from Book Two to demonstrate that the structure exists in both books. Upon arriving in London, and despite the fact that Kempe is clothed in cheap sack cloth and tries to hide her identity by covering her face with a kerchief, "mech pepil knew hir wel a-now" (243). She had, of course, been to London before: once to see Arundel at Lambeth and then again in 1417 or 1418 when she stayed "a long tyme" (136). Kempe does not mention that she has been to London since 1418 and, if she has not been back, she is recognized in London some sixteen years after she was there last.

The chapter containing the story of her stay in London is a remarkable one. As in Hoccleve's *Complaint* and *Dialogue with a Friend*, the physical proximity of the people in the streets and of London is emphasized. The chapter shows in a graphic and effective way how a reputation could be established, take on its own life, and spread among the city's inhabitants. Even though Kempe covers her face, "sum dissolute personys, supposyng it was Mar. Kempe of Lynne, seydyn, pat sche myth esily heryn pes wordys in-to repref. 'A, pu fals flesch, pu xalt no good mete etyn.' Sche, not answeryng, passyd forth as sche had not an herd" (243). Naming her like this, "Margery Kempe of Lynn," the only time her surname is used in the whole *Book*, has the effect of making her an object, almost a stranger we see through the eyes of these "dissolute" persons. This is a powerful way to emphasize the difference between Kempe and the people who come in contact with her, including the reader of the *Book*. It also stresses her authority because the people recognize her and think her important enough to generate such resistance. Moreover, this passage emphasizes the fact that people talk for the express purpose of Kempe overhearing them. It is exactly the same as Hoccleve's "laying his ear" to the people talking about him as he passes them by on his walks along the London streets in 1416–1421, except here the talk is intentionally calculated so as to be overheard by Kempe.

It seems her reputation in London is based on a tale, according to Kempe, fabricated by the devil and spread by his followers and envious people who are "indignant" about her "virtuous living." The tale was made up a long time earlier, possibly when she

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was seeing Arundel, as it is said it began not long after her "conuersyon" (243), which began with the period after she heard the "melodye so swet & delectable" while lying in bed with her husband. This event precipitated her desire for chastity, obedience to God's will, and communion with God over everything else (11). Apparently, in London she has the reputation of being picky and even snobbish about her food, at one time refusing to eat red herring when there was a more expensive and pleasant-tasting pike. So well-known is the incident that it has engendered a saying, called a "prouerbe" in the chapter. It runs as either, "A, pu fals flesch, pu xalt no good mete etyn," or, "fals flesch, pu xalt ete non heryng" (243, 244). In meaning, it is either an imperative that the false religious person should eat no expensive food, should not be concerned with the quality of her food, or it is an observation that the person does not deign to eat poor food. The proverb follows her about London whether people know it is about her they are speaking or not.

Several people in London are good to her, and matters come to a head when she is invited to a great feast at a woman's home where there are many guests, including some from the Cardinal's house. At the height of the dinner, they retell the proverb to each other, joking and laughing with each other about Margery Kempe of Lynn. It seems they do not realize it is this Margery who sits at the table with them. When she confronts them about whether they know the woman they are talking about, they say no, but they have heard she is "a fals feynyd ypocrite in Lynne whech seyth sweche wordys, &, leeuyng of gret metys, sche etith pe most delicyows & delectabyl metys pat comyn on pe tabyl" (244). Kempe tells them they are discussing her and laughing at her. When they are subsequently "rebukyd of her owyn honeste" and desire her "correcyon" for their misbehavior, it is a vindication of Kempe's spirituality and the reputation of this spirituality that accompanies her name (245).

Having completed this part of the story of her time in London, Kempe tells the reader that she spent the remainder of her days in the city speaking out against false liars and the "pompows aray" of men's and women's London fashion. She says her speaking

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helped many people and, for this, God thanked her. In turn, this leads her to "sobbyng ful boistowsly & wepyng ful plenteuowsly," which causes "ful mech slawndyr & repref, specyaly of pe curatys & preistys of pe chirches in London," presumably where she cries aloud. They force her from their churches, and Kempe paints the picture of going "fro on chirch to an-oper pat sche xulde not ben tediows on-to hem." The manner in which Kempe's time in London is recounted by her makes it appear she responded to the ubiquity of the proverb by critiquing first one particular group at the dinner and then many people about London for their words and their pride in order to restore her worth. Then this leads to confirmation of the value of her actions by God's dalliance with her, which in turn engenders more slander because of her weeping. However, as happened with the people at the table desiring Kempe to correct them, the chapter closes with Kempe again having her actions confirmed, not by the clergy but by the "comown pepil," who "magnifijd God in hir, hauyng good trost pat it was pe goodnes of God whech wrowt pat hy grace in hir sowle" (245). The episode in London contains a kind of double test: first the rumor about her and then her crying too loud in the churches. Both narratives end with public recognition of God's grace in Kempe.

Leicester and London are just two of the many places Kempe visited in England, the continent, and on her pilgrimages in other countries. Almost invariably the structure of the narratives is the same whether she is in her home town of Lynn or in another country altogether. Kempe enters a church, town, or other public space and is despised, often with the possibility of serious consequences. Sometimes the cause of the trouble is a new action she carries out in the space—as in Lincoln—or sometimes the cause is her reputation preceding her, often across great distances—as in York and Rome. Whichever cause it is, Kempe is called upon to correct misperceptions about the orthodoxy of her spiritual life, and the threat she poses to civil life and to relations between men and women in particular. This she manages, frequently with clever and indirect critiques of social conventions and prejudices, what Staley calls a "strategy of dissent." After all, Staley continues, a strategy

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of indirect critique can "shield her" from running into serious trouble for being a recognizable dissenter, a dangerous thing to be considered at this time.[17] Invariably, the people who formerly slandered or disapproved of her are sufficiently convinced that she is not lying (even if it is with the assistance of ecclesiastic authority as in the case of the Mayor of Leicester) and should be allowed to continue in her chosen way of life. Kempe has her own actions justified and continues on to the next town.

Only very infrequently does she doubt the truthfulness of her path without recourse to a social setting to reconfirm that she is right. Once she doubts God's revelations to her about who should be damned and who saved. This might have been motivated by a charitable desire to believe that no one will be damned. God punishes her by giving her thoughts and visions of sex and men's, including various priests', penises for twelve days (144–46). On another occasion she is told by Jesus that the reason why she is not able to cry all the time, which makes Kempe herself think she is a hypocrite, is so she will remember that it is by Jesus' will that she has goodness and not by her own. She may be a hypocrite in other things, including all her actions which many people see, he says, but "pu maist be no ypocryte for no wepyng, for no criyng, for no swetnes, for no deuocyon, for no mynd of myn Passyon, ne for non oper gostly grace pat I ȝeue er send to pe" (205). In these cases it is God who steps in to tell her she is justified in what she is thinking and doing.

Throughout the *Book*, the episodes begin with Kempe's own certainty about her spiritual truth and self-worth. Next the certainty is called into question either by Kempe's own doubts (which are nearly always raised in the presence of or in relation to other people or a deity), or her certainty and self-worth are doubted by public slander or trials. Finally, Kempe, and usually the other people, are re-convinced, her spirituality is reconfirmed. In

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[17] 73–74. For the growing number of analyses of these critiques and ideas as to the degree of their cleverness, see Beckwith, "Very" 44–54; Aers 89–96, 109–16; Lochrie 136–63; Elizabeth Armstrong 25–27; Beckwith, *Christ's* 80–111; and more in Staley xii, 5–9, 31–38, 146–47.

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terms of the structure of each episode, then, the public world of fifteenth-century England stands as the other side of Kempe's religious convictions. Kempe's cries and roars, Kempe's spiritual certainty, always echo off this social world. Fries argues that such a structure is common, even "predominant" in medieval literature, a quest narrative, which forms the basis of so much religious and secular writing (218–19). While this explains the structure of individual episodes and perhaps some of the repetition of the episodes (we might, for instance, think of the repetition in *Pearl* or *Piers Plowman*), the implications when the structure is repeated so often and when the text is explicitly about the author are importantly different. *The Book of Margery Kempe* does not contain what Beckwith calls a "massive variety of different ways" of incorporating the voices of the social world around Kempe. The consistency in the structure of the episodes explicitly foregrounds the fact that the *Book* is instrumental in constructing Kempe's authority and identity. Self-fashioning is not hidden among a great variety of textual strategies.

One aspect of the feynyng aesthetic is precisely that texts call attention to themselves and particularly to the way they are feyned, that is, made up, *dis*sembled, even full of pretense. Hoccleve's *Regement* and especially his *Series*, and Lydgate's *Fürstenspiegel*-begging poems call attention to themselves in these ways. Like Kempe, Hoccleve in the *Complaint* and *Dialogue with a Friend*, begins with an account of his psychosomatic illness; then his own particular kind of repetitive efforts to construct a discrete, middle-class, male self in his poetry are unsuccessful. Kempe is similarly unconvincing. The repetition in her *Book* foregrounds the effort she exerts to convince readers of her spiritual sincerity, making it too apparent and too urgent. In their different ways, Thomas Hoccleve and Margery Kempe try to feyne identities after an initial period of madness, their texts maintaining the sense of effort on their surfaces more than Chaucer and other Ricardian writers.

What remains to be shown is that medieval readers of the *Book* were also part of a culture which shared such an aesthetic. Contemporary responses to the *Book* come from

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three groups: the scribes, the annotators, and the earliest editors of Kempe for print. Only two of the three appear to have noticed anything about the structure of the *Book*, but all three sets of responses provide insight into medieval reactions to the *Book*'s feynyng aesthetic. The scribes respond to the episodes as twentieth-century readers have done, as unconvincing, the most important scribe actually drawing attention to exactly how unconvincing the episodes seem at many points in the text. The annotators appear not to notice the structure. The editors completely rewrite the *Book*, removing any cause for doubt by editing out the social and the feynyng entirely.

Responses to the Book *and its Structure*

It is important to pause for a moment to recognize an important fact that belies the simple assertion at the beginning of the Proem to the *Book*: "Here begynnyth a schort tretys and a comfortabyl for synful wrecchys, wher-in pei may haue gret solas and comfort" (1). This opening suggests the text that follows will somehow be simple, merely comforting, direct. But, as we have seen, the relationship between the text and the effects it has on at least present-day readers is not so clear-cut. One aspect of the problem is that the composition of the *Book* is part of Kempe's life. Its purpose is not only to record a recognizable life or to instruct people in the correct moral way but also to assist in an on-going argument for the legitimacy of Kempe's actions while Kempe is still alive. Also, the scribe or scribes not only write about events that happened to someone else, but their presence *and* their action of writing the *Book* is part of the subject matter of the text. These elements are combined in the following passage at the end of Book One:

> [W]hil pe forseyd creatur was ocupijd a-bowte pe writyng of pis tretys, sche had many holy teerys & wepingys, & oftyn-tymys per cam a flawme of fyer a-bowte hir brest ful hoot & delectabyl, and also he pat was hir writer cowde not sumtyme kepyn hym-self fro wepyng. & oftyn in pe mene-tyme, whan pe creatur was in cherche, owr Lord Ihesu Crist wyth

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> gloryows Modyr & many seyntys also comyn in-to hir sowle & thankyd hir, seying pat pei wer wel plesyd wyth pe writyng of pis boke. And also sche herd many tymys a voys of a swet brydde syngyn in hir ere, and oftyn-tymys sche herd swet sowndys & melodijs pat passyd hir witte for to tellyn hem. And sche was many tyme seke whyl pis tretys was in writyng, and, as sone as sche wolde gon a-bowte pe writyng of pis tretys, sche was heil & hoole sodeynly in a maner. (219)

She cries, the scribe cries, she is thanked by many in heaven for writing; sometimes she cannot write her experiences; her illness continues, a problem we saw with Hoccleve, and writing is a kind of cure. The rearticulation of the experience, then, does not simply represent her experience but is about the very possibility of making Kempe, the scribe, and the text "heil & hoole sodeynly in a maner."

Hayden White's discussion of *discourse* is useful in understanding the various elements in this passage and the *Book* as a whole. Kempe's *Book* is a *discourse*—as defined by White—in that it consists of writing that does not exist according to some previously established "criteria" either in the form of conventions governing its composition or in the sense of writing as mimetic of previous experience. As we have seen, scholars have noticed (and criticized) Kempe on these two points. It is important to note that although she follows the conventions of some precedents, she does not do so exclusively. Here, White's description of the effectiveness of discourse is applicable to contemplative writing in general. Kempe shares with other contemplative writers a tendency to question and re-examine "a given area of experience which has become hardened into a hypostasis that blocks fresh perception or denies, in the interest of formalization, what our will or emotions tell us ought not be the case in a given department of life." The genre of contemplative writings is simultaneously traditional and a challenge to tradition. Kempe makes up her identity rather than trying to recapture some previously established subjecthood, and her writing is not simply mimetic of a former experience or

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subjectivity. White's definition of discourse comes very close to describing the *Book*: it is a text "intended to *constitute* the ground whereon to decide *what shall count as a fact* in the matters under consideration and to determine *what mode of comprehension* is best suited to the understanding of the facts thus constituted."[18] The "facts" in Kempe's case are many: her spiritual legitimacy, her social legitimacy, the scribe's ability to write, and (as we shall see) the scribe's willingness to write. By studying the scribes', annotators', and editors' responses to the *Book*, readers of the *Book* in the twentieth century can perceive how *effective* Kempe was in creating a discourse. Through these fifteenth- and sixteenth-century responses, we can see how her text "constituted the ground" of what would "count as a fact" in these readers' minds and how the *Book* "determined" with what "mode of comprehension" it would be received.

Analyzing fifteenth-century literature in general in terms of discourse also avoids the sense of literary-moral reproach we find in the long tradition of criticism of the literature as "dull," prolix, and "incompetent" or, more recently, "constrained" in response to Arundel's Constitutions or "consolidating" an already established Chaucerian tradition. In particular, it allows us to see more clearly the ways in which Kempe herself might have viewed her life and her *Book* rather than impose, as White says, "what our will or emotions tell us ought" to be or not be "the case." Also, it enables us to focus on the ways she "constitutes" both her life and her text instead of holding her text up to some preconceived concept of quality or "competence." Studying the ways an author constructs his or her identity is not to over-simplify a writer's activity. The task remains to show precisely in what ways and according to what historical factors a writer *makes up* his or her authority. In addition, this way of reading texts and history allows for clear distinctions among authors. Hoccleve's temporal disturbances and logical incoherence, and Kempe's repetition of self-confirming episodic circles are importantly different. Examining the texts

[18] 3–4. White's emphasis.

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according to the heuristic concept of the feynyng aesthetic allows us to see differences and similarities precisely in terms of the construction of identity. It also allows us to distinguish between the particular strategies that typify Hoccleve's and Kempe's writing. A study of the responses to Kempe's text by the scribes, annotators, and editors will also reveal the way people at this time thought about the *Book*. It will show more of the way readers after 23 July, 1436, the date the scribe began copying and revising Book One, "*constitute* the ground whereon to decide" for themselves what is significant in Kempe's *Book* and "*what mode of comprehension* is best suited to understanding" her text. Gradually, as the century progresses, readers' responses move from sympathizing with, even emulating, Kempe's content and structure, to radically revising and curtailing the way Kempe foregrounds her constructions of identity. This process is indeed a "hardening into a hypostasis," a hypostasis incidentally, which resumes in the critical studies of Kempe immediately following the 1934 discovery of the *Book*.[19]

Kempe's problems with her scribes and with having her *Book* written are well-known but complicated. Briefly, the story as described twice, once in the short Preface and again in the longer Proem, is as follows. Many scribes are involved in the *Book*'s composition. Early on, clerks to whom she has told (perhaps confessed) her visions, offer to write them down: "worthy and worshepful clerkys tokyn it in perel of her sowle and . . . pei wold answer to God pat pis creatur was inspyred wyth pe Holy Gost." However, even though they "proferyd hir to wrytyn hyr felyngys wyth her owen handys," she has been commanded by God to wait twenty years after the date when her revelations first began. Her twenty years is not up yet (3).

Some years later, at the end of the twenty-year period, Kempe desires to have her feelings and revelations written. But now she has "no wryter pat wold fulfyllyn hyr desyr ne 3eve credens to hir felingys." There was certainty about the source of Kempe's

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[19] For discussion of twentieth-century responses, see Lochrie 224–27.

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inspiration when the clerks offered to write her book, but now there is doubt about the sanctity of her feelings. Finally, she finds an Englishman, who has been living in Germany for some time, and he transcribes some of her feelings; that is, he writes a version of the contents of Book One, but then he dies. She takes the book to a priest, who is unable to read it because it is "euel wretyn," "neipyr good Englysch ne Dewch" (possibly a macaronic), "ne pe lettyr was not schapyn ne formyd as oper letters ben." The priest concludes, prophetically, that "per schuld neuyr man redyn it, but it wer special grace" (4).

This priest tries to make out the text in order to rewrite it in better form, but he cannot or actually *will* not. In the meantime, the public's doubts about Kempe, her crying, and her book have increased to the extent that they have begun to affect the priest: "Than was per so euel spekyng of pis creatur & of hir wepyng pat pe prest durst not for cowardyse speke wyth her but seldom, ne not wold wryten as he had be-hestyd vn-to pe forseyd creatur" (4). He is too frightened to write.

Four years or more later, after she has "cryed on hym" to write the book, the priest advises her to go to another man, a friend of the English-German scribe who has read some of the scribe's letters and might therefore be able to make out his writing. Kempe offers to pay this other man, and he tries, but he cannot read the book either. Now the priest begins to have pangs of conscience, and, when Kempe returns the book to him and promises to pray for him, decides to try reading it again: "trustyng in hire prayers," he "be-gan to redyn pis booke, & it was mych mor esy, as hym thowt, pan it was be-forn-tym." He still has some difficulty. For instance, his spectacles do not help because "hys enmy [the devil] had envye at hys good dede & wold lett hym yf he mygth," but with Kempe's persistent correction and her assurances that God's grace will help him, he is able to copy the book. After writing a quire of the first book (12 leaves), which includes the short Preface, he added leaves, appending right at the beginning a longer Proem telling in greater detail the history of the *Book*'s composition (5). A year and three-quarters later, the same priest

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continues his work by writing Book Two, an account of "seche grace as owr Lord wrowt in hys sympyl creature ȝerys pat sche leuyd aftyr, not alle but summe of hem, aftyr hyr owyn tunge."[20]

When critics have discussed the problems Kempe encountered in getting her *Book* written, they have done so in terms of Kempe's authority, issues of gender, and the figure of the scribe in medieval literature. David Lawton discusses Kempe's authority in terms of her "voice," which, he argues, Kempe is able to make authoritative because of the tradition of "locution" in the women mystics and in Walter Hilton ("Voice" 102–11). Karma Lochrie responds to an earlier version of Lawton's article by arguing that the *Book* needs to be read in terms of "interdiction," Kempe's "insertion of her own voice between text and reader," to create authority (100). A few critics have begun to notice some of the same characteristics of Kempe's writing I have examined. Thus Lochrie says, "Ironically, this story [in the prefatory materials] calls attention to her notoriety at the same time that it comments upon the relationship of oral to written text and her own role as author" (99–120). Beckwith shows how Kempe is on one level "invisible" in her text. The points in the narrative "where difficulties in mediation miraculously disappear," such as the priest's restored sight, are when Kempe's presence disappears. In such places, God intervenes and "restores the truth by wiping over the traces of [the text's] construction." However, this is only part of the story, for elsewhere the unconstructed nature of the text is "belied" by mediation: Kempe needs a transcriber, the text is in the third-person ("this creatur"), and Kempe's and God's voices are dramatized ("Problems" 190–91). Lynn Staley argues that the scribe in the *Book* is a kind of "trope," "a screen for the social criticism inherent" in Kempe's text. That is, Kempe uses the figure of the scribe in the text and other strategies in order to give herself authority to speak as a woman. The "screens" reduce the danger

[20] 221. For a description of the manuscript, see Meech, who shows that the sole surviving manuscript is not, presumably, by Kempe's cleric-amanuensis but by a person called "Solthows," who copied it some time very soon after Kempe's second scribe finished (Meech xxxii–xxxv). See also Holbrook for discussion of the Prefaces and Proem ("About" 268–73, 282 n.9).

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that Kempe will be considered a heretic or a woman neglecting her traditional duties (11–38). Julian Yates says it is the "tensions between autobiography and hagiography" that allow Kempe the "'voice' with which to record her experiences" (81–85). All these discussions, it should be noted, address information in the prefatory materials in relation to the main body of the *Book*'s *content*. They all show how the themes of these materials are the same as some themes in the main body. But no one has discussed these materials in terms of their form. An analysis of the form will show the structural as well as thematic parallels between the scribe's story of his own role in the *Book*'s composition and the structure of the narrative episodes. By foregrounding the assembled nature of the text, the scribe also partakes in the feynyng aesthetic. The scribe draws attention to his role in a way that makes the reader conscious of how constructed, how "made up," the text is. Also, he raises questions about the truthfulness of the text he is copying by his own explicitly discussed doubts. All these features reveal the scribe's affinity with Kempe. His "mode of comprehension" is very similar to Kempe's own approach.

What is remarkable about the story contained in the Preface and expanded in the Proem is that it has exactly the same structure as the episodes in the *Book* proper. It is parallel not only in content but also in structure. Like the narratives in the main body of the *Book*, the prefatory narrative begins with certainty about Kempe's "inspiration," moves on to public doubt about Kempe's sanctity, and concludes with miraculous reconfirmation. This narrative starts with the clerks' and Kempe's confidence, both of which are further supported by God's direction that the *Book* not be written for twenty years. Even He is involved in its production. Then no one will give "credens" to her feelings, and the priest is affected by the slander and is too frightened to continue. Like many of the episodes in the main body of the *Book*, other people's and the priest's doubts have increased because of her cries. The social, the peopled world of rumor and slander in fifteenth-century England is again the other side of Kempe's own certainty. In the end, only divine grace encourages and physically enables the priest to read the text. Kempe's prayers and the

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prophecy of "special grace" needed to write the *Book* have worked, and Kempe's truth has been reconfirmed. In fact, the *Book* itself is a witness to Kempe's special standing. Its presence is proof that God continues to favor her. The fact that it was written, its physical existence, confirms her sanctity.

What can be inferred from the prefatory materials about the priest-scribe's perception of the structurally repetitive episodes in the main body of the *Book*? First, I do not think it means that just as the priest created the story of the *Book*'s composition in the prefatory materials to Books One and Two, so he created the full text of the *Book*.[21] Kempe is the *auctor* of the main body of the *Book* in as much as the text is written "aftyr pe informacyon of pis creatur" and is continually corrected by her (5–6). But it might mean that his knowledge of Kempe's life informed the way he wrote the shorter Preface. It might also mean that after copying and correcting a quire of the first scribe's manuscript (which could have been anywhere from twelve to twenty chapters in the original manuscript), the priest-scribe had either consciously or unconsciously registered the structure of the episodes and, upon returning to write the longer additional Proem, wrote it with the same structure. Reading and copying all the chapters of the first quire, and being corrected by Kempe while doing so, could have made him see his own cowardice and hesitation in a different light. In writing both the Preface and Proem, he would have seen his own actions as similar to the public's doubts, which are such an important part of the content of the *Book*. The scribe would have had a ready framework, which he could use to understand his own initial hesitation. In the end, his new trust in Kempe and belief in writing the *Book* would parallel what he had read and copied of Kempe's own reconfirmed certainty in the *Book*. An alternative idea is that he does not learn from Kempe's life or her story to account for his experience by means of the same form, but that he chooses the same structure because it is one that is available to him in the culture of the feynyng

[21] See Hirsh, Goodman, and Atkinson 21–28, 36–37, who critique early arguments along these lines.

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aesthetic. That is, the scribe and Kempe draw on some tradition that was available to both of them. While these ideas are speculative, the effect of the prefatory materials is undeniable. Because these prefatory materials occur before the main text of the *Book*, even though they were written after, they set the tone for subsequent readers. Readers are prepared to distrust Kempe in the same way the scribes, including the priest-scribe, have doubted her. Readers are at least ready for the structure that will govern the episodes. The structure of the episodes will be familiar and—soon—too familiar, too apparent.

The story of the priest's God-given, miraculous powers of understanding is exactly parallel to the beginning of the episode in the *Book* concerning the German priest Wenslawe, the priest so important in first testing Kempe's ability to cry alone. The story of Wenslawe takes place in Rome. Although Wenslawe does not understand any English and Kempe knows no German, after they both pray, they can understand each other. He can understand Kempe's English but no one else's (82–83). The German priest's inability to understand anyone else's English except Kempe's is itself reconfirmed in a later episode where her fellow pilgrims have complained to the *English* confessor (who has come to Rome after hearing about Kempe in England) that Kempe confessed to a priest who could not understand her. Wenslawe sits at dinner with them all—Kempe, English priest, pilgrims—but cannot understand their conversation . . . until Kempe tells him a Biblical story. He is able to tell them all the story in Latin, indicating he has understood her. They "meruayle" at her. It is, of course, God that "mad an alyon to vndirstondyn hir" (97–98). This same miraculous power to understand, despite language differences, enables the priest-scribe to decipher the incomprehensible writing in the first book. The priest-scribe's ability to comprehend Kempe's words and his faith in her are restored by God's grace, which confirms again Kempe's spiritual truthfulness.

If the scribe writes in the Preface and Proem that he is convinced by the same means as people are made certain in the main body of the *Book*, it does not mean he is always sure about Kempe. Rather, as with the various people Kempe encounters and the

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recurring problems she has in her home town of Lynn, the scribe needs continual reconfirmation of her sanctity. Desire for reassurance occurs at various places in the main body of the *Book* and signals the scribe's uncertainty and hesitation. The effect of this hesitation is profoundly unsettling. It is an ambiguous attitude towards one's own principal subject like the doubts the friend has in Hoccleve's *Dialogue*. In a remarkable passage in chapter 23, the text calls attention to Kempe's own recurring apprehensions about the truth of her "feelings." Indeed, the passage says that Kempe often desires not to have the feelings at all. They are painful, and she is afraid of their deceitfulness. For instance, sometimes her "felyngys . . . fel not trewe to hir vndyrstandyng" until some time later. At other times, she is often at risk of falling into "dyspeyr," a condition which often implies suicide or a lack of the will to live (akin to sloth), both dangerous sins (54–55). Immediately following this discussion by Kempe, the priest-scribe raises his own doubts about Kempe's sanctity. It is a disorienting passage because her uncertainty is compounded by his doubts. He says that several times she must

> tellyn hym how sche felt, & ellys wold he not gladlych a wretyn pe boke. And so pis creatur, sumdel for drede pat he wold ellys [not] a folwyd hir entent for to wryten pis boke, compellyd, dede as he preyd hir & telde hym hir felyngys what xuld be-fallyn in swech materys as he askyd hir 3yf hir felyngys wer trewth. & pus he preuyd hem for very trewth. & 3et he wold not alwey 3euyn credens to hir wordys, & pat hyndryd hym. (55)

In this way the priest-scribe is like one of the people Kempe encounters on her travels and at home in Lynn. He is part of the public which doubts and tries Kempe. His doubt, and Kempe's miraculous ability to dispel it, make up several of the episodes in the *Book*. [22]

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[22] See 55–60 and 152–54 where the scribe reads stories of the male and female mystics who preceded Kempe, 214 where the scribe writes he has not been able to recount all her dalliance with God (and writes in the first person), 219 where the scribe weeps along with Kempe as he writes her story, and places where Kempe herself is reassured directly by God that writing the *Book* is a worthy activity (216). It is interesting to note that writing the *Book* can actually cure her when she becomes sick: "And sche was many

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These episodes have exactly the same structure as the others we have observed, this time with the priest acting as the doubting member of the public. *He* is trying to discern her feelings, an appropriate action for a priest. Once his suspicions have been dispelled and his faith in the source of Kempe's cries reconfirmed, the narrative moves on. The priest is writing about his own experiences in the same way as Kempe recounted her own; that is, he is writing a *discourse* which is similar to Kempe's. He does not rely on preconceptions but continually reviews "what shall count" as the reasons why he writes.

At the conclusion of writing Book One, the scribe is convinced enough to continue the project voluntarily and write Book Two. He no longer doubts Kempe, nor does he doubt his role as her writer. Even though the English-German scribe had written a poor text, he has "mad trewe sentens pe whech, thorw pe help of God & of hir-selfe pat had al pis tretys in felyng & werkyng, is trewly drawyn owt of pe copy in-to pis lityl boke" (220). The priest-scribe has been able to copy the original "aftyr hys sympyl cunnyng."[23] Here, at the end of Book One, part of what convinces him is his first-hand witnessing of Kempe's behaviors, but part of it must also be the long narrative he has copied. As in the Proem, we can see that he has had his faith reconfirmed in exactly the same way as the public's and Kempe's own faith are restored over and over again. The scribe repeats the structure of the *Book*'s episodes in the narratives concerning himself and the composition of the *Book*. Whether this is conscious or not, it suggests that the scribe accepts Kempe's way of composing both text and self. It is part of medieval textual culture to use this structure, or, more accurately, to *reuse* and *repeat* a preexisting structure.

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tyme seke whyl pis tretys was in writyng, and, as sone as sche wolde gon a-bowte pe writyng of pis tretys, sche was heil & hoole sodeynly in a maner" (219).

[23] 221. The scribe's copying is an example of what Rita Copeland calls "primary" translation, a practice which began with the translation of Latin works into vernacular languages but has roots in patristic rhetorical study (43–52). A "primary" translation is in service to and dependent on the original text. However, it also cannot help but supplant the original because it "orients its practice towards a self-sufficient or independent discourse" (93–94). With Kempe, the scribe can recover the "trewe sentens" of the original, but he also includes the episodes about himself in the "recovered" text and so, in part, makes a new, independent text.

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Like Kempe, the priest-scribe also draws attention to the constructed nature of the text. His doubts require Kempe to perform for him. She must tell him her feelings. He hesitates before writing at all. His spectacles trouble him. The scribe foregrounds the effort and the troubles he has in writing the text and, in this way, the scribe's own role is feyned in that he is so self-conscious about it. He is not a simple, believing witness, even when he has agreed to copy the book over. Like Hoccleve, his feynyng consists of hesitation, and then he needs Kempe to convince him repeatedly that what he is writing is the truth. He draws attention to the ways his text is authorized, the very center of its make-up. The *Book*, he implies, is also feyned: assembled, mediated, consistently requiring discernment and proof. Both Kempe's structural repetition and the scribe's hesitation draw attention to the *Book* as a feyned discourse, which continually reexamines and asks its readers to reexamine the grounds of its arguments and the readers' beliefs.

The annotators are different from the scribe. They do not seem to notice the structure of text. The *Book* appears to have been annotated by four different people in the late-fifteenth or early-sixteenth centuries. The annotations are numerous, indication that there was engaged and active interest in the text. The most significant annotations are by the latest reader, who notes in the margins that Kempe's experiences, including her feelings of love, her writhing on the ground and her roaring, are similar to the behaviors and feelings of Richard Rolle and two men at the Carthusian monastery of Mount Grace: Richard Methley, a monk, and John Norton, the Prior.[24] The analogies drawn between her and Rolle's, Methley's, and Norton's behaviors serve to indicate that Kempe's text was believable, received unproblematically as part of a tradition by this annotator. Only one note by a different annotator indicates anything about the structure, the word "narracio" immediately before a story Kempe tells about her trial at York (126, n.5). This reader

[24] For analysis of the annotations, see Meech xxxvi–xliv; Holbrook, "Margery" 35–38; Lochrie 8, 120–22, 204–25; and Staley 96–98. See also Edmund Colledge and Romana Guarnieri for a discussion of Richard Methley's translation of Margaret Porete's *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, and Methley's copy and gloss of *The Cloud of Unknowing* (373–81).

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appears to be aware that the story is a discrete unit. Other annotations draw attention to places where Kempe is tested, and, although annotators' marginal words such as "dyscresion," "nota eius dubitacionem," and "detraccion" indicate at least two of the readers notice her trials, these marks appear to be in support of Kempe. Some excisions, possibly by the annotator who draws attention to Methley's and Norton's analogous experiences, might indicate an uneasiness about some of Kempe's familiarity with the holy family and the saints, but these are only three and their significance is unclear.[25] Overall, it appears that the annotators believe her. They do not draw attention to the remarkable or unusual characteristics of the structure of the episodes, nor do they notice that both Kempe and her scribe foreground the constructed nature of the *Book* through structural repetition. It is unclear whether the text appears feyned to them or whether they find its structure unremarkable. Their failure to note anything peculiar about the *Book*'s structure could imply they do not notice the structural repetition because it is a convention of their time, but ultimately there is too little evidence to draw a conclusion as to whether the repetition ever caused the annotators to doubt Kempe's spiritual sincerity. As most of the comments appear in support of Kempe, it would appear they do not perceive the structure.

The *Book* is radically rewritten in the printed editions. Wynykn de Worde's "schorte treatyse of contemplacyon" (1501) and Henry Pepwell's reprint (1521) both change the *Book* to a treatise that is not about Kempe's private-public interactions and trials. More important, the episodes, with their repetitive structure, are also gone. The *Book* in its new treatise form does not appear feyned in that the constructed nature of Kempe's identity, of her experiences in the world and with God, is edited out. There is no foregrounding of Kempe's efforts to convince the listeners of her time and the readers of her book about her sanctity, nor is there any evidence of the problems she had in getting the

[25] See pages 87, 203, and 208. See also Meech's discussion (xxxviii).

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Book written or of the scribe's own recurring doubts about writing the *Book*. It is a treatise to be contemplated, and little stands in the way of such a quiet, untroubled reading.

The printed texts are considerably shorter than the manuscript.[26] They consist of twenty-eight short extracts from the manuscript, comprising only seven quarto pages in Wynykn de Worde's text. Henry Pepwell's text is basically a re-issue of de Worde's, with two important differences I will discuss in a moment. The incipit and colophon of de Worde's pamphlet explicitly acknowledge its source: "Here begynneth a shorte treatyse of contemplacyon taught by oure lorde Ihesu cryste, or taken out of the boke of Margerie kempe of lynn" (353). Sue Holbrook's "Margery Kempe and Wynkyn de Worde" provides the best analysis of the effects of the changes. She argues the selection of passages appears deliberate in de Worde's pamphlet. The extractor has altered the text to "form a coherent text, one consisting of dialogues between the first-person voice of a woman and the first-person voice of Christ, who addresses her as 'daughter,' along with an unobtrusive narrative voice that provides exposition" (28). This dialogue form, Holbrook argues, serves particular ends:

> In sum, the extractor has searched for passages that commend the patient, invisible toleration of scorn and the private, inaudible, mental practice of good will in meditation rather than public or physical acts or sensory signs of communion with God and has left behind all that is radical, enthusiastic, feminist, particular, potentially heretical and historical. The search has produced a coherent set of excerpts with a pronounced slant. (35)

The important feature of the social world of a particular time and place—England, the continent, and Jerusalem in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—is gone. Kempe's raucous cries and roars, her disturbing and disruptive behavior, which mediated between her private contemplative self and the social world, are erased. The repetitive

[26] A transcription of Wynkyn de Worde's printed pamphlet, which includes variants from Henry Pepwell's volume, appears in the Meech and Allen edition of the *Book*, Appendix II (353–57).

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foregrounding of the same structure—Kempe's spiritual certainty, the public testing of this certainty, and the reconfirmation of her sanctity—has also disappeared. The dialogue form is dominated by Christ's words: according to Holbrook sixty percent are spoken by him (29). The narrator's voice is "unobtrusive," dispassionate, and not Kempe's. The ultimate effect is that the text is not feyned, not made up, simply a presentation of a private dialogue. Also, the *shorte treatyse*'s quarto format and pamphlet form means it was relatively inexpensive, portable, and thus available to many readers. However, the evidence suggests it was used privately, among Carthusians and Brigittines at Syon Abbey and elsewhere. Interestingly, this means a readership that includes women but also a private religious readership.[27]

Only two small excerpts retain any aspect of the social as it appeared in the manuscript version of the *Book*, the first of which is quite important; it is Kempe's expression of her desire to be tied naked to a cart to be drawn about town while men throw muck at her (356, *Book* 184). But, as Holbrook points out, the excerpt's significance in de Worde's text is as part of Christ's counsel that she will have reward in heaven for "her 'good wylles and good desyres,' which are more important than bodily acts" (29). According to this interpretation, Kempe's desire for public testing and humiliation is cut off at desire. Without any of the context of her trials by clerical and secular authorities alike, so much the subject matter of the *Book*, the desire goes no further than a wish. No action is necessary or implied. However, the passage offers a slight residue of Kempe's desire, an excerpt that is not totally "disembodied" as Lochrie would have it (220–24). Kempe's disruptive body and her desire for public humiliation are still there in this passage. These two elements are also present as a trace in the second excerpt, where Kempe desires to kiss the lepers "whan she met them in the way" (355). This is changed from the *Book*'s slightly more specific "whan sche sey hem er met wyth hem in pe stretys" (176), but the

[27] Holbrook, "Margery" 40–43. See also Keiser (10–12), S. S. Hussey (120), and Ann Hutchison (215–27).

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pamphlet's excerpt still shows her ideas about recognition and realization of her desire in a real setting.

Henry Pepwell's reprint is not substantially different from de Worde's. The major changes by Pepwell, who would become Wynkyn de Worde's overseer on Fleet Street upon de Worde's death in 1535, include an addition to the title and explicit of de Worde's treatise, and a difference in context: Kempe's text is accompanied by six other texts in Pepwell's new quarto volume.[28] First and importantly, the title and the explicit designate Kempe as an anchoress. In Pepwell's edition: "Here begynneth a shorte treatyse . . . taken out of the boke of Margerie kempe ancresse of lynn" and "Here endeth a shorte treatyse of a deuoute ancres called Margerie kempe of Lynne" (353, n.2; 357, n.11). Designating Kempe an anchoress is to turn her into exactly what she is *not*. It removes her from the public and places her in a different tradition of female piety than the one she and her scribe drew on—Marie d'Oignies, Elizabeth of Hungary, Birgitta of Sweden—all women who led active lives marked by conflict and negotiation with people in the world. The second change is that in Pepwell's edition, Kempe's treatise is now in the company of texts noted for their negative theology rather than what Kempe appears to be following, affective piety. Included in Pepwell's edition are excerpts from Richard of St. Victor's *Benjamin Minor*, from *The Divers Doctrines of Saint Katherin of Seenes*, from Walter Hilton's *Of Angels' Song*, and from three texts by the *Cloud*-author. The manner in which the very influential and public life of Catherine of Siena is excerpted is similar to Kempe. The *Divers Doctrines* are spiritual teachings by Christ and Catherine, not descriptions of Catherine's active life. The effects of Pepwell's alterations are further to change Kempe's text into one that is less about the creation and negotiation of Kempe's identity in relation to an adversarial public.

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[28] Pepwell's text is British Museum, C. 37. A modernized version is also available in Edmund Gardner, *The Cell of Self-Knowledge* (51–59).

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More important with regards to the suppression of the structure of the *Book* is the form of the printed texts. De Worde's and Pepwell's texts show a disregard for any sense of a feynyng style; they alter the emphasis from one that foregrounds the ways in which Kempe and her *Book* are made to texts in which the truth of Christ's and Kempe's "pithy sayings" is paramount. Nothing stands in the way of the *sentence*. Very little indicates the rhetorical constructedness of their printed treatises. As Lochrie points out, the audience for de Worde's and Pepwell's printed editions, like Caxton's audience, wanted "concentrated, concise, and pithy sayings." She follows George Keiser in quoting from the author to the prologue of one of de Worde's devotional texts, *Contemplacion of synners*, who says, "now a dayes it lyketh best a man to here or rede complylacyons whiche ben compendyous, pleasaunt & prouffytable/short in sayenge & large in sentence."[29] The emphasis, in the printed versions of Kempe, on short touchstones of devotion for contemplation is far removed from the feynyng characteristics of Kempe's text. As Keiser says, "Margery Kempe's long, rambling narrative, with its sentence deeply embedded therein, would have lacked the sense of structure that seems to have been desirable at the time. Hence, its reduction to a 'compendious compilation' must have seemed a way to satisfy an audience" (24).

The incipit to de Worde's 1501 edition, "a shorte treatyse of contemplacyon taught by oure lorde Ihesu cryste, or taken out of the boke of Margerie kempe of lynn," performs a great elision with its coordinate "or." It is as if what is "taken out of the *Book*" is simply what Jesus taught: a collection of pithy didactic sentences. The "or" indicates, or rather does not indicate but elides the fact that the treatise's source is not a "treatyse of contemplacyon taught by oure lorde." But the *Book* is by no means so simple. Its contents and its repetitive structure have functioned to draw attention to the efforts by which Kempe and her scribe construct their stories. We can see in the recension of the

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[29] *Short Title Catalogue* 5643, Wynkyn de Worde, 1499 (Keiser 16 in Lochrie 222).

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Book in the 85 years from Kempe, to scribe, to annotator, and finally to editors, the gradual larger-scale elision of doubt, debate, and dissembling. The emphasis on feynyng, on the difficulties in making up the *Book*, made particularly obvious by its repetitive structure, gradually lessens. It is a "hypostasis" that will "block" perceptions of *The Book of Margery Kempe* when it is rediscovered in 1934, a hypostasis that continues to block many readers' responses even today.

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CHAPTER FOUR

AUDIENCES FOR LANGUAGE-PLAY IN MIDDLE ENGLISH DRAMA

MYSCHEFF [to MERCY]. 3e are all to-gloryede in yowr termys; 3e make many a lesse.

Wyll 3e here? He cryeth euer "Mankynde, vbi es?"

NEW GYSE. Hic hyc, hic hic, hic hic, hic hic!

Dat ys to sey, here, here, here! ny dede in pe cryke.

Yf 3e wyll haue hym, goo and syke, syke, syke!

Syke not ouerlong, for losynge of yowr mynde!

NOWADAYS. Yf 3e wyll haue Mankynde, how domine, domine, dominus!

3e must speke to pe schryue for a cape corpus,

Ellys 3e must fayn to retorn wyth non est inventus.

How sey 3e, ser? My bolte ys schett.

NOUGHT. I am doynge of my nedyngys; be ware how 3e schott!

Fy, fy, fy! I haue fowll arayde my fote.

Be wyse for schotynge wyth yowr takyllys, for Gode wott

My fote ys fowly ouerschett. (773–86)

These lines from the morality play *Mankind* contain only a small example of the many instances of parody, mock glossing, and scatological humor found in the Middle English drama. In order to explain the presence of these elements in the plays it is necessary to examine them in terms of the material out of which the burlesques are made—the language—and to situate this language-play historically. What does it mean to parody the Latinate "termys" of a character like Mercy in the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries? How was Latin perceived? And is it possible to go further and speculate with a degree of accuracy about the effects of these imitations and burlesques on audiences?

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The feynyng aesthetic, prevalent in different genres in the early fifteenth century, was configured and expressed in ways that depended on specific historical circumstances and the authors themselves: Thomas Hoccleve and John Lydgate's *Fürstenspiegel*-begging poems consist of deliberately ornate language with conflicted motivations, Hoccleve's poetry becomes stylistically and thematically incoherent, and Margery Kempe's prose foregrounds rhetorical constructedness. The authors and their audiences participate in a culture that is attracted to these aspects of the feynyng aesthetic. These aesthetic choices and issues coalesce in another genre, the Middle English drama.

In addition, the plays contain a further and related characteristic of the feynyng aesthetic: the composers of the plays are interested in exploring issues associated with language's ability or inability to make meaning. The particular way this topic is explored in the drama is through an examination of the relations between Latin and English in terms of the amount of authority each language holds. The plays' focus on the relations between these two languages derives its impetus from the debates about Latin and English taking place in society at the time the plays were composed, performed, and written down, a context that closely parallels the linguistic patriotism behind the mirrors for princes. In several plays, *Mankind* in particular, the devil characters show that the authority of Latin, the authority of the characters who speak Latin, and the messages contained in Latin words can all be parodied. In fact, the plays suggest that the meanings of words and the readings of texts, such as the ones quoted in the plays, are open to multiple interpretations. Language can mislead—in terms of morality, political ideas, and religious propositions—as much as guide.

The effect of this language-play on audiences can, indeed has, been read conservatively: that audiences, while attracted to the devilish manipulations of language and sympathetic to ways of responding to authority that diverge from the expected, ultimately learn to reject these ideas. These arguments necessarily rely on the play texts as indicators of audience response as there is little direct evidence of audience reactions. Yet two other

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kinds of medieval texts, grammatical and sermon treatises, provide insight into how people were trained to react to written and spoken texts. The greater latitude of potential and actual audience reactions described in grammatical and sermon treatises suggests that the audiences of the plays may have had a greater variety of responses, including a longer-lasting and more profound interest in and empathy with the devils' and other characters' beguiling parodies and challenges.

Audience Responses: The Evidence from Grammatica *and the* Artes Praedicandi

Many studies of Middle English drama argue that the mysteries and the moralities are, in a sense, hegemonic tools that work to proscribe heterodox thought and control urban behavior.[1] But this model of a disciplinary function ascribes a rhetorical power to the drama that may not have existed; further, it tends to overlook considerations of audience diversity and to underplay audience resistance. Both ideas about *enarratio* in grammatical texts, and theories and descriptions of audiences in the *artes praedicandi* indicate ways of responding to written and verbally-delivered texts that counter simple ideas of rhetorical effect and textual constraint. In turn, the evidence from grammatical and preaching sources suggests that the plays do not reflect hegemonic constraint, with audiences only sympathizing with, for example, a Church- or city-maintained view of men's and women's unchangeable places in the scheme of gender or labor relations. Instead, the texts register tensions that came to bear on the drama in the fifteenth century. Moreover, according to these medieval traditions, the audience reactions to such tensions would not necessarily have been to experience a catharsis and expel the influence of any challenging or heterodox ideas, including ideas about language.

So far discussions of audience reaction to the plays in books and articles on the drama have been minimal, but those that exist take one of two forms. First is a salubrious

[1] These ideas are ubiquitous and many are compelling. See, for example, Hans-Jürgen Diller 227; Lauren Leprow 12–13; Alison Hunt 22–25; Janet Dillon 58; and Sarah Beckwith, "Making" 259–65.

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hesitancy before what is possibly a foolish task of speculating, conjecturing, and attempting to provide insights about spectatorship. However, in many if not most cases, critics tend to give way in the opposite direction. That is to say, it is sometimes enough for a character in a play to repeat doctrine or express a class-related bias for critics to argue that audiences were influenced by that character and none of the others, that they remembered that character's words and no other arguments, and that they acted upon the injunctions contained in those words and ignored any other suggestions. The plays are thought to have been able to unite audiences in a way that is reminiscent of older and continuing generalizations about people in the Middle Ages: a world "innocent of our profound concern for tension" and a thousand years of "massive hermeneutic unanimity."[2]

Another tendency is to base ideas about audience reactions on present-day responses to performances. While this approach—when careful—can be revealing, there is also a danger in dehistoricizing responses, of forgetting that they are culturally specific activities that change over time. Even where critics posit the possibility of "resistant" or "divergent" medieval audiences, the connection between text and audience remains unexamined. Again, based on evidence from the text alone, audiences are said to have particular reactions.[3] Both groups of critics, those who suggest that the plays have a disciplinary function and those who say that other and antagonistic responses are possible, attempt to bridge the gap between text and audience without sufficient evidence.

The hard historical information we do have about the conduct of those who watched the plays is meager. Some comes from records, some from the bans, and some from analogy with audience contemplation of visual images and related discussion about

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[2] D. W. Robertson, Jr., *Preface* 51; Thomas Greene 36. These and other references may be found in Lee Patterson, "On the Margin" 87–108, and David Aers, "Whisper" 177–202. For examples of generalizing assumptions about the effect the drama has on audiences, see Robert Potter 57, Marianne Briscoe 165, and Jerome Taylor 11.

[3] I am thinking of Claire Sponsler's compelling arguments about the moralities in *Drama and Resistance*. See especially 80–103 for ideas about audience.

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iconoclasm. But the most these records tell us of audience behavior and reaction may be summed up by Friar William Melton's (often-quoted) reaction to the pageant at York on the feast of Corpus Christi from 1426: he "commended" the play in his sermons, "affirming that it was good in itself and most laudable," but that it kept people out of the church on the day of the feast (they were too busy with "feastings, drunkenness, clamours, gossipings, and other wantoness") and so the play's performance should be moved to the eve of Corpus Christi.[4]

The temptation to speculate, and thereby cross the gap between play manuscript and context, document and audience, is great: these are social texts, performed regularly by a variety of religious and secular groups and individuals in a range of settings. The pageants in particular were economically successful and seem to have been the occasion for extensive and varied kinds of play, merchandising, and social interaction. It would be fascinating to know what effect the explorations into the power and meaning of language had on audiences. But we lack a way to bridge the gap between text and audience reaction.

My arguments are, to a certain extent, arguments by analogy. Discussions of audiences in *enarratio* and the *artes praedicandi* address different contexts from those of the plays. Their treatments of audiences tend to be discussions primarily of readers, annotators, and scribes, not watchers and listeners. We even need to be careful with an analogy between plays and books of sermons, which often are models so other preachers can read them and write their own sermons; that is, they are not texts to be read aloud. However, the fact that many of the composers of the drama were most likely preachers or at least teachers with extensive experience strengthens analogies between the audiences of grammatical and rhetorical texts and the audiences of the drama. The observations in the *artes praedicandi* about the effects texts can and do have on audiences need to be considered in the light of this experience. In addition, sermon writings on how to interpret and

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[4] *Reed* 42–44 and translation 728–30.

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compose texts are not merely exercises without a purpose; they are guides with practical ends, designed to be of real use to the reader. In addition, scholars have shown that liturgical and preaching texts were profoundly influential on the drama.

According to Martin Irvine, *grammatica* not only regulated *what* was to be read but also instructed *how* to read and indeed *why* reading needs regulation (*Making* xiii, 7, 16). An examination of its techniques and its intended effects is one of the ways to gain an understanding of the processes by which people reacted to and understood texts. *Enarratio*, the exposition of texts, was taught throughout the Middle Ages and was a fundamental part of the *trivium* as taught at Oxford from at least the fourteenth century on. Schools appear to have taught its techniques as well.[5] Medieval writers on *enarratio* posit that people can understand texts in many different ways, and that one person's interpretation of a text, even of the truth, can be manifold. Interpretations not only can but *should* increase and multiply, as Augustine says, "non errorum fallacia, sed verarum intellegentiarum generibus" ("not with any deceit or error, but in several kinds of very true senses").[6] For readers to practice *enarratio* without falling into error, however, there are three guides. The first way a reader can arrive at a "very true sense" of a passage is to have recourse to easier passages within the same text in order to resolve any ambiguity, a structuralist approach to reading. The second is that the reader should consult Church doctrine and follow its precepts. Textual uncertainty can be resolved with help from canonical precedent. However, where these two techniques are insufficient or unavailable, the third should guide the reader. This third guide to response and interpretation is "ut ratione" ("reasoning"), a process which many writers on the grammatical ways of reading and interpreting acknowledge as necessary but also "periculosa" ("dangerous").[7] Two of

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[5] See James Weisheipl 143–85, Nicholas Orme 87–115, Jo Ann Moran 21–62, and William Courtenay 17–20, 30–36.

[6] *Confessions* 13.24. See also 12.24–25 and 12.31.

[7] *De doctrina Christiana* 3.86. For similar ideas about this hermeneutical theory, see also Cicero, *De inventione* 2.40–41; Origen, *Commentary on St. John's Gospel* 5.8, *Contra celsum* 4.38–50, *De*

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the principal parts of *enarratio* appear to exhort readers to create or gather multiple interpretations and to proceed, at least in part, according to their own rationality. If the audiences' responses to the plays are at all similar to those encouraged by the fundamental techniques of *grammatica*, then we can expect multiple, conflicting, and individual reactions to the plays.

Glosses, concordances, and the school setting where students learned the techniques of *enarratio* undoubtedly help the medieval reader of manuscripts to a less "dangerous" interpretation, but audiences of the plays in England in the fifteenth century are obviously responding without this textual assistance or pedagogical guidance. There are, of course, plenty of "Holy Church" figures within play texts, but even here we need to note the admission, central to the process of *enarratio*, that different people can have different interpretations and that even one person is capable of having multiple interpretations. Moreover, the practice of *enarratio* is literally to pull a word, phrase, or section out of a narrative and to examine it—as Donatus would have it—in terms of parts of speech, or—as Priscian instructed—in terms of semantics.[8] If, as many critics of the drama argue, the narrative of a play is teleologically conservative, allowing exploration of ambivalent or aberrant ideas in order to proscribe those thoughts in the end, then *enarratio* works against narrative drive and encourages examination and contemplation of each segment of action in a play.

Divisio and *amplificatio* were basic reading and compositional practices whereby a text was divided into sections, and each section was considered separately. *Narratio*, while recognized as a technique in composition and interpretation, was not the only way to

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principiis 4.2.3; Hugh of St. Victor 4.1, 5.7–10; and Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 1a 1, article 9. Twentieth-century critics stress a similar point. For example, see Irvine, *Making* 265; Rita Copeland 156; and Ruth Morse 3–27.

[8] Semantics for Priscian means the grammatical placement of words, what words signify, and their particular qualities. See Jeffrey Huntsman 71.

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understand a text.[9] In addition, memorial practices work actively with grammar's dividing, extracting, and studying techniques to urge audiences to consider each piece of a play individually and not only in terms of the play's overall plot. Members of an audience may have been apt to remember striking speeches and colorful characters who speak them, as much as an attempted conservative end of a play.[10] Overall, grammatical teachings suggest that we are wrong to overlook difference among and even within audience members, that audience members were probably encouraged to reason through interpretations, and that many parts of a play could be retained and contemplated.

It might be objected that the various grammatical ways of interpreting a text, which I am proposing are applicable to the drama, are limited to highly-educated audiences with the ability to read principally Latin texts, but two things need to be said in response to this objection. One is to note the uncertainty, with many of the plays and particularly the moralities, concerning who exactly was in the audience. Several studies suggest religious audiences and performances in abbeys and court spaces, even in universities.[11] The second is the pervasiveness of grammatical ideas about reading and interpreting. It is thought that, by about 1380, grammatical construing in Oxford was carried out in English and French, reflecting the ubiquity of the vernacular languages but also a more popular, accessible approach even in the colleges. Teaching grammar in the vernacular also appears to have carried over to schools at this time.[12] Grammatical techniques may even have influenced a lay audience with a less-formal education. There is evidence that clergy bequeathed grammatical texts to boys who were not necessarily entering the clerical life (Moran 200–

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[9] For a discussion of the differences between the narrative and iconic elements in drama, see Peter Meredith, "Fifteenth-Century Audience" 106–108, 111.

[10] For discussion of these techniques, see Mary Carruthers 82–86, 103–105, 174, 191.

[11] See, for example, Gail Gibson 107–35, Meg Twycross 37–84, and Tom Pettit 191–92.

[12] See R. J. Schoeck 214–25, Orme 95–97, R. Hunt 189–91, Moran 37–38, 43, and Courtenay 17.

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202). In particular, lay audiences more generally would have heard many of the techniques of *enarratio* in nearly every sermon they attended, and so it is to rhetoric and the *artes praedicandi* that I turn next.

Medieval guides to sermon writing and sermons themselves provide three insights about audiences that are essential to remember in any attempt to bridge the gap between the dramatic texts and their audiences. Scholars have already discussed affinities between sermons and plays, which brings these insights and the plays even closer together.[13] The first idea about audiences that sermon materials can provide is that, as with *grammatica*, nearly every sermon text acknowledges the diversity of its audience, a fact that should serve as a useful corrective to the assumptions about the homogeneity of audiences modern scholars tend to bring to medieval drama. In a prologue to one of his collections of sermons, Jacques de Vitry addresses 120 different kinds of auditors (Spencer 68–70). John Mirk, canon-regular at Lilleshall in Shropshire in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, not only instructs the parish priest to keep in mind the various audience members' ages, wealth, whether he or she is religious or secular and "in his wits," but also provides directions on what to teach people about how they should behave in church: when to stand and sit, to stop talking and especially to leave off "ydel speche," not to lean on the walls, not to quarrel, and not to play games in the church (82, 86, 147–48). Other sermon texts complain of more faults such as fighting over seats in the middle of a service, sleeping, talking so much as to drown out the sermon or to stop others from hearing, or leaving before a sermon is over (Owst, *Preaching* 165–92). In 1437 Bishop Alnwick of Lincoln Cathedral had to threaten his vergers with fines to get them to do their duty and keep order and silence during sermons (Owst, *Preaching* 157). In addition, different priests could produce different reactions. In a thematic sermon from around 1400 the sermon-writer

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[13] See G. R. Owst, *Preaching* 165–92; Paula Neuss 41–68; Briscoe 150–72; and Leith Spencer 115–20. I am particularly indebted to Spencer's *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* for many insights and ideas.

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complains that if a well-known doctor or bishop preaches, many people will gather, people will not "gruche . . . aȝeyns hym" if he reproves their sins, and they will retain his words (*Middle English Sermons* 70). Chaucer's Pardoner's Prologue and Tale are, in a sense, a study of the interplay between a preacher's status and his effectiveness. Certainly, it also seems possible that the different places a sermon could be preached—cathedral, church, or public square—could have encouraged different responses.[14] The open acknowledgment of the diversity of the audience members for sermons suggests that the audiences for the plays could have been as diverse and, therefore, have responded to the plays according to their age, status, whether they liked the particular play (and production) or not, and so on. The fact that different preachers and different settings produced different effects on audiences becomes even more complicated when we consider the plays. For example, guild members performed many of the mysteries. How might the audience members who knew the players have reacted?

The second piece of information the *artes praedicandi* give us about audiences is also similar to that found in grammatical texts: that different audience members and even one audience member can have diverse, even contradictory reactions to the whole or parts of a sermon. Margery Kempe's reactions to sermons are a good example here, but less enthusiastic responses were also frequently noted. Audiences let "itt commep in at pe on ere and goyp oute at pe opur" (*Middle English Sermons* 166), they express the wish that the sermon be over sooner, and they hear a sermon without attention or devotion (Mirk 129). A thirteenth-century Dominican preaching anthology from Oxford describes strong audience resistance to a sermon's denunciations of eating, vanity, and the extensive ownership of goods.[15] Chaucer's Pardoner certainly meets with resistance from the Host, and Chaucer famously depicts the pilgrims responding in different ways to other speakers

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[14] See Spencer 70–73 on the different settings. See also Meredith, "Fifteenth-Century Audience" 101–11.

[15] Ms. Laud misc. 511, fo. 61va, quoted and cited in Spencer 95 and 399 n. 65.

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and tales, including the Miller's Tale: "Diverse folk diversely they seyde."[16] Leith Spencer notes that it is a commonplace in sermon texts to complain of audiences arguing against the preacher's denunciations of lechery, by saying that it is only doing what comes naturally (95).

It is also telling that lay literacy appears to increase during the fifteenth century, which created further problems for preachers.[17] Spencer discusses instances when audiences critique preachers for clumsy use of words or mock them for making mistakes in their Latin (96–97). Such an awareness of Latin and the uses to which it might have been put in a sermon are parts of the culture within which the plays were composed and performed, just as Hoccleve, Lydgate, and their audiences are very conscious about the relative authority of Latin, French, and English. It is worth quoting an account of a church service to show the close affinity between descriptions of the contestation over language in churches and sermons, and in the plays, particularly of the "Leccyo Mahowndys" in *Mary Magdalen* and generally in *Mankind*. A priest had said "Deus quid viginti filii tui," "God, whose twenty sons," instead of "Deus qui unigeniti filii," "God whose only begotten son." A person from the audience asks:

> Syr, I pray you tell me how many sonnes had God Almyghty? Quod the preest: why aske you that? Mary, syr, quod the gentylman, I suppose he had xx sonnes: for ye sayd right nowe: Deus qui viginti filii tui. The preest, perceyuynge howe that he deryded hym, answered hym shortely and said thus: howe many sonnes so euer God Almyghty had, I am sure that thou arte none of them: for thou scornyst the worde of God.[18]

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[16] *Canterbury Tales* 1.3857. See other specific examples of the diversity of pilgrims' reactions in the Man of Law's Tale 2.211, Merchant's Tale 4.1469, and the Squire's Tale 5.203.

[17] On changes in literacy in the fifteenth century, see Orme 11–56; Margaret Aston 101–33; Moran 19–20 n. 25, 373–74; Shannon McSheffrey 59–61, 187 n. 61; and Christina von Nolcken 177, 187 nn. 9, 10.

[18] Spencer 97 and 400 n. 72. This example, though from somewhat later than the plays, is one of many such problems.

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Audiences had different responses, many motivated by growing literacy and a concerted effort on the part of Lancastrian rulers and others to raise English's prestige; the result is a concomitant willingness and ability to contradict and even ridicule priests. Plays are part of this culture and appear to encourage such attitudes and critiques.

The third point to be gathered from the *artes praedicandi* is that authors of both the old and the newer scholastic guides to sermon writing acknowledge the difficulty, despite the sermon deliverer's best intentions and the number of rhetorical techniques available, of achieving a particular effect among audience members and making sure the audience takes away one idea and not another. Again we can think about the audiences of the drama when we consider the evidence from sermons and sermon manuals. Nearly every guide to sermons lists the faults that can stand in the way of communication and persuasion, without which a sermon is not only ineffective but potentially harmful. The lists include faults such as boring the listeners; preaching for the preacher's own pleasure or to show off his own learning; confusing audiences by using difficult authorities; or using overly ornate language, theatrics, or inanely popular subjects and styles. A guide to preaching printed in Germany in the fifteenth century warns that "When the preacher gives occasions for doubts and questionings in the pulpit, he should not retire without solving the point. For the people, being simple, or ignorant how to distinguish ordinary writings from sacred Scripture, may doubt, and even commit offense" (Caplan 73). Owst notes a manuscript from St. Albans Cathedral that describes the audience as "settynge nouȝt bi prechynge and techinge of godis word, but wenynge that it is an ydil thinge." Elsewhere he notes a complaint that people listen but listen with no "devociowne," that is, with no "luf langing" in their hearts (*Preaching* 172, 174). The injunction directed at sermon composers that the audience should not only hear but also retain the lesson and change its behavior because of the words made the preacher's task even more difficult.[19] The Christian adaptation of the

[19] For examples of this injunction, see Augustine, *De doctrina* 4.79 and Robert of Basevorn 238.

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Horatian dictates to teach, delight, and move not only stipulated the acceptable forms for delight but also stressed the requirement to move audiences in the correct direction. The evidence suggests that even despite the play composers' intentions to teach a particular message (if it can be argued such intentions exist), the message will have difficulty getting through even if the audience appears to be listening. Their appearances and their hearts can differ.

The material about audiences in grammatical and rhetorical treatises encourages a reconsideration of preconceptions about audiences of the drama. It provides insight into audience diversity and responses that gives us the ability to move from the text before us to the audience in an informed manner. It suggests that we could be imagining too little if we consider fifteenth-century audience members as one whole body whose response is solely disciplined in one direction. Given the social and linguistic turmoil of the fifteenth century, it is perhaps more accurate to imagine our audience members having many different and often conflicting responses to the performances before them.

Language Contestation: Latin and English in Selected Plays

Rosemary Woolf's *The English Mystery Plays* has been enormously influential for scholars of the drama. In the final chapter, "The Decline of the Plays," Woolf suggests a specific cause for the end of the important tradition of English mystery plays: "The most sinister omen of potential decadence in the English plays . . . is the native feature of aureate diction," which she describes as "vapid magniloquence" and "frigid pomp." She continues by saying that this "late and deliberate preference for ornate language . . . suggests literary self-consciousness in a disturbing way" (312–13). Woolf is correct in identifying an apparent literary self-consciousness on the part of the composers. The poetry of Hoccleve and Lydgate, as well as Margery Kempe's prose, reveals self-consciousness in composition. Also, Woolf's fears about the "sinister" aspects of the "decline" and "decadence" of the plays are insightful and telling in that they respond to a stylistic-aesthetic

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issue, specifically aureate language. As argued in the first chapter, this discomfort with the "excessive" language of fifteenth-century literature is common to twentieth-century criticism, and because this feeling is not prevalent among fifteenth-century authors, it is also anachronistic. It is true that aureate language exists in the drama but, as with the language of the poems examined in chapter one and *contra* Woolf, it is not something to be condemned.

The plays contain the most remarkable and significant manifestation of ornate language, a hybrid named in *Mankind* "Englysch Laten." The concept of hybridity in terms of identity and language is basic to post-colonial theory and literature. Post-colonial discourse positively values hybrid identities, languages, and literatures as they are a way to resist the colonizing force's belief in a pure culture and a way to value the mixed and composite discourses of post-colonial cultures.[20] The composers of medieval plays also value the hybrid, playful "Englysch Laten," and it is the locus of a different identity. They create the language because they are particularly interested in the relative power of Latin and English. Several of the plays, *Mankind* in particular, focus on the relations among Latin, English, and "Englysch Laten" in terms of their status and their ability to make meaning. In so doing, the writers explore the possibility that language itself can become corrupted. One extreme feature of the composers' concern with the relations among Latin, English, and Englysch Laten is the idea in the plays that language has the potential to be devoid of moral and spiritual truth. According to the author of the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, the words can become detached from the ideas and things they signify and become "onely singnis" (line 200).

The Middle English plays approach translation, the relative authority of Latin and English, and the ability of signs to be meaningful in a variety of ways. Some plays contain Latin words and phrases that confirm authority. Others use Latin and English in various

[20] A discussion of language and hybridity in post-colonial texts may be found in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tifflin 7–8, 33–77.

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learned styles, and yet these styles are as able to subvert as confirm the speaker's authority. The historical reasons as to why these issues about language appear in the drama in the fifteenth century include an awareness and wariness about English as the language comes under official scrutiny, changes in terms of the authority it holds, and changes in its internal make-up.

Despite Lancastrian attempts to further English's authority, it is difficult to determine whether the use of Latin or French in a text took precedence—in terms of its affective power—over English in fifteenth-century textual culture. The languages of "official culture," Latin and French, obviously held authority but, by the first half of the fifteenth century, their authority cannot be taken for granted. Critics today acknowledge that the prevalence of English at court and in the literature of the time, particularly following Chaucer and Gower, meant a resurgence of interest in problems of language, including those which surround translation. The important conclusions seem to be that the use of Latin (my main concern here) in and of itself did not necessarily confer authority on a text and that English's authority was developing.[21] However, while a disparity between the statuses of English and Latin is difficult to discern, it is also far from clear that the relationship between Latin and English was, as the Lancastrians and their poets and as Rita Copeland argues, "smooth," despite the occasional evidence of sermon writers who were able to move easily between Latin and English authorities. Rather, when we look at the fifteenth century and note that many texts are still being produced in Latin, that writers often express a great deal of ambivalence about translating, and that Latin, calques, and

[21] M. T. Clanchy 224–52; Rita Copeland 221–29; and Roger Ellis, introduction. For the status of the languages in sermons, see Spencer 118–33 and Siegfried Wenzel 107–108. For prose, see Samuel Workman, particularly 164. For the relative status of English and French at this time, see Rolf Berndt 341–69. In addition, the appearance of the first English-Latin and Latin-English dictionaries shows that relations between Latin and English had become, to a certain extent, normalized. The *Promptorium parvulorum sive clericorum*, an English-Latin dictionary, was compiled by a Dominican friar in Lynn about 1440; the *Medulla Grammatice*, a Latin-English dictionary, appeared in 1468 and several manuscript and printed editions followed; and another English-Latin dictionary, the *Catholicon Anglicum*, was first composed about 1475. Many thanks to Kelly DeVries for informing me about the dictionaries during the Second Fifteenth-Century Conference in May, 1998.

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"Latined" English words are present in the plays and other texts, the choice of language still appears to be a point of contention. Rolf Berndt's study of the decline in the use of French suggests a self-awareness that is in addition to that of the Lancastrian court, a "[g]rowing vernacular-consciousness" (348). Translation and the historical situation reveal that there is a large degree of contestation among the languages and, moreover, that this contestation is central to composition in the early fifteenth century.

The situation of the languages in England during this period is similar to the many different ways language is central to the composition of literature in colonial and post-colonial countries. Just as post-colonial authors may choose to write the language of the colonizing center and follow its cultural hegemonies, refuse to write its language and deny its influence for an indigenous identity, or appropriate and mimic its discourses "with a difference," so too writers in fifteenth-century England are highly aware of and make use of the possibilities and problematics of writing in one language or another. As with post-colonial writers, they can address the conflict in a variety of ways.[22] The plays I examine range from a conservative but telling use of Latin and English to a more fundamental and explicit questioning, especially in *Mankind*, of language and power, and language and meaning.

In the morality play *Wisdom* characters use Latin essentially to confirm authority. It is important that the character Lucifer speaks scripture in Latin once and then uses Latin once more, but characters do not use Latin and language itself in such an extreme manner as in other plays. Authoritative figures such as Anima and Wisdom speak or sing the majority of the Latin, and Understanding, Five Wits, Will, and Mind speak and sing the remainder. Before Lucifer appears, Anima and Wisdom speak, quoting Solomon and the *Orologium sapientiae*, to announce and confirm their authority. The first time they speak Anima reveals her relationship to Wisdom as lover and seeker: "Hanc amaui et exquisiui"

[22] The idea of repetition "with a difference" is central to Homi Bhabha's concept of mimicry. See the articles by Bhabha in the Works Cited pages.

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(17). Wisdom answers Anima's assertion that his name is "hye felycyte" and "No creature knowyt [Wisdom's] full exposycyon" by stating "Sapiencia specialior est sole," that is, Wisdom is more splendid than the sun (25–27). From then until the entrance of Lucifer at line 325, Anima, Wisdom, and Understanding speak Latin frequently, usually quoting from Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus, or similar works, piously.

Even when Lucifer enters and speaks in Latin, he quotes and speaks Latin piously. However, a problem arises because he quotes scripture in Latin in order to disrupt Mind, Will, and Understanding's assertions of their faithfulness. He says "Vt quid hic statis tota die ociosi?" ("How can you stand here idle all day?") (394). Then he slips Latin into a description of Christ's life—he calls it a "vita mixta" (428). It is important, I think, that this second brief use of Latin is the last time anyone speaks Latin until Anima sings scripture right at the end of the play. This means that half of the play contains no Latin, and this entire section is while Lucifer is present and while Mind, Will, and Understanding are fallen. Latin is not touched, as if it has become corrupt, after Lucifer uses it for bad ends. As soon as Lucifer and his fellow demons leave, Anima uses Latin. This final section of the play, from the disappearance of the demons to the end, only 184 lines, reintroduces ten instances of Latin and Latin scripture, once again spoken by pious characters to confirm authority.

While *Wisdom* principally uses Latin when the language can mark authority, Lucifer's accurate quotation of Matthew for malignant ends suggests a more ambiguous attitude towards another language. As suggested, Lucifer's lesson, "Vt quid hic statis tota die ociosi?" which leads to the fall of Mind, Will, and Understanding, is, itself, an orthodox lesson. But here, in the mouth of a devil, it is the "suggestyon" that leads Mind away. Wisdom says to Understanding, "Wan suggestyon to pe Mynde doth apere / Wndyrstandynge, delyght not ȝe perin" (301–302). Lucifer says he intends to use the Latin in order that "To pe Mynde of pe Soule I xall mak a suggestyun, / Ande brynge hys Wndyrstondynge to dylectacyon" (365–66). When Mind replies to Lucifer's quotation of

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Jesus' words that whoever is with God is not idle, Lucifer heartily agrees, but he qualifies his response: "No ser! I prowe well yis. / Thys ys my suggestyun. / All thynge hat dew tymes / Prayer, fastynge, labour, all thes" (399–402).

Lucifer is not alone in using scripture and orthodox Latin to mislead. In the Towneley *Judgment* play there is an emphasis on words' propensities to lead people to damnation. In turn, this will reveal a limitation of language: that meaning is not stable or universal but is dependent upon context. The fourth bad soul's catalogue of sins near the start of the play begins with "My synfull wordys and vayn, / Full new now mon be rekynyd / Vp to me agayn" (64–66), recalling Everyman's "boke of counte" and the "rekeninge" he must give in that play (99–106). In fact, the improper use of words, from the presumption to think oneself free and to "haue my wordys at will" (100) to the "carpars," "cryars," "lyars," "flyters," and "bakbytars" (211–16, 270), is very important for all the characters in *Judgment*. As Martin Stevens describes,

> it is in the very excess of language—the racy humor, the crackling alliterations, the earthy proverbs, the shrill tyrants' rants, the trumpet-tongued catalogues, the salty dialectalisms—that the Towneley Plays are most dazzling and most engaging to the reader. It seems that the Wakefield Author willfully provided a caution against the very fiber of his own art, as if to warn that the voice of poetry in the context of the highest verities can beguile its auditors.[23]

This play also introduces the character Titivillus; the first demon announces, somewhat ambiguously, "With wordes will thou fill vs, / Bot tell thi name till vs."[24] Titivillus responds:

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[23] "Language" 104. See also Stevens, *Four Middle English Mystery Cycles* 164–68, and Peter Meredith, "The Towneley Cycle" 134–62, for discussions of language in this play.

[24] 361–62. For a summary of the history of Titivillus, including the earlier mention of him in a Latin sermon of the fourteenth century, see Kathleen Ashley 128–50. For the idea that idleness is a *verbal* sin, see the same article 136–40. See also Clifford Davidson, who argues that in the visual arts, Titivillus

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Mi name is Tutiuillus;

My horne is blawen.

Fragmina verborum,

Tutiuillus colligit horum;

Belzabub algorum,

Belial belium doliorum. (363–64+)[25]

Some of the people he "catches" are those who "In sweryng thai grefe Godys son" (408) and "kyrkchaterers" (430).

Titivillus has a ready supply of Latin, which, unlike his introductory use of it in the play, usually echoes or repeats scripture. However, it serves a similar function: to give his words authority. For example, he specifically mentions and then quotes Matthew, where Jesus expelled the money-lenders from the temple, as a reason to condemn the "kyrkchaterers" among others.[26] In these places and almost exactly like Lucifer's Latin in *Wisdom*, we encounter the problem of Titivillus, a devil, using scripture to confirm his authority. Also, as in *Wisdom*, characters use scripture in an orthodox manner and, ultimately, it serves to carry out God's will in the final judgment. Pamela King describes Titivillus and his use of scripture in the following way: "The fall of the protagonist depends on an extension of the proposition of imperfect likeness into the realms of spurious likeness, disguise and deceit" (260–64). That is, Titivillus and his Latin quotations are imitations of Church characters and language, but with different intentions. Both his character and his speeches are mimicry in the sense that post-colonial literatures mimic Old

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"is the demon normally assigned to collect words misspoken or mumbled at Mass and other services" (35–36).

[25] Fragments of words,
Titivillus collects some of these;
Beelzebub of the shivers,
Belial . . . of tricks.
The editors of the edition of the play state that the sense of *belium* is obscure (640).

[26] Also see lines 415–16, 428, and 441–42.

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World texts for their own ends. In *Wisdom* the mimicry implies that scripture, textual authority, Latin, and perhaps all languages are negotiable, open to being employed in the mouths of characters whose intentions may be quite different from an orthodox reading of a text and whose use of scripture can cause someone's downfall. An authoritative and orthodox use of scripture can be employed as temptation to damnation. Moreover, the mimicry in *Wisdom* and the Towneley *Judgment* play suggests a consciousness on the part of the plays' composers about the powerful effects of different languages and, perhaps, language itself. When we consider various authors of this period, Lydgate, Hoccleve, Kempe, and more, we should not be surprised that others examine and hold up for contemplation the very material of the play—its language. That language is an explicit theme is a characteristic of the feynyng aesthetic of the writing that we have seen in the poetry and prose of the period.

The N-Town plays of *The Trial of Mary and Joseph* and *Christ and the Doctors* also raise questions about language's efficacy, its dependence on who speaks, in what situation, and to what end. Again this is evidence of the composers' consciousness about language—perhaps the most troubling element to which to draw attention as it is a self-consciousness about the principal media of the plays' performances: their words. As Stevens says, it is a warning against the "very fiber" of the composers' medium.

In *The Trial of Mary and Joseph* the two detractors, who refer to each other as "Bakbytere" and "Resesclaundyr," have explicit intentions:

> More slawndyr we to xal arere
> Within an howre thorweouth this town
> Than evyr per was pis thowsand 3ere,
> And ellys I shrewe 3ow bothe vp and down! (46–49)

Specifically, these two characters act as rumor-mongers, drawing attention to Mary's pregnancy and raising the question about Joseph's or some other man's responsibility for making her pregnant. The bishop's immediate reaction against them is not so much

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because of the content of their accusations as because of the way they present these allegations. He draws attention to their speech four times in his opening lines:

> Herke, ȝe felawys, why speke ȝe such schame
> Of pat good virgin, fayr Mayd Mary?
> ȝe be acursyd so hire for to defame,
> She pat is of lyff so good and holy.
> Of hire to speke suche velany
> ȝe make myn hert ful hevy of mood.
> I charge ȝow sese of ȝoure fals cry,
> For sche is sybbe of myn owyn blood. (106–13)

Similarly, other characters—the two doctors of law—stress the importance of these slanderous characters' words in their opening lines: "Take good heed, serys, what ȝe doth say," and "ȝe be to besy of ȝoure langage!" (122, 130). The play continues to draw attention to the legal process and especially to the role of truth in the trial. Mary and Joseph are tested as suspected adulterous women (only) are tested in the Bible, by drinking holy water, which is poison here in the play (Numbers 5.11–31). When Mary is found innocent, Resesclaundyr questions the efficacy of the poison Mary and Joseph have drunk. The bishop replies that "Becawse pu [Resesclaundyr] demyst pat we [the court] do falshede, / And for pu dedyst hem fyrst defame," Resesclaundyr must drink the poison (359–59). Luckily, he is saved before he dies. This is because, as he says, "I do me repent / Of my cursyd and fals langage!" (366–67). The bishop himself adopts this idea that people need to repent their disparaging language: "All cursyd langage and schame onsownd, / Good Mary, forȝeve us here in pis place" (371–72). Unlike in the Biblical source, Mary is able to speak in her own defense during the trial. Also, and unlike the source, the play is much more concerned with verbal accusations of falsehood, suggesting a deliberate choice or an unconscious but no less important shift in emphasis on the part of its fifteenth-century author or authors to a concentration on the significance of the power

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inherent in language-use.

Christ and the Doctors also opens up the possibility that many of the plays, in addition to writings of other genres in the fifteenth century, are intimately concerned with language in general and the relationship between Latin and English in particular. It specifically focuses on the relationship between these two languages, establishing this concern right from the beginning with the doctors' opening lines in Latin followed by their boasts about their learning. As Gail Gibson points out, this self-authorization is soon undercut by the very same means—Jesus' own Latin (132). Latin here signals both empty and true learning. Ultimately, *Christ and the Doctors* sets out the argument that the authority of language derives from grace and is "lent" from God:

> Omnis sciencia a Domino Deo est:
> Al wytt and wysdam, of God it is lent.
> Of all 3oure lernynge withinne 3oure brest
> Thank hyghly pat Lord pat hath 3ow sent.
> Thorwe bost and pryde 3oure soulys may be shent.
> Of wytt and wysdome 3e haue not so mech
> But God may make at hese entente
> Of all 3oure connynge many man 3ow lech. (33–40)[27]

When the doctors become convinced of Jesus' learning, having earlier had "skorne and derys[y]on" for his words because he "nevyr lettyr dude lere" (61–62), they invite him to stay in case they have any more doubts and questions. He does until his mother arrives to take him home, and he promises to "unhyde," that is discover, any truths that may be hidden in their doubts (200). It is his presence that can enable them to know the truth.

It is not, in fact, that the Doctors' use of Latin in the play is wrong in itself but, as Leith Spencer argues about fifteenth-century sermon writers, it is wrong that they draw

[27] Stephen Spector's note to this last line glosses it as "'Many men like you (in respect of) your knowledge.' Alternatively, *lech* may be a form of *lach* 'catch, ensnare'" (481).

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attention to their learning (100–106). They fail to realize their authority is only "lent." They are mistaken in the assumption that Latin and learned language overall have guaranteed authority simply on their own merits. It is, for instance, not only an internal structure that authorizes language (as rhetorical guidebooks imply). Nor is it simply Latin by itself. Therefore, there is need for a way to confirm the authority of one's words. A writer or text can use God as a guarantee of the authority of his or her language just as the doctors desire Jesus to remain with them, but a more worldly context determines exactly what constitutes a guarantee and how authoritative and permanent that guarantee could be. It is this kind of guarantee that *The Book of Margery Kempe* makes so problematic by examining the social, ecclesiastical, intellectual, and rhetorical contexts that say whether such a guarantee has authority or not. In Kempe's life the authority of ecclesiastical and secular governing bodies said what did and did not have meaning, but Kempe herself also repeatedly corrects these institutions. In the end it is her text, in particular the structure of the episodes and Kempe's deliberate shaping of the material of her life, that gives the *Book* and Kempe authority. In addition, just as part of her feynyng is deliberately to draw attention to the construction of the *Book*, so too here the composers of *Christ and the Doctors* draw attention to the material upon which their play stands.

The idea of a Church-sanctioned meaning takes on a particular significance if we reconsider for a moment the context within which Hoccleve, Lydgate, and Kempe were writing and the plays were performed. As is made evident to Kempe in Leicester and other places, England in the fifteenth century is highly aware of issues of language not only because of Lancastrian attempts to promote and identify with the new vernacular literatures but also because of the problems associated with Wycliffite thought and teaching. In 1409 Archbishop Arundel issued the Constitutions, which, among other things, aimed to restrict discussion of matters of faith and forbade the expression of any ideas gained from Latin books, including the Bible, which were written in English, unless approved by the diocese.

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In that the Constitutions is a document that seeks to arbitrate which texts people could read and which not, which were worthy and which not, it belongs to the grammatical tradition.

Nicholas Watson contends that composition of "original" vernacular theology is "constrained" after Arundel's Constitutions of 1409. The Constitutions, he argues, had far-reaching effects, particularly on works in English.[28] Yet Watson is unwilling to generalize from the principally theological texts he examines. He describes the Constitutions' effects on translation as engendering

> two mutually irreconcilable views: a conservative one, which held that, because vernacular religious writings were accessible (at least potentially) to everyone, their circulation and content needed to be carefully restricted; and an evangelical one, which held that the Gospel was too important to be "claspid vp, ne closid in no cloyster," and that truth should be available to all.[29]

Overall, while he considers the theological texts produced after 1409 to be more conservative, this theory is not so easy to apply to all vernacular texts.[30] Even within the

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[28] 822–64. I quote Watson's emphasis on "original" compositions here because it is crucial to his argument. Copying of texts, even theological texts in the vernacular, continued and, it seems, actually increased after 1409. In a different field, Ann Nichols argues that response to Lollardy was conservative in the visual arts of the seven sacraments (90–9<,.

[29] Passage quoted from "Sermon of Dead Men" (line 1152) from the early fifteenth century in Watson 839.

[30] Watson points to Margery Kempe, whom he describes, somewhat awkwardly, as a "fascinating exception" to his argument for an increasingly conservative approach (834 n.29). He does not, however, consider the drama.

It is important to consider the dates of the plays in relation to the 1409 edict. The dates of all the Middle English plays' composition, performance, and transcription are difficult to ascertain. According to its editor, *Wisdom* is thought to have been composed and written down ca. 1470 (xxx). The editors of the *Towneley Plays* state the cycle was first performed ca. 1450 and written down 1475–1500 (xv, xxii) They also show that many lines in the Towneley *Judgment* play are from the York Cycle, the plays of which were collected in the 1450s and, according to Richard Beadle, written down 1463–1477 (10–11). *The N-Town Play*'s editor states "N-Town was not composed before 1425–50" and suggests ca. 1468–ca. 1500 for its transcription (xvi, xxxviii–xli). Donald Baker, John Murphy, and Louis B. Hall Jr., editors of *The Late Medieval Religious Plays*, date the composition of the Digby *Mary Magdalen* to ca. 1500 and the manuscript to ca. 1520–1530 (xl). *Mankind*'s editor speculates the play was composed ca. 1466 (xxxviii). It is important to consider that, for example, the first mention of a Corpus Christi cycle in York is 1376, indicating an earlier date for the drama than the manuscript dates suggest. In most cases it seems the plays

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field of theological texts, there was important dissent. Apart from the Wycliffites themselves, there were people like Richard Ullerston, who, in 1401, wrote from an orthodox basis in favor of translation of the Bible (Watson 843–46). It is even more difficult to ascertain how much the Constitutions affected the plays, a vast body of texts that are precisely "vernacular theology." Margaret Aston and others argue that the Church was "excessively wary" about texts in and general use of the vernacular, this "wariness" extending to the Lollards themselves.[31] It appears that Wycliffite controversies caused a greater "wariness" about language in general. The themes of language in the plays, seen in this context, are an important and significant register of the tensions of the period. But they are not necessarily complicit with the "constraining" effects of the Constitutions. As with Kempe's clever responses to her questioners, and her deliberate and repetitive construction of her spiritual authority in the *Book*, we can see in a play such as *Christ and the Doctors* the recurrent turn to issues of language. This deliberate exploration of language, a semiotic and epistemological investigation that occurs throughout the Middle Ages but that is given a particularly strong impetus in the fifteenth century in part because of the issues surrounding Lollardy, is very much part of the feynyng aesthetic.

The Digby *Mary Magdalen*, even more than *Wisdom*, reserves its use of Latin for its pious characters, confirming the authority of its characters and their speech. Apart from one important exception, Latin is principally spoken by Jesus, Mary (*after* her conversion), the three Marys, the Queen of Marseilles (also after her conversion, and immediately preceding and following her death), and Peter.[32] It is also sung in the end by the angels (at

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were performed before they were first written down in manuscripts. A useful chronological table may be found in Beadle's *Cambridge Companion* (xx–xxii).

[31] Aston 193–217 and see 97–98. See also Ann Hudson, "Lollardy: The English Heresy?" 141–63; Hudson, *The Premature Reformation* 185–86; McSheffrey 59, 187 n. 63; von Nolcken 177–95; and Ruth Nissé 427–52.

[32] See *Late Medieval Religious Plays* for Jesus' Latin in lines 661, 691, 924, 1111, and 1120. Mary quotes Jesus' Latin as her first use of Latin at 757, then actually preaches and uses Latin in her sermons and in other places at 1471, 1483, 1552–53, 1715, 1930, 1971, 2027, 2115 and 2117–18. The

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2122+) and then, presumably, by the whole audience of the play, led by a priest. A *Te Deum* closes the play (2139). However, the first instance of Latin in the play is when Herod's philosophers quote scripture, which upsets Herod's claims to power (171–96). Here, the authoritative words oppose Herod's own rule. His command to them to "Forsake ȝe pat word!" is a sign of his impotence in the face of the language of the Bible (190). His violent reaction is no match for the truth inherent in the words.

The exception to these relatively conventional uses of Latin in *Mary Magdalen* is when the Presbyter's boy Hawkin reads a lesson from the "Leccyo mahowndys" during the service at Mahownd's altar. It begins with real Latin, but, partly in the spirit of Hawkin's scurrility and partly to reflect the perception of the meaninglessness and Otherness of worship of Mahownd, it quickly degenerates into a mix of nonsense and strangely Englished Latin.

> Leccyo mahowndys, viri fortissimi sarasenorum:
> Glabriosum ad glvmandum glumardinorum,
> Gormondorum alocorom, stampatinantum cursorum,
> Cownthtys fulcatum, congrvryandum tersorum,
> Mursum malgorum, mararaȝorum,
> Skartum sialporum, fartum cardiculorum,
> Slavndri strovmppun, corbolcorum,
> Snyguer snagoer werwolfforum,
> Standgardum lamba beffettorum,
> Strowtum stardy strangolcorum,
> Rygour dagour flapporum,
> Castratum raty rybaldorum,
> Howndys and hoggys, in heggys and hellys,

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three Marys say a Latin chorus in 1010. The Queen's Latin is in 1765 and 1899–1900. Peter uses Latin in 1861.

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> Snakys and toddys mott be yower bellys!
> Ragnell and Roffyn, and other in pe wavys,
> Gravntt yow grace to dye on pe galows! (1186–1201)

Nearly all the principal words here end in the *-um* suffix that signals the "Latinness" of it all. Many lines are also alliterative, and English words are strangely "Latinized," often with lower-body or devilish references. The editors of this edition note that

> The passage would have been a little clearer in its punning if scribal variations had not interfered. The general theme would seem to be slippery, smooth-talking priests who fornicate with parishioners' wives, mislead their flocks for their own gain, not caring whether their souls go "ablackberyed," as Chaucer's Pardoner observes. (211).

The "Leccyo mahowndys" example shows that not only Latin can lead characters down the wrong path, as with Lucifer in *Wisdom* and Titivillus in the Towneley *Judgment* play, but that Latin itself can be corrupted. In terms of language this is a step further than the plays and other texts we have analyzed so far. What is at issue here is the beginning of a questioning of language itself and not just language in combination with character or language as a necessary but debased step towards true enlightenment. Unlike *Wisdom* and the Towneley *Judgment* play, it would be difficult to argue that this extended "Leccyo" is necessary in the structure of the play. It does not, for example, ultimately lead a character to a bad end or bad actions. In this case it is Latin from a book that is distorted and distorting. Even though it is impossible to trace the precise circumstances of the composition of this and the other Middle English dramas, this focus on playing with the words of a book is identifiable as a moment of self-consciousness on the part of the play's composers. This is, after all, not just any book but a mock sermon, a *Lectio* directed at the play's audience. The amusement here, if that was the reaction, is in recognizing the silliness of the imitation. However, it is imitation "with a difference," and it can have the same effect as post-colonial imitation, to indicate the constructedness of an original—any

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sermon, any Latin—and the authority accompanying either one. This indicates a self-consciousness about authority in general and the authority of words and language in particular that is characteristic of the feynyng aesthetic. Although this somewhat empty Latin is purposely humorous and its distortions obvious, both signaling the inverted world of Mahownd's church, clergy, and followers, this perversion of language draws attention to the possibility that language itself can fail to signify correctly. It is language being used for a particular reason at this point in the play, but, in that it is an inverse of the Bible and a Christian lesson, by extension it suggests that Latin and all language can be corrupted.[33]

Carnivalesque practices in French towns from the twelfth century on included parodic uses of Latin and other burlesquing activities. Social and anti-clerical parody also has a long history in England. In the lines that follow Hawkin's lesson, the King addresses Mahownd and gives an offering of a gold besant; also, the Presbyter encourages the celebrants to kiss the relics—Mahownd's "own nekke bon" and "yeelyd," the "holy bede," which will actually make those who kiss it blind (1209–48). The point here is not only to paint the world-upside-down nature of Mahownd's church but also to show the Christian corruption that existed in offerings to the church and the cult of relics. While these critiques and parodies are common to English drama and medieval drama generally, the specific focus on the interplay between Latin and English is necessarily tied to a

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[33] The play contains a large amount of aureate language as well. Quite often, this is mixed with alliteration to create curiously alliterative aureate speech. See, for example, Mary's speech, beginning "Your debonarius obedyauns ravyssyt[h] me to trankquelyte!" in lines 447–51 and Jesus' speech in lines 921–24 for aureate language. For an example of aureate alliteration, see the King and Queen's speeches, lines 925–57. A few lines from the Queen's speech should make this clear:

> No creatur so coroscant to my consolacyon!
> Whan the regent be resydent, itt is my refeccyon.
> Yower dilectabyll dedys devydytt[h] me from dyversyte.
> In my person I privyde to put me from polucyon—
> To be plesant to yower person, itt is my prosperyte! (953–57)

The editors suggest that this feature is "frequently indicative of arrogance and impertinence." They also argue that "In addition to the reflection of character, then, alliteration has the function of emphasizing themes and of underlining new directions in the action, particularly in opening speeches" (xxxv).

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particular time and a particular place. Its presence in English drama, as the examples show, is ubiquitous.

Englysch Laten and Onely Singnis in Mankind

The delivery of Mahownd's lesson indicates a culture that could appreciate the language-play; the Lancastrian promotion of English, the increase in literacy, and the fact that audience members of sermons poke fun at priests for their inaccurate use of Latin suggest at least some who watched the play would have laughed along with the mimicry. A situation in which languages are changing in terms of their prestige and influence—exacerbated by legislation and practices aimed at controlling the use of the vernacular—makes it all the more clear why the language of *Mankind* also goes further than merely indicating the status of the character or the appropriate audience response to a character or characters. In *Mankind* the issues are that language is instrumental in leading characters astray, that language can dynamically constitute identity, *and* that the problems of signifying, when kept at the forefront, lead to an exploration of the nature of language. Indeed, *Mankind* introduces a third element, "Englysch Laten," a composite language that goes beyond its macaronic origins and becomes nonsense. However, it is not a nonsense language that is simply laughed off or ignored; it is nonsense that is central to the play's plots, characters, and messages. Anthony Gash characterizes *Mankind* as "a Janus-faced play in which a stilted, courtly style (aureation) is explicitly associated with the Church as a temporal authority, and set against an 'underworld' of festive, tavern, comic infernal and excremental language which parodies the 'high' language" (82). Given the context of the feynyng aesthetic in the texts and recognized in the culture of the early fifteenth century, the issues in *Mankind* are not only about subverting authorities and the self-consciousness of the play's composers but also about the production and possibility of meaning. Grammatical and sermon material brings into sharp relief the range of effects this language-play may have had on audiences.

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In the 1970s criticism of *Mankind* became more positive. Prior to that, critics tended either to neglect the play, to scorn it, or to ignore its complexities. More recently, Michael Kelley and Kathleen Ashley have identified an overarching design in the Macro plays as a whole and *Mankind* in particular.[34] In her article Ashley defends *Mankind* against critics of its lack of "thematic coherence" by looking for and identifying a design in the play. Ashley describes that design and accounts for the play's word-play: *Mankind* is "concerned with the crucial distinction between God's word and words of the Devil and the World." While she argues that Lenten practices and the structure of the play account for the "central theme" of the difference between sacred and profane words, this does not account for why a dramatic text in the fifteenth century should be so concerned with words in the first place (128–29). The increasing status of English; the increasing tensions in society due to Lollardy; and the composers' interest in the difficulties of signification in other plays, in poems, and in prose suggest several contexts for such a concern in *Mankind.* In addition, the play is not so clear-cut about, nor does it sustain, Ashley's distinction between God's and the Devil's words, the composers of *Mankind* suggesting that language's power can be used for good and bad ends. Moreover, language becomes more than a simple tool; to use it by playing with it, as the characters do in the play, is to suggest that language is dangerous and slippery. Not only are characters corrupted, but language becomes debased. The focus of this play is not simply character and a moral teleology but the nature of language itself. *Mankind* suggests that language can fail to mean in conventional ways, even when it is the language of scripture, an authoritative and central figure's words, and the words to which audiences (presumably) should pay attention.

As in nearly all of the morality plays, in *Mankind* time is running out for the central protagonist. Mankind's last hope is Mercy, the personified figure whose speech opens the play. The idea of mercy as the last hope for sinful humankind is a dominant one in

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[34] Kelley's ideas are best expressed on pages 123–24. For a review of negative criticism, see Ashley 128–29 and 128, n. 3. Also, see Lorraine Stock 386–87.

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Christian thought. Even if someone has been unrepentant, mercy can still be granted and can save a soul. Yet in the opening lines of *Mankind* Mercy's pious words are immediately undercut as soon as he turns from introducing the play to the audience in a conventional prologue. Mercy concludes his introduction saying: "For sekyrly per xall be a streyt examynacyon, / The corn xall be sauyde, pe chaffe xall be brente. / I besech yow hertyly, haue pis premedytacyon" (42–44). Myscheff is one of the devilish characters; his opening words echo and burlesque Mercy's words and scripture:

> I beseche yow hertyly, leue yowr calcacyon [threshing].
> Leue yowr chaffe, leue yowr corn, leue yowr dalyacyon.
> Yowr wytt ys lytyll, yowr hede ys mekyll, ȝe are full of predycacyon.
> But, ser, I prey pis questyon to claryfye:
> Mysse-masche, dryff-draff,
> Sume was corn and sume was chaffe,
> My dame seyde my name was Raffe;
> Onschett yowr lokke and take an halpenye. (45–52)

Myscheff's learned-style exposition parodies Mercy's learned and sermon-like opening speech, including his translation of scripture. In particular, Myscheff pokes fun at the aureate *-cyon* suffix of Mercy's words. Mercy uses this Latinate suffix, which would usually show authority and learnedness. But here power and erudition are undercut.

In addition, Myscheff not only parodies Mercy's language and Mercy's authority but also burlesques *enarratio* and the rhetorical technique of *inventio* employed in university dispositions, speeches, and sermons. He demonstrates grammatical techniques on a basic level by showing that meanings can increase and multiply. Out of the three guides to finding the true meaning of a passage—recourse to another passage, to Church doctrine, or to one's own reason—Myscheff chooses the last and "dangerous" one (as Augustine points out) to produce his "meaning," but, however "dangerous," it is still a fundamental part of *enarratio* to interpret using one's own reason. Myscheff's parody of pious erudition and

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Latin learning is a mockery from the inside. While audiences familiar with grammatical and rhetorical precepts might have condemned Myscheff's "inventiveness" because it produces a reading that differs from the norm, they would have at least unconsciously recognized his methods and perceived a logic to his conclusions. If any had conflicted ideas or emotions about the whole practice of *enarratio* or unpleasant memories of learning its precepts, they may indeed have sympathized with Myscheff's playful commentary.

Myscheff's critique goes even further. Medieval writers and thinkers took up the idea of distinguishing between corn and chaff (ultimately from Matthew 3.12 and Luke 3.17) as a model for the correct way to interpret a text, principally the practice of allegoresis. The basic idea of reading behind the words' literal meanings was, of course, ubiquitous in the Middle Ages. Chaucer's Nun's Priest ends his tale by blending the corn and chaff metaphors with Paul's lesson (Romans 15.4), counseling his listeners:

> But ye that holden this tale a folye,
> As of a fox, or of a cok and hen,
> Taketh the moralitie, goode men.
> For Seint Paul seith that al that writen is,
> To oure doctrine it is ywrite, ywis;
> Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille. (*Canterbury Tales* 7.3438–43)

And in *The Parliament of Fowls* the narrator explains why he reads books:

> For out of olde feldes, as men seyth,
> Cometh al this newe corn from yer to yere,
> And out of olde bokes, in good feyth,
> Cometh al this newe science that men lere. (22–25)

In addition, twentieth-century critics have interpreted metaphors of corn and chaff, and medieval allegoresis, as ways to read medieval literature just as the authors and their contemporary audiences read it, with "an underlying vein of philosophical seriousness" (Huppé and Robertson 4, 2–26). But Myscheff challenges such allegorical paradigms.

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The chaff cannot "be stille": "dangerous" words can proliferate in meaning in ways that are to the detriment of sanctioned allegoresis. Myscheff achieves this effect in the most economical way possible: by using the traditional metaphors that show the correct way to read and inverting them.

He continues his exposition by reversing the allegorical process so that the literal level of the affairs of this world—distorted—becomes the "discovered" meaning:

> "Corn seruit bredibus, chaffe horsibus, straw fyrybusque."
> Thys ys as moche to say, to yowr leude wndyrstondynge,
> As pe corn xall serue to brede at pe nexte bakynge.
> "Chaff horsybus et reliqua,"
> The chaff to horse xall be goode provente,
> When a man ys forcolde pe straw may be brent,
> And so forth, et cetera. (56–63)

As Gash states, he is "literalising metaphorical or paradoxical language as an expression of scepticism." By doing so, "not only is he bringing the other-worldly symbolism down to this world; he is also elevating chaff and straw to the same level as corn" (92). In fact, Myscheff is asserting that Mercy's conventional deployment of traditional allegoresis is itself productive of more allegory. It produces "questyons" that need to be "claryfyed."[35]

Despite this striking and pointed mockery of Mercy and learned techniques, Mercy still returns to the metaphor of corn and chaff as though he has not heard Myscheff, as though he has not learned that his use of scripture and his erudition won't work. Myscheff has ridiculed both Mercy's choice of scripture and the gloss, the *inventio* on corn and chaff. But a little later Mercy quotes and glosses Galatians 6.7–9 and 2. Corinthians 9.6:

> . . . such as pei haue sowyn, such xall pei repe.

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[35] Rita Copeland and Stephen Melville explore the implications of allegoresis, especially as "a productive act that locates itself in . . . temporal circumstances," and "its ability to force the issue of our inhabitation of time."

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Þei be wanton now, but þen xall þei be sade.

The goode new gyse nowadays I wyl not dysalow.

I dyscomende þe vycyouse gyse; I prey haue me excusyde,

I nede not to speke of yt, yowr reson wyll tell it yow.

Take þat ys to be takyn and leue þat ys to be refusyde. (180–85)

One interpretation of Mercy's speech is that his return to and repetition of the same metaphors of corn and chaff, and the same techniques of glossing this line—a learned *inventio* on the words—outweighs Myscheff's mischief. But an equally if not more plausible reading is that Mercy repeats these aspects of what are now Myscheff's words. Mercy returns to words and methods that have already been corrupted. In so doing Mercy appears naive and unable to adapt. This inflexibility is of course appropriate for a figure who is not of this world and a reader who wishes to conserve the correct process of allegorical interpretation, but it is difficult to overlook the appeal of Myscheff's word-play. Mercy's appeal to reason, "I nede not to speke of yt, yowr reson wyll tell it yow," is an appeal to that which is outside of language and eternal. But Mercy betrays his assertion that he need not speak of it by engaging in debate and argument with the worldly characters. Mercy's appeal to the audience's reason is one that is a last resort when others fail, for reasoning is "dangerous." Grammatical texts suggest that audiences might have been encouraged to appreciate the conflicting and multiple interpretations of the Biblical text.

After Myscheff's exposition, he leaves, and Mercy is left with three ribaldrous aspects of Myscheff's self, who banter on: New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought. Mercy draws attention to their wasteful words, asking for "Few wordys, few and well sett!" But it is to no avail. New Gyse replies, "Ser, yt ys þe new jett. / Many wordys and schortely sett" (102–104). Next, when Mercy is invited to introduce himself after the three new characters have introduced themselves, he returns to the aureate language he used in the final lines of his introduction, the same word endings that Myscheff picked up and

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burlesqued. Now New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought react against Mercy's introduction as an overly learned form of speech. And it is here that they critique him for his "Englysch Laten":

NEW GYSE. But of yowr name, ser, I yow prey,
That we may yow ken.

MERCY. Mercy ys my name by denomynacyon.
I conseyue ȝe haue but a lytyll fauour in my communycacyon.
NEW GYSE. Ey, ey! yowr body ys full of Englysch Laten.
I am aferde yt wyll brest.
"Prauo te," quod pe bocher onto me
When I stale a leg of motun.
ȝe are a stronge cunnyng clerke.
NOWADAYS. I prey yow hertyly, worschyppull clerke,
To haue pis mad in Laten:

"I haue etun a dyschfull of curdys,
Ande I haue schetun yowr mowth full of turdys."
Now opyn yowr sachell wyth Laten wordys
Ande sey me pis in clerycall manere! (120–34)

Onely Singnis

Given the societal changes surrounding English in the early fifteenth century, the reasons that the focus should turn to language and "Englysch Laten" in this and other plays are apparent. In addition, the Black Death and the rapidly changing economy of the fifteenth century meant a continuation of the vast demographic changes that began in the fourteenth century. Large numbers of people were moving from country to city and town

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to town. For example, in 1480–1490, 46 percent of London's skinners' and tailors' apprentices came from the north of England (Palliser 136–37). Along with demographic and economic changes came the intermingling and contestation of dialects. This may also account for the major change in pronunciation: the Great Vowel Shift. Such extensive and rapid changes to the English language as a whole and to whichever dialect the authors happened to speak, base their texts on, and write in produced a context within which each author was highly aware of the "very fiber of his own art," the raw material of the composition, the words. Myscheff's, New Gyse's, Nowadays', and Nought's burlesques are a symptom of and, in a sense, a representation of the play that can occur when a multitude of languages and cultures interpenetrate. Once again, the example of post-colonial literature suggests that this play can be incredibly fertile . . . and in earnest. Poking fun at or even simply imitating language "with a difference" ranges in effect from disturbing the language and power of the center to empowering and giving voice to marginalized groups. As with the post-colonial situation, language becomes denaturalized, but in the Middle Ages this process began at the level of basic education in that Donatus and Priscian taught students to pull a word out of context and analyze its constituent parts. The bad characters in *Mankind* indicate that Mercy's language is not authoritative but affected, and that his techniques can be recognized as overly formal. These characters parody the Latin and learning, and so are on the side of the vernacular and unlearned, giving voice to its marginal status. Even though they are "lewed," they know the power still attached to the Latin and the techniques those who hold the power use to construct their authority.

In addition, given the context of language change during the period of Lancastrian rule and after, and the insights into audiences gained from grammatical and sermon texts, it is not so easy to conclude, as we may be tempted to do, that the audience would have necessarily or whole-heartedly sided with Mercy's piety and grace. The increase in literacy and the concomitant willingness to argue back against preachers (demonstrated most graphically by the audience member's response to the misquoted sermon about God's

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twenty sons) suggest that at least some play-goers, already conflicted in their thoughts and feelings about Latin and Latinate learning, may have possessed a critical distance on Mercy and his techniques. This is all the more remarkable in terms of religious thinking because mercy is the last resort in Christian morality and eschatology. The last chance, usually so forceful, a blunt fact in the face of a sinner's sins, is shown to be a construction that can be imitated and parodied. If this can happen to a figure like Mercy, then other religious tenets are open to debate, detraction, and doubt. It is certainly not simply, as Michael Kelley argues about *The Castle of Perseverance*, that aureate language and Latin add a straightforward "aura of scriptural authority" (42–43).

The issue here in *Mankind* is that it is often difficult to determine how the audience would respond and (even) how it *should* react. It is hard, in many places, to perceive the play's pedagogy. The scatological humor indicates that laughter often sides with the devilish characters as much as with the pious Mercy. Mercy is as much at fault for resorting to Englysch Laten to make his points as are the other characters at fault for drawing attention to this language and poking fun at it. On the other hand, it is important not to universalize one possible audience response and to project our responses onto a medieval audience. For instance, it is also not easy to argue that a play, even one so scatological and fabliau-like as *Mankind*, clearly subverts authority. Given the contexts of the status of English and the diversity of audience responses seen in grammatical and sermon material, many, even conflicted reactions are imaginable. Audiences may have been at least "ambivalent" (Gash 74). However, it is possible to conclude that the Middle English moralities and mysteries, and *Mankind* in particular, are a testing ground for an exploration of the relationship between Latin and English. This is a deliberate examination on the part of the plays' composers, which indicates a self-conscious scrutiny of language and authority, a scrutiny begun at the most basic level of grammatical teachings. The historical context suggests that *Mankind* is as much about language as it is about the "availability of God's mercy to those who repent" (Ashley, "Titivillus" 150). Taking the

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problems further than other texts of this time, *Mankind* puts witty and justifiable criticisms in the mouths of its devilish characters. It suggests that learnéd language can be as much learned language, acquirable by others and open to critique. There is nothing integral to the words that confirms authority, even when the learned character is Mercy, the last resort for Mankind.

The fall of Mankind occurs in spite of Mercy's warning to him to beware of New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought, that "in language pei be large" (295), and especially to watch out for Titivillus, who "wyll ronde," that is, whisper "in yowr ere and cast a nett befor yowr ey" (303). When Mercy exits, leaving Mankind alone, there are telling signs that all is not well. Mankind is overly confident in immediately sitting down to write how Mercy's "mellyfluose doctryne" has saved his soul (311–12). Also, Mankind's language is overly aureate, reflecting Mercy's habitual speech, and he quotes scripture in Latin to give his writing authority. As with Mercy's speeches, these features anticipate and appear to invite burlesque. We can expect Mankind to run into problems. And he does. New Gyse immediately quotes scripture in Latin for quite different ends (323–26). Then the three devil characters launch into their scatological Christmas song with the punning chorus, "Hoylyke, holyke, holyke."[36] However, they fail to corrupt Mankind, who finally defends himself against their assaults with his spade. But Myscheff has gone to fetch Titivillus, who enters to words that echo scripture: "Ego sum dominancium dominus and my name ys Titivillus" (475).

Titivillus, the collector of words first encountered in *Judgment*, is able to corrupt Mankind by making him leave his work and his prayer, but it is finally when Titivillus whispers, or "rondes," in Mankind's ear that Mankind is lost. Titivillus' stated intention is to "answere" Mankind "ad omnia quare." To do so he will "sett abroche a clerycall mater,"

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[36] 333–43. The editor, Mark Eccles, glosses the chorus as "a pun on *holy*, with possible meanings 'hole-like,' 'hole-lick,' or a leek called *hoolleke*" (220). However, it could also mean "hole-leak," a meaning that would fit into the problem the Christmas song raises: that if someone "schytyth wyth hys hoyll" and doesn't "wype hys ars clen," then "on hys breche yt xall be sen."

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that is, open up a clerical problem at each step in Mankind's journey (578–79). Mankind's temptation is temptation to clerical curiosity. Titivillus enters Mankind's dreams and tells the tale of Mercy's own fall and death.

Soon New Gyse runs in, having just escaped his hanging for stealing a horse. Myscheff, he says, is in jail but has escaped hanging because he could recite his "neke-verse" (619), the law at this time stating that if someone could read a Latin psalm at the trial, he or she could be saved from being hanged (223, n. 520). This implies that Myscheff is literate in the eyes of the law. His ability to use Latin for his own ends and to deceive others—Mercy and the court—has very real effects. The staging of the mock court that follows and over which Myscheff, now escaped from jail but still in his prison chains, presides, makes this even more apparent. Like the court in the N-Town play of *The Trial of Mary and Joseph*, this trial enables the composers of the play to explore further the role of truth in language, hermeneutic explorations that may have found a sympathetic audience in fifteenth-century England. Mankind is tried and repents that he ever attacked New Gyse, Nowadays, and Nought with his spade. The trial is not only a burlesque of courts but also an extremely clever parody of scribal activity, which questions the limits of the written word. Nought is the scribe and shows Myscheff what he has been writing:

NOUGHT. Holde, master Myscheff, and rede pis.

MYSCHEFF. Here ys blottybus in blottis,

Blottorum blottibus istis.

I beschrew yowr erys, a fayer hande!

NOWADAYS. 3e, yt ys a goode rennynge fyst.

Such an hande may not be myst.

NOUGHT. I xulde haue don better, hade I wyst.

MYSCHEFF. Take hede, sers, yt stoude you on hande.

Carici tenta generalis

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In a place per goode ale ys

Anno regni regitalis

Edwardi nullateni

On 3estern day in Feuerere—pe 3er passyth fully,

As Nought hath wrytyn; here ys owr Tulli,

Anno regni regis nulli![37]

In this world where the word of the law and the written word can be used, can mislead Mankind and, in so doing, can disrupt spoken and written language, it is not surprising that, upon Mercy's return, he sees all the intervening activities as contrary to the law of God. However, Mercy resorts to the very same methods of using the authority of Latin and the law *and* language-play to express his sorrow. He puns on Mankind's name to express his own care for the world: Mankind is "Man onkynde," going against kind. This "flexybull," "mutabyle," "conuertyble" "not credyble," "despectyble" character, he says, is to be condemned (741–52).

Later in the play, language again loses its tenuous referentiality and even its pointed critique of power. Words lose any meaning at all. The quotation at the start of this chapter includes the point where New Gyse enters drunk and hiccuping. He glosses his hiccups, "hic, hic, hic," as a series of Latin *hics*. He and the others continue the repetition of words with "syke, syke, syke," "domine, domine, dominus," and "Fy, fy, fy!" Language is becoming what the early fifteenth-century Lollard writer of the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* criticizes as "onely singnis," which "ben not onely contrarious to the worschipe of God—that is bothe in signe and in dede—but also they ben ginnys [traps] of the devuel to cacchen men to byleve of Anticrist, as wordis of love withoute verrey dede ben ginnys of the

[37] 679–93. As Eccles points out, the Latin is "incorrigible"! He notes that as the exact date of the play is unknown, it is unclear which Edward this might be. Critics speculate it is Edward IV (1461–October 1470, April 1471–1483) (225).

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lecchour."[38]

The examination of both the potential and the danger inherent in language exists in Hoccleve's, Lydgate's, and Kempe's early fifteenth-century writings. Hoccleve and Lydgate respond directly to Lancastrian attempts to increase English's status. Kempe appears carefully but deliberately to use language and structure to construct her identity. The composers of *Mankind* explore something related but slightly different here. The kind of lack of coherence we saw in Hoccleve's and Lydgate's arguments is here imputed to language itself. Mahownd's *Lectio* in *Mary Magdalen* suggests that language can be corrupted, but here language clearly turns into signifiers alone, "onely singnis." John of Salisbury, in the *Metalogicon*, says this of language and the allegorical method: "To inquire into the effective force of speech and to investigate the truth and meaning of what is said are precisely and practically the same. A word's force consists in its meaning. Without the latter it is empty, useless, and (so to speak) dead."[39] When characters play with and burlesque language in *Mankind*, they dilute and diminish the "effective force" of words. The word-play in *Mankind* suggests that language can be "empty, useless, and . . . dead." The cultural changes occurring at this time and the other plays of the period suggest a pervasive context for the theme in *Mankind* that language can be "onely singnis." Such a deliberate choice of theme on the composer or composers' parts is one extreme but logical conclusion to the feynyng aesthetic in fifteenth-century literature.

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[38] The author of the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge* is describing plays themselves as "onely singnis" (200). However, the suggestion that language could be "onely singnis" also holds true. Anne Hudson considers the document an anomalous one for Wycliffites and a text that also expresses a mainstream condemnation of plays (*Selections* 187–88). For a different opinion, see the editor of the *Tretise*, Clifford Davidson's comments, 20–23. The Lollard treatises on the Eucharist printed in Hudson's *Selections* contain evidence of Wycliffite concern about signs and language (110–15). See also Nichols' chapter, "Dead Signs: The Lollard Challenge," particularly 90–99, and Nissé 427–52.

[39] 2.4.22–27. Translation by Daniel McGarry.

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At the end of the play only the characters Mercy and Mankind are left, and Mankind repents and asks Mercy for forgiveness. Half-addressing Mankind and half-addressing the audience, Mercy says, "ȝe were obliuyows of my doctrine monytorye. / I seyd before, Titiuillus wold asay ȝow a bronte [try to attack you]. / Be ware fro hensforth of hys fablys delusory" (879–81). However, in a play that has been centered on the slippery power that adheres to words and the potential emptiness of signs, this is little comfort to either Mankind or the audience. In fact, as W. A. Davenport states, Mankind's speech at the conclusion of the play is different from that of other characters and from his own previous language. According to Davenport,

> It is Mankind whose words are now elaborate and aureate, and the effect is not just that Mankind has returned to a state of grace, but also that elaborate speech is a symbol of those rich, wide spaces of the life of the spirit, which contrast with the barren littleness of the world and the body. The language, though excessive to modern ears at moments, conveys a sense of the luxuriant curlicues of life, a sort of baroque exuberance, by which Mankind's recovery is signaled. (47)

While I agree that Mankind uses "elaborate speech" at the end, it is far from clear that its effect—for Davenport is speculating about its effect here—clearly signals Mankind's recovery. There is little or no difference among Mercy's, Mankind's, Titivillus', or Myscheff's "vapid magniloquence," as Woolf describes the language of the plays. Mercy calls for "Few wordys, few and well sett!" at the beginning of *Mankind*, but Mercy and now Mankind consistently break this rule. Language soon becomes "onely singnis," and at the conclusion, what Davenport calls "baroque exuberance" continues. Is Mankind's way of using language more meaningful at the end, and does it signify recovery and the "wide spaces of the life of the spirit?" The devil characters in the play have already established repeatedly that this is not necessarily true. The effect on medieval audiences, grammar and

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sermons suggest, could have varied, with at least some audience members disturbed by, or even relishing the power of "delusory" fables and language.

In the concluding lines Mercy repeats the warning he gave Mankind right before Mankind began his fall—to beware of New Gyse, Nowadays, Nought, and Titivillus—and Mankind leaves (883–98). Mercy may intend this final warning to encourage audience members to turn to themselves and be wary, but, in reminding them of the beginning of the play, he also suggests a kind of repetition and perhaps inevitability to the process of temptation and the fall into language that Mankind experiences. The play is thorough, almost encyclopedic in exposing the widespread extent of the difficulties of language; there is no place on earth that is free from Mercy's foes: the courts, scholastic discourse, the tavern, and even dreams are full of words and their corruptions. After all, it is Mankind's false dream that Mercy "hangyth by pe neke," prompted by Titivillus' whispers, which finally caused his fall. The "derysyon" at the start of the play, Mankind's failure to set Mercy's good words "in herte" (259), the scatological Christmas song with its chorus of "Hoylyke, holyke, holyke!" Myscheff's escape from hanging because he knows just enough Latin, and the staging of the mock court are different situations in which burlesque of official language and its trappings occur. Mercy is forced into, and the bad characters revel in, playing with language, actions that open textual authority up to reveal its construction and its reliance on language, which, in the end, may be "onely singnis." Grammatical techniques suggest that even if Titivillus' words in the Towneley *Judgment* play, Bakbytere's and Resesclaundyr's words in the N-Town *Trial of Mary and Joseph*, Hawkin's mock *Lectio* in *Mary Magdalen*, and the many examples of language-play in *Mankind* are there as warnings and examples of what *not* to be or do, audiences would still have retained these examples and thought about them. They might even have considered them in a "dangerous" way.

In terms of fifteenth-century drama, *Mankind* is not alone in its concern with language. From plays that are more conservative in their discussions of and uses of

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language, to plays like *Christ and the Doctors* and *Mary Magdalen* where words are as likely to mislead as to guide, the relationship among Latin, English, and Englysch Laten reveals an anxiety about the language in use in England at this time as it rapidly changes, is the subject of ecclesiastical scrutiny, and is an important subject of so many writers' texts. The deliberate and conscious exploration of related problems of writing and authority also occurs in Hoccleve's, Lydgate's, and Kempe's texts. It is difficult to read these examinations of the sign—whether it will signify properly, and the particularly difficult problems that arise when it is burlesqued—solely as orthodox responses to Wycliffite heresies. Instead, many factors influence the writing, including a "wariness" about language due to the Lollard presence: the growing authority of English due to direct Lancastrian influence; social unrest; changes in English itself; *and* a deliberate interest in language, power, and the sign on the part of authors. The relations and contestations among English, Latin, and Englysch Laten reveal the power inherent in using language for particular effects. The plays also reveal that language may be "onely singnis," open to multiple meanings. These themes in the plays signal a self-consciousness on the part of the plays' composers. The changes in, and conflicts about, language in fifteenth-century England provide many reasons why the composers are interested in the language of the plays.

Grammatical and sermon texts suggest that audiences would most likely have had a range of responses to such themes, from possibly discounting the content of the plays altogether to noting and retaining the scurrilous and the exploratory elements. The Middle English plays, the poetry, the prose, and their audiences are part of a culture that frequently delights in and inquires into language-related issues. It is a culture that values instances when writers explore such issues, a culture that frequently employs and recognizes the feynyng aesthetic. Moreover, the evidence from grammar and sermons suggests that the mistrust of language and its ability to make meaning often weakens the drama's ability to teach the public only one set of religious, social, and economic ideas. Not only do the

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plays register and the composers deliberately explore the tensions surrounding language in the fifteenth century, but the audience would not necessarily have reacted negatively and simply dismissed such explorations. While the Wycliffite writer on Miracle plays condemns them as "contrarious to pe worschipe of God" and "gynnys of pe deuuel," *enarratio* and sermons already teach a close, often difficult, examination of language and meaning. The ubiquity of themes of language in the plays and in the poetry and prose of this time makes it apparent that all the texts are part of a culture that shares a preference for such explorations. This culture is perhaps most clearly evident in the priest-scribe's reaction to Margery Kempe's *Book*. In the *Book* not only Kempe but the priest-scribe, as a reader, notes and follows the presentation of Kempe's authority via rhetorical construction. The focus on language in the plays is a logical and related extension of the themes and concerns other writers share in the fifteenth century. It is perhaps the most extreme aspect of the feynyng aesthetic, and it is one that society appears able to appreciate. In a century that is often read as conservative or self-censored, it is important to recognize that, on the question of language and the sign, the drama and the culture at large is full of thorough and important examinations into the implications of "mysse-masche" and "dryff-draff."

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CHAPTER FIVE

AFTERWORD: DEATH OF A DIFFERENT TONGUE

W. resteth here, that quick could never rest;
Whose heavenly giftes encreased by disdayn
And vertue sank the deper in his brest:
Such profit he by envy could obtain.

A hed, where wisdom misteries did frame;
Whose hammers bet styll in that lively brayn
As on a stithe, where that some work of fame
Was dayly wrought to turne to Britaines gayn.

A visage stern and myld; where bothe did grow
Vice to contemne, in vertue to rejoyce;
Amid great stormes whom grace assured so
To lyve upright and smile at fortunes choyce.

A hand that taught what might be sayd in ryme;
That reft Chaucer the glory of his wit;
A mark the which, unparfited for time,
Some may approche, but never none shall hit.

A toung that served in forein realmes the king;
Whose courteous talke to vertue did enflame
Eche noble hart; a worthy guide to bring
Our English youth by travail unto fame. (1–20)

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The feynyng aesthetic belongs to a particular period, and while its distinct constellation of features does not survive beyond the fifteenth century, certain styles and poetic concerns continue. Geoffrey Chaucer's significance remains for sixteenth-century authors in terms of an English literary tradition and canon, but other figures come to play equal, even more significant roles. A mature canon established, the authors have greater confidence about English literature, which enables them to look to other countries' and eras' literatures, particularly Italy, Rome, and Greece, in order to enrich the English tradition. The purpose of English literature also alters in the sixteenth century. Just as with Hoccleve and Lydgate, authors continue to write for nationalist reasons, but instead of composing verse, prose, or drama for the benefit of the English language or linguistic nationalism, those writing under humanist ideas hold up education as a worthy goal. These pedagogical claims are unmistakably ideal, but they change literary values so that the kind of writing that comes to be esteemed, that (it is believed) would best serve educational objectives, is stern, august, and inspires to virtue. The significance of the Latin tradition for the feynyng aesthetic was linguistic; it served as a source of words with the potential to enrich English as in Lydgate's aureation. Also, many authoritative discourses were in Latin, something against which (as I have shown) the writers of fifteenth-century drama needed to define themselves. In the sixteenth century it is still difficult to surpass Latin literature and learning, but the emphasis on the linguistic is replaced by a formal and thematic decorum that converges with rather than diverges from classical traditions. In addition, writers continue to explore many of the same problems and complications surrounding the poetic subject, but the arguments that frame the discussion change. The self can be a confident body and a source of poetic inspiration rather than demonstrating economic or social vulnerability as it did with writers such as Margery Kempe. A new identity also achieves widespread importance, an identity which is a voice: the persona of the Petrarchan lover.

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My study of the feynyng aesthetic began with Chaucer's death and the usurpation of Richard II, and it ends with a later, but significantly different, death. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, laments the demise of Sir Thomas Wyatt in an epitaph written shortly after Wyatt's death in 1542. For Surrey, Wyatt was a poet who surpassed Chaucer and will be superior to all future poets, one who wrote and worked for the benefit of all England, serving kings overseas and inspiring noble hearts to virtue and Britain's youth to fame. Surrey, published along with Wyatt and others in Richard Tottel's *Songes and Sonnettes* in 1557, knew Wyatt personally. The remainder of his elegy continues in praise of Wyatt, with each stanza organized around a bodily topos: head, face, hand, tongue, eye, heart, and "valiant corps," ending with a final stanza on Wyatt's soul.

As I have demonstrated, the feynyng aesthetic's turn to the self as explicit subject matter of the text, its elaborate and often stylistically inconsistent elaboration, and its language-play arose out of fifteenth-century historical circumstances: Lancastrian usurpation in 1399 and the death of Chaucer in 1400, the changing status of the English language and literature, war with France and at home, Wycliffite uprisings and suppression, and developments in ideas about the linguistic sign. Feynyng was a cultural movement and an ethos favored by the authors and appreciated by audiences even though it appeared to contradict the rhetorical rules of decorum that the Middle Ages inherited from Greece and Rome. The starting point of the feynyng aesthetic is reasonably clear: the two major events in 1399 and 1400 offer a convenient historical point even if Chaucerian and other Ricardian poetry contained incipient feynyng characteristics. But the end of the period is not so determinable. This difficulty is compounded not only by the unknown dates for the composition of the morality and mystery plays, but also by the attempt to describe the feynyng aesthetic as a general cultural phenomenon. When were the plays first performed, and were they performed before individuals wrote them down? How long did they and the poetry and prose remain popular? Are the numbers of surviving manuscripts accurate measures of the literature's popularity? Yet the period when the feynyng

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aesthetic's characteristics predominated is over by the end of the fifteenth century. Certain aspects do, of course, continue as features in writing and as subjects of interest on the part of later authors, just as some of the same features predate the careers of Thomas Hoccleve, John Lydgate, Margery Kempe, and the dramatists. But by the end of the century the attributes of the feynyng aesthetic cease to prevail.

Surrey's elegy reveals what has changed. For Surrey and poets to follow, Wyatt has taken ("reft") Chaucer's glory. He is the next in canonical lineage, but he is also superior to Chaucer, surpassing him not only in fact but, more important, also in potential. Wyatt died at the age of thirty-nine, and Surrey depicts Wyatt's legacy as a force more powerful because it was unrealized. Wyatt's hand "taught what *might* be said in ryme"; he is the "mark," the target, which no one will hit even though death cut him off short and his poetry was "unparfited for time." He is an ideal that is both internal, inflaming noble hearts, and external, a goal for "English youth." Wyatt therefore serves a double function for Surrey and other English writers who follow after his death. He moves Chaucer back to stand as the figure before Wyatt, who, because of his later date and his potential, exponentially solidifies a tradition of English literature. Surrey and the writers who follow him are confident that a tradition of English literature exists, which frees them to continue Wyatt's additional achievement: to look to other traditions—particularly those of Italy, Rome, and Greece—for poetic models and inspiration without anxiety about the status of English literature. Chaucer is fixed as a canonical English writer, and with the crisis of Lancastrian usurpation past, the Hundred Years War over, and the Tudor reign begun, the necessity that England establish a tradition of exclusively English literature disappears. England does not need to worry that such a tradition barely exists or concern itself that this tradition serve kings who want to align themselves with a vernacular tradition, as was the case with Hoccleve and Lydgate. It is still questionable whether the English language and English poetry are fitting, well crafted, and elevated enough, but the aims of the poetic project have changed.

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In addition to this new perspective on literary origins and canon, poetic goals are different. There is still a national benefit to be gained from Wyatt's poetry, "that same work of fame / Was dayly wrought to turne to Britaines gayn," but this nation is not defined primarily in terms of its language. English literature is not for the sake of improving the English language; instead, both literature and language are incorporated into humanist pedagogical motives. To argue that humanism and the Reformation reoriented the didactic potential of poetry from linguistic or spiritual ends to an earthly horizon of education is an over-simplification. Surrey's descriptions of Wyatt's potential develop out of traditions that began well before the sixteenth century. But there is a perceivable change. Wyatt's body is the incorporation of human ideals. Surrey praises Wyatt for his "vertue" and "wisdom." Wyatt's face is that of justice, "stern and myld," and his moral qualities teach the avoidance of vices and the pursuit of virtue, a virtue that can "enflame / Eche noble hart" and act as a "worthy guide" for "Our English youth." Certainly, Wyatt's gifts are "heavenly," but the origin of his "misteries" is the wisdom that is located in his "hed." The elegy concludes:

> But to the heavens that simple soule is fled,
> Which left with such as covet Christ to know
> Witnesse of faith that never shall be ded;
> Sent for our helth, but not received so.
>
> Thus, for our gilte, this jewel have we lost.
> The earth his bones, the heavens possesse his gost. (33–38)

Wyatt's soul, his "gost," is in heaven, his bones remain on earth, and it is only with difficulty that his potential will be realized by those he has left behind. "Our gilte" is not, however, religious or even moral despite Wyatt's stern influence; the "helth" he offered was his writing, and our guilt is in not writing as well as he.

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George Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* of 1589 includes a description of Wyatt and Surrey that emphasizes their classical *proprietas* and the marrying of form and content: "their conceits were loftie, their stiles stately, their conveyance cleanly, their termes proper, their meetre sweete and well proportioned" (60–62). Like fifteenth-century writers, Wyatt and Surrey are aiso Latinists but in a different sense. The feynyng aesthetic addressed Latin in two ways, both of which centered on the phonological: the aureation of English with Latin words and the ascendance of English's worthiness as a literary medium and a medium that could instruct, the latter didactic purpose manifest in the Wycliffite heresies of Biblical translation and preaching but also in the drama's ambiguous handling of characters who use English versus those who habitually use Latin. For Wyatt, Surrey, and those who follow, the humanism of Erasmus, Colet, and others taught a return to a Latin language and literature as if it had been forgotten in the long Middle Ages. How could this be when the bulk of humanist education maintained the texts and methods that originated in the twelfth-century renaissance? The significant change is in what Latin learning means to the different eras. While it was phonological to those who feyned in the fifteenth century, Latin learning means decorum in the sixteenth century. Words are not chosen to be explored, dissected, even parodied, so much as they are selected to fit the composition's subject matter, their appropriateness part of a project that emphasizes order. Elegance in the sixteenth century means complexity but also cohesion of form and content. If the surface qualities of a poem—its ornamental and gilt embellishment—are emphasized, they are also integral, thematized as part of the subject matter of the poem. Certainly, in the fifteenth century the feynyng aesthetic's elaboration and amplification served king and country, but this motivation for writing came from outside the poem and was not part of an internal logic.[1]

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[1] On Skelton, see Robert Kinsman and A. C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance* 261–65. On Wyatt and Surrey, see the introduction by the editor of Henry Howard's poems, Emrys Jones; Patricia Thomson 79–208; Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance* 278–326; and Derek Pearsall, *Chaucer to Spenser* 607–608.

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Neither Wyatt nor Surrey were published until Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes* of 1557, which made their new poetic style available to a wider audience. Tottel's preface confirms changes in literary taste, further demonstrating that canon formation was well underway, enabling sixteenth-century poets to look to different traditions for poetic inspiration, particularly Italy and Petrarch. Poetry in English still requires defense. However, when writers praise English literature for its nationalist sensibilities, patriotic effects, and high style, they do so because these characteristics reinforce humanist ideals. Poetry is educational; it is not solely to serve a king, who embodies his subjects, or to elevate the English language. It is more commonly praised for being "studious" and "learned" (a status closely identified with the upper class) and its ability to correct the animal incivility of the unlearned. Tottel's complete preface is as follows:

> That to have wel written in verse, yea & in small parcelles, deserveth great praise, the workes of divers Latines, Italians, and other, doe prove sufficiently. That our tong is able in that kynde to do as praiseworthely as the rest, the honorable stile of the noble earle of Surrey, and the weightinesse of the depewitted sir Thomas Wyat the elders verse, with severall graces in sondry good Englishe writers, does show abundantly. It resteth nowe (gentle reder) that thou thinke it not evill doon, to publish, to the honour of the Englishe tong, and for the profit of the studious of Englishe eloquence, those workes which the ungentle horders up of such treasure have heretofore envied thee. And for this point (good reader) thine own profit and pleasure, in these presently, and in moe hereafter, shal answere for my defence. If parhappes some mislike the stateliness of stile removed from the rude skill of common eares: I aske help of the learned to defend their learned frendes, the authors of this work: And I exhort the unlearned, by reding to learne to be more skilfull, and to purge that

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> swinelike grossenesse, that maketh the swete maierome not to smell to their delight. (2)

In Tottel's argument, even the naming of other poetries, Latin and Italian, is significant, demonstrating the sixteenth-century editor's belief in the overwhelming and relatively recent importance of the Italian influence. He also suggests his belief that the English poetry in the *Songes and Sonettes* has the potential to equal Latin, Italian, and others. The book the reader holds has a sound educational *telos*, which is already known to the poets' "learned frendes" but which can benefit others. The ultimate end is poetry itself because the "unlearned," once they have elevated themselves by means of the poetry above their "swinelike grossenesse," will develop the ability to appreciate more of poetry's "swete maierome."

Lastly, another principal difference between Reformation concerns and those of the feynyng aesthetic lies in their very different methods of self-representation. Again, it is important not to over-simplify similarities and differences here. Stephen Greenblatt's description of Wyatt in relation to Protestantism could almost be applied to Hoccleve, Lydgate, Kempe, and the dramatists: Wyatt's poetic self "is intertwined with the great public crisis of the period, with religious doctrine and the nature of power"; therefore, it necessarily embodies a certain "conflict" (*Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 115–56). But to return to Surrey and his focus on Wyatt's body as the locus that brings together the potential for poetry and its educational ends, this corporeality is different from Hoccleve's, Lydgate's, and Kempe's identities. It is a body that (albeit dead) inspires readers to virtuous action, is confident enough to capitalize on the "disdayn" and "envy" of others rather than having repeatedly to justify, explain, and argue for its coherence in opposition to others. In their sonnets, Wyatt's and Surrey's poetic voice becomes another's, that of the Petrarchan lover. I suggested that the feynyng aesthetic turned away from the insistently mediated Chaucerian narrator to the dangerously solipsistic poetic subject in public, a body that cries, roars, and waves its legs to and fro or grotesquely whispers or

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shouts its profanities. Sixteenth-century writers supplant this feynyng subject with a new Italian model, a persona.

When Wyatt dies, it is the death of a different tongue, different in that it is not Chaucer and different in that his tongue's and his poetry's characteristics are unlike those of the feynyng aesthetic in the fifteenth century. For Surrey and others that follow in the sixteenth century, Wyatt and others add to a tangible canon of English literature. England's tongue is therefore able to speak with greater surety and authority, proclaiming goals that are similar to those of the feynyng aesthetic but also the additional humanist ideals of poetry's beneficial educational effects. The voice that speaks is grave and decorous, eschewing the glittering ornamentation and rejecting the troubled coherence of those who feyne. Ultimately, the distance between the body and the voice in sixteenth-century poetry is greater than the distance between body and voice in the feynyng poetry of the fifiteenth century. It is a subject who speaks with conviction in the voice of another.

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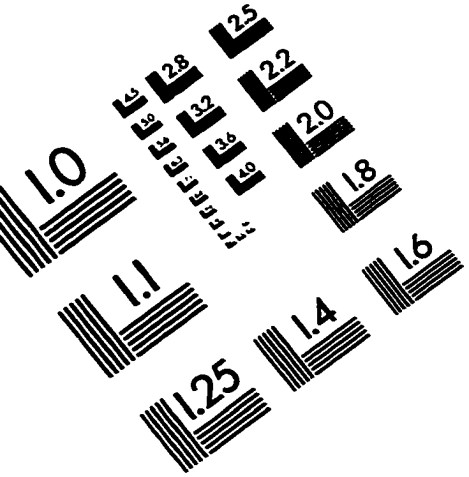

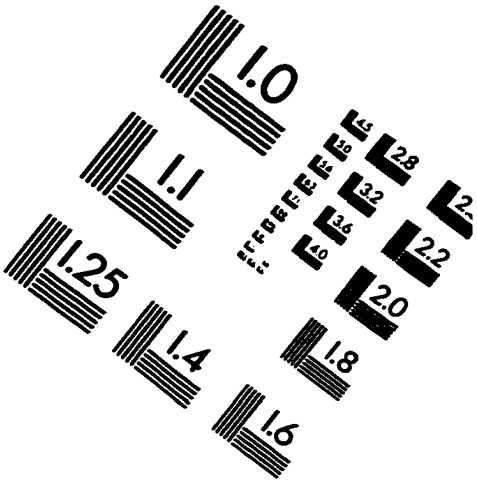

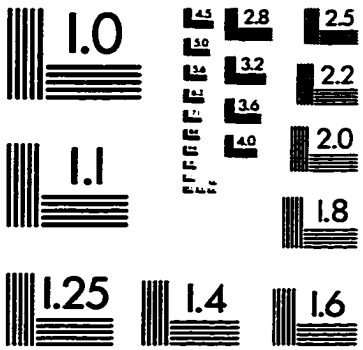

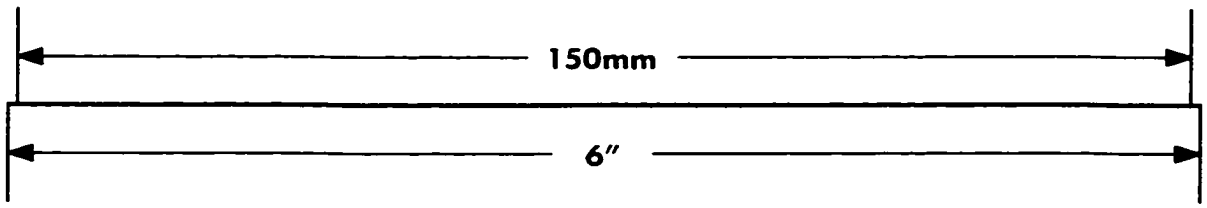

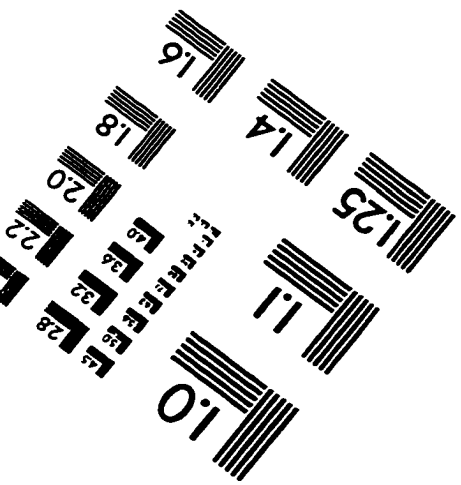

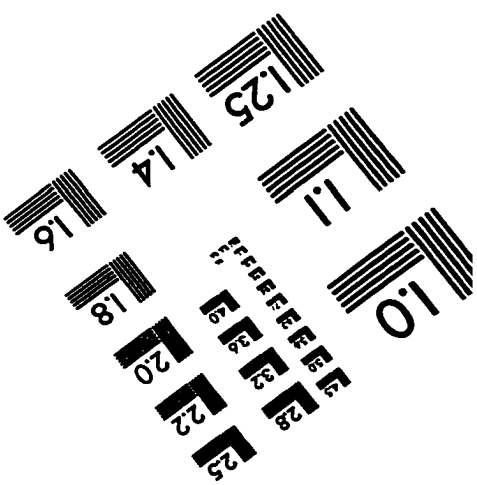

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