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Reading Lydgate's *Troy Book*: Patronage, Politics, and History in

Lancastrian England.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, Reading Lydgate's Troy Book: Patronage, Politics, and History in Lancastrian England, is my own work, and is not being submitted for any other degree in University College Cork, or elsewhere.

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Abstract

This thesis, *Reading Lydgate's Troy Book: Patronage, Politics and History in Lancastrian England*, discusses the relationship between John Lydgate as a court poet to his patron Henry V. I contend that the *Troy Book* is explored as a vehicle to propagate the idea that the House of Lancaster is the legitimate successor to King Richard II in order to smooth over the usurpation of 1399. Paul Strohm's *England's Empty Throne* was a key influence to the approach of this thesis' topic, not only politically, but with Chaucer's death there was also a gap in literature as well. Moreover I argue that although Chaucer had a definitive impact on Lydgate's writing, and Lydgate is able to manipulate this influence for his own ambitions. In order to enhance his own fame, Lydgate works to promote Chaucer's canon so that as Chaucer's successor, he will inherit more prestige.

The Trojan war is seen in context with Henry V's participation in the Hundred Years War against France, and the *Troy Book* text in places can be applied contextually to political events. In his work Lydgate presents characters that are vulnerable to human failings, and their assorted, complicated relationships. These are characters that are closer to the audience's active, contemporary experience rather than of a lustreless antiquity. Lydgate modernises the *Troy Book* to reflect and enhance his Lancastrian society, and the thesis gives a contextual view of Lydgate's writing of the *Troy Book*. Lydgate writes for a larger, and more varied target audience than his thirteenth-century source, Guido delle Colonne. Lydgate always considers his audience when writing, and there is a deliberation on the female characters of the *Troy Book* which promulgates the

theory that Lydgate takes a proactive and empathetic interest in women's roles in society.

Furthermore Lydgate has never really been accepted as a humanist, and I look at

Lydgate's work from a different angle; he is a self-germinating humanist. Lydgate

revives antiquity to educate his fifteenth-century audience, and his ambition is to create a

memorial for his patron in the vernacular, and enhance his own fame as a poet separate

from Chaucer's shadow.

Dedication

To Donovan,

Fawsitts, Nan Conner,

and

Absentees

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I would like to thank my siblings, their spouses and offspring, and my friends for their curiosity in my subject which has often shaped the route of discussion in my thesis; my late parents, Sean and Patience, who facilitated the opportunity for my study, and my husband Pat Donovan whose faith and persistence contributed immensely towards this thesis' completion.

Abbreviations

BK	Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Renate, et al., eds. *The Politics of Translation in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.* Medieval and Renaissance Studies 233. Tempe: Ottawa UP, 2001.
Bloom	Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry.* London: Oxford UP, 1973.
CND	De Weever, Jacqueline. *Chaucer Name Dictionary.* New York: Garland, 1996.
Complaint	Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse*
Consolation	Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy.* Trans. V.E. Watts. London: Folio, 1998.
CT	Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales.*
Gardner	Gardner, John. *The Poetry of Chaucer.* London: Southern Illinois UP, 1978.
GP	General Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales.*
MA	Wheatley, Edward. *Mastering Aesop: Medieval Education, Chaucer, and His Followers.* Gainesville: Florida UP, 2000.
Meek	Colonne, Guido delle. *Historia Destructionis Troiae*. Trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek. London: Indiana UP, 1974.
NPT	Chaucer, Geoffrey. The Nun's Priest's Tale.
OBM	Cannon, John, and Ralph Griffiths. *The Oxford Illustrated History of the British Monarchy.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
PardT	Chaucer, Geoffrey. The Pardoner's Tale
Radice	Radice, Betty, ed. *Who's Who in the Ancient World.* London: Penguin, 1971.
RC	Benson, Larry D., ed. *The Riverside Chaucer.* 3rd ed. Oxford UP, 1987.
RES	*The Review of English Studies.*
Schirmer	Schirmer, Walter F. *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the XVth Century.* Trans. Ann E. Keep. London: Methuen, 1961.
ST	Lydgate, John. *The Siege of Thebes*.
TB	Lydgate, John. *Lydgate's Troy Book.*
T&C	Chaucer, Geoffrey. *Troilus And Criseyde.*
Vernacular	Wogan-Browne, Jocelyn, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor and Ruth Evans, eds. *The Idea of The Vernacular.* Exeter: Exeter UP, 1999.
WWA	Lydgate, John. "On the Wretchedness of Worldly Affairs."

Introduction

The basis of my study is John Lydgate's *Troy Book* which was written between 1412 and 1420.[1] The purpose of this thesis is to examine the relationship between John Lydgate, his king, and the court audience, and the politics of translation: an adaptation of a revered Latin work to one that would earn praise in the English vernacular. In order to understand the *Troy Book*'s objectives several factors are taken in to consideration: the contextual influences on translation; Lydgate's creative portrayal of men and women, their relationships and presentation of their consequences in the *Troy Book*. His presentation of religion and myth will be discussed, and I also contest the theory that Lydgate lacks humanist tendencies. What must also be observed is the effect that Chaucer's canon played in shaping and developing Lydgate's own ideas of rhetoric. The *Troy Book* contains over 30,000 lines, and is an amplified translation of Guido delle Colonne's prose Latin *Historia Destructionis Troiae* which was completed in 1287. Guido's *Historia* declares itself based on texts that purport to be eyewitness accounts of the Trojan War, but these two witnesses, Dares the Phrygian and Dictys the Crete, were fraudulent sources - they were believed to be at the Trojan siege, but were fictional characters. Furthermore Guido similarly misleads his reader because the *Historia* is a "Latin prose paraphrase . . . of the *Roman de Troie* . . . by Benoit de Sainte-Maure", which is "a French romance in octosyllabic couplets written more than a hundred years earlier".[2] Therefore the *Troy Book* is a hybrid compilation of several sources as well as

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[1] The edition of *Lydgate's Troy Book* that is used was edited by Henry Bergen in 1906, and reprinted by the Early English Texts Society. Henry Bergen states: "The text of this edition is based on the Brit. Mus. MS. *Cotton, Augustus* A. iv. (C). collated with the Brit. Mus. MS. *Arundel* 99 (A) and the Bodleian MSS. *Digby* 232 (D 2) and *Digby* 230 (D 1)." Lydgate, *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ix.
[2] Meek, xi.

Lydgate's additional material which permeates the text.

John Lydgate was born circa 1370 "in the village of Lydgate, near Newmarket . . . and his family was probably of peasant stock", but his literary talents allowed him to become an important poet linked to the royal household.[3] When he was fifteen years old he became a novice in the Benedictine abbey of Bury St Edmunds, and was finally ordained in 1397. Walter Schirmer in his book, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the XVth Century*, believes that Lydgate was probably better suited to a secular than to an ecclesiastical career from Lydgate's confessions in his *Testament*: "What I was bodyn, I cowde wel disobeye" (Test. 711).[4] Lydgate's canon is impressive and varied: poetry, mumming plays, and translations of epic works. Larry Scanlon and James Simpson emphasise that Lydgate "was the author of more lines of poetry than any other figure in the Anglophone tradition, and his work was known by nearly all segments of the contemporary reading public".[5]

In order to contextually understand Lydgate's writings, it is necessary to provide a brief outline of the political setting before Lydgate came to public notice. From 1377 to 1399 Richard II was king, and towards the end of his reign Richard was making ill-considered decisions, such as choosing to surround himself with his favourites rather than with able, political men. Richard "was unable to deal with criticism in a calm, rational or constructive way . . . and reacted with extreme aggression when either his behaviour or policy was challenged".[6] The Lords Appellants forced Richard to impeach his favourites, some of whom were executed in 1388. As a consequence of this Richard,

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[3] Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, 8.
[4] Lydgate, "Testament", Halliwell, *A Selection*, 258.
[5] Scanlon and Simpson, *Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England* 1.
[6] McHardy, "Richard II", 18-9.

between 1397-8, "struck at the appellants of 1388, exiling, murdering, or executing them."[7] One of the appellants exiled was Richard's cousin, and John of Gaunt's son, Henry Bollingbroke. Henry's estates were confiscated, and he was exiled to France. By 1399 Richard's popularity had waned to such an extent that while he was in Ireland, Henry returned to England with a public intention of reclaiming his property, but the events that followed yielded more. Richard was arrested, deposed, and because of repeated risings of support, was probably murdered on Henry's orders in 1400. Henry was crowned in 1399, "but he was not universally regarded as Richard's right heir,"[8] and much of Henry IV's reign consisted of suppressing opposition to his ascendancy. This led his eldest son, Prince Henry, receiving at an early age responsibility for dispelling risings. He gained military experience against the Welsh, especially against Owain Glyndwr, from 1403 to 1406 before he was seventeen years old. The deposition of Richard was not unwelcome especially with regard to the clergy. He had shown favouritism to the Lollards which turned the monasteries against him, and according to Schirmer, "probably also the peace-loving Lydgate".[9]

The *Troy Book* consists of a Prologue, five books, an Envoy to Henry V, and an address of sixteen lines by Lydgate to his "litel bok" at the end of the Envoy. In the Prologue Lydgate identifies Guido as the source of the work, and names his own patron, Prince Henry.[10] Yet Lydgate does not name himself as the translator until book five (v.3468-9), and he remains an unidentified first person throughout the prologue: "Whan I be-gan of this translacio*n*" (pr.122). This emphasises that the importance of the *Troy*

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[7] *OBM*, 232.
[8] *OBM*, 240.
[9] Schirmer, 25.
[10] *TB*, pr. 360, 96.

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Book is based on the relationship it has with the future Henry V, and then to a lesser degree with Guido and Chaucer.

1. Translating and Contrasting the *Historia* and the *Troy Book*

The first chapter of this thesis examines Lydgate's response to Prince Henry's commission to make the *Historia* available to a wider audience in the vernacular. Lydgate was selected to translate the *Historia* due to his membership of the Benedictine order as Lydgate's monastery of Bury St. Edmunds was a strong supporter of Henry IV, "as it actively supported royal interests during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries".[11] Walter Schirmer believes that on hearing of Lydgate's "poetic talents, Henry IV commissioned him through his son" to write on the life of the Virgin Mary.[12] This literary work was the beginning of a long association between the House of Lancaster and the monk. However, Lydgate's later commission was more suited to the prince's life as a military leader, and Lydgate began his translation of the *Historia* for Prince Henry in the year "Fourtene complete of his fadris regne" (pr.124).

When placed alongside each other, the *Historia* and *Troy Book* are very different in styles: the former is in prose and the latter is in verse. As the time between the completions of the *Troy Book* (1420) and the *Historia* (1287) is approximately 133 years, differences in the authors' outlooks between the two texts are also inevitable. One of the most visible aspects of Lydgate's redaction of the *Historia* is the voluminous size of the *Troy Book* and his amplification would later be described as prolixity in the eighteenth century. Yet the contrasts that are in the *Troy Book* present a wealth of information

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[11] Lydgate, *Troy Book: Selections*, 8.
[12]   Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, 40.

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contextually to the reader on fifteenth-century society during Henry V's conquest of France, and his aspirations for the vernacular.[13] It must be remembered that in the early fifteenth century English was being developed into an official literary language by policy of the Lancastrian kings, in order to separate the establishment from French and Latin. The Troy topic alone implies a taste for historical, classical and mythical tales. If it were otherwise, Lydgate would not have amplified the book to such an extent for his target audience. The *Troy Book* is filled with images of sieges, battles, and mythology, complemented with themes of romance, chivalry, and etiquette. As the *Troy Book* is a romance, this contradicts Guido's original objective which is to write the 'correct' history of events for his select audience due to the deficiencies of the great authors "in describing the truth about the fall of Troy" (Meek 265).[14]

Lydgate diminishes Guido's work by elaborating the *Troy Book* to such a degree that Guido is even criticised within the work by Lydgate for some of his comments, such as when Guido writes ill of Troilus; Lydgate finds that Guido is "Rebukyng hym ful vncurtesly" (iii.4267). Furthermore, Lydgate diversifies from the Latin prose and opts to write in verse which elevates the *Troy Book*'s status. It would be reasonable to presume that writing in verse would put further constraints on Lydgate's structure, yet Henry Burrowes Lathrop states: "It is an instructive . . . study to see how even in the hands of a genius like Chaucer prose remained so refractory when verse had developed into so flexible means of expression".[15] Therefore because Lydgate writes in verse, it in turn

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[13] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 125.

[14] "For those who wanted history, this was clearly superior to Homer, who dealt with only a few weeks of the war. Furthermore, they [Dares and Dictys] are both scrupulously matter-of-fact, and both systematically demythologise and humanise the story." Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 124.

[15] Lathrop, *Translations*, 23.

gives him freedom to construct the *Troy Book* as he wishes, and to overcome difficulties

by diverting from the original model's sombre tone, and moving to one that is

contemporaneous to the fifteenth century.

2. The Appropriation of Chaucer's Legacy, and its Impact on Lydgate and His *Troy Book*

This chapter explores the influence that Chaucer had on Lydgate, and how Lydgate

worked to appropriate a relationship with the absent poet. Harold Bloom's theory on the

poetic father-son relationship will form part of this analysis.[16] With one hand Lydgate

seeks to enhance Chaucer's fame, and with the other he seeks to grasp this reputation for

himself through Chaucer. Lydgate's promotion of Chaucer inflates the bubble of

reputation, and as Chaucer's apprentice, it will in turn increase the level of authority that

Lydgate will hold. His efforts for this purpose worked well in the fifteenth century, but as

time progressed, Lydgate's writings began to lose their popularity and the distance

between the levels of appreciation for Chaucer's legacy and Lydgate's grew wider. Not

only is Lydgate looking for praise for himself, but he is also extolling King Henry V in

court politics and thereby legitimising his position on the throne. From the patronage of

John of Gaunt to Henry V there is a deliberate effort to present a continuous sponsorship

of vernacular poetry. By providing a continuous stream of Lancastrian patronage from

Chaucer to his apprentice, it obscures the breach of inheritance that the deposition caused

within the monarchy. Lydgate refers to Chaucer as his "rethor", and he selects images

from *Troilus and Cryseyde* that he reconstructs for his own purposes, and this in turn

causes the audience to recall the late poet's work. The intent is to establish the

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[16] Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*.

importance of vernacular writing, but also to subliminally propose to the *Troy Book*'s audience that Chaucer's successor is undoubtedly Lydgate.

3. Humanism, Myth and Lydgate's Application of Antiquity to Fifteenth-Century Ideals of Religious Ethos

This chapter is concerned with readdressing a humanist aspect of Lydgate. Frequently Lydgate is portrayed as having not benefited from other humanist writers and therefore his status suffers from a critically applied medievalism. However, by applying David R. Carlson's definition of humanism as looking back to antiquity with the intention to educate, Lydgate's *Troy Book* fulfills this criteria as a humanist.[17] Any arguments in modern scholarship that Lydgate's work reflected humanist influence is mainly connected with his association with Duke Humphrey of Gloucester which implies that the only opportunity for Lydgate to study humanist texts was through this particular patron. However it is through his knowledge of Chaucer that Lydgate was able to develop his own style of writing and create in the *Troy Book* a foundation for learning, as well as an application of lessons in court life, and a revival of classical literature. Lydgate illuminates Greek mythology for a Christian audience. For example the Roman goddess, Fortune, is used by Lydgate as an exemplar of how life can suddenly turn from prosperity and power to one of poverty and vulnerability. Lydgate demonstrated that Fortune's attributes were as relevant to the House of Lancaster as a warning as they were to the Trojans.

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[17] Carlson, *English Humanist Books*.

<u>4. Women: In Defence of Lydgate</u>

The aim of this chapter's discussion is to highlight Lydgate's affinity with his female characters and to distance him from an ill-earned reputation of holding either misogynistic or indifferent views on women. In the *Troy Book* Lydgate portrays women endowed with agency and intellect; they are not static images. He demonstrates that each woman is different and therefore women should not be subjected to generalisation. Women are consistently humanised and are frequently depicted sympathetically by Lydgate. He disassociates himself from Guido's unflattering descriptions of them, with the emphasis on that he is merely the *Historia*'s translator. Lydgate goes so far as to say that, if he was able, he would make Guido do penance for his misogyny.

In order to discuss Lydgate's female characters this thesis chapter is divided into four sections with the headings: Trojan, Amazon, transitional, and Greek women. Within the Trojan section, the debate on woman's counsel arises - whether it should be listened to or not. Of the Trojan women, Cassandra's and Andromache's counsel is trapped within the walls of Troy, and their advice falls on deaf ears. Hecuba, as an authoritative figure, debases her counsel by reverting to treachery and murder. She acts without consulting her king, and deviates from protocol because she seeks revenge. Because of this abuse of her power, her punishment is cruel at the hands of the Greeks when she witnesses her daughter's, Polyxena, execution. Polyxena is one of the unjust sacrifices to war and religion, and she represents the innocent civilians who are caught in the crossfire of conflict. Lydgate's treatment of her presents Polyxena as a Christ-like figure of sacrifice. Lydgate elevates her sister, Cassandra, to be an educated woman who has studied her craft rather than receiving it as a divine gift of punishment. Lydgate demonstrates that it

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is not Apollo's curse but her sex that prevents the Trojans from heeding her words.

In the Amazon section the discussion explores the fantasy of women's autonomy in the medieval world. The Amazon queen, Pentheselia, embodies the ideals of chivalry and knighthood whilst retaining her femininity. As warriors, the Amazons are hated by the Greeks, but they are welcome allies to the Trojans. Here, Lydgate appears in the light of a proto-feminist. In his version of the Amazon warrior, Pentheselia epitomises the codes of knightly behaviour. She aids the oppressed, rescues her allies from capture, and her army is a cohesive battling unit. She is pitted against a woman-hater, Pyrrhus, and manages to make him look ridiculous on the field by severely damaging his pride. Lydgate has not turned her into a male version of a woman but a female who is equal to a man which therefore makes Pyrrhus the antitype of a knight, whereas Penthesilea becomes the paragon of chivalry.

The transitional women are those who do not possess autonomy - they have been uprooted by circumstances; by abduction, marriage or exchange. Each woman has to come to terms with her new living conditions, and as women they must adapt to survive. Yet when Cryseyde is given to an alien camp, her conduct is used by Guido to denigrate the female sex as fickle. Lydgate is less judgemental, but admits that that the transfer of her affections from Troilus to Diomedes puzzling. Lydgate portrays the vulnerability of women in a patriarchal society, and with Andromache he shows the brutality of capture. Hesione's predicament is only referred to by relatives, whereas with Andromache, the consequences of war are depicted. The audience sees her owned and presumably raped by the son of the man who widowed her, and there is slim hope that she will escape this slavery.

The Greek women are multifaceted; their common attribute is that they are all waiting for their husbands' return from Troy, but there the similarities end. Each wife has a different reaction to the news of her husband's safe arrival, ranging from relief to regicide. The women's loyalties are tested, and it is Penelope who is depicted as the truest wife. Furthermore her circumstances are relevant to a medieval audience. Penelope reflects the role of a wife who is left behind to defend property from opportunists while her lord is at war. Another interesting character is Diomedes' Egea even if she only has a small role in the *Troy Book*. She is loyal to Diomedes, and Lydgate has an interest in Egea's position because the audience is aware that Diomedes has been unfaithful to her. A courtly love test arises where Diomedes has to now reclaim his position as her husband; a quest for his *trouthe* begins. The discussion on Clytemnestra involves the condemnation of the murder of a king. All of these Greek wives are autonomous while their husbands are away, and Lydgate portrays their characteristics and decisions on the facts that are surrounding them.

5. A Trojan Mirror for a Lancastrian King: The *Troy Book* as a Speculum for Henry V

The *Troy Book* is part of a line of mirror-literature for princes in the fifteenth century. This *speculum* is written for the benefit of Henry V first as prince, and then as king when he succeeds to the throne in 1413. Its lessons cover social conduct, treatment of emissaries, warfare, women, but also the ideals of kingship; a king should be morally upright. This exemplum also pertains to the circle of people around him, as evidenced by Richard II's misguided friendships, and goes so far as to suggest what virtues the king should look for in a wife. When the *Historia* and *Troy Book* are compared, it is easy to

see where Lydgate diverges, but it is difficult to know for certain which presentation of the Lancastrian court is real and which is illusion. This leads to questions whether the reflection is genuine, or is he creating an image that shows how the court wants to see itself? What motivates him to present the court in a chivalric light, with knightly codes of behaviour for all levels of rank? Lydgate uses Troy to present an enlightened society from which Henry can claim descent by highlighting parallels with the Houses of Priam and Lancaster. Hector is chosen to represent Henry V and, in a macabre parallel, both men are cut off in their prime leaving infant offspring. Lydgate portrays camaraderie between brothers when it matters on the battlefield, and this fraternal imagery continues with soldiers helping each other with their armour before a battle. This brotherhood also extends to the illegitimate members of the family, and this resonates particularly with John of Gaunt's children, the Beauforts.

The *Troy Book* serves as a propaganda text for the House of Lancaster to assert its right to the throne, and Lydgate associates the two Henrys with the Trojan Aeneas by voicing the conviction that they "schal longe by successioun / For to gouerne Brutys Albyoun" (pr. 103-4). As the period of the *Troy Book*'s construction from 1412 to 1420 was at the height of military activity for Henry V, the Trojan themes complemented Henry's ambitions in France. Troy also provided a link for Henry to the throne by attributing royal descent from "Brutys" (pr.104), a grandson of the Trojan, Aeneas.[18] Brutus was claimed by Geoffrey of Monmouth to be the founder of Britain[19] having been directed there in a dream by the goddess Diana:

> Brutus, beyond the setting of the sun, past the realms of Gaul, there lies an

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[18] Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate*, 95-7.
[19] *CND*, 66.

island in the sea, once occupied by giants. Now it is empty and ready for your folk. Down the years this will prove an abode suited to you and to your people; and for your descendants it will be a second Troy. A race of kings will be born there from your stock and the round circle of the whole earth will be subject to them.[20]

How could any king resist the implication of this passage that prophesies that he would rule the world? The objective was to strengthen the appearance of legitimisation after Richard's deposition by his cousin, Henry of Derby, by being able to recall the usurper's royal ancestry back to antiquity. By the time Henry V ascended the throne in 1413, he already had a great deal of military experience, and, subsequently, he was frequently abroad on campaign in France against Charles VI. Lydgate's agenda was to glorify renewing the French campaign by valuing it alongside the siege of Troy.

6. Human Relationships Seven Deadly Sins within the *Troy Book*

This final chapter looks at the varied relationships that occur within the *Troy Book* and they are not necessarily taken from the primary characters. Lydgate enjoyed enhancing the sub-plots surrounding the siege which suggests that he attached an importance to their educational properties for his audience. These are relationships that are filial; the realism surrounding marriage and the conflicts of thought in a unit; etiquette of behaviour between cousins and the self-styled fraternal ambiance of knighthood, amongst other forms. The chapter also examines the negative effect of the seven deadly sins on relationships, and looks at how Lydgate attributes this Christian ethos to a pagan society.

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[20] Monmouth, *Kings of Britain*, 16.

Lydgate is shown to consider his target audience with the relationship topics as an exemplar for good government. The failure of decent lord-retainer responsibility in the case of Priam and Antenor is discussed with emphasis on the theme that the carelessness of a lord begets the disloyalty of a retainer. Lydgate shows Priam's rashness in starting a war with a people whose self-belief in their absolute right to oppress others leads to his city's destruction. Lydgate's treatment of the relationships within Priam's family reflects an understanding of his audience's own personal interactions such as with siblings, parents, in-laws, and their conflicts. Matters between husbands and wives are sensitively treated by Lydgate, and they range from Penelope's loyalty to the unbalanced marriage of Hector and Andromache. The Hector delineated by Lydgate and Guido is an unsympathetic character; he chastises his wife, and his treatment of Andromache does not give the exemplar of a happy marriage. The Greek marriages vary with incidents from one extreme to another including acts of abduction and murder. Failed love outside of marriage is considered with Troilus and Cryseyde, and its traditions which has led to further writings on their affair. One such example is Robert Henryson's *The Testament of Cresseid* where he retrospectively puts Cryseyde into a position where she can be punished for abandoning Troilus' love for Diomedes.

Within the *Troy Book* there are numerous triangular relationships that cause discord: Orestes' and Menelaus' wives are abducted; Agamemnon is slain; Medea is abandoned, and Andromache is nearly murdered. To compound this further, the illegitimate offspring of these relationships do not always fare well, and Lydgate evinces a particular sensitivity towards Erigona's desperation. Telemonius, the son of Hesione, is given voice to speak with his mother's family, and demonstrates the concept of

knighthood that binds him to the Greeks rather than to the Trojans. This gives Lydgate the opportunity to weigh the disadvantages of a chivalric culture.

To summarise, the *Troy Book* is an important work of literature. It contains propaganda, mythology, sieges that reflect fifteenth-century warfare, and the desires of a court to be perceived as noble in both ancestry and language. Prince Henry was astute in commissioning Lydgate to produce the *Troy Book* because as a cleric, Lydgate was able to deal with a pre-Christian topic sensitively, while at the same time extolling the chivalric ethos of the society. Lydgate was able to renew religious, political, feudal and personal aspects of Troy for his audience. As a consequence of devoting eight years to translating and expanding the *Historia*, he created a world that is ultimately Lydgate's evaluation of the Lancastrian court.

Manuscripts

Henry Bergen states in his notes that there are nineteen manuscripts extant of the *Troy Book*, "so far as I have been able to discover,"[21] but this has increased to "twenty three manuscripts and fragments"[22] that have survived. For his enterprise Bergen collated Cotton, Augustus A. iv. with MS Arundel 99 and MSS Digby 232, and 230 for the Early English Text Society's edition of the *Troy Book* as they are "the oldest and best that have been preserved to us, and date approximately from the end of the first quarter of the fifteenth century".[23] The evidence of Lydgate's endurance is shown by the number of manuscripts for some of his other works. For example; *The Life of Our Lady* has forty

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[21] *TB*, Part IV, 1.
[22] Lydgate, *Troy Book: Selections*, 14.
[23] *TB*, ix.

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seven; *The Siege of Thebes*, twenty; *Fall of Princes*, thirty four.[24] Most of these

manuscripts stand alone, but The Helmingham (Tollemache) MS contains *Sir Generydes*

and the *Troy Book*; Digby 230 has the *Siege of Thebes*, while Trinity O. 5. 2. contains

Generydes, *Troy Book*, and the *Siege of Thebes*.[25] The Douce 148 and MS Kk. v. 30 both

have portions of a Scottish translation of Guido's *Historia*, while the latter manuscript has

sonnets, poems, and fragments of other works.[26] Derek Pearsall comments that "some

were presentation copies, like MS. Cotton Augustus A. iv of the *Troy Book*, a very large

folio volume of uninspiring magnificence".[27] Nevertheless by the number of surviving

manuscripts of the *Siege* and the *Troy Book*, we are provided with an insight into the

identity of the readers of Greek and Trojan antiquity: "Coats of Arms indicate that *Troy

Book* manuscripts were owned by fifteenth-century gentry and, in at least one instance,

by aristocracy" although the presentation copy to Henry V cannot be identified.[28] *The

Fall*'s manuscripts outnumber the *Siege* and *Troy Book* with its Roman history, and that is

further surpassed by Lydgate's religious work, *The Life of Our Lady.* *The Life Of Our

Lady* was Lydgate's first commission for Prince Henry, and it is the most transcribed in

surviving numbers.

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[24] *Comitatus.*
[25] *TB* iv. 21, 25, 19.
[26] *TB* iv. 46, 48.
[27] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 77.
[28] Lydgate, *Troy Book: Selections*, 7.

Translating and Contrasting the *Historia* and the *Troy Book*

Translation and Translation Theory

> The aim of translation is to bring back a cultural other as the same, the
>
> recognizable, even the familiar; and this aim always risks a wholesale
>
> domestication of the foreign text, often in highly self-conscious projects,
>
> where translation serves an imperialist appropriation of foreign cultures
>
> for domestic agendas, cultural, economic, political.[1]

Every translation that is undertaken is influenced by the peculiarities of its own time notwithstanding a

translator's genuine effort to produce a work that is as true to its original source as possible. The *Troy*

Book exemplifies Lawrence Venuti's criteria above regarding translation agendas. The alterations in

Lydgate's presentation of the *Historia* have to occur because his intended target, or reception, is very

different to Guido delle Colonne's late thirteenth-century audience's perception. Massimiliano Morini

in his work, *Tudor Translation in Theory and Practice*, states:

> Today, of course, we have come to recognize that no translation is really
>
> neutral, for every translation brings its own world of linguistic and cultural
>
> values to bear on the one conveyed by the original.[2]

Furthermore, Lydgate does not have any intention of being neutral to his source as he desires to exceed

the status of Guido. The *Troy Book*'s prime objective is to establish itself as the English vernacular

authority on Troy to its audience. Lydgate relies on the *Historia*, "Lyche as the latyn maketh

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[1] Venuti, "Translation as Cultural Politics", 68.

[2] Morini, *Tudor Translation*, 4.

menciou*n*" (pr.108), but at the same time this acknowledges the distance between the educated strata and the general, fifteenth-century populace - the difference between an insular language and an open vernacular:

> Even in 'that most remote little corner of the world, England' (as
> Boccaccio described it in his *Genealogia* 15. 6), it was clearly recognized
> that Latin was not only the international language of the elite and the
> clergy but also a vigorous living presence in its homeland of Italy.[3]

Lydgate is the particular link that connects the Trojan tale to his fifteenth-century audience rather than Guido who is only the conduit to antiquity. Ruth Morse notes this sense of disregard by Lydgate to a source writer in her chapter, "Traitor Translator". Of Lydgate's version of Laurent de Premierfait's translation of Boccaccio's *De Casibus*, she states, "Lydgate refers to Boccaccio's original as if Laurent's intermediary work were merely a window through which he had direct access to the Latin text".[4] Guido is not helped either by time as Lydgate's *Troy Book* is separated from Guido's original Latin by 125 years, and it is written in verse which automatically differs from the *Historia*'s prose format. As a translation, the *Troy Book* would be expected to follow its original source, but in medieval time: "the translator often changed the original radically, only to affirm that the translation was faithful to the 'sentence' (the sense, the meaning) or 'report' of the matter".[5] The aspiration was not merely to translate, but to produce an improved work to the source text.

Lydgate made use of the idea of "open-ended" writing where a translator follows the sense of the primary text, rather than translating word for word. The former method resonates

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[3] Havely, "Britain and Italy: Trade, Travel, Translation", 215.

[4] Morse, *Truth and Convention*, 190.

[5] Morini, *Tudor Translation*, 3.

for Lydgate's purpose with the *Troy Book* as Lydgate is not bound to follow the *Historia*'s

structure. The overall result is that the *Troy Book* achieves its author's and its patron's ambitions

by becoming a "memorial" (pr.120). This corresponds with Roger Ellis's observation that a

translator must also implicitly become an author to his work.[6] Consequently it is evident that not

only is it well within Lydgate's ability to combine the roles of translator and author, but also to

assume the functions of editor, narrator, commentator, and propagator. Lydgate incorporates his

train of thought into his writing: "as I haue in mynde" (ii.2579), "I haue hym set last of al my

boke" (ii.5824), "I muste now helpe hym to compleyne" (iii.4089). Lydgate actively permeates

the work with his narrator's personality.

Morini in his discussion on translation refers to a letter which is not only related to the

Troy topic, but also pertains to a verse translation of a prose work: [7]

> As early as 1392, Coluccio Salutati wrote a letter to his friend, Antonio
>
> Loschi, in which he encouraged him to improve on a Latin prose version
>
> of the *Iliad* compiled by Leonzio Pilato, thus producing a new verse
>
> translation which would respect Homer's epic grandeur. Apart from the
>
> conventional advice to concentrate on the subject matter rather than the
>
> words, what is interesting in this little text is the way Salutati inscribes the
>
> task of translation in a rhetoric of adaptation and transformation which
>
> goes well beyond the medieval urge to follow the spirit rather than the
>
> letter.[8]

This advice by Salutati corresponds with Lydgate's own methods of translation: "I leue þe wordis

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[6] Ellis and Evans, *The Medieval Translator*, 6.

[7] Rener, *Interpretatio*, 212-6.

[8] Morini, *Tudor Translation*, 8.

18

and folwe þe sentence" (ii.180). Lydgate works to improve the *Historia*, to "enkindle things that

are rather cold with exclamations or with questions, as if lighting them with little fires".[9]

Lydgate, like Guido, compiles other sources in order to amplify and improve the tale. Morse

comments that Lydgate "constantly amplified what he translated" and that "he knew - and

explicitly approved - other translators' manipulations".[10] Bigger is considered better, and as

Morini remarks, "amplification exercised more and more attraction on writers and translators"

later in the sixteenth century.[11] For Lydgate, brevity can leave "moche be-hynde / Of the story, as

men in bokys fynde" (pr. 324-5).

Guido's Historia

Guido's *Historia* has, in its background, several influences. Primarily, Derek Pearsall

states it is "Benoit de Ste. Maure, who produced in 1165 a vast conflation in over 30,000 lines of

the Latin Prose annals of Dictys and Dares, the *Roman de Troie* . . . [with] much new material

of his own invention".[12] Guido uses this work for his *Historia* "in what looks to us like a

startling piece of literary robbery",[13] and he transforms the romance tale to one of a historical

tragedy by stripping away what he considers fantasy. Because of this alteration by Guido the

Historia is presented to and accepted by the medieval audience as the literary, historical authority

on Troy. As Meek comments, Guido only had to "write it down in Latin prose, in a dignified

style adorned by rhetorical devices . . . [and] to comment critically on whatever is 'fabulous'"

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[9]   Morini, *Tudor Translation*, 8 (cites Robinson, 1997, 182).
[10] Morse, *Truth and Convention*, 189.
[11] Morini, *Tudor Translation*, 66.
[12] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 124.
[13] Pearsall, *John Lydgate,* 124.

among other things to make it a history.[14] Derek Pearsall in his chapter, "Troy and Thebes",

discusses why Dares and Dictys were adopted by the medieval author, and two points in

particular show why these two men were seen as Trojan war authorities:

> They both pack out the narrative with a mass of factual detail, especially
>
> Dares, whose story reads at times like a casualty report. For those who
>
> wanted history, this was clearly superior to Homer, who dealt with only a
>
> few weeks of the war. Furthermore, they are both scrupulously matter-of-
>
> fact, and both systematically demythologise and humanise the story.[15]

The result of this structuring is that Guido's work leaves the French vernacular *roman* source

behind in terms of its readership, and it isolates the *Historia* as an authoritative Latin text.

However, Meek concludes that Guido did not become familiar with the original sources and he

uses the *Roman* as an intermediary model for the *Historia*:

> His usual practice when bringing in other source material is to
>
> cite the author and quote or paraphrase the relevant lines. Throughout the
>
> *Historia*, however, whenever he cites Dares he never quotes him directly,
>
> and is almost always referring to something specific in Benoit. (Meek
>
> xviii)

Guido translates an end product of Greek sources that originate in the "first century A.D." (Meek

xii) that were then translated into Latin, and subsequently into French by Benoit. So even before

Lydgate translates the *Historia* there are already several other models embedded within the text.

Frederick M. Rener's description of a "'secondhand' translation"[16] is applicable here, or, as in

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[14] Meek, xv-xvi.

[15] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 124.

[16] Rener, *Interpretatio*, 22.

Guido's and Lydgate's cases, closer to third and fourth hand levels of translation. Furthermore,

Guido strips these works of mythological references to suit his own structure as it is Guido's

intent to write for his educated, male audience which Gideon Toury describes as a "target or

recipient culture . . . which serves as the initiator" of the work in the first place.[17]

 According to Guido, the initiator for the work was the archbishop of Salerno, Lord

Matteo da Porta, for whom he wrote the first book of the *Historia*. In the epilogue Guido shares

a similar motive with Lydgate about writing the Troy story, "lest the truth remain unknown"

(Meek 265) - which is the basis that Lydgate presents in his prologue as being the reason for his

own *Troy Book*'s creation. Ruth Morse encapsulates the medieval perception of History:

> In a different conceptual space of the Middle Ages, 'true' might mean 'in
>
> the main' or 'for the most part' true, or even, 'it could have happened like
>
> this'.[18]

Therefore Lydgate is not overly anxious about the accuracy of Guido's history, and it does not

stop him from elaborating the text further.

Lydgate's treatment of the Historia

 The main concern for Lydgate is the reception of his translation by his audience. Lydgate

does not have such a restrictive target audience as Guido; it is to be a much broader one.

Lydgate quite clearly states that his initiator for the *Troy Book* is Henry V:

> He gaf me charge þis story to translate,
>
> Rude of ko*n*nynge, called Iohn Lydgate.

---

[17] Toury, "A Rationale", 18.

[18] Morse, *Truth and Convention*, 6.

Monke of Burie be professiou*n*,

Vsynge an habite of perfecciou*n*. (v.3467-70)

Lydgate's directive is that the translation is not solely for Henry's own personal use, but for that of England. This in turn automatically declares that the *Troy Book* is to go beyond a private, elite circle, and become a very public work in the vernacular. This contravenes the *Historia*'s objective, where there is an admission that only the select few, "chiefly for the use of those who read Latin" (Meek 2), will be able to access the work. Ultimately the *Historia* is targeting an audience that could afford education. As this is in direct opposition to the ambitions of the *Troy Book*, Lydgate intentionally leaves the *Historia,* or the model, behind, and the prose work becomes "Þe sege of Troy on my maner to ryme" (v.3464). Lydgate declares authorship of the translation, and it is his style of verse that has been rewarded with the commission to translate for a broad, target audience. He assimilates the roles of translator, author, poet, compiler and editor and is in complete control of the finished work for his patron. Lydgate must anticipate and accommodate the variety of views, tastes and education within his target. Frederick Rener points out how important it was for the translator to consider the audience's ability to appreciate works in order to expand a language's progression:

> The need to reach the social class whose members were ignorant of Latin
> - they will play an important role in translation - was responsible for the
> introduction and the spreading of the vernacular in public life.[19]

The *Troy Book* is not just aimed at one social class, but at all of English-speaking society as Lydgate is dedicated to the progression of the vernacular, and in particular, to the promotion of Chaucer's language in order that it will become established with credibility and by custom.

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[19] Rener, *Interpretatio*, 46.

Lydgate must accommodate mixtures of gender, status, age, and occupation within the *Troy Book*. This is the skill a translator must utilise in order to keep his translation circulating; the vernacular separates his ambitions from Guido's for a general audience's benefit, and the use of rhyme heightens the status of the work. Acting as the link between Guido and the audience, Lydgate must also keep the audience's sympathy on his side. He has to impress on them the scale of the undertaking, without alienating the audience from approaching his own text:

> I am so dulle, certeyn, þat I ne can
>
> Folwen Guydo, þat clerke, þat coryous man,
>
> Whiche in latyn hath be rethorik
>
> Set so his wordis, þat I can nat be lyke. (ii.169-72)

By being "unlike" Guido, Lydgate departs from the source text and he is able to modernise the Trojan war, without losing the spirit of Guido, as a "medieval translator can use the source text as a starting point for an altogether new production and still count him/herself a translator."[20] The *Troy Book* is to be a source "in oure tonge, aboute in euery age" (pr.113) for classical reference, and Lydgate is not entirely concerned with weeding out accumulated falsehoods - instead, these will be used to broaden his discussion. Guido declares, "In the contents of this little book . . . will be found written everything that took place according to the complete history, both in general and in particular" (Meek 2). As Guido has reduced the quantity of text, his complete history is therefore not concerned about adornment. It is, as Morse states about medieval history, like "a broad church, teaching by precept and example".[21] Although Lydgate conveys that he wishes to be as close to the source text as he can -"after Guydo make" (pr.109) - he deliberately

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[20] Morini, *Tudor Translation*, 12.
[21] Morse, *Truth and Convention*, 6.

avoids Guido's morose overtone in certain areas.

The *Historia* is not always suitable for Lydgate's audience as he considers that Guido does not carry the essence of court literature. This then brings Lydgate as a translator to the foreground, and Lydgate's voice does not:

> remain entirely hidden behind that of the Narrator, rendering it impossible
> to detect in the translated text. It is most directly and forcefully present
> when it breaks through the surface of the text speaking for itself, in its
> own name.[22]

Where Lydgate decides that some of the *Historia*'s passages have failed to reach his standards, Lydgate strives to improve them in the *Troy Book*: "In his worschip for a memorial" (pr.120). The quality of language in Lydgate's translation must reflect the king's status.

Transcending Latin

Lydgate recognises that Latin is a barrier for the uneducated; at the same time he knows Latin is the universal language for church and office, and he does not wish to distance himself from his target. By his prevaricating claim that he is unable to match Guido's rhetoric, Lydgate's work becomes approachable for his audience as they need not fear isolation through ignorance:

> Since Guido's is the canonical account of the Trojan War, his book needs
> to exist in an English version; yet since the *assimilation* of the story into
> English is Lydgate's goal, paralleling Henry's intended reconquest of
> France, Lydgate aggressively reshapes his source, using the five-book
> structure Chaucer used in *Troilus and Criseyde* to create a poem three

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[22] Hermans, "The Translator's Voice", 198.

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times the length of Guido's book and even more ornate.[23]

A danger for Lydgate is that the *Troy Book* is departing from Latin to the English vernacular, which by "international language" terms was a step down in status. Latin and French were universally fixed as the languages of religious and governmental works, and English was developing its authoritative identity through poets such as Gower and Chaucer. Tim William Machan discusses the use of English, and comments that in Henry V's time a movement occurred from French to English:

> His 1416 English proclamation to marshal supplies and troops for an invasion of France, in any case, is the first extant royal proclamation in English since Henry III's letters of October 1258. In their 1422 Latin explanation of why they are changing their record-keeping from Latin to English, further, the Brewers' Guild specifically credits Henry as someone who has consciously employed the language as a way of improving communication with his subjects, thereby setting an example for nobility and commoners to do so as well.[24]

Yet the broad spectrum of Lydgate's interests also proved invaluable for the development of a broader culture. Nigel Mortimer writes that Lydgate "did much to open up the European 'Dance of Death' tradition to an English audience" with his translation of the *Danse macabré* from the Cimetière des Saints-Innocents in Paris.[25] Lydgate's audience would have known about the story of Troy even if they did not know about Guido's translation. John Froissart recounts a 1389, disorderly, performance of the siege of Troy in Paris:

> In the middle of the palace a square wooden castle had been erected, forty feet

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[23] *Vernacular*, 320-1.
[24] Machan, *English in the Middle Ages*, 161-2.
[25] Mortimer, *John Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, 47.

high and twenty feet square, with a tower at each of the four corners and a higher

one over the centre. The castle represented the city of Troy, and the central tower

was the palace of Ilion, with the pennons of King Priam, noble Hector and his

other sons all displayed . . . But the battle could not last long owing to the

density of the crowd, and the people being stifled by the heat and the crush. One

table, at which a number of ladies were sitting, near the door of the parliament

chamber, was even knocked over, and the guests had to extricate themselves as

best they could. The Queen was almost fainting, and a window behind her had to

be broken open to let in air.[26]

The chaos of the play intermingling with the audience must have proved to have been an exciting

performance for both actors and spectators.

Transcending the Historia with Chaucer's legacy

Lydgate establishes his *Troy Book*'s authority further by choosing to write in Chaucer's

literary language and therefore presenting a familiar vernacular for its reception. If the

vernacular is to gain a foothold, it is helpful to have evidence of an exemplar in order to create

the idea of tradition behind it. This tactic would also correspond to Henry's own policies in

government. According to G. L. Harris, in his introduction to *Henry V: The Practice of*

Kingship, Henry's policies were traditional:

In law-keeping, finance, council, parliament, and the church, he avoided

institutional innovation, preferring to breathe life and effectiveness into

the old forms . . . A revitalizing of traditional kingship was what men

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[26] Froissart, *Chronicles*, 328.

looked for.[27]

Analogous to Henry's political policy, Lydgate revives Chaucer's legacy and utilises the reputation of an ancient and respected retainer; Chaucer's work is portrayed by Lydgate as the essence of fine literature:

> By hym that was, yif I shal not feyne,
>
> Floure of poetes thorghout al Breteyne,
>
> Which sothly hadde most of excellence
>
> In rethorike and in eloquence. (*ST* pr.40-3)

As Chaucer's life was intertwined with the House of Lancaster, his connections with them began primarily with his *Book of the Duchess* in the 1360s for John of Gaunt. Chaucer's wife, Philippa, was a sister of John of Gaunt's mistress, Katherine Swynford, and later became his wife by 1396. Katherine was the mother of Henry V's half uncles, the Beauforts, and these brothers were later recognised by Richard II who "removed all taint of bastardy, and overrode the laws of inheritance" for his cousins in 1397.[28] Chaucer was to eventually become Richard's court poet, but initially he was connected to the household of Lionel, Edward III's son, and then later with Edward's royal household from about 1367.[29] Chaucer's commissions were the important links of patronage between Richard and the Lancaster family, and the appropriation of Chaucer bolsters Henry V's status on the throne. By revering the Ricardian poet's reputation, it promises that Chaucer's vernacular writing would not be lost or damaged due to the deposition of Richard, but would become a standard device for later writers such as Hoccleve and Lydgate. These writers would not let Chaucer's vernacular fail "due to the lack of commitment of those whose

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[27] Harriss, *Henry V*, 27.

[28] Bennett, *Richard II*, 88.

[29] *RC*, xiii, xiv.

duty it was to cultivate it rather than to a discrimination on the part of nature".[30]

Lydgate translates the *Historia* into Chaucer's language as Chaucer's work would have been a familiar 'old form' to the nobility. Lydgate is, as Rener describes translators, nurturing the vernacular plant; the vernacular is compared to a plant with three stages of life - sprouting, growing, and bearing fruit:

> This idea gave a new sense of confidence to those who wanted to bring the vernacular forward on the road towards perfection. The realization that every vernacular language could potentially grow to the point of competing with other more advanced languages, indeed with the three classical languages, became thus the actual driving force behind the efforts of generations of writers, linguists, and above all translators. They were working so that the 'plant' which was entrusted to their care would in time successfully complete the three phases of the life cycle.[31]

Additionally the Lancastrian court was now distancing itself not only from Latin, but from the official use of French being spoken and written in an official capacity (another shadow of Richard's legacy). The ambition of making English the principal language of court business meant they had to weed out a restrictive language in order to make the vernacular blossom. However:

> The process of bringing a language from rags to riches was slow and required the work of several generations. In Europe, this process was even more difficult on account of the predominance Latin enjoyed during the

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[30] Rener, *Interpretatio*, 50.
[31] Rener, *Interpretatio*, 50.

Middle Ages in all the public acts of the princely court, in the church, in

the school, and in the courts of justice.[32]

Yet in this situation it is Henry who is endorsing the vernacular's properties for the court.

Lydgate vitalises the vernacular

To demonstrate that the vernacular is more attractive in its own country for literary

expansion, Nigel Mortimer comments on the manuscripts of Petrarch's Latin *De remedis* in

France:

> The career of the *De remedis* took a slightly different route, for although
>
> the work was popular, comparatively few copies of it seem to have been
>
> available after Charles V commissioned an early French translation from
>
> Jean Daudin (completed 1378) which quickly displaced the Latin
>
> original.[33]

Although the quantity of *Historia* manuscripts exceed the *Troy Book*'s worldwide - Meek states

that "there may be as many as one hundred and fifty manuscripts" (Meek xi) of the *Historia*

extant - Lydgate's verse translation made Troy accessible to an English audience. Most of the

Troy Book's twenty-three manuscripts that survive "are deluxe manuscripts intended for wealthy

and politically powerful patrons: Lydgate, however, asserts that prince Henry intended the work

for "Hyghe and Lowe"".[34] Printing opened up Lydgate's readership further and created, what

Pearsall words as, "the effective elimination of élite culture".[35] Both Richard Pynson and

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[32] Rener, *Interpretatio*, 45.
[33] Mortimer, *Fall of Princes*, 42-3.
[34] *Vernacular*, 43. *TB*, pr.111.
[35] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 77.

Thomas Marshe later printed the *Troy Book* in 1513 and 1555 respectively.[36] The sellers of printed books capitalised on the name of the author as a selling point for their texts, as Trevor Ross points out:

> This Machiavellian art of self-promotion gave impetus to the writing of commendatory verses, where fledgling poets would canonize their betters as a way of introducing themselves to the commonwealth of wit.[37]

This self-promotion by others is a continuation of Lydgate's own practice of praising Chaucer, and thereby by being named in association with laureate poets, Lydgate and later 'fledgling poets' reaped the benefits.

In most circumstances in modern times, a translation is usually "regarded as the faithful repository of the content of the original",[38] but the ambition for the *Troy Book* was to displace the original *Historia*'s insular grip, making the Trojan tale accessible to English speakers. In the *Troy Book*, Troy is transformed to accommodate Lydgate's target's taste: "To be lusty to hem that schal it rede." (pr.62). Lydgate's own phraseology shows that the translation will not be verbatim as the tale is not described by Lydgate as a history of destruction, but referred to as "this mater" (pr.374), "this story" (pr.378), and "the drery pitus fate / Of hem of Troye" (pr.105-6). Therefore Lydgate is regarding his work not as history, but as a "story fully rehersed new and newe" (pr.253). He approaches Troy not just as a *historicus* like Guido, but as a combination of *orator* and *poeta*.[39] As a poet, Lydgate "was expected to use more refined and sophisticated tropes (imagery) coupled with the great variety of the figures of speech".[40] Lydgate defers to, and uses

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[36] Bergen, *Lydgate's Troy Book*. Part IV, 1.
[37] Ross, *The Making of the English Literary Canon*, 69.
[38] Rener, *Interpretatio*, 22.
[39] Rener, *Interpretatio*, 172.
[40] Rener, *Interpretatio*, 178.

Chaucer's authority, and uses as his model the five book structure of *Troilus and Criseyde* rather than Guido's thirty-five books as his template. He furthermore abandons prose for poetry - "Syth þat in ryme ynglysch hath skarsete" (ii.168) - and writes in "Chaucer's heroic verse" with the Envoy in "Chaucer's rhyme royal".[41] By the use of his "maister Galfride" (iii.4256), the "chefe poete" (iii.4256), Lydgate creates the appearance of a tradition for his translation without being derivative. The influence of Chaucer's verse should not be taken to imply that Lydgate did not have his own ideas on structure. Peter Groves demonstrates that Lydgate's metre "is a genuine hybrid: a partial impressionistic recognition of the new form combined with heavy formalist interference from familiar kinds of metrical behaviour."[42] Lydgate's mission is to test the vernacular's boundaries of vocabulary, explore and extend its known borders, and emphasise its identity in order to heighten its usage:

> Translators were among the individuals who were actively engaged in the
> progress of their native tongues. Owing to the nature of their work, they
> were able to assess better than anybody else the real status of their
> language in terms of its lexical wealth.[43]

Lydgate's descriptive scene just before battle conveys the electric atmosphere of the Greeks and Trojans from the warriors' perspectives:

> And þer men seie many crestis clere,
> And many tuft of gold & siluer schene,
> Meynt *with* feþris rede, white, & grene,
> And deuyses wonder merueillous,

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[41] *TB*, ix.
[42] Groves, "Finding his Feet", 17.
[43] Rener, *Interpretatio*, 51.

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And of folkis þat wern amerous

 Þe tokenes born to schewen openly

How þei in loue brenten inwardly

Som hiʒe emprise þat day to fulfill. (iii.724-31

    Furthermore, Lydgate's efforts at improving the *Historia* as a poet run contrary to Guido's

own vision of how history should be recorded. Guido's work is a factual effort, written in order

that he may remove distortions made by previous authors - especially poets with their "fanciful

inventions" (Meek 1). Yet Lydgate is a poet redressing Guido's prejudices and omissions, and

shaping his translation to another poet's form. It is humorously ironic that Guido is shriven in

verse by a "fanciful" (Meek 1) poet who vents his frustration caused by Guido's misogyny:

And 3if I my3t it schul[de] ben amendid.

He schulde reseyue duely his penaunce;

For 3if he died with-oute repentaunce,

I am dispeired of his sauacioun,

Howe he schulde euer haue remissioun. (i.2122-6)

Lydgate declares an ownership that Troy really belongs to poets: "It schal be rad in story and in

fable / And remembrid, with dites delytable." (ii.1888-9). This is in stark contrast to Guido's

view on poets. Lydgate translates Guido's view on Homer as deceiving his audience, but he does

not include the word poet to be a source of "the sothes of malys for to schroude" (pr.266).[44] John

Burrow agrees that it was "John Lydgate who exerted most influence upon succeeding poets'

ambitions of a reputation with polite readers".[45] Even though Lydgate says he will "sewe

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[44] Meek 1. *TB* pr.256-82.
[45] Burrow, "The Languages of Medieval England", 25.

[Guido] his stile *in* my translacioun" (ii.173) he leaves the sober and pedantic *Historia* for a fresh

new path. The difference between Guido's and Lydgate's presentations for their targets is evident

with the depictions of Peleus' dislike of Jason. Guido portrays the uncle's restrained hatred:

> Longe igitur in mente secum seruauit ardorem, quem sagaci studio tegere
>
> ne actu aliquo publicatus euagari posset extrinsecus diu per fatigabilem
>
> tollerantiam est conatus. (Griffin 6)

Mary Elizabeth Meek translates Peleus' concealment of his rancour:

> Therefore for a long time he preserved within himself the rage in his mind,
>
> which he made a shrewd attempt to conceal by means of an exhausting
>
> effort to be patient, lest being made known by some act of his it should
>
> come out into the open. (Meek 4)

However, Lydgate develops Peleus' rage with a more poetic and 'enkindled' description that gives

his audience a very clear impression of how treacherous the relationship is between uncle and

nephew. Peleus is described as acting towards Jason "Lyche an addre vnder flouris fayre"

(i.185); he is "Benyngne of speche, of menyng a serpente / For vnder colour was the treso*u*n

blente" (i.187-8), "And day be day cast and fantasieth / How his venym may be som pursute /

Vppon Iason be fully execute" (i.200-2). This manipulation of the text demonstrates Lydgate's

control over his translation. He is presented with a character trait and then adjusts it to engineer

his audience's reaction. Peleus is compared to a snake, and this simile alone would represent the

serpent's participation in the expulsion of humans from the Garden of Eden, as well as a sinister

image of a poisonous retainer in the court. Using imagery like this is a powerful tool in

Lydgate's writing, and one that resonates with his audience. As Morini states "the source text has

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to be re-dressed into the target text"[46] even though Lydgate makes it seem that he is acting as servant to his audience, praying the reader "to correct, to saue me fro blame" (ii.166). Lydgate continuously manipulates and stimulates his target's opinions. Lydgate feigns humility to his audience, but he is also paradoxically challenging them:

> Al-be þat I ne can þe way[e] goon
>
> To swe þe floures of his eloquence;
>
> Nor of peyntyng I have noon excellence
>
> With sondry hewes noble, fresche, and gay;
>
> So riche colours biggen I ne may;
>
> I mote procede w*ith* sable and with blake. (ii192-7)

Lydgate bewails his lack of colourful eloquence, yet for the *Troy Book* all he needs is pen and ink, and it is the audience's decision to see which "style" (ii.201) is the most effective. Guido with his Latin "floures", or Lydgate's English which only needs "blake" to succeed. Lydgate's amplification of the earlier passages concerning Peleus contain many references to flowers and colours (written in black), and yet he deliberately denies that he has "swyche craft" (ii.179) in his vernacular.

Lydgate's writing constantly bears his audience fully in mind, whether it is to gain support for his patron, or to disassociate himself from Guido: "Alas, whi wolde he so cursedly write" (i.2098) against women. The royal court is the recipient culture that determines the finished work, but there is also an undercurrent of reversal: Lydgate's purpose is to style the royal court in turn. In effect, the *Historia*'s lessons are being rewritten for a fifteenth-century audience as translators "may well influence the recipient culture and language, if only because every

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[46] Morini, *Tudor Translation*, 9-10.

translation is initially perceived as a target-language utterance".[47] To protect his presumption

from the more literate individuals on Troy in his audience, Lydgate frequently relies on the

humility *topos* to excuse himself from diverging from the source text:

> Preynge to alle þat schal it rede or se,
>
> Wher as I erre for to amende*n* me,
>
> Of humble herte and lowe entenciou*n*
>
> Commyttyng al to her correcciou*n*. (pr.379-82)

Lydgate therefore takes a certain degree of independence from Guido which allows him to

amplify the work and produce a "memorial" (pr.120) even though Lydgate is still restricted to the

*Historia'*s framework as his source:

> Lydgate's position as a representative vernacular writer, situated between
>
> authoritative sources and authoritative patrons whose demands pull him in
>
> such different directions that he has to assume a double attitude of
>
> simultaneous deference and assertiveness. Implicitly, the prologue also
>
> attributes this contradictory attitude to the English language as it invents
>
> itself through *translatio studii*.[48]

Lydgate is literally transferring Latin antiquity to his contemporaries. He is drawing in to his

fifteenth-century society values and ideas that come from the outside cultures of Troy and

Greece, Guido and, most importantly for the language, Chaucer. Lydgate's many additions to the

Troy Book are intended to construct a compilation in the vernacular, one that can be looked upon

as complete and original. Rener points out that:

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[47] Toury, "A Rationale," 19.
[48] *Vernacular*, 321.

Scholars who have engaged in such comparisons report that translations may have up to a third more words than the original. While these numbers are disturbing to modern scholars, at that time they were considered necessary for an exact rendering of the original thought.[49]

In essence Lydgate's *Troy Book* must try to supersede Guido's *Historia* in order to satisfy his patron's request, and to become comparable as a poet to Chaucer - a case of the servant becoming the master. Yet Lydgate never loses sight of being a servant:

> And now I haue hooly in his honour
>
> Executed þe fyn of my labour.
>
> Vn-to alle þat shal þis story se,
>
> W*ith* humble herte and al humylite
>
> Þis litel boke lowly I be-take,
>
> It to supporte - and þus an ende I make. (v.3607-12)

This is a humility topos sitting in an element of irony, as Lydgate's little book has taken eight years to complete and it is the second longest work of his career.

As Maura Nolan discusses, in relation to Lydgate's "Mummings for the Mercers", Lydgate interprets his production for each particular target:

> Chaucer may have "enlumined" the English language, but it is Lydgate who can effect a kind of translation from European high culture to the mercantile sensibility embodied in the label "grand peyne / grande gayne".[50]

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[49] Rener, *Interpretatio*, 22.
[50] Nolan, *Making of Public Culture*, 103.

For example in the *Troy Book* Lydgate manipulates Paris' speech to his father in the *Historia*. In

this instance Guido originally writes:

> et de optimatibus Grecie mulierem nobiliorem eripere et in Troyanum
>
> regnum a me captam posse transferre, que pro redemptione uestre sororis
>
> Exione de facili poterit commutari.[51]

Paris will capture an aristocratic, Greek woman to exchange for Hesione, and Meek's Paris

declares that he will "seize some very noble woman" (Meek 59). Yet Lydgate's wording has

Paris going a step further; Paris intends to "rauysche som lady" (ii.2342).

Lydgate assumes an omniscient position as translator for the audience. Helen Phillips

states that "authors of romances often use dreams within their narratives with interesting

prophetic, symbolic or psychological import."[52] Using Paris' dream where he decides which

goddess is the most beautiful, Lydgate lures his audience in to view another world, saturated with

references to time.[53] Lydgate inflates the atmosphere with astronomical references to the zodiac

(ii.2378-84), yet its scientific complexities are then deflated by Paris' ennui when he states: "on a

Fryday þis auenture is falle" (ii.2410). The audience would recall in this line Chaucer's

Chauntecleer in *The Nun's Priest's Tale*: "And on a Friday fil al this meschaunce" (NPT 4531)

which would be closer to the truth for the fate of Troy. Time is physically manifested by Lydgate

in the image of the cockerel crowing beside Mercury:

> And at his fete, also lowe a-dou*n,*
>
> Me sempte also þat þer stood a cok,
>
> Singyng his houris trewe as any clok. (ii.2474-6)

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[51] Colonne, *Historia*, 61.

[52] Phillips, "Dream Poems", 385.

[53] Paris' judgement *TB* ii.2369-809.

With these references Lydgate is increasing the audience's awareness that time is short for beauty and Troy, but it is a disquieting omniscience that Lydgate's emphasis on time also correlates with Henry V's short reign. Troy enjoyed prosperity but ill-timed judgements caused its double destruction; firstly by Laomedon, and then by his son, Priam. Similarly, Nigel Mortimer describes it as "intriguing" that Humphrey of Gloucester commissioned Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, when "Humphrey's career reads much like one of the *casus* of the *Fall*".[54] Lydgate as *poeta* is emphasising the fact that fortune does not remain constant, and that change is always influenced by the progression of time.

Lydgate combines many elements within his role as translator: his education, his environment, and his audience all influence his work. In the eighteenth century Lydgate's amplification would be described as prolixity, but in Lydgate's time and for the next few hundred years, it was appreciated as a high, literary form. Lydgate cannot be confined merely to the idea of being a one-dimensional writer. His representation of the *Historia* goes beyond translation. In his conclusion on the "Marginalization of John Lydgate" W. T. Rossiter is certain that:

> John Lydgate is the poet of transition: far from being an author whose sole concern is drab Gothic artifice, he is a poet concerned with gradual and natural poetic evolution. His devotion to the progression of poetry in the fifteenth century should not be underestimated or ignored; his retrieval from the margins of literary criticism is long overdue.[55]

What is called prolixity later was in fact authorial exploration and expansion in the early fifteenth century. The more enhancement of the language that the translator could achieve, the

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[54] Mortimer, *Fall of Princes*, 56.
[55] Rossiter, "The Marginalization of John Lydgate".

closer the text approached the aesthetic ideals of the period. This sadly backfires for Lydgate's

reputation later as seen from Joseph Ritson's disparaging comment that this method is soporific

rather than spontaneous and lively, and this is addressed by Alain Renoir:

> Ritson had already declared, in 1783, that 'Dan John, like most of the
>
> professed poets of that age, laboured too much with a leaden pen'. In
>
> *Bibliographia Poetica* he picks up and develops Percy's suggestion that
>
> Lydgate is both dull and prolix. With his customary verbal pugnacity he
>
> sketches his victim as 'a most prolix and voluminous poetaster' and 'a
>
> voluminous, prosaic, and drivelling monk'.[56]

This infamous condemnation of Lydgate's work by Ritson has led to discussions on Lydgate

varying from wholehearted agreement with his critic, to the opposing opinion that Ritson's

statement is an unfair attack on Lydgate's canon. Neither was the Victorian period kind to

Lydgate as discussed by Larry Scanlon and James Simpson:

> Victorian philology saw its charge as twofold: enhancing the scientific
>
> field of historical linguistics and, guided by that knowledge, recovering
>
> the Middle English canon . . . editors were concerned to produce reliable
>
> text, regardless of perceived aesthetic value.[57]

Most, however, agree that criticism is often due to an unfamiliarity with Lydgate's work because

he left behind him such a large quantity of writing. The result of which makes any substantial

effort to become acquainted with the larger works, a daunting task. However, any attempt to

approach the texts is worthwhile, not only for their quality, but because Lydgate's work can also

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[56] Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate*, 7.
[57] Scanlon and Simpson, *Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, 1.

be looked at in the context of life: historical events, patrons, medieval themes, the roles of faith, women, and society.

The content of the *Troy Book* suggests a taste in medieval times to absorb historical, classical and mythical tales. From Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* to the vernaculars of Wace's *Roman de Brut* and Laȝamon's *Brut*, they are relevant to Diane Speed's comment that a "text will address the people at large and position them as an audience willingly sharing in its attitudes, its medium will thus be the language of common communication including all its resources of rhetoric and reference."[58] The *Troy Book* could have been (at the least) a straightforward prose translation with a few observations thrown in, but Lydgate does not do this. As Robert R. Edwards observes when comparing the *Troy Book* with the *Laud Troy Book* and the alliterative *Destruction of Troy*:

> Lydgate gives, however, a defining shape to Guido's account where the other translations are content to reproduce its sequence of action . . . The result is a poem longer, more diffuse in focus, and more consciously learned than its predecessors or contemporaries.[59]

Lydgate instead presents an epic,"To telle forþe in my translacioun" (iv.2179). The *Troy Book* is filled with images of war, mythology, themes of romance, chivalry, and diplomacy. All are found in abundance, and presented in order to satisfy the appetite of a general audience as well as the taste of Lydgate's patron, the king. The topic of Troy was not chosen by accident, but because it was considered to be the historical epitome of warfare.

As the period of the *Troy Book*'s construction from 1412 to 1420 was at the height of

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[58] Speed, "The Construction of the Nation", 136.
[59] John Lydgate, *Troy Book: Selections*, 1.

military activity for Henry V, the Trojan themes complemented Henry's ambitions in France. Troy provided a link for Henry to the throne by attributing royal descent from "Brutys Albyo*n*" (pr.104).[60] It also marks the future foundation of a new reign at this point by associating Prince Henry with Brutus. There is a precedent for this type of propaganda by an earlier King Henry which is discussed by Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski:

> The *Roman d' Enéas* and the *Roman de Troie* fit into the political program
>
> of Henry II [1133-89] in that they glorify the founding of an empire and
>
> illustrate the spread of civilization eastward.[61]

In both cases the Troy topic is utilised to demonstrate the military ambitions of the monarchy. Henry V's commission undeniably resembles this "political program" of expansion with his continuation of the Hundred Years War. In effect, Henry V is returning the compliment to his Norman predecessor as the Trojan mirror is a useful tool politically to gain support for the French war. Susanne Saygin comments that "the Lancastrians had a keen sense of the propagandistic value of literature and consciously relied on the ready pen of court apologists to legitimise their political projects."[62] For Henry V, his project was to reclaim "an English Aquitaine in full sovereignty . . . [and] the recovery of long lost Normandy."[63] It was important for Henry in the war against France for England to have its own identity with language, and not to be still seen as the child of former Norman policies. This sense of national identity during the Hundred Years War would target France to become a submissive vassal under Henry V's ambitions.

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[60]   Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate*, 95-7.

[61]   Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *The Politics of Translation*, 19.

[62]   Saygin, *Humphrey*, 41.

[63]   Dockray, *Henry V*, 126.

In renewing the war, Henry would have to be doubly convincing in relation to the legitimate right to lead England. Richard II's policy of peace towards France had from 1389 "saved face on both sides, and it saved money, for warfare was expensive requiring tax raising on a great and unpopular scale in both countries".[64] Not only was this truce disrupted by the deposition of Richard II in 1399, but the usurpation also severed the hereditary order of the throne, which must have raised questions regarding its legality within the nobility. There is a definite objective by Lydgate to answer those questions, by presenting and strengthening the legitimacy of the House of Lancaster's hold on the English throne by mirroring Trojan genealogy from Troy. Peter Hoppenbrouwers suggests:

> The function of the Trojan myth complex is clear; by proving its Trojan
>
> roots, a political community, whether on a local or national level, could
>
> claim recognition as a worthy member of a post-Trojan pan-(West-)
>
> European commonwealth. Similarly, kings and emperors, by being
>
> compared to Aeneas, were put on the same level as Roman emperors.[65]

Lydgate bypasses the Norman role in England and, for Henry's benefit, "stresses the unbroken line of descent connecting Troy and England".[66] In the prologue Lydgate connects Henry to Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, an early history of Britain's kings, to vindicate their reign: "To whom schal longe by successiou*n* / For to gouerne Brutys Albyou*n*" (pr.103).[67] Alain Renoir states:

> The legend of Troy was an ideal vehicle for the expression of nationalistic views.

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[64] Dodd, *The Reign of Richard II*, 34.

[65] Hoppenbrouwers, *Such Stuff as Peoples are Made on*, 203.

[66] *Vernacular*, 320.

[67] Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *The Politics of Translation*, 19.

Since the Middle Ages held the conviction that the Trojans . . . were the actual

ancestors of the English people. A long poem about the rise and fall of Troy had

somewhat the emotional appeal of a national epic.[68]

Lydgate's prologue is similar to that of Guido's, but there is a political motive to make the

Lancaster and Trojan cultures bear a closer resemblance to each other in order to project

legitimacy. As the *Troy Book* was written concurrently with the sieges of Harfleur (1415), Caen

(1417), and Rouen (1418-1419),[69] the action of the text correlates contextually with these events.

Schirmer writes:

It has been suggested that Lydgate inserted technical details about military

tactics, weapons, armour, and heraldry in order to please his patron, and

this has been held against him. But in fact a description of this kind was

of interest to everyone in those days, including the poet himself.[70]

An example is Harfleur, one of the most successful sieges, it "was to be the base from which he

[Henry] would conquer Normandy" and move toward Paris.[71] This is a parallel which is

comparable to one of the most descriptive accounts in the *Troy Book* when the Greeks attack the

Castle Tenedos on their way to Troy. Lydgate moves from translator to author and portrays

familiar conditions of warfare to his audience by adding features such as "rau*n*sou*n*" (ii.6414) of

noblemen, and "large sowis" (ii.6436) which were used to protect the men when mining the walls

in sieges. Derek Pearsall writes:

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[68]   Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate*, 96.
[69]   "At Harfleur, in 1415, Henry V had to rely on his guns to bring down the walls of the town when his mines were continually countermined. Eventually he moved his guns on clumsy platforms next to the walls of the town before the siege was effective." Hebron, *The Medieval City Under Siege*, 230.
[70]   Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, 45.
[71]   Seward, *A Brief History*, 159.

It is against Lydgate's nature to omit anything, but he does everything he can to enliven and heighten the colour of battle-descriptions, for instance by adding a long, detailed, and scrupulously accurate contemporary description of arms and armour . . . In this way, by implicit contemporising, and explicitly, by drawing out the chivalric behaviour worthy of imitation . . . Lydgate keeps his promise of making the work an exemplar of ancient chivalry.[72]

Lydgate does not see translation merely as a reproduction of an original, but as a creation that will fit into his own contemporary sphere and that of his audience: "Of hem in Troye in englysche to translate / For to compyle, and after Guydo make" (pr.106, 109). He will present his work redressed, ornate, entertaining and, most importantly, approachable for his target. Therefore Lydgate looks to Chaucer who "oure englishe gilt[e] w*ith* his sawes" (iii.4237).

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[72] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 140.

The Appropriation of Chaucer's Legacy, and Its Impact on Lydgate and His *Troy Book*

In the *Troy Book* there is emulation of Chaucer, but there is also Lydgate's desire to establish his own work as that of a contemporary, and leading authority. In this chapter I argue that Lydgate uses Chaucer as a foundation in the vernacular, but Lydgate sees the concept of expanding the possibilities of literature further from what has already been established. In other words, Lydgate is testing the boundaries of written language beyond Chaucer with his own originality. This chapter also examines the hypothesis that there is a deliberate appropriation of Geoffrey Chaucer's legacy by Lydgate in order to enhance Lydgate's own, and Henry V's literary reputations as author and patron respectively. Lydgate proclaims in his *Troy Book* "Sith my maister Chaucer her-a-forn / In þis mater hath so wel hym born" (iii.4197-8) with his tale of *Troilus and Criseyde* that no other could describe it as well. However, by extolling Chaucer, Lydgate claims a self-appointed discipleship to Chaucer: "My maister Chaucer" (ii.4679), who drank from the well "þat þe Musis kepe" (iii.555). There is no doubt that the influence that Chaucer's writing had on Lydgate was strong, but it must not be simply taken that Lydgate is meekly walking in the path of his predecessor. He recognises Chaucer as being the trail-blazer of standards for the vernacular, and even though Lydgate himself can be seen as "the most lavishly deferential writer of humility topoi among the English 'Chaucerian' poets", he is still considered "Chaucer's recognised heir in the creation of an elevated English style".[1]

       With Chaucer's demise in 1400 poets would be required to fill the vacancy that was left

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[1] *Vernacular*, 16.

behind in literature, and they would have to prove the adequacy of their skills. Lydgate exposes the situation succinctly with Chaucer: "For lak of whom slouȝer is my spede" (iii.552). Lydgate was approaching thirty when Chaucer died, but the *Troy Book* suggests they never met as Lydgate produces a character description of Chaucer based on hearsay from Chaucer's contemporaries:

> My maist*er* Chauc*er*, þ*at* fou*n*de ful many spot-
>
> Hym liste nat pinche nor gruche at eu*er*y blot,
>
> Nor meue hy*m* silf to p*ar*turbe his reste
>
> (I haue herde telle), but seide alweie þe best,
>
> Suffering goodly of his gentilnes
>
> Ful many þing enbracid w*ith* rudnes. (v.3521-6)

As Lydgate's writing was greatly informed by Chaucer, which is especially seen in Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*, he is frequently misplaced as an imitator rather than as an independent author. In many instances of his use of the humility topos, Lydgate refers to Chaucer as his master, which automatically presents the counter-image of Lydgate as the student. In a sense this is unproductive for Lydgate as he cannot offer himself as being separate from Chaucer's shadow, and therefore lacking in originality. However, with regard to the political sphere surrounding Henry V's ascension to the throne, it is necessary for Lydgate to appear personally close to Chaucer - to be Chaucer's official apprentice even though they did not collaborate. It was advantageous to the Lancastrian dynasty that a legitimate line be made from Chaucer to Lydgate in context with the usurpation of Richard II, in order to develop a standard of royal, courtly literature from Chaucer's patrons to Henry V.

Lydgate's prominence came at a later stage to that of Chaucer's, and it is unavoidable that he is relegated to be a disciple of the Ricardian poet - yet Chaucer's prominence is also dependent on Lydgate's appraisal of his talents. It is a father-son situation that Harold Bloom discusses:

> The strong poet fails to beget himself - he must wait for his Son, who will
>
> define him even as he has defined his own Poetic Father. To beget here
>
> means to usurp.[2]

When Lydgate asserts that Chaucer is the superior "rethor",[3] Lydgate is setting a paradigm of quality in vernacular literature. It is an ideal situation for Lydgate to develop because Chaucer, as Richard's court poet, is being appropriated by Lancastrian patronage to establish an English literary tradition for the new king, and his descendants.   With Lydgate's alignment to the 'Lancastrian' Chaucer comes opportunity, and this culminates in further commissions from John of Gaunt's descendants: Henry V, Humphrey of Gloucester, and Henry VI.[4]

Parts of the *Troy Book* correspond to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, but where Guido's and Chaucer's accounts differ, they provide the opportunities for Lydgate to eulogise Chaucer.[5] He marks the loss of Chaucer to literature in an exalted mythological manner which, comparatively, diminishes his own status as a poet. As Nicholas Watson writes:

> Many of the fifteenth-century 'Chaucerian' poets are still patronized even
>
> by those seeking to rehabilitate them; their rhetorical expressions of
>
> gratitude to Chaucer are read at face value (as signs of awareness of

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[2] Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, 37.

[3] "Þe noble Rethor þat alle dide excelle." (iii.553).

[4] *Vernacular*, 42.

[5] (ii.4679-717, iii.4191-263).

inferiority), while the ambition and confidence of many of them are not.[6]

Lydgate was neither lacking in ambition nor confidence as he developed the *Troy Book* as an expansion of *Troilus and Criseyde*, but it is not the *Troy Book*'s central focus. He chooses the structure of Chaucer's five books in preference to Guido's thirty-five,[7] and writes in decasyllabic couplets with Chaucer's heroic verse in the prologue, and five books with the envoy in Chaucer's rhyme royal.[8] In the *Troy Book* there is a declaration of Lydgate's own identity, alongside that of Guido and Chaucer: "Iohn Lydgate, / Monke of Burie be professiou*n*" (v.3468-9). It is evident that Lydgate has his own ideas on how to develop the tale, and Pearsall argues that "we should not let our admiration for Chaucer, and the comparisons we are inevitably drawn to make, blind us to the real qualities of the English Chaucerians".[9] Lydgate's ambition is to impress upon the audience that the vernacular will exceed the authority of Latin - "And y-writen as wel in oure langage / As in latyn and in frensche it is" (pr.114-5) - and he breaks away from the Latin tradition by using Chaucer as his model. He comprehends that he is taking a risk, and towards the end of book V Lydgate pleads to the audience:

> Or wher-so-eu*er*e þat þei fynde errour,
>
> Of gentilnesse to shewe þis fauour:
>
> Benygnely for to done her peyne
>
> To correcte, raþer þan disdeyne. (v.3479-82)

Lydgate foresees the critics who will have disdain for his work who he disarmingly states are lurking "(Specialy be-hynden at þe bake)" (v.3500):

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[6]   Watson, "Outdoing Chaucer", 90.

[7]   The editors of the Vernacular state 24 books. *Vernacular*, 42.

[8]   Bergen in his Introductory Note to the *Troy Book*, ix.

[9]   Pearsall, "The English Chaucerians", 201.

> For wel wot I moche þing is wrong,
>
> Falsely metrid, boþe of short & long;
>
> And, ȝif þei shuld han of al disdeyn,
>
> It is no drede, my labour wer in veyn.
>
> Late ingoraunce & rudnesse me excuse. (v.3483-7)

If it is considered that Lydgate knows that Chaucer suffered "rudnes" (v.3526), then Lydgate is on safe ground with his critics because he believes that it is only Chaucer who would have the authority to criticise him:

> Was neuer noon to þis day alyue,
>
> To rekne alle, boþe ȝonge & olde,
>
> Þat worþi was his ynkhorn for to holde. (v.3528-30)

E. Talbot Donaldson presents an interesting argument when he suggests that Chaucer's own modesty topos in *Troilus and Criseyde* should be considered, not at face value, but as a challenge:

> There follows the celebrated injunction of the poet to his book not to vie
>
> with other poetry, but humbly to kiss the steps of Virgil, Ovid, Homer,
>
> Lucan and Statius. This is the modesty convention again, but transmuted,
>
> I believe, into something close to arrogance . . . I do not feel that the
>
> narrator succeeds in belittling his work by mentioning it in connection
>
> with them; there is such a thing as inviting comparison by eschewing
>
> comparison.[10]

Consequently this suggests that although Lydgate praises Chaucer's skill in the vernacular, there

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[10] Donaldson, "The Ending of *Troilus*", 145.

is also the agenda to deliberately inherit his laurels at the same time by being overtly humble to the poetic father. In "Sovereignty and Sewage", Paul Strohm comments:

> Chaucer in Lydgate's hands is like Hector in Priam's; wholly subject to the form and regimes within which Lydgate chooses to treat him. For example, Lydgate's own emphasis on architectural ingenuity, and artifice, and the prolongation of life touches on themes of Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," but with differences that signal Lydgate's now-dominant poetic position.[11]

Chaucer's absence gives Lydgate freedom to act as an apprentice to Chaucer while at the same time master the direction of his own poetry.

Jill Mann, in her introduction to the *Canterbury Tales*, states that "Chaucer was both an inspiration and a model to the generations of writers who followed him"[12], and Lydgate's response and reaction to Chaucer's development of the vernacular impacted visibly on Lydgate's writing of the *Troy Book*. By using *Troilus and Criseyde* as a structure to his text, Lydgate publicly declares that Chaucer's English work supersedes the thirteenth-century Latin authority on Troy by the Italian, Guido delle Colonne. Lydgate is propagating Chaucer's vernacular reputation, and in doing so he subtly commends Chaucer's and Lydgate's Lancastrian patrons. Chaucer was the court poet to the deposed Richard II, and Lydgate is appropriating Chaucer's political and literary background for Henry V, not only for Lancastrian purposes, but also for Lydgate's own literary profit. The more Chaucer is posthumously lauded as a master of rhetoric, the more prestige is added to his legacy and to Lydgate's final inheritance as a poet laureate. It is

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[11]   Strohm, "Sovereignty and Sewage", 67.
[12]   Jill Mann, ed. Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, xviii.

evident that Lydgate achieves such a status, for example, when George Ashby (d.1475) calls

upon the new English muses:

> Maisters Gower, Chaucer and Lydgate,
>
> Primier poetes of this nacion,
>
> Embelysshing oure Englisshe tendure algate,
>
> Firste finders to our consolacioun
>
> Off fresshe, douce Englisshe and formacioun
>
> Of newe balades not used before,
>
> By whome we all may have lernyng and lore. (pr.28-34)[13]

   While Lydgate's prevarication worked in the fifteenth century, the long term effect it had

on his later reception was detrimental, and the readership of his works ultimately started to

decline. As Pearsall remarks:

> No one who wrote so much can be anything but a hack, we may think, and
>
> protect ourselves from what looks like an unrewarding task by simply
>
> dismissing the man and his work as unworthy of our attention.[14]

The objective of Lydgate actively presenting Chaucer as the father of English literature was so

successful that it subsequently obscured Lydgate's attributes, and relegated him to the back-row

of the class. James Simpson states:

> From the middle of the sixteenth century, the comparison between the two
>
> poets is routinely made to Lydgate's detriment: he is pitched against
>
> Chaucer in a hopeless agon, which he is bound to lose . . . He is doomed to

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[13] Ashby, *Active Policy of a Prince*, 59.

[14] "Extract from Derek Pearsall, 'John Lydgate: The Critical approach', in *John Lydgate*, 4-10." Roger Dalrymple, ed. *Middle English Literature*, 6.

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imitate Chaucer but equally doomed to fail in the attempt.[15]

Right up to the 1920s comments were still not in Lydgate's favour, with regard to identifying style:

> One reason for attributing a more serious effort, "The Complaint of the
> Black Knight" to someone else is that Shirley attributes it to Lydgate. A
> reason equally strong is that it is too poor for Chaucer's authorship. We
> may say of this tiresome performance that it is like Chaucer's style of
> writing, but altogether without his life.[16]

These are harsh words indeed.

Lydgate's commendatory passages towards Chaucer such as "my maist*er* Chauc*er*" (v.3521), and the "chefe poete" (iii.4256) appear to reduce Lydgate's authority. He also humbly declares his own efforts in comparison to Chaucer's work as being "colourles" (iii.560), but he manages at the same time to convince his contemporary audience otherwise. He proves that he is the legitimate successor because he is able to overcome and merge the differences between his two sources, Chaucer and Guido. This is evident especially in relation to *Troilus and Criseyde* which Lydgate recreates in the *Troy Book* (iii.4234-6). Lydgate highlights Chaucer's authority by nodding to Chaucer's poem to promote and keep Chaucer's work alive in the audience's memory. To facilitate this recollection, Lydgate utilises terms and images from *Troilus and Criseyde* (such as "blind baiard" (v.3506) which will be discussed further in the chapter), but he arranges them in a manner that displays his skill and ease with the vernacular. Lydgate fosters the idea that high, literary substance is readily available in English, therefore making it suitable to its own society

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[15] Scanlon and Simpson, eds. *Poetry, Culture and Lancastrian England*, 130.
[16] Jack, *A Commentary*, 122.

rather than to a confined Latin audience. By using Chaucer's language, Lydgate improves on the Latin source and creates a historical romance as opposed to Guido's dry history. As Lydgate states, Chaucer is the most noble "rethor" of all.[17]

Lydgate's adherence to Chaucer is not only out of deference to his originality, but also to his family. Schirmer proposes that Lydgate learnt about Chaucer's character "from the authoritative lips of his son Thomas", and that "Lydgate may also have made the acquaintance of his most famous patron, Humphrey of Gloucester, in the circle of friends associated with Thomas Chaucer".[18] He may have felt that his own "pe*n*ne stu*m*bleþ" (ii.4678) by not knowing Chaucer personally, but Chaucer's literature and ideas are so familiar to Lydgate that he can reproduce what he needs for his own work on demand. Chaucer and Lydgate had very different backgrounds. Chaucer was born in the early 1340s, and he held many positions of governmental service. Through the reigns of Edward III and Richard II Chaucer was:

> a soldier, an esquire of the king's household, a member of diplomatic
> missions, a controller of customs, a justice of the peace, a member of
> Parliament, the clerk of the king's works in charge of building and repair at
> ten royal residences, and a forest official.[19]

In later years he was recognised as a poet of Richard's court, but he was also connected to Henry IV's father, John of Gaunt, who was one of his most influential patrons. Therefore Chaucer would have a simultaneous claim to be a retainer to the Lancaster household, as well as to King Richard.

In addition, Chaucer personally aligns himself with Henry IV because after Richard's

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[17] Barney, "*Troilus and Criseyde*", *RC* 471.
[18] Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, 59, 61.
[19] Benson, *RC*, xi.

deposition, Chaucer appealed to the new king with a "witty and slightly salacious" begging poem.[20] Crow and Leland describe that the envoy of *The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse* "hailed Henry as true king by right of conquest, birth, and *free eleccion*".[21] Chaucer's declaration of support here is so close in time to the actual usurpation that it shows he is not regretting the change in monarchy, and he reminds Henry about his duty as king "that mowen alle oure harmes amende" (*Complaint* 25).[22] From this sanguine observation, the deposition of Richard appears to have been greeted with relief by Chaucer. G. G. Coulton observes that Richard was generally considered "to have thrown his splendid chances wantonly away".[23] From his acquaintance with Henry, Chaucer would have had reliable confidence in the new king's character, and Chaucer did not need to ingratiate himself into the new court as he was already acknowledged by Henry before the usurpation.[24] Pearsall comments that Chaucer must have been "on good terms with Henry, to judge from his receipt from him of a handsome gift of a scarlet gown in 1395-6".[25] When Henry of Derby becomes king, Coulton states:

> Henry IV granted on his own account a pension of forty marks in addition
>
> to Richard's; and five days afterwards we find Chaucer pleading that he
>
> had "accidentally lost" the late King's letters patent for the pension and the
>
> wine, and begging for their renewal under Henry's hand. The favour was
>
> granted, and Chaucer was thus freed from any uncertainty which might

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[20] Pearsall, ed. *Chaucer to Spenser*, 180.

[21] "Free eleccion" (*Complaint* 23), *RC* xxi.

[22] Pearsall, *Chaucer to Spenser*, 181.

[23] Coulton, *Chaucer and His England*, 67.

[24] John Gardner feels that Henry was amused by this poem as he paid Chaucer. He states that in the *Complaint* "Chaucer merrily turns the high-minded conventions of courtly love to the purpose of comically outrageous begging". Gardner, *The Poetry of Chaucer*, 69.

[25] Pearsall. *Chaucer to Spenser*, 180.

have attached to his former grants from a deposed King, even though one

of them was already recognized and renewed in Henry's letters of October

13 [1399].[26]

Henry's acceptance of Chaucer's appeal, and the increase in his pension, declares Chaucer as a

valued retainer of the House of Lancaster. This is an important association in the transition

period between the two kings, as both monarchs are patrons of the same court poet. Lydgate

deliberately builds on this link in order to promote the Lancastrian cause, and his own position as

Chaucer's rightful heir.

With Lydgate's declaration of Chaucer as the "noble Rethor" (iii.553), Lydgate is

empowering the beginning of a tradition of writing in the vernacular. Rita Copeland, in her

discussion on the *Fall of Princes*, states that Lydgate understands "rhetoric largely, or even

primarily, in terms of poetics and assimilate[s] the function of rhetoric to the power of poetic

eloquence".[27] Further confirmation of this view is provided in the *Troy Book* when Lydgate

describes rhetoric as being an illumination of writing "with many corious flour" (pr.218), and

"many fresche colour" (pr.363). On Lydgate's self-focus as an orator, Copeland remarks that he

"blurs, as if by habit, any distinction between orators serving a public good and poets pleasing

their kings".[28] Later Lydgate states, in a comparison to Chaucer's rhetoric, that his "wede be nat

polymyte / Colourles, forþe I wil endyte / As it cometh euene to my þouȝt" (iii.560). Alan J.

Mitchell puts forth the idea that "Lydgate starts from the assumption that rhetoric and right rule

are intimately connected practices",[29] and therefore since Chaucer - as the master rhetorician -

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[26] Coulton, *Chaucer and His England*, 66.

[27] Copeland, "Lydgate, Hawes", 242.

[28] Copeland, "Lydgate, Hawes", 243.

[29] Mitchell, "John Gower and John Lydgate", 576.

approved of the Lancastrians, then so should follow the rest of England. Following the usurpation, the smoothest transition for Henry would require that everything must continue as normal (as if it had been kept amicably in the family), and that there had not been any hiatus in the monarchy:

> With varying but unceasing intensity over a period of twenty-three years, Henry IV and especially Henry V sought a symbolic enactment of their legitimacy persuasive enough to control the field of imaginative possibility.[30]

It was more advantageous for both kings to show that they had merely adopted a role that was freely handed over to them, because they would not have been legally in line as the expected heirs to the throne:

> Henry's position was far from easy . . . the fact that he had only a victor's title to his crown, and that the rightful claimant was the eight-year-old Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March, obliged Henry continually to seek and maintain the consent of the majority of his subjects.[31]

According to Schirmer, it was vitally important for Henry IV to gain support for himself, and for his descendents. The break in hereditary succession thereafter required constant activity on Henry's part to justify the deposition, and to assert his possession of the throne; he needed to earn support. One method to target the nobility's goodwill was by using the court poet as a tool for entertainment and self-promotion, which could be described as a process of public relations. There is no doubt that Henry was carefully aligning himself with allies as "he was shrewd

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[30] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 2.
[31] Schirmer, 26.

enough to reward his friends rather than to punish his adversaries."[32] By raising Chaucer's

pension Henry not only appeased the poet; he also declared possession of Chaucer and his works

even though Chaucer was not to benefit from this for very long. It was not paid until the 21st

February, 1400, and Chaucer died on the 25th October that same year.[33]

The loss of Chaucer to vernacular literature is akin to what Paul Strohm describes as

England's empty throne between the transition period between Richard II and Henry IV. Strohm

comments about the funeral ceremonies at Richard II's empty tomb in Westminster:

> The linking of the king's mortal remains with the emblems of his dignity at once
>
> celebrated his possession of the kingly aura and rendered that aura eligible for
>
> transmission to its next earthly embodiment.[34]

Likewise Lydgate performs his own literary obsequies, and he rues the fact that "Chaucer now,

allas ! is not alyue / Me to reforme, or to be my rede" (iii.550-1). In order to stabilise a sense of

continuation of literature, a successor was needed. As John Gower (d.1408) was Chaucer's

contemporary in literature, so too had Lydgate his own literary alternative. The other main poet

beside Lydgate at this point is Thomas Hoccleve (1368-1426) who was also retained by Henry V

and between 1411 and 1412, Hoccleve wrote the *Regement of Princes* for him. In the *Regement

of Princes* Hoccleve also mourns for Chaucer:

> My dere mayster - God hys soule quyte! -
>
> And fadir, Chaucer, fayn wolde han me taught,
>
> But I was dul, and lerned lyte or naght. (*Regement* 2076-8)[35]

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[32] Schirmer, 26.

[33] Pearsall, *Chaucer to Spenser*, 180.

[34] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 106.

[35] Pearsall, *Chaucer to Spenser*, 332.

Of Thomas Hoccleve, Pearsall remarks: "The combination of the disaster-prone drama he makes of his personal life and the wit, resourcefulness and crisp, easy command of his verse makes him a much more endearing poet than Lydgate".[36] Hoccleve, like Lydgate, recognised Chaucer's influence on the vernacular, "The first findere of our fayre langage" (*Regement* 4978), and he was concerned with the language of legitimisation. Yet he too took advantage of Chaucer's absence. Strohm comments that:

> Hoccleve's repeated invocation of Chaucer has rightly but restrictively
> been seen as personal aggrandizement; viewed more broadly, Chaucer's
> unquestioned artistic legitimacy and his adaptability to issues of literary
> succession offer a convenient and reassuring analogue to the problematic
> of succession in the political sphere.[37]

Hoccleve's poetry is more concerned with home governance rather than the conduct of campaigns and warfare like the *Troy Book*. His political poetry is contextually concerned with heresy, the Lancastrian ascension to the throne, Richard II's reinterment, and especially his advice to the future Henry V in his *Regement of Princes*.[38] However it is Lydgate who eventually becomes the most involved with Lancastrian policy, and it leads Pearsall to state that "the stature of Hoccleve as a poet is so immeasurably less than that of Lydgate".[39]

Ultimately, Lydgate becomes the appropriate choice for the language of legitimisation for Henry V, continually proving that he "does what he can to adjust obstinate circumstances and putative enemies to the requirements of the Lancastrian solution".[40] Lydgate's imitation in effect

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[36] Pearsall, *Chaucer to Spenser*, 319.
[37] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 182.
[38] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 183.
[39] Pearsall, "The English Chaucerians", 203.
[40] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 190.

complements what is required to present the ideal of following a constructed authority. Strohm

goes so far as to say that Lydgate acknowledges this aspect of being subject to Chaucer with his

authorship:

> Lydgate repeatedly lays claim to discipleship and just
>
> authorial inheritance, as when he presents the *Siege of Thebes* as his own
>
> Canterbury tale, in effect imagining himself as written by Chaucer. [41]

The *Siege of Thebes* is a homage to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* and Lydgate inserts his own

persona into the tale, firstly as a pilgrim - as Chaucer did - and secondly to accompany Chaucer

as a peer in poetry:

> "Sirs," quod I, "sith of your curtesye
>
> I entred am into your companye["]
>
> And admitted a tale for to telle
>
> By hym that hath power to compelle. (*ST* i.177-80)

It is the Host who compels Lydgate to join the pilgrims, - "Thow shalt be bound to a newe lawe"

(*ST* pr.130) - and to leave aside his profession. Lydgate has been accepted into the literary world

of Chaucer, not by the narrator, but by Harry Bailey, a "man wonder sterne and fers" (*ST* pr.81),

The Canterbury Tales' original governor. Metaphorically, Lydgate has been declared a laureate

member within the text. Some criticism of the *Siege* shows that Lydgate is not always overly

familiar with *The Canterbury Tales,* and it has been suggested by Rosamund S. Allen that

"Lydgate's limp-wristed metre, and his syntax, where he is apt to wobble off course and collapse

like someone on a monocycle, are not qualifications for an attempt to outdo Chaucer at his own

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[41] Strohm. *England's Empty Throne*, 189.

game".[42] However, it should be considered that Lydgate's main design is not always to outdo, but

to amplify Chaucer; where Chaucer goes, Lydgate will explore and widen, whether it proves to

be a successful effort or not. Christopher Edward Manion in his dissertation *Writers in Religious*

Orders and their Lay Patrons in Late Medieval England suggests that there is more to Lydgate's

remissness than meets the eye in the *Siege*. He argues that Lydgate is trying to restore the image

of religious society that Chaucer lampooned with his fat friar:

> Lydgate's mode of representing himself in the prologue to the *Siege of*
>
> *Thebes* can thus be seen as a form of resistance to secular criticism and
>
> intrusive attempts at reform, rather than as an inept or simplistic emulation
>
> of Chaucer. In his "Canterbury Tale," the Bury monk is offering a very
>
> complex model of monastic identity and its relationship to secular
>
> authority.[43]

Manion suggests that the *Siege,* and its style, is a response to Henry V's proposed reforms of the

abbeys in 1421 where the monks lives were to be restricted more to their enclosures, and female

visitors were forbidden.[44]

   Chaucer would be, according to Harold Bloom, Lydgate's precursor. Bloom explains this

using Kierkegaard's maxim:

> "He who is willing to work gives birth to his own father." We remember how for
>
> so many centuries, from the sons of Homer to the sons of Ben Jonson, poetic
>
> influence had been described as a filial relationship, and then we come to see that
>
> poetic *influence*, rather than *sonship*, is another product of the Enlightenment,

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[42] Allen, "Lydgate's Canterbury Tale", 133.

[43] Manion, *Writers in Religious Orders*, 79.

[44] Manion, *Writers in Religious Orders*, 72.

another aspect of the Cartesian dualism.[45]

Lydgate's ambition is to develop the vernacular and Chaucer's prestige further by presenting himself as the candidate to fill the vacancy that is left by Chaucer's death. This is an opportunity for a fresh starting point for the next poet - a new poet who would be engaged by the court, and who would have his own ideas on what direction poetry should take for the new reign.

By using Chaucer's writings as his model, Lydgate can deliver contemporary observations on religion, treachery, gender and politics. According to Pearsall, Lydgate was Chaucer's ideal successor as his "influence on the [fifteenth] century is, in fact, considerably greater than that of Chaucer, and the century's understanding of Chaucer was largely filtered through Lydgate's understanding of him".[46] Chaucer's fame is in part due to Lydgate's affirmation of Chaucer's status as the "poet of Breteyne" (ii.4697), and it is praise like this that contributed to retaining for Chaucer a place with successive audiences. Lydgate took on the responsibility of promoting Chaucer's reputation, and the size of the rethor's shadow is often caused by Lydgate's illumination which leads to Bloom's theory of impoverishment:

> Strong poets keep returning from the dead, and only through the quasi-willing mediumship of other strong poets. *How* they return is the decisive matter, for if they return intact, then the return impoverishes the later poets, dooming them to be remembered - if at all - as having ended in poverty, in an imaginative need they could not themselves gratify.[47]

Chaucer has led the way to a certain point in the vernacular, but Lydgate as a solitary author now has to explore the language's capabilities further. With regard to *Troilus and Criseyde*, Shepherd

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[45] Bloom, 26.

[46] Pearsall, "The English Chaucerians", 201.

[47] Bloom, 140-1.

makes a similar comment: "The naive Narrator is another blind man leading blind men to their fates."[48] However, it is Lydgate who finally makes the decision as to who should be chosen as the primary source for Cryseyde's tale of mutability in the *Troy Book*. He is setting an example by following Chaucer's adaptation rather than strictly adhering to Guido's Latin. If taking into account C. S. Lewis' comment that in the Middle Ages "Every writer, if he possibly can, bases himself on an earlier writer, follows an *auctor*, preferably a Latin one",[49] then Chaucer and Lydgate are certainly creating a hybrid of this tradition. Lydgate often leaves the respectable status of Guido's Latin, and transfers his allegiance to Chaucer's "englisch per[e]les" (ii.4710). He refers to Pandarus who aids Troilus "Þoruȝ whos comforte & mediaciou*n* / (As in his boke is maked mencioun)" (iii.4217-8), when Pandarus is not mentioned in the *Historia* at all. Watson argues that the "renarrations of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* in Lydgate's *Troy Book* . . . be read as complex acts of literary theft, . . . [but it] ensured the continuance of the tradition he began".[50] This theft conforms with Bloom's conviction that "Poetry is property, as politics is property".[51]

In the *Troy Book*'s case, Lydgate breaks away from Guido's ignominious remarks, and renews the work. He establishes the vernacular authority by referring the reader to Chaucer's contemporaneous *Troilus and Criseyde*, and, as Benson points out, "Lydgate approached Chaucer's story of Troilus and Criseyde as a scholarly commentator ready to annotate, reinforce, and provide his readers with the historical context to Chaucer's work."[52] Lydgate implies that it is a wasted effort to translate what Chaucer has already completed because Chaucer has already

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[48] Shepherd, "Troilus and Criseyde", 73.
[49]   Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 5.
[50] Watson, "Outdoing Chaucer", 91.
[51] Bloom, 78.
[52] Benson, "Critic and poet", 23.

perfected the tale:

> It wolde me ful longe occupie
>
> Of eu*er*y þinge to make menciou*n*,
>
> And tarie me in my t*r*anslaciou*n*. (iii.4192-4)

However, as Roger Dalrymple states, prolixity is a formula for medieval writing: "abbreviation is of little more than formal interest, and is totally swamped in amplification, the governing principle in medieval stylistics".[53] It therefore seems unusual that Lydgate is declaring a ceasefire here on amplification, but - like the humility topos - it must not always be taken too literally:

> But, me semeth þat it is no nede,
>
> Sith my maister Chaucer her-a-forn
>
> In þis mater hath so wel hym born,
>
> In his boke of Troylus and Cryseyde. (iii.4196-9)

This comment does not conform to Lydgate's accustomed process of expansion, and, after examination, the length of Guido's account is not enough in fact to detract from the work. In fact, Lydgate is feigning abbreviation, and he keeps to his usual methods of bigger is better. Lydgate adds to Guido's description of Cryseyde's hair by having it falling down her back, and drawn in by a thread of gold (ii.4741-5), and he retains Guido's idea of her physical flaw where "hir browes Ioyn[e]den y-fere" (ii.4748). Lydgate does not omit the tale of betrayed love, and he translates Guido's version, but in conjunction with this, Lydgate adds Chaucer's classic tale. He assures the audience that Chaucer is the only worthy authority that can tell the story appropriately, and he directs the reader to approach Chaucer, rather than Guido: "For he owre

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[53] Dalrymple, "Authorship", 9.

englishe gilt[e] w*ith* his sawes, . . . And adourne it w*ith* his elloquence" (iii.4237,43).

With this self-declaration by Lydgate of Chaucer's work being superior, Lydgate is automatically turning the *Troy Book* into a hybrid work as it is sourcing its authorities from both Latin and English. Rita Copeland states that the *Troy Book* does not have a proper place in her discussion, but her view that "the *raison d'être* of Latin clerical culture is to function as a sign of continuity between the pagan and the Christian intellectual *imperia*" is applicable. Lydgate as a cleric would follow this programme, but he is departing from the traditional ethos, as he endeavours in this instance "to outdo and supplant the revered auctores" with his own and Chaucer's vernacular.[54] He leaves his religious profession aside.

By combining Chaucer and Guido, Lydgate makes a stronger case for Chaucer as a literary authority, and as a source for Troilus and Cryseyde's tale. Lydgate must therefore make a satisfactory compilation to negate the differences between Guido and Chaucer. The most prominent example of this is with the character of Cryseyde.[55] She is an interesting figure as she is originally Benoit's invention as Briseida:

> His supreme achievement, of course, is the creation of the story of the love
>
> of Troilus and Briseida, their separation, and her final acceptance of
>
> Diomedes . . . [Benoit] develops it with a richness of characterization and
>
> wealth of dramatic detail that are truly poetic and were, in fact, to inspire
>
> later poets like Boccaccio and Chaucer. (Meek xiv)

Since then Cryseyde has suffered degradation from different authors because of the mutability of her devotion. This is demonstrated in Chaucer's and Guido's versions, but in the *Troy Book* there

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[54] Copeland, *Rhetoric*, 185, 221.

[55] For the purpose of this text, I am using both Chaucer's and Lydgate's spelling of Cryseyde, and keeping alternative spellings when used by other authors, as well as in the title of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.

is now also a third opinion on her character: Lydgate's own view. David Burnley suggests: "Lydgate's explanation of women's duplicity in a lyric on 'Doubleness' is that of a self-protective measure in an unjust society".[56] In the *Troy Book*, Lydgate's Cryseyde is merely trying to survive. These differing views of Cryseyde give a vivid example of when Lydgate's masters come into conflict with one another, and Lydgate declares this difficulty: "So am I sette euene amyddes tweyne!" (ii.4693). However there may also be a fourth influence although it is only in relation to a reference made by Lydgate in the *Troy Book*. This is discussed by Ambrisco and Strohm on the suppression of Benoit as the source for the *Historia* by Guido, and the fact that Lydgate does not confirm whether he knew about Benoit's work or not. Lydgate's only clue is vague, and is mentioned in the prologue that the Trojan tale is known "in latyn and in frensche" (pr.115). This makes it uncertain whether Lydgate means a French translation of the *Historia*, or Benoit's actual *Roman de Troie*.[57]

Cryseyde's own name also undergoes transformation. Originally she is called Briseida by Benoit, but it is through Boccaccio she becomes Criseida which is Chaucer's source for *Troilus and Criseyde*.[58] Chaucer introduces his own version of Cryseyde's faithlessness in his tale, and early on it is automatically inferred by the narrator that the problem lies with the woman:

> In which ye may the double sorwes here
>
> Of Troilus in lovynge of Criseyde,
>
> And how that she forsook hym er she deyde. (*T&C* i.54-6)

It is Troilus who in "lovynge" Cryseyde becomes the sufferer; it is Cryseyde who abandons him for the Greek, Diomedes, and it is the finality of her action in forsaking Troilus before her death

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[56] Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature*, 93.
[57] Ambrisco and Strohm, "Succession and Sovereignity", 46-7.
[58] *RC*, 471-2.

that subjects her to disparagement. It is her mortality that is mentioned in these lines, not Troilus'

end on the battlefield: "Despitously hym slough the fierse Achille" (*T&C* v.1806). Afterwards,

Troilus "in hymself he lough right at the wo / Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste" (*T&C*

v.1821-2), whereas Cryseyde disappears into nothingness. Henryson's Cryseyde cannot even rise

to the heavens as a light ghost like Troilus as she is sentenced to be weighted down by the poet:

"Under this stane, lait lipper, lyis deid".[59] She is judged as the unworthy soul. Likewise, Guido

holds her as fickle, with a woman's "flighty intentions" (Meek 160), and within a day her "love

for the noble Troilus began to moderate in her heart, and in such a short time, so suddenly, and so

unexpectedly, she became inconstant and began to change in everything" (Meek 160). When

Lydgate writes of Cryseyde he recoils from Guido's harshness, and reiterates his position as a

translator, and not as the author of these opinions:

> And, as seiþ Guydo, in loue variable-
>
> Of tendre herte & vnste[d]fastnes
>
> He hir accuseth, and newfongilnes. (ii.4760-2)

Lydgate distances himself from Guido's authority on Cryseyde by using the words "He hir

accuseth"; it leaves it open to the audience to decide whether she really is guilty or not. As

Donaldson states in relation to Chaucer's narrator:

> The moral that is staring him in the face is written in the faces of the ladies
>
> of his audience, the anti-feminist moral which is at once obvious and, from
>
> a court poet, unacceptable . . . While anticipating the ladies' objections, the
>
> narrator has, with that relief only a true coward can appreciate, glimpsed a

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[59] Henryson, *Testament of Cresseid*, 44.

possible way out: denial of responsibility for what the poem says.[60]

Lydgate is sympathetic to Cryseyde in his writing when compared to Guido, whose disappointment in women develops a tendency to expostulate on their vices rather than their virtues.[61] He divorces himself from Guido's admonishments, when Guido is too cynical in his attitude to women:

> Þe fraude of wommon, and þe fre[e]lte;
>
> In whom ful selde is any sikerte,
>
> As in [his] latyn Guydo dothe expresse. (i.1923-5)

Lydgate clearly positions himself as the translator, and not the originator of such disparaging thoughts:

> Þus techeþ Guydo, God wot, & not I! -
>
> Þat haþ delyt to speke cursidly
>
> Alwey of wommen þoruȝ-out al his bok. (iii.4343-5).

Lydgate has a different audience receiving his book as opposed to Guido whose Latin work would have been accessed mostly by men. The ambition of the vernacular is to expand the range of reception, making it more accessible to both sexes, and therefore it needs to be civilised and circumspective. Lydgate renews Cryseyde because of the differences between Chaucer's and Guido's accounts, and to modernise her for his Lancastrian audience. Even Lydgate's phrasing demonstrates the gender of those he expects to be able to refer back to the original source: "As men may se, who-so list to loke" (iii.4346). Lydgate does not mention that it is Chaucer who

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[60] Donaldson, "The Ending of Troilus", 144.

[61] "In all nations and at all periods there has existed a fund of anecdotes having for its subject the perfidy of women . . . Many, too, were *contes gras* intended only to amuse, and their social significance should not be exaggerated. But even allowing for these factors, the rancour, the intense contempt for women expressed in them at least exemplify what amused the new bourgeois society." Power, *Medieval Women*, 21.

describes her as a widow when Guido does not: "For bothe a widewe was she and allone / Of any frend to whom she dorste hir mone" (*T&C* i.97-8).[62] Although Lydgate takes the position of a translator in order to avoid ill-feeling, with Cryseyde he becomes an editor in order to create a more identifiable woman for his mixed audience:

> For þouȝ myn auctor hindre so her name
>
> In his writinge, only of Cryseide,
>
> And vp-on hir swiche a blame leide,
>
> My counseil is, liȝtly ouer passe
>
> Wher he mysseith of hir in any place. (iii.4410-4)

When Lydgate knows more than what is in Guido's *Historia*, he is apt to enlarge upon it, but in Cryseyde's case he is very subtle in his approach, and he underplays Guido's writing. When Troilus and Cryseyde bewail their imminent parting, Lydgate omits Guido's theatrical description of her woe when her clothes are so wet with tears, that water can be wrung from them.[63] Instead, he creates a more gentle, and pathetic image of Cryseyde:

> Þat be hir chekis þe teris doun distille,
>
> And fro hir eyen þe rounde dropis t[r]ille,
>
> And al for-dewed han hir blake wede:
>
> And eke vntressid hir her abrod gan sprede,
>
> Like to gold wyr, for-rent & al to-torn,
>
> I-plukked of, & nat with sheris shorn. (iii.4121-6)

Effectively Lydgate has brought Chaucer's Cryseyde into this passage with reference to her

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[62] *RC*, 474.

[63] Meek, 157.

widowhood, and abandons Guido's description which borders on the farcical. Lydgate

demonstrates his familiarity with Chaucer's work; he is capable of following Chaucer, and he

also has the skill to sustain Chaucer's legacy on a different path. Lydgate presents this succinctly

when Cryseyde and Troilus are grieving together; Cryseyde's tears are settling on "hir blake

wede" (iii.4123) - her mourning clothes. Lydgate portrays a sorrowful scene, but, with this

above expression, Lydgate also portends Troilus's downfall with Cryseyde as she is still deep in

mourning. She is pictured here by Lydgate weeping over a new love while dressed in a darker

colour than Chaucer's "widewes habit large of samyt broun" (*T&C* i.109) for her late husband.

Lydgate therefore changes her status to a more recently bereaved widow, and therefore it allows

the audience to suspect the longevity of her passion rather than its sincerity. Lydgate cannot

explain why she moves from lover to lover, but it suggests she seeks comfort in challenging

times. As she is freshly widowed, she seeks solace with Troilus. She is later forced to leave her

home in a political exchange, so it does not come as a surprise that Diomedes' attention becomes

a consolation to this loss. Lydgate just states:

> I can noon oþer excusaciou*n*,
>
> But only kyndes transmutaciou*n*,
>
> Þat is appropred vn-to hir nature. (iii.4441-3)

For a contemporary reader, Cryseyde could be seen as a woman who is consistently on the

rebound.

Within a short amount of text in the *Troy Book* Lydgate demonstrates his familiarity with

Troilus and Criseyde, and yet he still deprecates his own capabilitiy. In a self-comparison to

Chaucer's skill in the *Troy Book*, Lydgate portrays himself as a writer that is closer to the blind

"baiard" of a farmyard. He is forging ahead, but unaware of what pitfalls lie ahead: "For blind Baiard cast pereil of no þing, / Til he stumble myddes of þe lake!" (v.3506-7). He will "stumble forþe of hede" (ii.4733) with the *Troy Book*. Lydgate's efforts are, in his view: "But ben as bolde as Baiard is, þe blynde, / Þat cast no peril what wey[e] þat he fynde" (ii.4731-2). For Lydgate, his peril ultimately is the reception of his translation because if it does not match Chaucer's literary quality, then the *Troy Book* is not appropriate for his patron. He absorbs Chaucer's literature, and he continually reminds the audience of how the vernacular is being informed by Chaucer's expression. With the use of the above two lines of quotation, Lydgate prompts the audience to recall Chaucer, by associating the words 'Baiard' and 'blynde' that can be found within a short space of each other in two stanzas of *Troilus and Criseyde*:

> O blynde world, O blynde entencioun!
>
> How often falleth al the effect contraire
>
> Of surquidrie and foul presumpcioun;
>
> . . . .
>
> As proude Bayard gynneth for to skippe
>
> Out of the weye, so pryketh hym his corn. (*T&C* i.211-3, i.218-9)[64]

Lydgate may claim that "Of rethorik þat I have no flour" (ii.4726), but by linking "Baiard" and "blynde" he has compressed Chaucer's two stanzas into a personal image, or a mirror, of himself at work on the *Troy Book*. No matter how much he may be able to "skippe" within his writing, he still has to conform, and follow his masters, as Chaucer writes: "Yet am I but an hors, and horses lawe / I moot endure, and with my feres drawe" (*T&C* i.223-4). It is evident with this royal commission that Lydgate feels the loss of "Galfride"

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[64] *RC,* 476.

(iii.4256), and he describes Chaucer's contribution to the progress of the vernacular:

> Amo*n*ge o*u*re englische þ*a*t made first to reyne
>
> Þe gold dewe-dropis of rethorik so fyne,
>
> Oure rude langage only tenlwmyne. (ii.4798-700)[65]

Mitchell states that "Rhetoric is an activity that seeks to engage audiences as potential respondents rather than (as is usual in modern fiction) voyeurs upon whom no clear responsibility is placed", and that it is a means of communication.[66] Lydgate recognises that this translation needs to reflect a proposed image of the House of Lancaster to the wider audience of the court, and that it must also cause a supportive response within the audience for Henry V. He regrets that Chaucer is no longer present, as he would have been the counsel that could have the authority to advise Lydgate on his rhetoric to the court: "And Chaucer now, allas! is not alyue / Me to reforme, or to be my rede" (iii.550-1). This leads the audience to question why, particularly in the *Troy Book*, does Lydgate need advice with his translation?

Lydgate has an uneasy relationship with Guido in that Lydgate cannot always conform with Guido's writing, or condone Guido's opinions, even though Lydgate gives him "Laude and honour & excellence of fame" (pr.371). Not only can Guido be critical of women, Lydgate recognises that Guido's comments on society can also be ludicrously puritanical, such as the view that he holds on festivals and dancing:

> But oh, how often these kinds of spectacles have led many very shameless
>
> women to shameless ruin by the observation and sight of games and

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[65] A similar quotation is used by Nigel Mortimer in a discussion on the dating of the *Serpent*: "Moreover, the *Serpent* includes in its closing stages a reference to Chaucer which speaks of 'hym þat was flowre of poetis in owre englisshe tonge & þe firste þat euer enluminede owre langage with flowres of Rethorike' in the past tense: if these words were written in 1400, it seems probable that Lydgate would refer to the death of the poet as a recent occurrence." Mortimer, *Fall of Princes*, 80.

[66] Mitchell, "John Gower and John Lydgate", 570.

pastimes, when young men come and practice their charms and with

sudden rapacity seduce the captivated hearts of women from the follies of

the celebration to the peril of their honor. (Meek 68).

The difficulty for Lydgate is that he is writing for a different target audience than Guido, Lydgate

is writing for "hyȝe and lowe" (pr.111), and not just for his patron. This is exemplified by

Roasamund S. Allen on Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*:

> Perhaps the explanation is that Lydgate was in fact writing for a wider
>
> audience than politically prominent males. If the *Siege* is a mirror for
>
> princes, it is a mirror for dowager queens, princesses and royal nannies as
>
> well.[67]

Therefore Lydgate must present the *Troy Book* as a modern translation, and not as a vehicle for

Guido's archaic pettiness. For Lydgate, his ideal target is made up of "symple folke ful

compassiou*n*" (v.3515). Lydgate's wording here encompasses all estates, as the audience would

revel in the suggestion that they are compassionate, as opposed to being "blent w*ith* vnkon*n*yng"

(v.3505). The *Troy Book* is an earlier *speculum* than the *Siege*, which was written between 1420

and 1422, but the type of limited, misogynistic outlook that Guido presents in the *Historia* is

neither to Lydgate's taste, nor would it be to the taste of his patron's court. It also contravenes the

ideals of *fine amor.* Therefore Lydgate uses an alternative, contemporary authority in Chaucer to

divert attention from Guido's outbursts, and diminish their value. This provides him with the

opportunity to perpetuate Chaucer's style, "Þe ruby stant, so royal of renou*n*, / W*ith*-Inne a ryng

of copur or latou*n*" (ii.4707-8), and leave Guido's archaic "latyn" (pr.108) behind.

    Disconnecting from a primary source, as Lydgate does here, is not an unusual aspect of

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[67] Allen, "Lydgate's Canterbury Tale", 129.

medieval literature as observed by Strohm:

> So, too, is Boccaccio in the *Fall of Princes* accorded a degree
>
> of respect, even as Lydgate argues that intervening source Laurence de
>
> Premierfait is entitled to 'breke and renewe' Boccaccio's vessel in order to
>
> amend it for the best (l.11).[68]

Lydgate abandons the worst features of Guido, and produces a vernacular work that holds attention and authority. A further image of Lydgate, if there is a question about him being worthy enough to hold Chaucer's "ynkhorn" (v.3530), is that he recognises that he and other poets have inherited Chaucer's purpose towards furthering English literature - albeit their attempts would be inferior to Chaucer's skill:

> Whan we wolde his stile cou*n*terfet,
>
> We may al day oure colour grynde & bete,
>
> Temp*r*e our aȝour and vermylou*n*:
>
> But al I holde but presumpciou*n*-
>
> It folweþ nat, þerfore I lette be. (ii.4715-9)

Lydgate distances his own "presumpcio*n*" by elevating Chaucer's standard of writing to exceed that of the Muses. This mythological prestige is incorporated into the eulogy for Chaucer's death, where Lydgate portrays Atropos as being responsible for cutting his life thread, and ending Chaucer's time on earth.[69] Because of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Lydgate has a problem and admits:

> Gret cause haue I & mater to compleyne
>
> On Antropos & vp-on hir envie,

---

[68] Strohm, 189.

[69] *TB*, iii.4695-6.

Þat brak þe þrede & made for to dye

Noble Galfride, poete of Breteyne. (ii.4694-7).

Lydgate blames her envy for cutting the thread because of Chaucer's skill, and by linking

Chaucer to the mythical Atropos within twenty years of his death, Lydgate elevates Chaucer's

work to the standards of ancient classical authors. Chaucer is England's "master of literary

expression"[70] and Lydgate describes him as:

Þe noble Rethor þat alle dide excelle;

For in makyng he drank of þe welle

Vndir Pernaso, þat þe Musis kepe. (iii.553-5)

Lydgate does not represent Guido as having drunk from this well, which places Chaucer - as a

writer - on a higher pedestal than his Latin source. The next line is wistful as Lydgate declares:

"On whiche hil I myȝt[e] neu*er* slepe" (iii.556). The implication here is that Lydgate will never

achieve such a mystical quality, but it is also a gentle reminder to his audience that Lydgate's

achievements are his own hard work. His labour is often undervalued by readers as Pearsall

observes:

Yet Lydgate has hardly been accorded an enthusiastic reception by literary

critics; he has on the contrary provided a ready target for the long line of

English men of letters who have preferred wit to honesty, the plausible

sneer to the painstaking effort at appreciation.[71]

Lydgate accepts that his literature will be judged inadequate by comparison to Chaucer,

as he has helped to make Chaucer's expression the exemplar in the fifteenth century. Lydgate's

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[70] Bergen's definition of "Rethor" in his glossary, Part IV, 453.

[71] Pearsall, "The English Chaucerians", 203-4.

purpose is to promote Chaucer, and he presents an attitude of vexation to his audience: if

Chaucer were alive he would be able to direct Lydgate accurately with his translation, as well as

answer Lydgate's many questions. It is obvious that Lydgate's alignment is markedly with

Chaucer, especially with regard to Cryseyde, as Lydgate demonstrates his adherence by calling

her "Cryseyde"[72] as opposed to Guido's "Briseyda".[73] Lydgate is appropriating her character

from Chaucer, as Corinne Saunders remarks about Cryseyde:

> We become aware of how, ultimately, her reputation is shaped and
>
> reshaped by a whole procession of male writers, just as within the text she
>
> is passed from one man to another - from father, to uncle, to lover, to
>
> father; from Trojan to Greek.[74]

Lydgate ascertains his right to include his version of Cryseyde, and he continually presses the

audience to remember his inheritance:

> My maister Chaucer dide his dilligence
>
> To discryve þe gret excellence
>
> Of hir bewte, and þat so maisterly,
>
> To take on me it were but hiȝe foly. (ii.4679-82).

However, this humility topos must not to be taken at face value that Lydgate genuinely believes

he is incapable without his master. Lydgate has the texts he needs before him, and can explore

his own paths of literature as other writers have done:

> And seke his boke þat is left be-hynde
>
> Som goodly worde þer-in to fynde,

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[72] *Troilus and Criseyde, RC*, 473-585.

[73] Collonne, *Historia Destructionis Troiae*, 85.

[74] Saunders, "An Overview", 129-30.

> To sette amonge þe crokid lynys rude
>
> Whiche I do write; as, by similitude (ii.4703-6).

In these lines it is worth noting that Lydgate is seeking the singular word to enhance his vernacular translation. He is not dependent on Chaucer's entire canon, but refers to it occasionally in order to add a jewel to an already embellished crown. The lines he writes may be crooked, but they are in the plural - he does not rely completely on Chaucer for his work. Paul Strohm presents an interesting point about Lydgate's relationship to Chaucer:

> Despite Lydgate's professions of loyalty to Chaucer, he does not fail to
>
> take advantage of the older poet's absence from the scene to institute his
>
> own, and very different, aesthetic of stylistic decorum and comprehensive
>
> treatment.[75]

Lydgate's approach to Chaucer's work would be as a vernacular writer that is "envisaging the search for truth as a collaborative project that does not end with the completion of a text but simply moves into a new phase".[76] Chaucer is a model for Lydgate to develop, and he is also used as a basis for response. For example, Lydgate answers Chaucer's *Lak of Stedfastnesse* with the amplified poem *On the Mutability of Human Affairs* which demonstrates that the world, like fortune, is mercurial - making it impossible for man to be truly constant. However, with Lydgate there is always a 'but', and midway through the poem he does not disappoint the audience: "Feith, hope, and charité shal outraye al dispayr, / Thouhe alle men be nat stedfast of lyvyng" (63-4).[77] Alexandra Gillespie takes a similar view to Strohm about Lydgate's advantage with Chaucer's absence for the reception of his book. Lydgate's ambition is for the *Troy Book* is to be the

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[75] Strohm, 189.

[76] *Vernacular*, 13.

[77] Lydgate, "On the Mutability of Human Affairs", 196.

pinnacle of the Trojan histories in the vernacular. The "rethor" is not present to correct Lydgate's work, which means that only the worthy could presume to scrutinise Lydgate's *Troy Book*, and amend its errors:

> Having declared there is no author alive who can match Chaucer, Lydgate
>
> cancels the very danger he here appears to allow - the possibility that his
>
> text will be recomposed by scribes or readers in his absence.[78]

With this theory in mind, it also alludes to Lydgate's own opinion of his hierarchy within vernacular writing. Lydgate is Chaucer's heir, and with that inheritance comes establishment. Similarly Henry IV may have usurped Richard, but his position still demands the same measure of respect for a king that Richard had. This is applicable to Lydgate as he picks up Chaucer's laurels, but he is not destroying the memory of the model that he follows; the more Lydgate enhances Chaucer, the greater his own reputation becomes:

> And, for my part, I wil neu*er* fyne,
>
> So as I can, hym to magnifie
>
> In my writynge, pleinly, til I dye. (iii.4260-2).

Stephen A. Barney describes Chaucer as radically transforming Boccaccio's poem with *Troilus and Criseyde*,[79] and with the *Troy Book* Lydgate is using similar approaches in order to create a work that is appropriate for his patron. He uses Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* as an official historical source in combination with the *Historia*. Lydgate is making a contemporary English text possess the same consequence as a Latin one. This not only reflects well on the language itself, but also on the patron who supported Chaucer, and whose descendents are now

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[78] Gillespie, *Print Culture*, 34. Gillespie is referring to *TB* v.3519-39.
[79] *RC*, 472.

encouraging the use of the vernacular for national pride. Although Chaucer's life was close to the court it must also be remembered that:

> In public Chaucer was no more than a minor functionary and his appearance in court would depend upon a reputation as a sophisticated entertainer, not as a speculative moralist or an interpreter of his times. . . To the secret hearts and thoughts of men in high places he remained a stranger. What went on in public he could learn only by humble and deferential observation.[80]

In contrast, James Simpson in his essay on Lydgate's *Churl and the Bird*, inverts this idea of deference, and places Lydgate at the opposite end of inscrutability towards his patrons:

> On the one hand, Lydgate maintains a covert role by not making explicit the burden of this poem as it applies to court patrons and poets; on the other, he exposes the emptiness of the poet and the pathetic longing of patrons that poets will offer up panacea and plenitude.[81]

This shift in perspective allows Lydgate far more control of his work than his predecessor, and gives him freedom to manipulate the text for his own objectives.

When Lydgate comes to the tale of Troilus and Cryseyde, he departs from translating Guido, and eulogises the late Chaucer with mythological terms. Atropos is reprimanded for stealing Chaucer's life, but acknowledging her existence should be an antitheses of Lydgate's own Christian beliefs; yet he implicates her to a commanding role in Chaucer's death. However within the *Troy Book* setting, this contradiction fits naturally, as Lydgate's purpose is to link

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80 Shepherd, "Troilus and Criseyde", 73-4.
81 Simpson, "Empty Poets", 139.

Chaucer to the classical authorities, to make the *Troy Book* as relevant as he possibly can to Chaucer's canon. Lydgate is echoing Chaucer's writing with this particular Fate as he read about Troilus' call on Atropos to "make redy thow my beere" (*T&C* ii.1208), and Cryseyde's demand of "Attropos my thred of lif tobreste / If I be fals!" (*T&C* ii.1546-7).[82] Nevertheless if there is a question about Lydgate's orthodoxy, Atropos is well chosen because her name means "the inevitable".[83] For Lydgate this is appropriate for the end of a life, as it is his conviction that it is God who is now truly responsible for Chaucer's spirit: "To God I pray, þat he his soule haue" (ii.4701-2).

The declaration of Chaucer as being Lydgate's "rethor" shows that Chaucer is Lydgate's inspiration in the vernacular. Lydgate promotes Chaucer as much as he can for many reasons; admiration for the chief poet; for political benefit; and to establish and continue tradition in English literature by using Chaucer as the starting point. Lydgate grieves for the absence of Chaucer, but he is not dependent on him; he is able to make his own modern mark on the vernacular. As Richard Helgerson comments, "For the laureate, writing was a way of saying something about himself. He wanted to not only to be a laureate but also to be known to be one".[84] As Lydgate's audience is different to Guido's, he must shape the *Troy Book* to suit more contemporary times. Lydgate has to consider the image of the patron that he wants to present, and its relationship to society's attitudes on women, religion, treason and war. The *Troy Book* is a speculum, and Lydgate has final control over the finished work. His inclusion of *Troilus and Criseyde* reminds the audience that Chaucer's legacy continues due to Lancastrian patronage, Chaucer's admirers, and Lydgate's deliberate promotion of his canon.

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[82] *CND*, 46.

[83] *CND*, 46.

[84] Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates*, 24.

Humanism, Myth, and Lydgate's Application of Antiquity to Fifteenth-Century Ideals of

Religious Ethos

Lydgate has never been really regarded as an English humanist and, at best, Lydgate's efforts are

considered as merely touching the fringes of humanism's paradigm without actually belonging to

it. His work is considered too early to have benefited from the Italian humanists who began to

make their way to English shores. Yet Daniel Wakelin does not despair of the apparent lack of

humanism in the early fifteenth century:

> To espy such tiny signs of humanist learning in fifteenth-century England,
>
> we need to look, if not through rose-tinted spectacles, then at least through
>
> ones which allow us to see the subtle humanist colouring in the records of
>
> the period - rather than blanching out any signs of humanism because they
>
> are not as bold or bright as some later shining examples, such as Corpus
>
> Christi College.[1]

Although not a record of the period, the *Troy Book* is a mirror of the fifteenth century through

Lydgate's efforts to bring antiquity to life. Lydgate's treatment of ancient myth and history is

handled with a pedagogical interest in these subjects, and he questioningly applies them to his

own society in order to better inform his audience. He explores aspects of pagan religions and

accompanies them with responses based on Lydgate's Christian belief and commonsense.

Furthermore there is a deliberate intent by Lydgate to make a relevant connection between

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[1] Wakelin, "Humanism beyond Weiss", 266.

antiquity and the reign of Henry V in order to engineer an enlightened society, and it is this educational focus which is a foundation stone of humanist ideals. This chapter will argue that Lydgate quietly fulfills the criteria to these ideals which leads to a more humanist reading of the *Troy Book*. The three following sections deal with the concepts of humanism, myth, and varied observances of religion in Lydgate's *Troy Book* with the hope of retrieving him from the limited, stereotypical position of having only medieval thoughts, to which some modern criticism has confined him.

Humanism: engineering circumstance with precedent in antiquity

Lydgate's approach to classical learning and culture is to use myth as a diversionary tool within his writing in order to activate the reader's interest. He sees ancient Greek and Roman histories as informative, and he uses their tales to caution and educate his audience. Therefore it is under this instructive activity that humanism in Lydgate's *Troy Book* is explored. Humanism, as defined by David R. Carlson, is based on looking back to Roman and Greek civilisation, and applying it educationally to contemporary events:

> Fundamentally, humanism was a committed interest in antiquity, in
> ancient literature, Latin or Greek, and in ancient culture more generally,
> committed in the sense that it was polemical, arguing in favour of a revival
> of ancient standards and canons of taste. Such an interest entailed, on the
> one hand, an effort to return *ad fontes*, in order to gain understanding of
> antiquity; it also entailed, on the other, an effort to put the understanding
> of antiquity so gained to work on and within contemporary society.[2]

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[2] Carlson, *English Humanist Books*, 5.

In essence the *Troy Book*'s foundation is based on Greek and Roman mythology. It may not be based on one of the "humanistic Latin texts brought direct from Italy" by Humphrey of Gloucester, but it is the most famous tale from Greek antiquity.[3] Lydgate makes the *Historia* relevant to his audience which turns it into an encyclopaedic handbook of the early fifteenth century for later readers. It is Lydgate's contemporary perspective on war and kings, and it includes treatises on the primary facets of human relationships. From this it is arguable that the *Troy Book* is, in its entirety, a step towards humanist writing. However remarks made on efforts of trying to find humanistic evidence from Lydgate have not been very enthusiastic. Derek Pearsall states: "Looking for signs of humanism is an unrewarding task, because the whole direction of his mind is medieval."[4] Also Alan Renoir proposes that "only timid traces of humanism in the *Troy Book*" have been detected.[5] One of the most compounding factors against suggesting the *Troy Book* contains any humanist work is that its time line is previous to Humphrey of Gloucester's patronage of Lydgate. This literary relationship added to Lydgate's established credentials as a Lancaster retainer, and Pearsall comments that:

> Humphrey's patronage can also be seen in a more generous light as an
> attempt to introduce into English, through the agency of the major poet of
> the time, something of the dignity and repute of continental classical
> learning, of which Boccaccio was not an inadequate representative.[6]

However this patronage also seems to have created a limited recognition of Lydgate's independent qualities as a potential humanist before Humphrey's interest. Nevertheless it is

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[3] Pearsall, *Old English*, 225.
[4] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 15.
[5] Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate*, 96.
[6] Pearsall, *Old English*, 231.

evident that the duke's own status as a patron proved to be immeasurable. Susanne Saygin states:

> The cradle of French humanism was the University of Paris: that of
>
> English humanism was the household of Humfrey, Duke of
>
> Gloucester. Had Jean, Duke of Berry - to whom we owe those delightful
>
> Books of Hours - lived a generation later, he might have done for France
>
> what Duke Humfrey did for England.[7]

This gives the sense that the introduction of England's humanist literature is marked solely by the reliance on Humphrey's interest and his influence on humanist writers. One of them, the Italian humanist, Pietro Del Monte, "dedicated his Latin treatise on the virtues and vices (1438) - the first humanist work written in England - to Duke Humfrey".[8] This came eighteen years after the completion of the *Troy Book*, and yet it is considered the first English humanist work, leaving Lydgate's canon behind. The central difference between the authors is that Pietro wrote in Latin to revive the Latin language, whereas Lydgate is scrutinising a Latin work and introducing "Of hem of Troye in englysche to translate" (pr.106). The *Troy Book* unjustly falls short of what is considered the full humanistic criteria of reviving classicism, because it is written in the vernacular. Yet it is through English that broadens the access to education. The *Troy Book* should not be overlooked as it conforms entirely with Carlson's standard of reviving antiquity for "contemporary society"[9].

       After Henry V's death in 1422, Lydgate's association with the Lancasters did not dissipate because Humphrey recognised Lydgate's value (as Henry did) to reanimate ancient history, and make it apply relevantly to political agendas:

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[7] Weiss, *Italian Humanism*, 90.
[8] *The Cambridge Companion To Renaissance Humanism*, 248.
[9] Carlson, *English Humanist Books*, 5.

> In the ensuing years Lydgate continued to enjoy the patronage of several
> members of the Lancastrian kinship nexus . . . [and] late in 1425
> Humphrey, duke of Gloucester commissioned the court poet with the
> composition of the *Serpent of Division* as a supplement to the compact of
> alliance with Bedford and in order further to impress the necessity of joint
> action on his elder brother.[10]

Humphrey had hoped that Lydgate's *Serpent* would inform John, Duke of Bedford, of the importance of Lancastrian unity against the English parliament for the benefit of Henry's last wishes. Susanne Saygin states that the *Serpent* "represents the earliest treatment in English of the civil war in Rome and Caesar's rise to power", focusing on the triumvirate of Crassus, Caesar, and Pompey.[11] It is a reminder to the Duke of Bedford that it is only through unity that success can follow; the disagreements between the Romans reflected Humphrey's ensuing relationships with his brother, Bedford, and his uncle, Henry Beaufort. These two men in particular complicated Humphrey's interpretation of Henry V's intent as to the structure of guardianship of Henry's infant son, and of England.[12] The rift between Humphrey and parliament occurred mainly because the late king's will did not clarify matters on government while Henry VI was in his minority. Humphrey had been made guardian and protector of the child, but the will did not go as far as to say that Gloucester was to be made regent in England and Bedford in France, as Humphrey believed Henry had desired. His view held the "potential for causing controversy and aristocratic friction, particularly as far as the government of England

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[10] Saygin, *Humphrey*, 41.

[11] Saygin. *Humphrey,* 41-7.

[12] "Of these medieval versions, that by Jean de Tuim seems to have influenced Lydgate most strongly; even here, though, he makes several interesting alterations to his text so as to illustrate the damaging effects of self-division for any state." Mortimer, *Fall of Princes*, 83.

was concerned".[13] Humphrey needed allies, but family was not always forthcoming to join his

side. The *Serpent* is unique because it is:

> Lydgate's only prose work, but it is also one of the earliest English
>
> biographies of a secular historical figure. Its intent is to remind the reader
>
> of precedent in triumvirate rule - educating the reader on antiquity.[14]

The commission of the *Serpent* was to refer to Caesar's authority in a similar light to Humphrey's

own ambitions which gives the *Serpent* a humanist intent to inform a political sphere.

Another comment on the intensity that Humphrey's patronage had on humanist literature

comes from Roberto Weiss: "Before Duke Humfrey's time English intellectuals were too

immature to derive any real profit from their occasional contacts with Italian humanism."[15] Yet

one of the primary "intellectuals" that would spring to mind before the duke's personal interest

must be Chaucer who derived a great deal of influence from the Italian humanists such as

Petrarch, and, as evidenced in *Troilus and Criseyde*, from Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*. Robin

Kirkpatrick holds an opposing view when he states that "No English poet makes fuller or more

critical use of Italian sources than Chaucer."[16] Neither Chaucer nor Lydgate is considered the

first English humanist, but they are students of humanism through Chaucer's contact with

humanist works. For Lydgate, some of his education comes through Chaucer "who was familiar

with the work of Petrarch, the poet and ideologist of the Florentine humanistic Renaissance", and

also through further attempts by Humphrey of Gloucester who "offered Lydgate a copy of the

famous *Declamatio* of Lucretian by the Italian humanist Coluccio Salutati as a model of the

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[13] Dockray, *Henry V*, 238.

[14] Nolan, *Making of Public Culture*, 36-7.

[15] Weiss, *Italian Humanism*, 90.

[16] Kirkpatrick, *English and Italian Literature*, 24.

latest kind of Latinity".[17] This system of apprenticeship has been the structure of literature's development, and is markedly so in humanist ideology, the word itself developing from the idea of a liberal education, *humanitas*.[18]

Education is one of the driving forces behind Lydgate's writing. He propounds all the additional details that he has learned from his absorption of literature, and revitalises what Schirmer calls "Guido's dry *Historia*."[19] He actively engages in "a Lancastrian project of promoting an English vernacular tradition of high literary status that could stand beside a long French, and a more recently established Italian, tradition".[20] Lydgate contemporises the Latin work in order to inform a wider audience. Schirmer also presents the opinion that:

> From the *Troy Book* we know that he [Lydgate] had no intention of writing
> a great romance, but an interpretation of life; and here again he is not
> philosophizing in an abstract way about virtue, vice and the need for
> charity, but stating his position on the two burning issues of the day: the
> relations between a ruler and his people, and war and peace.[21]

The *Troy Book*'s issue on moral behaviour is being projected towards the Lancastrian court for two reasons. Primarily it is aimed at Henry to provide exemplars of good kingship, and secondly to pacify the court with the legitimising view that although the Lancastrian monarchy is a new movement, its roots are growing from an ancient line of kings. By recounting the ancient story of Troy, Lydgate uses the classical tale to negate the stigma of usurpation, and endorses Henry's succession to the throne through his familial, military, and personal qualities. Although the son

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[17] Cantor, *The Last Knight*, 204. Pearsall, *Old English*, 231.
[18]   Mann, "The Origins of Humanism", 1.
[19] Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, 45.
[20] Scanlon and Simpson, *Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, 8.
[21] Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, 64.

of the usurper, the text serves as a reminder that the House of Lancaster is still directly related to the Plantagenet kings of Britain. Henry V's ambitions as a soldier and leader correspond with those of his great-grandfather, Edward III, securing their territory in France and making a claim to the French crown. In essence, Henry is presented as the rightful heir via a line of legendary heroes: he is a fifteenth-century Hector.

This glorification of Henry corresponds with Susan Saygin's view when she agrees with Pearsall and Green by describing Lydgate as one of "the leading Lancastrian propagandists."[22] Using Geoffrey of Monmouth's view and including Brutus as being the founder of Britain, Lydgate presents a structure of classical genealogy that can be presented as comparable to that of Henry IV's.[23] Lydgate addresses precedent in antiquity and applies it to contemporary events in order to vindicate the extraordinary. One of the issues to show that Henry IV was a legitimate heir was not through his father John of Gaunt, but through his grandfather Edward III. This approach was done mainly because the Earl of March was the rightful heir to the throne after Richard II - he was the son of Lionel, the next eldest brother to the Black Prince.[24] The Lancastrian line is placed beside the Trojan succession of Aeneas, his son Silvius, and his grandson, Brutus (i.829-36). Aeneas is depicted as the Trojan forefather of a new era, and Lydgate can exploit this idea for the Lancasters with Edward III, John of Gaunt and Henry of Bolingbroke. This provides a precedent to support the tenuous idea that it is through the grandfather that dynasties can be structured, and not necessarily by the order of birth. The

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[22] Saygin, *Humphrey*, 41.

[23] "The most famous and most influential presentation of the myth of Trojan descent was Geoffrey of Monmouth's description, in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (1135), of how Brutus came from Troy to Britiain and founded Troynovant, or New Troy, better known in later years as London, and established the dynasty of British kings." Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 123.

[24] "With Roger's [Mortimer, fourth earl of March] death in 1398, the young Edmund arguably became the heir to the throne, and he remained available as a rallying point for anti-Lancastrian activities throughout the reigns of Henry IV and Henry V, and into the childhood of Henry VI". Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 112.

implication is that both Henry IV and Brutus are founders of new reigns, but: "Once the balm was washed off an anointed king and inheritance of the crown by bloodline was no longer honored, national politics changed."[25] There can be a drawback with such improvisation as Paul Strohm observes:

> Of course, the introduction of a new discursive route (or the revival of an established one) is like the construction of a new highway, whose builders will have limited authority over which vehicles will drive upon it or with what cargo. Official recourse to such varied routes as political prophecy, sensational anecdote, partisan legislation, and legal ingenuity can result in temporary argumentative advantage, but at the cost of opening these same routes to alternative action and imagination, rejoinder or other reply.[26]

Contextually by creating this bypass to support Henry IV, it also creates criteria to allow a wider presumption of challenge to the throne by others. As an example, a basis for ignoring the Earl of March's more legitimate position was that his descent was from the female line:

> Henry [IV] could at least claim to be the male heir, for there was, after all, no written law governing the succession in the middle ages, and precedents from the twelfth century and earlier pointed in different directions. Yet there were undoubtedly many who regarded Henry as a usurper, and this perception of their flawed title was something which the Lancastrians never quite overcame.[27]

This argument against inheritance through women was seriously undermined by the fact that

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[25] Cantor, *The Last Knight*, 219.
[26] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 5-6.
[27] Saul, *Oxford Illustrated History*, 124.

"everyone in England knew that the Plantagenet title to France came through a female line", via Edward III's mother, Isabella.[28] Furthermore, "descent from the March heiress would one day be the basis of the claims of the House of York".[29] From Henry IV's efforts to establish his reign as king to Lydgate's depiction of Henry IV as a reflection of Brutus, the main beneficiary of this lineage is Henry V.

Lydgate recognises that the *Historia* is a tale rather than fact when he uses terms such as "þe story telleþ vs" (ii.207). Even though Lydgate admires Guido's writing - "O Guydo maister, be vn-to thi name, / That excellest by souereinte of stile / Alle that writen this mater to compile" (pr.372-4) - Lydgate is not overpowered by Guido. Guido's historical account is revered because he has pruned it of fantastical elements, and yet Lydgate returns to myth and fantasy as he knows the legend of Troy is a pagan tale; he revives Carlson's "ancient standards and canons of taste".[30] Lydgate translates the account after it has been through the hands of two Christians, Benoit and Guido, and his *Troy Book*'s development is also a reaction to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. Guido's editing gives the impression that his work is a factual account of history, but the *Troy Book* holds:

> All the moral and political lessons which history was expected to teach.
> Into the leisurely unfolding narrative are woven erudition and worldly
> wisdom, exhortation, and didactic sermonizing, all of which combine to
> produce a richly embellished historical structure.[31]

Lydgate understands that through Guido's excoriation a sense of the real antiquity has been lost,

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28 Seward, *A Brief History*, 155.
29 Seward, *A Brief History*, 155.
30 Carlson, *English Humanist Books*, 5.
31 Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, 44.

and Lydgate replaces the omissions to make the tale resemble its original condition for his audience in order "That of the story þe trouth[e] we nat mys" (i.116). If humanism was not an inherent part of Lydgate's writing there would have been less mythology and amplification by him in the *Troy Book*. Schirmer writes that:

> There are three themes in particular which are repeatedly treated in
>
> formal digressions: the theme of transitoriness, which Lydgate sees
>
> as a sermonizing monk, coupling it with general moral and religious
>
> teachings; the theme of war and discord, which as a pacific-minded poet
>
> he holds up for the edification of the rulers and the ruled; and the
>
> humanistic theme, which leads him as a scholar, widely read in the works
>
> which his library contains, to set down proudly and naïvely his knowledge
>
> of history and mythology.[32]

By using Carlson's definition and applying it to the *Troy Book*, there is a strong contention for Lydgate to be viewed as a self-germinating humanist due to his vast absorption of literature. Throughout the *Troy Book* there are multiple references to other sources. Frequently Lydgate produces alternative or additional information which can be found elsewhere whether he seeks it within Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* - "Som goodly worde þer-in to fynde" (ii.4704) - or that the reader in "Stace loketh" (pr.230). He sees the past as a means to instruct intellectually and morally:

> Almost for nouȝt was þis strif be-gonne:
>
> An who list loke, þei han no þing wonne
>
> But only deth, allas, þe harde stounde! (ii.7855-7)

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[32] Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, 47.

For those who are less literate, it is important that the work should break away from Latin, and be read in the vernacular in order to expand its reception as "Syth þat in ryme ynglysch hath skarsete" (ii.168). Lydgate looks to the classical past, and applies its lessons to his own period to elucidate human conduct. If he did not have humanist tendencies he would not have looked back *ad fontes* and presented antiquity with such enthusiasm to his audience.

Myth: Oracles, Deities, Fortune and Philosophy

Lydgate as a Christian author is looking back at pre-Christian era with a religious omniscience that is shared with Guido, yet Lydgate appears to be the more objective and sympathetic observer. Usually, as Peter Kidson remarks, "medieval Christians consulted the classics, if not actually in a spirit of condescension, at least with a consoling smugness that came of knowing higher truths than any accessible to pagan authors".[33] As the *Troy Book* is addressed to a Christian audience, Lydgate certainly does not have the deities personally involved as much as they are in Homer's *Iliad*. Their participation is limited, yet in the *Troy Book* Lydgate activates the gods to be called upon, chastised, and condemned. They have been reduced by Guido in the *Historia*, and yet Lydgate's sense of resurrecting the past correctly includes them. However he does not allow any conflict to arise with Christian belief as Lydgate is confident in his position to be able to present the deities as part of the tale without any form of heresy, and thus he elucidates his audience. With regard to his culture, Lydgate is responding to his environment as he is in the position of being answerable to the Church, and also as a subject to Henry V. The influence of both these authorities is reflected in his work, and Lydgate's writing must also include a confident interpretation of instruction for his king. To substantiate and justify this confidence,

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[33] Kidson, *The Medieval World*, 14.

the work must follow the path of a credited *auctor,* such as Guido. Therefore the translation

from Latin into English offers Lydgate an effective opportunity to become an authority on the

past for the benefit of his king:

> In our own society most knowledge depends, in the last resort, on
>
> observation. But the Middle Ages depended predominantly on books.
>
> Though literacy was of course far rarer then than now, reading was in one
>
> way a more important ingredient of the total culture.[34]

So whatever Lydgate decides to include or omit from the *Historia* will ultimately define the tale's

final shape in the vernacular. The idea of deliberate suppression of mythology is also argued by

Ambrisco and Strohm as being extended to Homer because in the prologue "the specific

accidents for which Homer is criticized are his belief that the Greek gods actually took part in the

affairs of men and his bias toward the Greek forces".[35] This leads them to propose that Lydgate

is participating in an "anti-Homeric sentiment that tends to fault Homer and other classical

writers for the fabulous elements in their works".[36] Guido undoubtedly points the finger at

Homer's *Iliad* as the propagator of error:

> Among them Homer, of greatest authority among the Greeks in his day,
>
> turned the pure and simple truth of his story into deceiving paths,
>
> inventing many things which did not happen and altering those which did
>
> happen. For he maintained that the gods the ancient pagans worshipped
>
> fought against the Trojans and were vanquished with them just like mortal
>
> men. (Meek 1)

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[34] Lewis, *The Discarded Image*, 5.
[35] Ambrisco and Strohm, "Succession and Sovereignty", 46.
[36] Ambrisco and Strohm, "Succession and Sovereignty", 47.

Furthermore, because of these deceits, Homer is held responsible by Guido for the rot that spread into subsequent literature:

> Afterward poets, having followed his error carefully, undertook to
>
> write many misleading things in their books, with the result that they
>
> caused it to be known that Homer was not the only author of falsehoods.
>
> (Meek 1)

Lydgate, on the other hand, comprehends that mythology embodies Troy's history. The tale is grim enough, and the inclusion of the immortals' human failings is for the purpose of illuminating the text. The gods are presented by Lydgate as ethereal and structured around the firmament:

> And Aurora estward doth a-dawe,
>
> And with þe wat*er* of hir teris rou*n*de
>
> Þe siluer dewe causeth to abou*n*de
>
> Vp-on herbis and on floures soote,
>
> For kyndely norissyng boþe of crop & rote. (ii.2388-92)

In contrast Guido is specifically presenting his ideal of genuine history and what he considers superfluous, he believes emerged from misinformed minds. Lydgate does not address the point specifically to the audience that Guido deliberately isolated the *Historia* from fantasy. He commends Guido for recognising that Homer "feyned falsly that goddis in þis caas / . . . howe þat þei wer seye / Lyche lyfly men amonge hem day by day" (pr.272, 274-5). However, within a short space of text, Lydgate neutralises the censure in this statement with "Cupide [is] blynde, whos domys be obseruyd / More after lust than after equite" (pr.286-7).

As Ovid and Virgil are cited as two of Homer's errant followers, Lydgate is in complete agreement with Guido's comments on the quality of those sources:[37]

> Ovide also poetycally hath closyed
>
> Falshede with trouthe, þat makeþ men ennosed
>
> . . . .
>
> Virgile also, for loue of Enee,
>
> In Eneydos rehersyth moche thyng,
>
> And was in party trewe of his writyng. (299-300, 304-6)

Yet their main sources, the writings of "Dictys the Greek and Dares the Phrygian, who were at the time of the Trojan War continually present in their armies and were the most trustworthy reporters of those things which they saw" (Meek 2), are now known to be forged works.[38] In retrospect this demolishes Guido's noble attempt to compile his true and accurate picture of the Trojan war, whereas Lydgate has considered and treated Guido's history as a fable to be played with from the beginning. Kidson describes the Italian humanists as making an ideal out of antiquity, and using it as "a yardstick of excellence whereby they could judge men, literature and art."[39] Lydgate provides an example of this discernment which is typified with a translation of the Myrmidons' origins. Guido's account refers to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and compresses the description into a few lines:

> These Myrmidons were ants transformed into men by prayers directed to
>
> the gods by a king of Thessaly, at the time when the whole populace of the
>
> kingdom of Thessaly had sickened and finally died of a deadly plague, and

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[37] Meek, 1-2.

[38] *CND*, 110, 119-20.

[39] Kidson, *The Medieval World*, 13.

only the king was left. He was near the roots of a certain tree in a certain

grove when he noticed in the same place the scurrying lines of

innumerable ants, and he prayed humbly that they be made into men.

(Meek 3)

This account is far too brief for Lydgate, and he acknowledges Guido's minor reference with the

comment, "So as myn auctor maketh mencioun" (i.13); Lydgate cannot resist embellishing the

story further in order to make it more graphic. The deep woe of the king is described, "Sool by

hym silfe, al disconsolate, / In a place that stood al discolat" (i.29-30) and his pleas to the gods

are aided with a "humble sacrifyse" (i.42). Of all the gods it is "Iubiter herde his orisoun" (i.52)

and turns the ants into men, who instantly are at the service of this king. The Myrmidons are

famous for their industry in summer and being prepared for winter with their stores. Lydgate

reasonably proffers his own conclusion to the audience: "As I suppose in myn opinioun, / That

this fable of amptis was contrived" (i.74-5). Where Guido mentions that the source of the tale is

Ovid, Lydgate actually recounts it for his patron. Both mention St. Matthew residing there, but

interestingly Lydgate does not elaborate further on St. Matthew. It is possible that Lydgate does

not know for certain, and he is not willing to proffer a guess:

Ancient writers are not as one as to the countries evangelized by Matthew,

but almost all mention Ethiopia to the south of the Caspian Sea (not

Ethiopia in Africa) and some Persia and the kingdom of the Parthians,

Macedonia and Syria.[40]

Instead Lydgate is more concerned with the pre-Christian era, and continues with Troy, drawing

on the virtues of the legendary Myrmidons who, like ants, "eschewen ydelnesse" (i.83).

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[40] Jacquier, "St. Mathew", 9 Sept. 2010.

Lydgate's knowledge and treatment of Medea is another adaptation from an archaic to a contemporary view. She is viewed as an enchantress, but Lydgate feels that Ovid has made too much of her powers, "Yit God forbede we schulde ʒif credence" (i.1711). Christian reason prevails with Lydgate and he disbelieves that her power borders on the divine, but these are not the only views that he has about Medea. Lydgate humanises her; she is a woman, a daughter, and a jilted lover. She is presented as a courtly, educated woman by Lydgate "Al-be sche were a passyng sorceresse" (i.1797). Lydgate's retrospection highlights Medea as a victim in the tale to Jason's selfishness and betrayal, and empathises with her to the extent that she has been deceived by the Greek hero who later abandons his promises: "Hath her my trouþe whil I haue life & mynde, / As in þe ende trewly ʒe schal fynde" (i.2705-6).

A further example of the gods hearing prayers occurs when Agamemnon decides to send messengers to consult Apollo at the god's birthplace, the island of Delphos (or Delos). Achilles and Patroclus are entrusted with the question about the propitiousness of the forthcoming attack on Troy.[41] This act of consulting an oracle for knowledge of future events is alien, especially within a Christian context, as it is held that only God knows and proposes what is in store for mankind, and that is to be concealed until Judgement Day:

> But the answers which were given by them were given not by them but by
>
> those who walked about in their images. who were surely unclean spirits,
>
> so that through their answers men were kept in the perpetual blindness of
>
> error. (Meek 91)

Agamemnon's desire to seek guidance from the island of Delphos leads Guido not only to write of the island's history, but also to write a diversion on the origins of pagan faith. Guido cannot

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[41] Meek, 90.

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ignore the possibility of the attraction that an oracle would have to a reader's mind, and he is moved to describe the history of idolatry, and its destruction by Christianity, to counteract any fanciful beliefs that such a passage would excite.[42]

Conversely, it is not easy for Guido to disprove this function of predicting the future, and, as much he would like to discredit the practice of divination, his honesty makes him record an event depicted in the Old Testament where there is a record of such practice. These diviners or oracles here are linked specifically to the god Apollo:

> Likewise the same Apollo was called Pythias from the python serpent
>
> killed by him. From this, certain women skilled in predicting the future
>
> were called pythonesses, since the same Apollo prophesied to them at their
>
> request. (Meek 90)

Surprisingly, what Guido does next is to link a pythoness to a woman with a divining spirit at Endor.[43] "It is written about this pythoness in the Old Testament, in the First Book of Kings, that at the prayer of King Saul, she made Samuel stir when he had been dead a long time" (Meek 90-1).[44] Guido is not disturbed by this passage and he moves forward to assert the extinction of idolatry:

> However, how idolatry came into being and had its evil beginning, and
>
> how answers were given by unclean spirits, since we now have the
>
> opportunity, we have taken care to describe briefly in this place, and how
>
> the aforesaid idolatry was ended, when through the glorious coming of
>
> Our Lord Jesus Christ, all the idolatry in the world ceased on all sides and

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[42] Meek, 91-4.
[43] Kings 1:28. The Holy Bible, 367.
[44] Kings 1:28. The Holy Bible, 367.

vanished completely on account of its exhausted vigor. (Meek 91)

Guido states that, with Christ in Egypt, "all the idols in Egypt fell down together, and there was not one idol to be found in Egypt, which was not torn to pieces" (Meek 91). Guido bases his argument on the fact that the idols that were worshipped were only the images of dead men, and those images that allegedly divined man's questions, were possessed by unclean spirits. His explanation is that Lucifer had entered these statues and caused mischief by speaking from them. By these means men "clung to the worship of deaf and dumb gods, who assuredly had been mortal men, believing and considering that those who had no power were gods" (Meek 91). To explain the origin of these unclean spirits Guido leads the reader to Satan's history and, interestingly, Guido says that "we have decided to describe it in a short account in this place" (Meek 93) - but, by whom does Guido mean "we"? In her notes, Mary Meek states that "the *Prose Roman* also has a digression on idolatry at this point, and so does Joseph of Exeter . . . but these are little more than the orthodox criticisms of the credulousness of the pagans for believing in oracles" (Meek 292). The *Historia* is not commissioned and it does not have a patron behind it. It is a self-motivated work which in the epilogue Guido states that the *Historia* was begun at the suggestion of his friend, Lord Matteo da Porta, who was Guido's "stimulus and impetus for me to take up the present work" (Meek 265).

Although the passage on idolatry itself is relatively short, it is a substantial diversion from the action of the Greeks. It also includes descriptions of different gods and their followers, and it is also accompanied by the judgement that the pagans knew no better. The garden of Eden is described and how the devil took on the appearance of a serpent with a woman's face to deceive Adam and Eve. His jealousy of them, as Lucifer was formerly held in esteem by God,

entrapped mankind into a fate of misery. Lydgate follows faithfully Guido's diversion, but sets

its intent as an entertaining and instructive lesson for the reader:

> Þis þe cause, for ouȝt I can espie,
>
> For þat he sawe þe mat*er* was nat knowe
>
> I-liche wel, boþe to hiȝe and lowe;
>
> Par aventure ȝou to do plesau*n*ce,
>
> He ha*th* þe grou*n*de put in remembrau*n*ce
>
> Of false goddis & of mawmetrie, (ii.5928-33)

Lydgate is not apprehensive about his audience being corrupted - "antiquity could be regarded as

a temptation either to be risked or resisted" by the Church[45] - and he becomes more informative,

adding more details and tales with his own style to the text. He describes Saturn's children, and

further on Romulus is added to the history of Rome's religion.[46] Where Guido only names one

deity per people, Lydgate expands on this further by including the gods' own contemporaries.

Guido has Beelzebub developing from the name of the idol of King Belus: "King Ninus

worshipped this image [of his father, Belus] as if it were a god and ordered it to be worshipped

by his people" (Meek 93). Lydgate breaks down the name "Belȝebub" further as to mean "god

of flyes" which is not in Guido's *Historia*. He also adds that "Ysis" is the daughter of

"Ynachus".[47] Guido's reference to the demons and idols must have made an impression on

Lydgate because later in his *Siege of Thebes* Lydgate writes:

> And whan Edyppus be gret devocioun

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[45] Kidson, *The Medieval World*, 14.

[46] *TB* ii.5556-624.

[47] Isis and Inachus (ii.5625-6). Lydgate mixes Egyptian and Greek mythology here. Bergen in his notes says Lydgate does not "supply any basis" for this addition. Bergen, 140.

Fynysshed hath fully his orysoun,

The fend anon withinnen invisyble

With a vois dredful and horrible

Bad hym in hast taken his viage. (ST i.551-5)

Guido portrays humankind as being deceived by unclean spirits in the idols, but Lydgate

considers that worshipping idols is due to fear of the unknown, and a very real fear of kings.[48]

He understands that the idols are "Made aft*er* man, his ymage to expresse" (ii.5518), to subjugate

society.

However, at the same time that Lydgate is asserting his faith, "Yit God forbede we

schulde ȝif credence / To swyche feynyng" (i.1711-2), he makes free use of this literary,

mythological world of the *Troy Book*. Lydgate often refers to the Greek goddess, Tyche, or

"Fortune and hir whele" (i.2046), as she is known to Lydgate.[49] She haunts the text when there is

human suffering, and Lydgate presents the credence that echoes Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*

when Troilus claims: "For wel fynde I that Fortune is my fo."[50] In his introduction to the

Consolation of Philosophy, V.E. Watts comments that "almost all the passages of philosophical

reflection of any length in the works of Chaucer can be traced to Boethius".[51] Lydgate refers to

Boethius by name in his poem, "On the Wretchedness of Worldly Affairs":

Boys in his booke of Consolacioune,

Writethe and rehersithe fortunes variaunce,

And makithe there a playne discripcioune,

---

[48] *TB* ii.5520.
[49] Hornblower and Spawforth, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 1566, 606.
[50] *Troilus and Criseyde*, i.837.
[51] Boethius, *Consolation*, 16.

To trust on hir ther is none assuraunce. (WWA 9-12)[52]

Boethius complains to Philosophy about the "severity of Fortune's attack" upon him,[53] and she is used by Lydgate to highlight imperfections of life: poverty, betrayal, and injustice. When Achilles plans the destruction of Troilus, Guido states that "Achilles never killed any valiant man except by treachery" (Meek 198). Lydgate is inclined to be persuaded by Troilus's, or Chaucer's, reasoning that misery is due to this outside force:

> But whan Fortune haþe a þing ordeyned,
>
> Þouȝ it be euere wailled and compleined,
>
> Þer is no geyn nor no remedie
>
> Þouȝ men on it galen ay & crye. (iv.2683-6)

Fortune is carried through the text predominantly as a harbinger of torment. Although her wheel is supposed to revolve to prosperity as well - "Þis gery Fortune, þis lady reccheles, / Þe blynde goddesse of transmutacioun" (i.754-5) - it does not provide anything but grief. Primarily Fortune is focused on the fates of the monarchs in the *Troy Book*; the coincidence of Calchas and Achilles being sent to consult the same oracle at the same time strengthens the idea of Fortune's wheel.[54] It suggests that this is the moment that Fortune becomes active, and the Greeks will be raised by the wheel, while the Trojans will be cast down from affluence. It offers an incongruous and informed warning to the Christian Henry that neither rank nor virtue is a guarantee of protection as the fates of Laomedon, Priam, Penthesilea, Agamemnon, and Hecuba prove.

In the *Consolation of Philosopy* Boethius' Philosophy role-plays Fortune's defensive voice and reminds him that Fortune is naturally mutable:

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[52] Lydgate, "On the Wretchedness", 122.

[53] Boethius, *Consolation*, 43.

[54] *TB* ii.5936-6012.

Shall man's insatiable greed bind me to a constancy which is alien to my

ways? Inconstancy is my very essence; it is the game I never cease to play

as I turn my wheel in its ever-changing circle, filled with joy as I bring the

top to the bottom and the bottom to the top. Yes, rise up on my wheel if

you like, but don't count it an injury when by the same token you begin to

fall, as the rules of the game will require.[55]

Priam's rash gamble in the Greek game for revenge ultimately leads to Troy's fall because he

believes "these ups and downs of Fortune happen haphazardly",[56] and he is convinced that a fall

is not inevitable. This is even further compounded by the fact that the Trojans are well aware

that they are outnumbered by the Greeks as evident by Hector's speech:[57]

For þouȝ al Asye help vs in our nede,

ȝif it be likid on eu*er*y part ariȝt,

Þei be nat egal vn-to Grekis myȝt. (ii.2276-8)

Although Guido writes in order to use the tale so that such a tragedy will not happen again,

Lydgate is fully aware that Henry V's policy is to gain the French crown because the king

believes that it is his divine right "To sette rest atwene Inglaund and Fraunce" (WWA 105).

Malcolm Hebron holds the view that:

The sieges of Thebes and Troy are not presented in medieval treatments

primarily as the fulfilment of God's purpose . . . but as examples of the

inevitable collapse of great cities, kingdoms, and royal houses. They mark

a revolution in the wheel of Fortune that is to be repeated at different

---

[55] Boethius, *Consolation*, 60.

[56] Boethius, *Consolation*, 55.

[57]   *TB*, ii.2266-303.

moments in history.[58]

Lydgate is resigned to the fate that England is at war, but he impresses the idea that Fortune, or surreptitiously God's favour, may not always shine on Henry: "Hector was slayne also of Achilles, / As he hym mette unwarly in bataile" (WWA 65-6). Lydgate believes that it is preferable to follow the council of peace rather than that of war. At the same time, Lydgate must be careful not to show a lack of faith in his king's ambitions. The idea of a premonition of failure in war, or differing views on moral right is not an acceptable excuse to abandon a king whose reign is divinely ordained. It is also not acceptable for the king to act like Priam; recklessly toy with his subjects' lives when motivated by pride, revenge or by greed. Schirmer suggests the idea that Lydgate had to choose his words carefully:

> In the *Troy Book*, written under patronage, Lydgate could not speak so openly. In
>
> his *Siege of Thebes* he speaks his own mind, and can dare do so since the Treaty
>
> of Troyes recently concluded promised to inaugurate a new era.[59]

It must not be thought that Lydgate is always grave on matters in the *Troy Book*. Lydgate has humorous slants on mythology such as when it comes to inebriation:

> And so*m*me of hem þat Bachus serue & sewe,
>
> Amonge to hym haue swiche deuociou*n*
>
> Þat þei som while ar voide of al resou*n*,
>
> Hasty and wood, & wiþ-oute al drede. (ii.5748-51)

Another aspect of Lydgate exhibiting some amusement is when he embellishes Paris' encounter with the goddesses. Lydgate portrays Paris as a lustful soul whose view of women is quite

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[58]   Hebron, *The Medieval Siege*, 92-3.
[59]   Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, 65.

comical - he is the Trojan philanderer. He is called upon to judge the beauty of three goddesses, "Cithera, whom louer[e]s serue, / Iuno, and Pallas þat callid is Minerue" (ii.2519-20). Paris proves that he possesses the right characteristic for the task: he is superficial. In both accounts he has the temerity to ask the goddesses to undress so that he might "haue fully libertte / Eueryche of hem avisely to se" (ii.2749-50). Lydgate's Athena is armed with a spear and shield, and her war-like appearance does not diminish Paris' impudence in requesting the goddesses to remove their clothing:

> And þei anoon, as ȝe haue herde me seie,
>
> To my desyre mekely gan obeie,
>
> In al hast to don her besy cure
>
> Hem to dispoille of cloþing & vesture.
>
> Liche as þe statut of my dom hem bonde. (ii.2755-9)

It is blatantly Paris' desire that overpowers reasonable thought. He awards Venus with the apple because she appears as a "fresche lusty quene" (ii. 2776) to him. His request breaks the rules between the human and the divine. Actaeon was punished by Artemis when he saw her undressed. He "inadvertently came upon Artemis bathing naked, was turned by her into a stag, and torn to pieces by his own hounds".[60]

In Mercury's address to Paris, Lydgate reveals that the goddess Discord is responsible for the golden apple in the first place. Discord is the prime example of a vindictive goddess as she is not invited to Jupiter's feast, therefore her intent is revenge, and she uses the apple to create jealousy among the guests. Discord "Hath þis appil, passyng of delit, / Brouȝt to þis fest, of malis and despit" (ii.2655-6). The allusion of Discord's premeditated malevolence is wasted on

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[60] Radice, *Who's Who*, 48.

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Paris, as he is absorbed by novelty and self-indulgence. A foretaste of his selfishness is evident

when he pursues the hart into the forest. His own desires surmount everything else, and Lydgate

depicts this with the treatment of the horse. Lydgate portrays Paris' horse in a far more distressed

state than Guido does after the hunt:

> And myn hors on whiche I dide ryde,
>
> Fomyng ful whit [vp-]on eu*ery* syde,
>
> And his flankis al w*ith* blood disteyned,
>
> In my pursute so sore he was constreyned
>
> W*ith* my sporis, scharp and dyed rede,
>
> After þe hert so priked I my stede. (ii.2439-44)

The imagery here amplifies Chaucer's lines in Sir Thopas from *The Canterbury Tales*:

> His faire steede in his prikynge
>
> So swatte that men myghte him wrynge;
>
> His sydes were al blood. (vii.775-7)[61]

Lydgate demonstrates Paris' obstinacy in such a little matter as a deer hunt, and when the hunt is

for a Greek woman, the abuse of his horse microcosmically represents the future neglect of Troy.

What makes it evident that Paris has walked into a hazard is Mercury's position as a mediator

between the divine and the earthly. It suggests that even the gods thought it impossible to

achieve a satisfactory judgement when vanity is present. Paris does not question the prudence of

his adjudication: if the gods are reluctant to make a decision then surely even the gods must be

afraid to become involved in this squabble. The deities suffer petty emotions of jealousy, and

Paris' ultimate judgement causes further complications as the slighted goddesses will take sides

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[61] *RC*, 214.

when the war begins. Numerically for Paris, there are now two goddesses against one, both of whom are raging with Paris' decision.

Lydgate provides a sharp diversity between his monotheism, and what he sees as a belief of a polar opposite - a multitude of gods on Mount Olympus that are acting like a divided committee. Yet they are in complete agreement when discord arises; they need to seek a mortal as they are afraid to make a decision. This parody contemporises the deities more for Lydgate's audience, and strongly contrasts with Guido, who suppresses their participation in his *Historia*. A prime example of Guido suppressing the divine is in Achilles' mother, Thetis. Her Homeric immortality is omitted by Guido, and she is humanised as the daughter of King Acastus, and wife of King Peleus.[62] She becomes a more earthly presence in the *Troy Book* as Lydgate has her as Peleus' companion in his exile. Acastus banishes Thetis and Peleus who: "He beraft hym boþe septer and crowne . . . He made hym go w*ith* Thetides his wif" (v.2335, 2338). When Pyrrhus returns to avenge Peleus and is about to kill Acastus, Thetis appears and physically restrains her grandson - perhaps the only concession to give her superiority over a mortal: "At once Thetis, by embracing him strongly, seized the arm with which he was holding the sword in his hand, so that he could not raise it for a blow against King Acastus" (Meek 256). Lydgate is even surprised by this event, and turns it into a possible suicidal and self-sacrificing act by Thetis for her father and - most importantly - her former king:

> But wonderly, þe story can ȝow lere,
>
> Quene Thetides dide anoon appere,
>
> Al be-reyned w*ith* terys on hir face,

---

[62] Meek 252-3. "Thetis, daughter of Nereus, an old sea god, was Achilles' mother. Since it was foretold that she would bear a son greater than his father, Jupiter and Poseidon decided to marry her to a mortal." *CND*, 349.

>   And gan þe swerd of Pirrus to embrace,
>
>   Preiyng hi*m* his dedly hond restreyne. (v.2563-7)

Lydgate puts Thetis into a more vulnerable position - she is not physically restraining his arm, but embracing his blade. Lydgate emphasises the acute selflessness of her act in order to preserve the king. One error, or movement by Pyrrhus would cause the blade to run through her. She epitomises the genuine, fifteenth-century feudal subject's loyalty by valuing her king and husband above her own life.

The Observances of Religion: heresy and hypocrisy

Lydgate's emphasis on loyalty to the king and Christian idealism is amalgamated into the *Troy Book*'s pagan world which permits the tales to be easily manipulated into ideals of political conduct to be used as guides towards virtuous rule.[63] Lydgate is primarily advocating loyalty to the king, even when it opposes personal religious belief. Lydgate endorses Henry's conviction of feudal loyalty coming first which includes Henry's belief that the king's ambitions should be supported by the Church as well:

>   Henry V . . . saw church and state almost as two aspects of a militia of
>
>   moral right, with himself dominant as its leader. Devout in the extreme,
>
>   he persecuted the Lollards (partly to placate a jealous God, partly to
>
>   suppress a sect which, with some justification, he regarded as traitors as
>
>   well as heretics) . . . and at the same time rigidly excluded the pope from

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[63] "For it was common practice to regard history as a mirror of the present and a guide to action; and Lydgate made use of every opportunity that presented itself, even at the cost of the narrative, to make the practical moral applications of his story clear to the reader." Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, 47.

the exercise of any practical power in the English church.[64]

In the fourteenth century, "England was experiencing her first serious outbreak of heresy for nearly a millenium",[65] and during the period of the *Troy Book*'s composition was an active time of royal hatred towards the Lollards.[66] They were accused of heresy and sedition against Henry V, and in 1414 an attempt was made on his life:

> And þis same yere were take L[oll]ardez and heretikes þat hadde purposed
>
> throgh her false treson to haue slayn þe kynge and the lordes spirituell and
>
> temporell and destroye[d] all the clergie off þe reame.[67]

Lollard influence permeated all classes as Sir John Oldcastle, one of Henry's oldest friends, was involved in the Lollard revolt of 1414. Its failure resulted in Oldcastle going into hiding until he was captured and executed in 1417.[68] According to Bishop Pecock, there were three Lollard "trowings":

> The first, that no precept of the moral law is to be esteemed a law of
>
> God unless it is grounded in scripture: the second, that every humble-
>
> minded Christian man or woman, the meeker he or she is, can arrive at the
>
> true sense of scripture; and that when the true sense of scripture has been
>
> reached, the believer should listen to no argument of clerks to the
>
> contrary.[69]

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[64] Lander, *Conflict and Stability*, 55.

[65] Saul, *Oxford Illustrated History*, 121.

[66] "Anti-Church sentiment also featured prominently in the rebels' rhetoric, reflecting the fact that Lollardy, as it is called, drew its intellectual inspiration from the radical theological speculation of the Oxford master John Wyclif on matters such as transubstantiation and predestination." Saul, *Oxford Illustrated History*, 119-21.

[67] Marx, *An English Chronicle*, 42.

[68] Hicks, *Who's Who in Late Medieval England*, 205-6.

[69] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 282-3.

It is because of these occurrences that Lydgate is more condemnatory in his version of pagan

priests when compared to Guido - a reflection of clerical and political establishment views

commonly held against Lollardy - and it is also arguable that Lydgate shared with Chaucer

similar sentiments towards dubious religious authority.

Lydgate is unreservedly hostile towards the treacherous Trojan priest, Calchas, who is

also the mutable Cryseyde's father. Calchas' role as a pagan priest gives Lydgate an opportunity

to echo Chaucer's characters in *The Canterbury Tales,* and actively denounce Calchas, as the

"olde shrewe, w*ith* al his prophesie" (iv.6651). Initially Lydgate's introduction of the "bischop"

(ii.5976) is respectful; Calchas is "a man of gret science" (ii.5981). Even though the priest is

clearly pagan, and observes the "ritys . . . Like þe custom with þe circumstau*n*ces" (ii.5991-2),

Lydgate does not excuse but condemns Calchas' actions as those of a liar, rather than those of a

diviner. Lydgate's viewpoint on the priest complements Chaucer's tacit opinions on certain

clerics as argued by Alcuin Blamires in relation to *The Canterbury Tales*:

> The Prologue is quite ready to detail *their* exploitative habits. We only have to
>
> remember that the Friar can extract a coin even from an impoverished widow; that
>
> the Pardoner contemptuously swindles country folk; and that the Summoner's
>
> extortion racket has a price for everything.[70]

Lydgate reflects this rapacious sentiment towards the Trojan priest, Thoans, - the guardian of the

Palladium - who succumbs to Antenor's bribery:[71]

> But ofte sithe it happeth me*n* p*ur*chase
>
> By ȝifte of good, to speke i*n* wordis pleyn,

---

[70] Blamires, "Chaucer the Reactionary", 533.

[71] Meek 219.

> Þat trouþe in pouert myȝt neuer atteyne:
>
> For mede more by falshede may conquere
>
> Þan title of riȝt, þat men in trouþe lere. (iv.5812-6)

The priest at first is reluctant to "assent to so foule a dede" (iv.5810), but avarice eventually overcomes his scruples. In *The Canterbury Tales* when the Pardoner addresses the other pilgrims about his "relikes", the character is portrayed as unrepentantly grasping:

> And, sires, also it heeleth jalousie;
>
> For though a man be falle in jalous rage,
>
> Lat maken with this water his potage,
>
> And nevere shal he moore his wyf mystriste,
>
> Though he the soothe of hir defaute wiste,
>
> Al had she taken prestes two or thre.[72]

This greed is in marked contrast to Lydgate's recuperating monk with his "thredbar hood" (*ST* 90) in his *Siege of Thebes*:

> Monk of Bery, nygh fyfty yere of age,
>
> Come to this toune to do my pilgrimage,
>
> As I have hight. I ha therof no shame. (*ST* 93-5)[73]

For Chaucer, the Pardoner displays the hypocritical immorality among the clergy as they defraud their flocks and share carnal knowledge of married women. Chaucer's viewpoint is perpetuated by Lydgate and instead of protecting the miscreants within the clergy, Lydgate is more likely to support justified, anticlerical feeling in the *Troy Book* when there has been an abuse of power.

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[72] Chaucer, *The Pardoner's Prologue*, (366-71).
[73] Lydgate, *The Siege of Thebes*, 31.

Lydgate does not limit this prejudice to the lower levels of the clergy as he recognises that corruption can be anywhere. He demonstrates this by making Calchas a more authoritative figure in the *Troy Book* who becomes a bishop in contrast to Guido's mere "Trojan priest" (Meek 95). This elevation corresponds with Lydgate's ambition of advising princes, blending together the officers of spiritual and lay societies:

> Other estates satires of the period usually complement this type of
>
> emphasis on predatory religious operators with a similar emphasis on
>
> secular abuses of lordship and of law.[74]

Why does Lydgate diverge from the idea of a priest as the voice of the gods to such an extent, and why does he specifically target Calchas? Cassandra does not receive such condemnation for her pagan observances: "it was þe more rouȝe - / Sche was nat herde, al-be sche seide trouȝ[t]h" (iii.2295-6).

Primarily, Lydgate's dislike arises from Calchas's betrayal of Priam. Calchas abandons Troy to the Greeks, but that action is plainly due to Calchas' observance of Apollo's instructions. At the same temple Achilles is promised a Greek victory whereas Calchas is warned not to return to Troy as the city will be destroyed. Calchas does not have any alternative other than to be obedient to his god:

> Be riȝt wel war þat þou ne *tur*ne ageyn
>
> To Troye tou*n*, for þat wer but in veyn;
>
> For finally, lerne þis of me,
>
> In schort tyme it schal distroyed be -
>
> Þis is in soth, whiche may nat be denyed. (ii.5999-6003)

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[74] Blamires, "Chaucer the Reactionary", 533.

Calchas abandoning Priam to his fate under instruction from Apollo corresponds with the idea that the Lollards' beliefs separate them from their king, and are a contradiction to feudal order. This abandonment is best reflected to Henry in 1414 with Sir John Oldcastle's rebellion; treason can be found even in the most trusted retainer.

Calchas' second crime to Lydgate is the further betrayal of Polyxena. Here Lydgate is not only condemning pagan practices, but also the reasoning behind them. Why was it necessary to sacrifice Polyxena when the Trojans had already followed Cassandra's advice to appease Apollo, and Polyxena must now "By sacrifice to queme his deiete" (iv.6668)? Because of this religious ambiguity, and the inconstancy of Calchas' loyalty as a retainer, this would lead to a society that Chaucer describes in his *Lak of Stedfastnesse* where:

> Trouthe is put doun, resoun is holden fable,
>
> Vertu hath now no dominacioun;
>
> Pitee exyled, no man is merciable.[75]

Lydgate sees Calchas as a fraud and a liar (iv.6650-2) who has already betrayed Troy and the value of his corrupt divination is contemptible. Lydgate puts these acts into perspective as Calchas' abuse of his position is a far greater crime than his daughter's amorous failings. He is used by Lydgate as an example of treachery that can surface even in the most deeply religious, and respected friends:

> Who þat swereth falsly in his speche,
>
> Florisshinge outward by a fair colour
>
> For to desseive his trewe neȝ[e]bour,
>
> He is forsworn, what-so-eu*er*e he be! (iv.6138-41)

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[75] Chaucer, "Lak of Stedfastnesse", (15-7).

Lydgate sees betrayal as heinous and wicked. An abandonment of *trouthe*, especially a feudal one, is reprehensible.

The *Troy Book* epitomises the idea of a commitment to loyalty to God and king, and through classical literature it revives a canon of principles that are applicable to a Christian ethos. Lydgate breathes new life into the tragedy of Troy, and approaches it with a humanist ideal in order to educate the Lancastrian court to maintain higher principles with relevance to religious, feudal and political societies. Lydgate's medieval values are blended with classical history in order to bring an educational and an alternative perspective to his audience. Lydgate's *Troy Book* is not merely a translation of Guido's *Historia*, but also a reflection of antiquity that illuminates contemporary and military life of the early fifteenth century for its audience. "While Chaucer readily grasped the significance of Renaissance humanism's capacity for a more modern psychological insight, and William Langland's poem [Piers Plowman] expressed submerged proletarian rumblings",[76] Lydgate educates his audience and his ambitious king on moral conduct with the *Troy Book*. He is, as Carlson defines, putting Guido's, Chaucer's, and his own "understanding of antiquity so gained to work . . . within contemporary society".[77]

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[76] Cantor, *The Last Knight*, 227.
[77] Carlson, *English Humanist Books*, 5.

Women: In Defence of Lydgate

> Writing women into warfare allows for the opposition of passive and
>
> active, the exploitation of shock, pity and horror, and the possibility of
>
> setting against the structures of the political, military world an ethic of
>
> pity, mercy and reconciliation - the desire for peace over war.[1]

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the nature of Lydgate's portrayal of the female

characters in the *Troy Book*. Lydgate's *Troy Book* is not to become a vehicle for male prejudices

against women; Richard Green states that "Doubtless, when Henry V commanded Lydgate to

write the fall of Troy . . . he had in mind the glory of Troynovant on the banks of the Thames."[2]

Therefore Lydgate's *Troy Book* was intended to be a comprehensive English tome so that "þe

trouthe we nat mys / No more than doth eche naciou*n*" (pr.116-7). Lydgate amplifies but also

refines Guido's *Historia*, making it more acceptable to the taste of Henry V's court audience.

This effort on Lydgate's part concurs with Paul Strohm's theory that "a successful artist adapts

both content and style to the requirements and capacity of the intended audience".[3] However the

successful artist's manipulation can compromise the reader's acceptance of Lydgate's sincerity. It

cannot be trusted that the *Troy Book*'s content alone proves that Lydgate was a champion for

upholding women's integrity as it is possible that Lydgate was only accommodating his

audience's current taste. However, there is a consistent effort by Lydgate in the *Troy Book* to

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[1] Saunders, "Women And Warfare", 188.
[2] Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, 197.
[3] Strohm, *Social Chaucer*, 46.

rehabilitate the presentation of female characters that have received a stereotypical reception of negativity. When they depart from society's precepts, Lydgate treats their plight with sympathy and makes an effort to bring the audience's viewpoint to view them with charity. He humanises the characters and makes their actions relative to their situation, rather than abandoning them to myth. The interest that Lydgate has in these characters, and the effort he makes in his writing to present women as individuals negates the idea that he is either indifferent or a misogynist.

Lydgate has been accused of being disgruntled by the opposite sex, as well as of displaying indifference. For example, on reading *Complaynt Lydegate*, John Shirley added in the margin: "be stille daun Johan such is youre fortune" with women.[4] There is the suggestion from Derek Pearsall that it is doubtful that Lydgate "thought much about them at all".[5] However, these differing viewpoints do not tally with the vivid and dynamic female characters that are presented by Lydgate in the *Troy Book*. In order to discuss the subject of Lydgate's women, the *Historia* has to be examined as the basis for Lydgate's revisions. Guido's comments are not always flattering, and Lydgate is obliged to translate them, but he follows this with reprimands to Guido for his ill-feeling towards women. So why does Lydgate enlarge on the virtues of female characters, giving them more credibility as human agents rather than following Guido's views of them as being the root of all man's misfortune, as well as the medieval church's opinion to which Lydgate should be a fully paid-up member?

In order to be able to approach this question, the *Troy Book*'s women have been divided into four main categories. The first category is the Trojan women within the walls of Troy, trapped by the siege. Second is the outsider group of Amazon women, who voluntarily come to

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[4] Brusendorff, *The Chaucer Tradition*, 461.
[5] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 238.

Troy's aid. Third are the Greek and Trojan women who are in transitional positions; these are women who are transferred between warring camps, and displaced from their homes. Last of all are the Greek women who are waiting for their husbands' return with varying degrees of anticipation. These four groups provide a wide spectrum of female characters as examples of Lydgate's attitude towards women. They can be used to base a discussion on Lydgate's and Guido's presentation of women, and Lydgate's domestication of Guido's work. These females are all aristocratic, but they represent a varied range of relationship roles: wives, mothers, daughters, and maidens. These are not stereotypically represented as their only roles; their participation in the *Troy Book* varies from villainous, innocent, victims, lovers and warriors. Women are vital in the *Troy Book* to Lydgate, as they are part of the whole tale, and for it to represent a vibrant courtly society, women are recognised as necessary.

Each female character depicted by Lydgate has an identity of her own, and a personality which differs from Guido's one-dimensional characters. It is Guido's sentiments concerning women that put Lydgate in the difficult position of having to retract his earlier approbation of Guido:

> Þus Guydo ay, of cursid fals delit,
>
> To speke hem harme haþ kauȝt an appetit,
>
> Þoruȝ-oute his boke of wommen to seyn ille,
>
> Þat to translate it is ageyn my wille. (ii.3555-8)

In the Prologue, Lydgate has undertaken to follow Guido "That excellent by souereinte of stile" (pr.373), but by Book II Guido is no longer an endearing "maister" (pr.372) to Lydgate; Guido is dated. He is not expressing and regurgitating Guido's views, but Lydgate finds instead that he is

frequently arguing with Guido's sentiments in the *Historia*. Reasonably, Lydgate fears how the translation of such misogyny might reflect upon him, and he is particularly anxious that his views are not conflated with Guido's opinions. As a translator it should be unnecessary for Lydgate to make any further comments than those that are in the original, yet he is often moved to reproach Guido and chastise the male characters within the text when they display poor conduct towards women.

As the *Troy Book* is intended to be presented to Henry and his court, its role is that of an advisory nature, and therefore it should be viewed as a reflection of the court conduct that Henry would ideally like to project. Guido's misogynistic remarks need to be assuaged by Lydgate's defence of women in order not to alienate the female members of the court. These women would not only have the attention of prospective, patriarchal patrons, but like Margaret, the Countess of Shrewsbury or the dowager queen Catherine, they could become sponsors of literature as well.[6]

Trojan Women: "Allas! whi ar ȝe now no more credible / To my conseil swiche harmys to eschewe." [7]

In the Trojan group, the primary female characters to be discussed are Hecuba, Polyxena, Cassandra and Andromache, all of whom are closely connected to Priam: they are his wife, two daughters, and his daughter-in-law respectively. They are examples of lives that are destroyed by the rotations of Fortune's Wheel. Hecuba's and Polyxena's fates are tightly intertwined with one another, and it is important to examine this mother and daughter relationship as a whole. Hecuba is presented as a model of regal virtue, but she is also a complex character as she is capable of

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6 See Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 167. Also *Vernacular*, 42.
7 *TB*, ii.3260-1.

deceit and murder. It is through her machinations of revenge that she indirectly causes

Polyxena's death. Hecuba is not a passive model of a victim, but one who has freedom, and

choice like the Amazon queen. It is, however, the disastrous decisions that she makes that lead

her to murder, grief, and eventually insanity. By stepping outside the ideals of virtue, she

succumbs to a baser role of murderous interference: "Riȝt so, I þink, w*ith* tresou*n* hym to quyte"

(iv.3120). Hecuba succumbs to using treachery and this causes a fall-out of social order resulting

in Polyxena's unmerited sacrifice. This scheming by Hecuba links the Trojan queen with

Cassandra and Andromache and to the "vexed question of 'Women's Counsel'" as Andromache at

one stage holds the role of being a Sibyl like Cassandra.[8] Whether or not to follow women's

advice is unanswered directly by Lydgate, but his support is strongly behind the counsel of the

virtuous. For example, Cassandra and Andromache are both seeking to save lives, yet for this

they are unheeded and castigated by those who refuse to listen. In contrast, Hecuba's advice is

always acceptable, yet she abuses her position as queen and uses her authority to ambush and kill

Achilles. The character that acts upon her tainted counsel is Paris, whose own self-absorption

has already shown itself to be detrimental to Troy.

The Trojan Queen's transitional experiences clearly illustrate the negative effects of the

revolution of Fortune's Wheel. Hecuba's life moves from peace and prosperity to war, mediation

to murder, and finally madness with execution by stoning. In the *Troy Book* her sufferings are

the greatest in the war as foretold by Cassandra: "Of þi sonys swiche vengau*n*ce for to sen! / O

woful deth, cruel and horrible!" (ii.3259-60). Guido states that Hecuba "was a marvelously

sagacious woman, noble, learned in many subjects, very devout, very modest, and loving works

of charity" (Meek 85), but that "She was inclining to the masculine rather than the feminine kind

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[8] Barratt, *Women's Writing*, 138.

in appearance" (Meek 85). However, in the *Troy Book*, Lydgate assures the audience that in

"werke and dede / Sche was in soth þe most[e] womanly" (ii.4966-7). Yet Hecuba's fault is that

she deviates from the role of a traditional, peacemaking queen, and acts without her husband's

knowledge as the instigator of murder. In the *Historia* she "summoned Paris to her, [and] she

addressed him secretly" (Meek 198). It is by Hecuba's counsel that Achilles should "die by

treachery" (Meek 199), and this shameful end to a noble warrior is the catalyst to Polyxena being

made a Greek sacrifice. Hecuba's activity is underhand (reflective of Ulysses's traits of

cunning), and she abuses her position of power. Lydgate also sees her vengeance on Achilles as

being divinely ordained: "Loo! here þe knot and conclusiou*n*, / How God quyt ay slau3t*er* by

tresou*n*!" (iv.3213-4). However, treachery also has a price which turns out to be so heavy that

Lydgate is appalled by it; Hecuba witnesses the savage sacrifice of Polyxena by Pyrrhus:

> I am astonid, sothly, whan I rede,
>
> After hir deth, how it dide hym good,
>
> Like a tirau*n*te to cast abroad hir blood,
>
> Or a tigre, þat can no routhe haue,
>
> Rou*n*de envirou*n* aboute his fadris g*r*aue
>
> He spreint of hate and of cruelte. (iv.6860-5)

From having the authority of taking a life as a queen, Hecuba as a prisoner now sees the death of

a life she gave birth to, and her efforts to rescue Polyxena are futile. She cannot save her

daughter, even though she is able to convince Aeneas to hide Polyxena from the Greeks.

Following Polyxena's death and dismemberment, Hecuba loses her senses, casting stones and

biting any Greek within range (iv.6894-907). Guido writes, "Heccuba uero cum uidit coram se

interfici Polixenam, dolore pre nimio sui sexus protinus exuta memoria, facta est furiosa".[9] Here Meek translates Hecuba as being "crazed by a grief too great for her sex", which Lydgate does not repeat. Neither does Lydgate declare her subsequent actions being carried out "as if she were a dog" (Meek 228). Lydgate does not debase the queen's dignity as much as Guido, because the image of the futility of Hecuba's struggles is poignant enough without degrading her further. Her only remaining weapons are physical: fists, stones and teeth. At this point Fortune's wheel has turned to the lowest point, and expiration is the only possible release for Hecuba - and even then it is not a merciful one: she is captured, tried, and stoned to death by the Greeks.

If Hecuba is represented as the negative answer as a response to women's counsel then Polyxena is the neutral or passive state in this group of women. Although she is one of the women who pleads with Hector not to go into battle (iii.5075), she does not give any advice nor does she have any involvement in the war apart from being in the besieged city. She is without doubt a passive bystander, and is portrayed as an ideal: young, beautiful, innocent and, most importantly for later pathos, harmless. Her presence in the tale contrasts the brutality of Pyrrhus, and is also used by Lydgate to highlight the danger of "religious hypocrites".[10] As a daughter, Polyxena is constrained to obedience, and the arranged match using her as a bargaining tool to achieve peace is perverse:

> Wherof ful trist was þis Polycene,
>
> Þat was inclined, w*ith* hir eyen clere,
>
> By þe cou*n*seil of hir moder dere
>
> To haue be wedded to þis Achilles,

---

[9] Colonne, *Historia*, 237.

[10] Blamires, "Chaucer the Reactionary", 533.

> To fyn only þer shuld haue ben a pes
>
> Atwen Grekis and hem of Troye tou*n*. (iv.2614-9)

Although she has seen her brothers slain by Achilles, she is willing and agreeable to the match. Before her execution, Polyxena tells Pyrrhus that she had "grieved excessively" over Achilles's murder (Meek 227), and it can be questioned as to whether it is because of the loss of peace, or because she genuinely became attached to Achilles, that she regrets his murder. Polyxena faces and welcomes death as all that are dear to her are slain, and because: "she preferred to die in her own country rather than to go away to alien provinces to lead her life during exile in grief and in the straits of poverty" (Meek 227-8). Lydgate illustrates the execution further with "hir hed she gan enclyne" (iv.6849), so that it suggests she is beheaded. Guido states that Pyrrhus kills her "wickedly with his sword" (Meek 228), but not how. Polyxena is the portrayal of an innocent, passive bystander of the war, but Lydgate also makes Polyxena a martyr because of religious nonsense:

> Witnesse of ȝou þat ben immortal,
>
> Clene of entent of þat I am accused!
>
> And ȝit, allas! I may nat be excused. (iv.6760-2)

Polyxena becomes the Christ-like figure of martyrdom in this pagan world. In order to give man a safe passage home she is sacrificed by her enemies, and even those who wish for her freedom are subdued by this reasoning. This sacrificial lamb would resonate with Lydgate's Christian ethos and, because of this, he is severe with his strictures towards Calchas for this solution. As Lydgate saw Achilles' death as retribution from God then Calchas is a charlatan - the pagan equivalent to a Pharisee who would have whipped up a crowd to demand Christ's death.

Lydgate's strictures are additional to the impartial *Historia* because when the Greeks demand why they are unable to leave Troy:

> Calchas told them thus: this had happened to them on account of the
> infernal furies because the soul of Achilles slain in the temple of Apollo
> had not yet been satisfied.   A sacrifice to these gods should therefore be
> made of her through whom he had endured death and who until now had
> remained unpunished. (Meek 226-7)

As far as Lydgate is concerned, Calchas is saving his own skin with the death of another. Lydgate is revolted by the behaviour of Calchas and his divination, and curses the priest:

> God ʒeve hym evele sorwe,
>
> Þis olde shrewe, w*ith* al his prophesie,
>
> Þat can so wel whan hi*m* list to lye! (iv.6650-2)

He blames Calchas for the murder "Of Polycene, whilom by Calchas / Vn-to Appollo falsly offrid was" (iv.6925-6). Whereas in contrast there is neither criticism nor censure from Guido towards the priest, but only indifference:

> While Polyxena was led to the slaughter, the kings rushed together . . . and
> had pity and compassion upon her. They would have speedily freed her
> from Pyrrhus' hands, if this would not, according to the pronouncement of
> Calchas, have prevented all of them from being able to return to their own
> countries, and while she was alive, no free opportunity of returning could
> be open to them. (Meek 227)

Calchas has already betrayed Troy, and therefore the value of his divination is worthless to

Lydgate. It is left to Lydgate to vilify Calchas and Pyrrhus for their actions. He is not only

condemning pagan practices, but also the reasoning behind them; why was it necessary to

sacrifice Polyxena when the Trojans had already followed Cassandra's advice to appease Apollo?

Then there are the "infernal furies" (Meek 226) that have to be mollified as well. Lydgate

digresses after the sacrifice with a condemnatory passage on false gods, idolatry and where "þe

serpent & þe olde snake, / Sathan hym silf, gan his dwellinge make" (iv.6933-4).

As a counterbalance to Calchas' false divination there is Cassandra. She has been

ridiculed and silenced for her views constantly throughout the war, and she has had to withstand

being treated as a pariah by her family and the citizens of Troy for her unwanted counsel.

Usually at a point such as this Lydgate would enjoy divulging his additional knowledge of

classical myth, yet there is an omission of Cassandra's background where "Apollo fell in love

with her and gave her the gift of prophecy, but she refused to return his love".[11] As punishment

for breaking her promise, her prophecies are doomed to be ignored by everyone. Perhaps

Lydgate was ignorant of this myth, but it is more likely that by deliberately omitting it, Lydgate

proposes to make Cassandra a more valuable character. To strengthen the idea of sensitivity,

Lydgate also introduces his own interpretation of her personality as a woman "of ful gret sadnes"

(ii.357):

> And ay in prayer and in honeste
>
> Sche ladde hir lyf, and in deuocioun,
>
> After þe rytis and religioun
>
> Of paganysme vsed in þo dawes,
>
> Þe obseruauncys kepyng of her lawes. (ii.364-8)

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[11] *CND*, 76.

This inclusion of her devout life, albeit a pagan one in Lydgate's view, adds to Cassandra's worth as a role model. Her comportment is exemplary even from a Christian perspective, and she reflects the ideal medieval lady. War is anathema to her as she can foresee the suffering that the city will endure. Lydgate deliberately makes this woman's counsel based on education, and not as an ethereal gift from the gods: "Of sondry bokis sche wolde [hir] occupie, / And specially of astronomye" (ii.5009-10). She spent her time "in studie & contmplacioun" (ii.5008). Lydgate clearly appreciates that women should be educated and held in esteem. From his standpoint the Trojans should have listened to Cassandra as her warnings held positive foundation from learning rather than from supernatural influences.

When Cassandra pleads that Paris should not be sent to abduct a Greek woman it is in "mournful tones" (Meek 65) according to Guido, but Lydgate makes Cassandra more anxious: "With here to-torn and with fistes folde" (ii.3238) she sees Troy's "synne is dere [a]bouȝt" (ii.3248). She cries to each of her parents to know what crimes they have committed that such a terrible vengeance from Fortune should await them.[12] Her dramatics are her downfall, and yet it is the only way that she can be heard: "Sche made a mortal lamentacioun" (ii.3236). The strictures of Trojan male hierarchy is evident when Cassandra is seen to be the last recipient of information. It is received after the decision has been made, which suggests that she is deliberately kept in the dark. One example of her forced ineffectuality is when she is first cast into prison:

> After it had come to the notice of Cassandra . . . that Paris had united
>
> Helen to himself in marriage, she burst out in a terrible voice with
>
> complaints and wailing . . . "Ah, blind people, ignorant of awful death,

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[12] *TB* ii.3249-76.

why do you not tear Helen with violent hand from that unlawful

husband . . . before the fierce blade hastens and the sharp sword boils in

your blood?" (Meek 78)

Cassandra is her own worst enemy, and Lydgate makes her predictions in this speech for the

Trojans more wretched, as wives will see their husbands with "large wou*n*dis depe / Girt þoruʒ

þe body, pale, cold, & grene!" (ii.4208-9). Although a grim forecast, Lydgate tempers Guido's

harshness in one part when mothers will, in Lydgate's version, witness their children "slayn with-

oute remedie" (ii.4213). Lydgate softens it for the audience as Guido's description is horribly

graphic:

Ah, miserable mothers, with how much grief will you lock up the confines

of your hearts when you see the entrails of your offspring torn out and

their limbs torn asunder limb from limb! (Meek 78)

Another variation that Lydgate makes with Cassandra is that she becomes an extremely

recognisable character when Lydgate mistranslates one of her features, which gives an

unexpected twist. Guido's wording is "lentiginosa facie",[13] which Meek correctly translates by

saying that Cassandra's face is "freckled" (Meek 85). Lydgate creates a different impression:

And Cassandra, hir [Hecuba's] ovne douʒter dere,

Was of stature wonder wo*m*manly,

Of colour white, and þer-w*ith* riʒt semly

(Saue in her face in sou*n*dri places were

Many wertys growyng here & þere). (ii.4998-5002)

If Lydgate is reflecting Henry's court perhaps there was a woman whom Lydgate had in mind

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[13] Colonne, *Historia*, 87.

with this feature. It is hard to imagine that Lydgate would confuse *lentigo* with *verruca*.[14]

Whether it is intentional or not, his translation questions Cassandra's main virtue of pursuing

maidenhood, or remaining a virgin, by the fact that warts would make her appearance so off-

putting that her self-restraint is probably not tested too frequently. This would tie with Sarah

Hopper's view that:

> Contemporary literature was often heavily misogynistic, describing
>
> women as incapable of remaining faithful to their husbands and lacking in
>
> dignity and self control. Those who were particularly attractive might find
>
> their looks a mixed blessing and, were considered the most likely to stray
>
> and sacrifice their honour.[15]

Apart from Polyxena, the beautiful such as Helen, Medea, and Cryseyde had all, somehow, acted

detrimentally to their station. Perhaps Lydgate had grown tired of all of Guido's women being

paragons, and he wanted Cassandra's voice to be taken more seriously.

Lydgate is generous to Cassandra with the length of her speeches. He provides her with

sixty-one lines (iv.5961-6022) of verse, whereas Guido only gives her about twelve brief lines of

passage (Meek 221). In comparison to Guido, Lydgate also lengthens her moment of triumph in

the *Troy Book* when, in Book IV, her advice is finally heeded. It is a Pyrrhic victory though, as it

is only done when the Trojans have no one else to turn to. Her authority as a counsellor is lifted

to a higher level as she is sought to divine the signs from the gods of a failed sacrifice (iv.5910-

60), which is in sharp contrast to her treatment earlier when she is rebuked by all for her clamour.

Additionally the Trojans now believe what she says and they follow through with her

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14 Morwood, *Oxford Latin*, 226, 327.

15 Hopper, *Mothers, Mystics*, xiv.

instructions. If Lydgate was to include the myth of her punishment, it would undermine and complicate the outcome of Troy turning to her for help. Cassandra has earned her position in society as a sibyl, and it is Lydgate, not Guido, who hands her the title: "And so*m*me men seyn sche was on of þe þre, / Of þe women þat Cebile bare þe name" (ii.5012-13). Jacqueline de Weever states that, "the name *sibyl* was given by the Greeks and the Romans to female prophets, usually to those inspired by Apollo".[16] It implies that Lydgate was aware of her mythological connection with Apollo even though Guido omits it in the *Historia*, and here he smuggles it neatly into the text. Lydgate presents a Cassandra that has to struggle to make herself heard, mainly because of her sex, and not because of Apollo's curse. By this demonstration, Lydgate's Cassandra shows that the female sex is boxed in by society's prejudice. Her counsel foretells doom for the people of Troy with the outcome of Paris' and Helen's wedding, but she is seen as a troublemaker, and not one Trojan is prepared to pay attention to her counsel. Her only recourse is to try and make public uproar so that her voice can be recorded (an echo of Margery Kempe), and Cassandra's reward is to be bound and fettered by her father (Meek 77-8) for her efforts. Lydgate, the narrator, is sympathetic to her plight, as she has a tough audience:

> For, be a man inly neu*er*e so wys
>
> In cou*n*seillynge, or in hyȝe devys
>
> In werkynge, ouþer in elloquence,
>
> Eche þing to sen in his adu*er*tence
>
> Or it be falle, a-forn in his resou*n,*
>
> Amyd þe eye of his discrecciou*n,*-
>
> ȝet for al þis (it is þe more dool),

---

[16] *CND*, 77.

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W*ith*-oute fauour, he holde is but a fool. (iii.2303-10)

Like Cassandra, Hector's wife, Andromache, receives more positive attention from

Lydgate. He has far more interest in developing Andromache's character further in the *Troy*

Book than what is portrayed in the *Historia*. Guido allocates a mere three sentences to her which

Lydgate amplifies to twenty-two lines of verse. One of the main reasons for this development is

because of the *Troy Book*'s mirror theme: Hector is modelled on Henry as the example of an ideal

prince, and naturally this ideal should also extend to his consort. When Henry chooses a wife,

Andromache's virtues should therefore be taken into consideration as necessary qualifications.

By the time Lydgate finished the *Troy Book* late in 1420, Henry V had been married since June to

Catherine of Valois.[17]   Lydgate hopes that their union, "Of werre shal voide aweie þe rage, / To

make pes w*ith* briȝt[e] bemys shyne" (v.3422-3). Catherine's marriage to Henry would be

looked upon as the physical symbol of peace with France as well as bringing the French crown to

Henry when Charles VI died. Therefore Guido's basic description of Andromache is insufficient

for Lydgate's purpose as it is mainly of a physical nature, and the detail of her character blandly

states that "She was the most virtuous of women, temperate in all her acts" (Meek 85). Lydgate

must extol Andromache's attributes, and go further than Guido by placing her in a more proactive

role as peacemaker. For example to the rich and poor "sche was of chere þe goodlieste" (ii.4987-

8), "And gladly euer dide hir dilligence / To gete grace to hem has þat dide offence" (ii.4993-4).

"After hir lore mochel dide drawe, / Andronomecha, þe feiþful trewe wyf" (ii.4979-80).

Lydgate's Andromache is developed to be the mirror of attributes that the court's female society

should base their conduct upon: "Sche was so ful of compassioun / Þat women alle myȝten of hir

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[17]   Henry Bergen in his "Bibliographical Introduction" to the manuscripts (Part IV. 2, f1.) suggests that the *Troy Book* was finished "possibly as late as the middle of December 1420" as opposed to late summer or early autumn.

lere" (ii.4996-7).

Andromache's link with Cassandra's counsel is that she acts as a sibyl in Book III when in a dream she is forewarned of Hector's death. This is an ideal section in which Lydgate can amplify the text because it is a prime example of the recklessness of disregarding good advice, no matter what gender the counsellor is. The close bond between husband and wife is ignored by Hector and pride deafens him to her fears. He belittles her intuition: "But þer-of hadde indignaciou*n*, / Platly affermyng, þat no discreciou*n* / Was to trest in swiche fantasies" (iii.4943-5). In dire circumstances, Andromache implores Priam and Hecuba to prevent Hector from entering the battlefield on that day (iii.4965-99). In this case it is her father-in-law who listens to her pleas instead of her husband. Lydgate adds to Andromache's speech that "Fortune's fals disposiciou*n* / [is] Fully p*ur*ueied to destrucciou*n* / Of hir lord" (iii.4973-5). Another inclusion by Lydgate is the portrayal of Andromache and her son, Astyanax, who was still, according to Guido, "being nursed at his mother's breast" (Meek 165). Guido's intention was merely to establish the age of the youngest child, but Lydgate manipulates this description further: "For verray ȝong þat tyme was soukynge, / And w*ith* his armys hir brestis embrasynge" (iii.4907-8). Where Guido states that Andromache begs Hector to stay, "with her little son whom she was carrying in her arms" (Meek 166), Lydgate presents a pathetic, dishevelled image of mother and child:

> His wif of newe crie gan & shoute,
>
> And w*ith* hir pappis also hanging oute,
>
> Hir litel childe in hir armys tweyne,
>
> A-forn hir lord gan to wepe & pleyne. (iii.5051-4)

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Lydgate is far more empathetic to Andromache's plight than Guido in this scene, and he has amplified the tragedy more by adding the natural response of a child in such a situation. The boy is vocal, and poor Andromache literally has her hands full of woe, as the child:

> Whiche þat she bar in hir armys two,
>
> And nat myȝt him fro criynge kepe,
>
> Whan he sawe his woful moder wepe. (iii.5060-2).

Guido portrays the child as passively carried by his mother, and there is not any further remark made about him; in fact he seems to be forgotten about after this incident. The older child, Laomedon, is the only one mentioned later which suggests that Astyanax did not survive the siege.[18] Lydgate adds pathos, and shows an understanding of motherhood and humanity which is absent in the *Historia*. His reflection of such a traumatic event is far too good for Lydgate to have him casually dismissed as indifferent. Lydgate depicts the voices of women in Troy that are traditionally ignored, and presents a deafness in society that still had not changed by Lydgate's time.

Andromache is not the only voice trying to persuade Hector to stay within the city, but she is the important one as his wife. Hector is being warned in force by women with Andromache being supported by Hecuba, Polyxena, Cassandra and Helen. Combined, these are the voices of prudence, warning of devastation and loss, but the patriarchal structure ignores and berates the women instead. The exception to women's counsel being ignored is with Hecuba's plotting, and as she favours betrayal and murder, it sits more favourably with Paris. This tainted counsel causes her to be punished severely. The difference between Hecuba's interference and

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[18] In the *Iliad*, Andromache presumes two fates for Astyanax in her lament for Hector: "And you, child, you will go where I go, where you will be put to shaming work, slaving for a cruel master. Or some Achaian will catch you by the arm and fling you from the walls to a miserable death, in his anger." Homer, *The Iliad*, 406.

that of the Amazon Queen, Penthesilea, is that Penthesilea has been invited to join the war by Priam, and she follows the rules of warfare. Hecuba's counsel was not given with the intent of ending the siege, but was given in a spirit that was solely concerned with revenge and punishment towards Achilles. Fortune is no longer with Hecuba because, before Polyxena is sacrificed, Hecuba and her women are granted "A saufconduit and a fre pardou*n*" (iv.6628) by the Greeks. Hecuba can be used to demonstrate the negative effects of woman's counsel, but Lydgate is ambiguous about this in two ways. In the first place he sees Hecuba's treachery as the machination of God's retribution towards Achilles for all the death and misery that he has caused. Even though it is a pagan society, Lydgate comprehends the hand of God at work. Secondly, Lydgate has made Hecuba a reflection of her husband, Priam. It is because Priam suffered from the same emotions that he retaliated against the Greeks. For this weakness he is condemned by Lydgate, but he is still considered a chivalric king. To the Lancastrian audience both the king and queen are at fault because they are determining the fate of their dependents on their personal vendettas. Hecuba's ambush is a microcosm of the whole siege, but she shares the same fate as Priam as they both carry the "grayn of malys, causer of al offence" (ii.1071).

Lydgate's Hecuba and Priam prove that the virtuous can give equally tragic and detrimental counsel because they are human, and not because of their sex. What is visible in the *Troy Book* is that when women's counsel is informed in the tragedy, it is more than likely to be brushed aside by men, and especially by the men who are closest to these women. Cassandra is a sibyl, but her public outcries put her into the category of a medieval scold. As Karras states:

> Scolding . . . was an archetypally feminine offense because words were among
> the few weapons women had for striking back at individual men or sociey in

general. The scold could also be a nag, one who tried to wear the breeches in the family.[19]

Her pleas to Troy to take Helen back to Menelaus fall on deaf ears because she is a woman, and therefore her sex does not allow her to have a voice in her society. They would have put her scolding down to jealousy of Helen's beauty or as sibling's resentment. Lydgate's depictions of the Trojan women are the closest to that of the women in his own social sphere.

Amazon Warriors: "On her armvre þat day clad in whyt." [20]

The Amazon queen, Penthesilea, is presented by Guido and Lydgate as a worthy adversary to her male counterparts, and is received within Troy with the same courtesy as the male leaders. Lydgate accepts Guido's representation of Penthesilea who is portrayed as the ideal warrior, but Lydgate further characterises her as a heroic character who does not display any sense of false bravado or chauvinistic tendencies towards men. She is coming to Troy's aid for Hector's sake, but on arrival she is distraught to find that he has already been slain. She loved him "for he was so noble a knyȝt" (iv.3822), "And vn-to hym she was be bond of trouþe, / Confederat of olde affecciou*n*" (iv.3828-9). She is more than Hector's particular friend as it is seen that Hector in return recognises Penthesilea's worth as a peer, or knight, by the use of the word "trouþe". This is in complete contrast to the Greeks' viewpoint of her as an alien being rather than as a female warrior. Their stereotypical conventions of the roles of women have been turned upside down by the arrival of the Amazons. Penthesilea is brutally efficient against the Greeks, and their only hope is the fulfilment of a prophecy about Achilles' son, Pyrrhus.

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[19] Karras, *Common Women*, 139.

[20] *TB*, iv.4074.

Before Penthesilea's arrival, the Greeks had sent for Pyrrhus as it was foretold that he was required in the war for the Greeks to succeed with the destruction of Troy (iv.3342). During Penthesilea's and Pyrrhus' first encounter with each other, Pyrrhus is vocally petulant at her success:

> To his knyȝts lowde he gan to crye,
>
> And seide it was shame & villenye,
>
> For þe woᵐmen so to lese her lond
>
> And to be sleyn so felly of her hond. (iv.4113-6).

Pyrrhus is the extreme model of a woman hater, and Penthesilea observes that Pyrrhus holds "woᵐmen in dispit" (iv.4152), which is undoubtedly Lydgate's personal view of Pyrrhus' character as Guido does not mention it in the *Historia* (Meek 206). If anything can be said for Pyrrhus' principles, it is that he is not discriminatory in his hatred for the female enemy as they are treated similarly in the tale: slain and hacked to pieces. Penthesilea believes that Hector's death at the hands of Achilles is her justification to fight with Troy:

> Nat only men done her besy peyne
>
> To quyte his deth, but woᵐmen eke also
>
> W*ith* al her myȝt helpen eke þer-to,
>
> As riȝt requereth, w*ith*-oute excepiou*n,*
>
> Þer-on to done ful execuciou*n.* (iv.4146-50)

Penthesilea's actions on the field earns a fearful respect from Troy's enemies. She is able to withstand blows equally if not better than her male counterparts, and yet her appearance and physical strength are not exaggerated to make such a feat more credible. Penthesilea is "Ful

renomed of strengþe & hardynes" (iv.3806), and "Of wommanhede and of gentilnesse / She

kepte hir so þat no þinge hir a-sterte" (iv.3818-9). From the very first engagement between

Pyrrhus and Penthesilea, she justifies her presence. He receives the worst in combat, and he is

humiliated by his lack of prowess against this woman as she unhorses him at least twice.

Lydgate says that the combat "lasteth of hem tweyne / A large whyle" (iv.4181-2), and it is only

through the force of the Myrmidons that Pyrrhus is disengaged from the fight and, even more

mortifyingly, able to recover his horse (iv.4183-5).

A hatred for Penthesilea festers so much that later on in the war Pyrrhus, like his father,

takes advantage of his adversary's weakness. When Penthesilea is exhausted and without her

helmet, Pyrrhus strikes her down while she is pressed by the Greeks (iv.4316-36). Although he

is wounded, Pyrrhus, "in his satisfaction for vengeance, hacked her whole body to pieces" (Meek

208). Lydgate gives his own opinion on this action "whiche was to foule a cruel dede!"

(iv.4341). Guido does not give any such opinion, but interestingly he does ascertain that the

Trojans' deep grief for Penthesilea is because she:

> had defended them so manfully. . . and they grieved more strongly because
>
> they could not have her body in order that they in their grief might repay
>
> her by the proper funeral rites which are usually owed to dead nobles. (Meek 209)

The Trojans are concerned over her remains, and Lydgate manipulates some of the translation as

he possibly finds Guido's character of Pyrrhus too much at variance from his original conduct.

When it comes to the disposal of Penthesilea's body, the Greeks take a keen interest on how best

to degrade it. This is unusual that they become involved in the burial of an enemy, and it

highlights the shame that they have felt for their losses from a woman. The Greeks are petty and

will not release her body to the Trojans but "cast [it] into a large pond of water near the city of Troy" (Meek 209). Some are keen that the dogs should eat it but Guido states that Pyrrhus "objected and said that it should be given a suitable burial" (Meek 209). This is too much of an inconsistency for Lydgate as it is evident that Pyrrhus did not have any such respect for her remains earlier on the battlefield. However, Lydgate concedes that "Pirrus þanne of verray gentilnesse / Nolde assent to so foule a dede" (iv.4426-7). That is as far as he will exert himself on the behalf of Pyrrhus' good nature. It would be difficult for Lydgate to convince his reader that Guido's Pyrrhus could insist on a proper burial after his mutilation of the corpse.

    Lydgate does not condemn women for their involvement in the war; he is more likely to admire it. The Amazons are to be feared and respected, but he never suggests that they are unwelcome to men on the side of honour. The Greeks hate them, but this is a pro-Trojan tale. Lydgate is not a misogynist as he marvels at Penthesilea's prowess, and there is not any suggestion that she is anything but a welcome ally to Troy; it is from knightly conduct that she supports Priam, and seeks to avenge Hector's death. Before Penthesilea is slain Lydgate laments:

> The fatal hour, harde for to remewe,
>
> Of cruel deþ, which no man may eschewe . . .
>
> Aproche gan - it may noon oþer bene,
>
> Allas þe while! - of þis hardy quene. (iv.4281-6) [21]

Pyrrhus is the main voice of misogyny, and Lydgate does not approve of this character's actions. Although the *Troy Book* is decidedly pro-Trojan, no other Greek is disliked by Lydgate as much. He is disgusted by Pyrrhus' actions towards women, but especially by what he does towards

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[21] Lydgate's Penthesilea is a remarkable precursor to France's Joan of Arc later in 1428-31, but it is not likely that Lydgate would have been a supporter of the French maid. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 246-52.

Polyxena: Achilles was cruel but his son is far worse. Pyrrhus is a maid-slayer:

> For of þi fader in al his lyvynge
>
> Ne redde I neuere ȝit so foule a þing
>
> -Þouȝ I wold of hatrede hym abraide-
>
> For no rancour þat euere he slow a maide! (iv.6871-4)

In combat, Penthesilea manages to make Pyrrhus look ridiculous as he is unable to vanquish her on his own. Her death is frowned upon by Lydgate as a dastardly and tragic one, not because as a woman she should be an exception, but because it reflects an unscrupulous conduct by the Greek side that does not reflect the chivalric code on the battlefield. The outcome of Penthesilea's death also throws a light on the poorly trained male troops, and their lack of cohesion. After she is slain, the actions of her female warriors are in strong contrast to their male counterparts. Penthesilea's Amazons are directionless without their leader, but they do not flee. They hold their positions and fight on with their loss, and "Grekis þei gan of newe for to assaile" iv.4356). In nearly every circumstance when a male leader is killed in battle in the *Troy Book*, the soldiers panic and disperse in chaos. Male warriors in the *Troy Book* seem to need the reassurance of a leader to fight.[22] The men can only be rerouted back into battle by the intervention of another noble, showing that there is a solidarity of loyalty in the Amazon army that is lacking in a patriarchal society. An example of this panic is the slaughter of the Myrmidons by the Trojans when Achilles loans them to Agamemnon (iv.2197-2207). Their efficiency is undermined by the absence of Achilles, with the result that, "Mirundones and hem euerychon, / Aforn his [Troilus's] swerd þat he made hem goon / To her tentis, and þe feld

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[22] Hector wounded, rallies his men because he cannot bear the shame if the Trojan women on the walls were to witness his men fleeing. *TB*, iii.4525-47.

forsake"(iv.2329-31). Initially the Amazons' skill at warfare is underestimated by the Greek side because they are women. Penthesilea is not described as being supernatural which could account for her prowess in arms, but she is always described as a credit to feminine virtue. With the other female characters there is always a description of their beauty, but Penthesilea is different. She is not there as an ornament to decorate the siege, but as a weapon of war that is "vertuous and wys" (iv.3810).

The Amazon warriors are described as "worþi wo*m*men" (iv.3835) and are "wel horsed eke, and armed richely" (iv.3837). This is an efficient army and one that is well trained and prepared to avenge Hector's death. They play an equal part in the war as the men: seizing spoils, rescuing Trojans and participating in hand to hand combat. They are appreciated and valued by Priam as much as any other army. In fact probably more so, as he offers Penthesilea all that he has, "tresour and richesse" (iv.3965), in the hope that she will fight for Troy. Of the one thousand Amazon women that arrive, only four hundred survive to carry Penthesilea's body home. By comparison to the number of men King Philimenis leaves Troy with, this is a not a dishonourable number. Guido states that of the two thousand men that he arrived with, Philimenis leaves with two hundred and fifty (Meek 222); Lydgate alters this to "No mo þan fifty home w*ith* hy*m* he ladde" (iv.6101). Lydgate appreciates the Amazons, not just as a military force, but as the exemplar of a cohesive, chivalric unit.

Transitional Women: "With hem hom þei ladde, / Exyona and many a mayde mo." [23]
Transitional women in the *Troy Book* can be so called because they have been displaced: they have had to undergo a change of environment. Whether it is by marriage or by force, they do not

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[23] *TB* i.4394-5.

have autonomy in their lives like Penthesilea or Hecuba, for example. They are made up of

Greek and Trojan females who are displaced before, during and after the Trojan siege. Their sex

subjugates them to a position where they have been pressured to leave their own society to join

an alien one and some are used as political exchanges as well as being abductees from their

homes. The women who are presented in this section are: Hesione, Helen, Cryseyde, and

Helen's daughter, Hermione. Medea, from Book I, would not fit in to this discussion, as her

departure from Colchos is by her own volition, and it is her choice to leave with Jason. All these

women have differing responses to their situations, and Lydgate's sympathetic handling of their

individual predicaments will also be discussed.

Hesione is the first woman to be seized in the *Troy Book*, and, although her capture is

pivotal to the initiation of the siege, she does not make any appearance other than when she is

seized. It is the disgrace that Priam feels that causes Hesione, and the other captives to "function

as catalysts for the enactment of deeds of arms and war through their power, willingly or not, to

incite desire".[24] Helen's abduction is the retaliation for Hesione's continued captivity, and in

contrast to Hesione, she is frequently visible and has dialogue with other characters. Cryseyde is

a political exchange rather than an abduction, but she is not able to appeal the circumstances of

the transaction. Helen's daughter, Hermione, is extremely adaptable, and she has a response to

her transference that borders on a mental imbalance to her situation - the classical version of

Stockholm syndrome. These displacements have repercussions on male society, and differences

between Guido's and Lydgate's approach become evident. Guido is, at times, blind to the

victim's predicament and is happy to blame the woman's behaviour as a result of her gender.

Lydgate has more empathy for these unfortunate women, and he frequently gives the characters

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[24] Saunders, "Women And Warfare", 188.

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opportunities to voice their emotions.

   Hesione has a very small part in the *Historia*, and the description by Guido of her abduction is minimal: "As they rushed into the palace of King Laomedon before they had destroyed it completely, on the very threshold of the donjon they found Hesione, a young woman of marvelous beauty" (Meek 41). Lydgate gives her more movement: "Hercules hath anoon hir take / Þat for drede pitously gan quake / And hir deliu*er*ed vn-to Thelamou*n*" (i.4347-9). Guido is severely judgemental about Hesione's status when she is now, as translated by Meek, "made a harlot" and "carried away into foreign regions under the disgrace of base harlotry!" (Meek 42). Once she is in Telamon's possession, her position as a concubine is degraded by Guido further in a malicious kind of manner as she becomes disreputable rather than dishonoured: "For from this Hesione proceeded the whole substance of the raging madness from which afterward the greatest causes of war proceeded" (Meek 41). Guido wishes that Hesione "had never been found or born" (Meek 41). Lydgate is less judgemental, and he preserves her integrity as Telamon's prize:

> He schulde rather of kyngly honeste,
>
> And of knyȝthood, haue weddid hir þerfore,
>
> Syth þ*a*t sche was of blood so gentil bore,
>
> Þan of fals lust, ageyn al godlyhede,
>
> Vsed hir bewte and hir womanhede
>
> Dishonestly, and in synful wyse- (i.4358-63)

Like the majority of captives, Hesione is never rescued, and it is through Hector's speech that Guido projects a morbid and realistic attitude to her future. Women in this era are expendable:

> It is not improper, then, to close one's eyes to the fate of Hesione, since

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> she has already for so many years been used to her wrongs, and death can
>
> tear her away from living air for a short time, with the result that a basis
>
> for peace would be provided for us all. (Meek 58)

Although it is insensitive, war is business, and Hector's theory is a practical one. However

Hector is not heeded, and Hesione's predicament becomes the rationale to abduct a Greek woman

in exchange. This retaliatory response shows a different mentality between the Trojans and

Greeks. Once a Greek woman is abducted, war is inevitable; the Greeks are more keen to

retrieve their possessions by violence rather than by negotiation.

The approach Guido takes to writing on women is usually based on a desire to moralise

on their vices rather than their virtues, and Helen is not an exception.[25] It is because she sought

pleasure away from her husband and home, "with the eager appetite of changing desire" (Meek

68), that she becomes entrapped by Paris. Karras in her chapter Saints and Sinners comments:

> Women who wandered abroad rather than remaining in the home were also
>
> suspected of lust . . . Women who walked out in public were automatically suspect
>
> of sexual sin; and . . . the practical effect was that any woman walking in the
>
> street could be considered a whore.[26]

Guido's sentiments in the *Historia* about women are compatible to Karras' perception above, and

it is displayed when Guido comments on Helen's actions. An insight is gained into his personal

psyche:

> Oh, how pleasing to women should be the walls of their homes, how

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[25] "In all nations and at all periods there periods there has existed a fund of anecdotes having for its subject the perfidy of women . . . Many, too, were *contes gras* intended only to amuse, and their social significance should not be exaggerated. But even allowing for these factors, the rancour, the intense contempt for women expressed in them at least exemplify what amused the new bourgeois society." Power, *Medieval Women*, 21.

[26] Karras, *Common Women*, 111.

pleasing the limits and restraints of their honor! For an unrigged ship

would never know shipwreck if it stayed continually in port and not sail to

foreign parts. (Meek 69)

It is an unfortunate aphorism for Guido to choose, as a ship sitting in port is a redundant one; it

can only be productive when it is commercial and sailing to foreign parts.

Helen is the central focus for the whole siege, but she is also the primary example of a

captive. Her abduction is brought about by the carelessness of her own position in society. She

forgets her husband in the eyes of a possible lover, and she is contravening the rules of courtly

love, in that she has revealed the affair by publicly cuckolding Menelaus with her flight. When

they first meet in the temple, Paris and Helen conduct themselves with a degree of discretion so

that "no man þe tresoun myȝt aduerte / Of hem tweyn, ne what þei wolde mene" (ii.3736-7).

She readily leaves with Paris, where "he fonde no maner resistence" (ii.3834), even though he

and his crew are pillaging the island of Cythera. It is when they reach Tenedos that she reflects

on the enormity of her conduct, and thinks of "hir Menelaus" (ii.3913). This is an almost

comical situation of a lover's ardour being suddenly quenched by reality, were it not for the fact

that her situation is so serious. Her flight with Paris was with free will, but her change of mind

alters Helen's position as a willing lover to one of that of being vulnerable to rape. Infatuation

has led her to become a captive, and this allows Lydgate to expand and vocalise the positions of

the abducted; Helen "may nat fle, / In hold distreyned and captiuite" (ii.3963-4). Guido also puts

into context the reason for Helen's acquiescence; physical strength often determines the outcome

when she says to Paris:

I know, lord, that I must of necessity follow your wishes, whether I want

to or not, since a woman, and especially one held in captivity, is not able

to prevail over masculine force. (Meek 75)

Therefore the supposed mutability of women's affections in these situations are directly influenced by the circumstances that are surrounding them. Helen has to accommodate her character in order to suit Trojan society, and similarly the other displaced female characters must do the same to survive. For all of Paris' loving promises to Helen in her grief, he never offers to return her to Menelaus. His right to have the most beautiful woman on earth overcomes any prudence on his part - as seen by his heavily spurred horse's state earlier. It is Cassandra who voices the solution while the town basks in its ignorance: "To take Eleyne from Parys / As riʒt requireth, w*ith*-oute*n* any more, / And to hir lord iustly hir restore?" (ii.44222-4).

Another transitional character is Cryseyde and Guido's description of her is longer than that of Andromache, as she is a more complex character: "She attracted many lovers by her charm, and loved many, although she did not preserve constancy of heart toward her lovers" (Meek 83-4). Lydgate chooses to avoid translating Cryseyde too closely because of the differences between Chaucer's and Guido's accounts. For example, Chaucer describes her as a widow in his *Troilus and Criseyde*, and Lydgate believes that Cryseyde's grief is genuine at the time rather than Guido's stereotypical view of women: "If one of their eyes weeps, the other smiles out of the corner, and their fickleness and changeableness always lead them to deceive men" (Meek 157). Therefore Lydgate does not believe that Cryseyde is as deceitful as Guido asserts her sex compels her to be, and it leads Lydgate to manipulate the translation.

When Cryseyde meets Diomedes for the first time, Guido instantly discredits her faithfulness "as is the custom of women" (Meek 158), but Lydgate asserts that it is Cryseyde's

character flaw, it is "appropred vn-to hir nature" (iii.4443). For Guido, her crime is to allow Diomedes to hope that he could win her as she leaves him with her ambiguous answer: "At present I neither refuse nor accept the offer of your love" (Meek 158). It may have been faithless, but it is a prudent response as she is entering unknown, enemy territory: "Vn-to Grekis, and eu*er* with hem dwelle!" (iii.4233). Cryseyde has technically been abandoned by the Trojans with the exchange which contradicts the chivalric code, and she has been abandoned by Troilus because of feudal loyalty. Madeleine Pelner Cosman highlights that in medieval times widows and orphans were supposed to be under the king's protection.[27] Priam neglected his duty towards Cryseyde. Therefore Lydgate decides to ignore Guido's depiction of Diomedes' "pleasing theft" (Meek 158) of Cryseyde's glove, and he is adamant that the reader should not be drawn in by Guido's maliciousness: "Taketh noon hede, but late hi*m* be w*ith* sorwe, / And skippeth ouer wher ʒe list nat rede" (iii.4416-7). Lydgate recommends his audience to turn to Chaucer's version of the tale, as "Þe hool[e] story Chaucer kan ʒow telle" (iii.4234). This comment was possibly directed specifically at King Henry V. K. B. McFarlane remarks that when "the poet Lydgate describes him as given to the study of ancient histories, it was not pure flattery. His copy of Chaucer's *Troilus* still survives".[28]

Like Cryseyde, Hermione is also used as a means of exchange, but in this case it begins with an arranged marriage to consolidate a truce between Menelaus and Orestes, "so that Orestes took as his wife Hermione, daughter of King Menelaus and Helen" (Meek 246). Lydgate adds a bit more of a lively romance to the couple by emphasising their youthful energy:

> Þat Hermyone, þe ʒong[e] douʒt*er* dere

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27 Cosman, *Women at Work*, 67.
28 McFArlane, *Lancastrian Kings*, 117.

> Of Menelay and þe quene Eleyne,
>
> So ʒong, so freshe, of bewte sou*er*eyn,
>
> I-wedded was w*ith*-oute more tariyng
>
> To Horestes, þe newe lusty knyg. (v.1760-4)

Similar to her mother's history, Hermione is later abducted by Pyrrhus who "was captivated by the desire of fervent love for Hermione" and "joined her to him in matrimony" (Meek 257). Orestes is "accordingly grieved that such a disgrace should have happened to him" (Meek 257), but he is not in a powerful enough position to challenge Pyrrhus. Although he is Agamemnon's son, he has not inherited his father's abilities, and his ineffectuality is evident. Agamemnon managed to raise an armada against a foreign nation for the slight to his brother, whereas within the Greek community Orestes appears impotent by comparison to Pyrrhus, and Orestes has to bide his time. He waits for an opportunity for revenge, and when Pyrrhus goes on pilgrimage:

> And vnwarly he w*ith* Pirrus mette
>
> And vengably vp-on hym he sette,
>
> Þat finally in þat strau*n*ge londe
>
> Horestes slow hym w*ith* his owne hond.   (v.2795-8).

Therefore for a period of time Hermione, like Hesione, is abandoned by family, and left to her fate, learning to accept her position in an alien environment. However, the outcome of her abduction has a bizarre aspect in that she prefers the second marriage, and her attitude is closer to that of a sybarite. She seeks her own comfort only to the detriment of others, as she complains to her father that she is:

> Grievously injured by her husband Pyrrhus, who was madly in love

with Andromache alone and cared little or nothing for her, and she

asked Menelaus to hasten to come to Thessaly and kill Andromache and

her son Laomedon. (Meek 257)

Hermione is not reproached by Guido for this act, and this may explain why Lydgate expands the

fault further to include Andromache in the dispute between the two women. It is also noticeable

that Menelaus does not make an attempt to retrieve his daughter even though her marriage was

part of a peace process. The actual abduction of Hermione by Pyrrhus is an obvious elevation in

status for her - it was his presence at Troy that decided the victory. Hermione openly

communicates with her father, and, instead of taking advantage of Pyrrhus' absence to return to

Orestes, she instead conspires to murder Andromache. Lydgate describes her jealousy as "in hir

Ire al hoot" (v.2763), but as mentioned earlier, he also presents Andromache as a second party to

the quarrel: "And þis wo*m*men, for al hir gret estate, / Atwen hem silf amonge wern at debate"

(v.2761-2). Evidently Lydgate's Pyrrhus not only can slay a maid, but is highly attractive to the

opposite sex. Lydgate suggests an ambiguity in the relationship between Orestes and Hermione

with his choice of words. When Pyrrhus is slain, Orestes can then recover his wife:

King Pirrus was lokked vnder stoon;

And Horestes forthe his weie is goon,

And by force gat his wyf ageyn. (v.2815-7)

Guido does not say that Orestes used force, merely that he "recovered his wife and took her back

to his kingdom" (Meek 258). Lydgate's manipulation of the text questions whether this could be

a satisfactory ending for Hermione and Orestes. As Pyrrhus is slain, there should not be any

resistance to recover Hermione - unless she is the reluctant one to return home.

Each of the women have similar experiences of abduction, but Hesione is the only captive who is silent, and the desperation of her predicament is only referred to by others. Cryseyde is transferred by her father's wishes to the Greek camp, and she has some control to make the best of her fate with Diomedes. Hermione seems to benefit from her new husband, and Lydgate creates the impression that she is not too eager to return to Orestes. It is left to Andromache to be the woman who exemplifies the horror of servile captivity. She is owned by the son of her husband's slayer and is "pregnant by Pyrrhus" (Meek 257). She is vulnerable, and her life is subject to the whims of her captor, and his household. Menelaus is called upon, by his jealous daughter, "To sle þis woman & hir childe also" (v.2770). Lydgate has more sympathy towards women in captivity in the *Troy Book* than Guido's historical expression allows in the *Historia*, and it easy to see from Andromache's fate to see why Lydgate has Polyxena declaring:

> For bet is here to ȝelden vp þe breth
>
> Þan to be ladde oute of þis cite,
>
> Amonge straungeris to live in pouerte! (iv.6819-20)

Andromache's yoke as a prisoner of war justifies Polyxena's statement and it shows the desolation the Trojan women endured in a foreign land under a conqueror's hand.

Greek Women: "Þe trewe lok, sothly, of spousaille." [29]

Towards the end of Book V are the accounts of the Greek kings' voyages home. It is at this point that Greek wives in the *Troy Book* come to the foreground with the receptions of their husbands' return from Troy. Of particular importance are: Penelope, Helen, Clytemnestra, and Egea. Of all three, and in severe contrast to Helen, Penelope is the most faithful and - if medieval attitudes

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[29] *TB* v.1093.

towards Ulysses are to be followed - he does not deserve this virtuous woman.[30] Then there is

Clytemnestra who "defiled her marriage bed with a man named Aegisthus" (Meek 239) in

Agamemnon's absence, and bears a daughter, Erigona. If Lydgate's observation is taken into

account that a man should not make a fool of himself over a wife taking another lover, then

Clytemnestra's real crime is not adultery, but regicide. She compounds this act further by

making a common man a king which will earn the retribution of God (v.1142-7). Diomedes'

wife, Egea, has only a small part in the *Troy Book*, but she can be identified as a more

contemporary character to current readers in that she acts with autonomy. She is an example of a

median character between Clytemnestra and Penelope as she is neither aggressive nor passive,

but proactively institutes what could be described as a modern-day barring order. She dutifully

watches her husband's property, but expels him from it for alleged misconduct. The reader

knows that slander is the cause, but it is also known that Diomedes is not entirely innocent either.

The Greek women represent the wives that are left behind when husbands depart their home

country to invade a neighbour, and contextually they are exemplars of women that were left

behind during England's campaign in France. Lydgate presents the pitfalls that must happen

when husbands and wives fall short of the ideal.

Egea is a simplistic character: faithful and business-like. She waits for her husband's

return like Penelope, but her loyalty is undermined by Oectus' lies. He convinces Egea that her

brother, Assandrus, was slain at the request of Diomedes, and, to add insult to injury, Oectus also

reports that Diomedes is bringing home "a-noþer wif " (v.1286) from Troy to take Egea's place as

---

[30] Initially Ulysses was considered a hero of the *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, but it began to be "argued, and widely believed, that, since Homer himself was a liar and a cheat, his favourite hero must have been equally villainous. As a result, Ulysses's reputation reaches its lowest level at the end of the classical period and remains there for over a thousand years of the Western literary tradition." Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme*, 146.

queen.[31] The reader has seen in the *Troy Book* that Diomedes was unfaithful to Egea with

Cryseyde, and that it is remembered as the tragic love-triangle involving the unfortunate Troilus.

This triangle is rapidly becoming a square with the appearance of Egea, and because the

audience is aware of Cryseyde, Egea's subsequent actions to Diomedes are tempered with justice.

Diomedes has compromised his own *trouthe* with this dalliance. His crime in this case is that

Cryseyde was not a prize of war like Cassandra, but technically a free woman within the Greek

camp. Diomedes has been unfaithful to his wife, and Lydgate, in a feigned innocence, is puzzled

by Diomedes' conduct:

> And she [Egea] was wyf vn-to Diomede,-
>
> Al-be to-forn þe story of hym saide
>
> Þat he whilom loued wel Cressaide-
>
> I can nat seine wher it was doubilnesse. (v.1222-5)

Fortunately for Diomedes Egea does not take a lover, and there is eventually a resolution to their

relationship. However, it is only after he is subjected to a sharp lesson from his spouse; she takes

counsels' advice:

> By myȝti hond of þis worþi quene,
>
> And hir liges þat assented bene,
>
> He was exiled oute of þat regioun, -
>
> Þer may be made no mediacioun. (v.1309-12)

In Egea's defence, she is far less vindictive against her husband than Clytemnestra. Exile

is a harsh punishment as in this case it is based on misinformation, but it is a far less extreme

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[31] "This same Oectus, son of King Nauplius, went to Egea, the wife of Diomedes, and in the same way in which he influenced the mind of Clytemnestra to believe that her husband was bringing with him one of the daughters of King Priam, in the same way he influenced Egea." (Meek 240).

retribution than murder. Diomedes' exile becomes the atonement for his infidelity, and like the

young knight who sets out to become the flower of chivalry, he must again seek to recover his

title as a "manly knyȝt" (v.1419). Fortune is kind to Diomedes and she produces an opportunity

for him to redeem himself with a crusade to rescue Troy, as in its weakened state it is vulnerable

to its old enemies:

> Cely Troiens, þat almost were shent
>
> W*ith* her fomen of Iles adiacent
>
> Þat hem be-set abouten envirou*n*. (v.1371-3)

He returns in order to "releue hem in þis sharp[e] shour" (v.1359) with soldiers, and joins Aeneas

in its defence. Guido states they "fought continuously for seven days" (Meek 242), but Lydgate

reduces this to "foure daies þei fauȝt by and by" (v.1378). Diomedes' return to Troy is cathartic

as it is the scene of his misdemeanour, and his efforts initiate his redemption: "Diomede þus gan

wexe strong" (v.1386). His prowess culminates in becoming the "Chef protector now of Troie

tou*n*" (v.1388), as he and his men defend the city "in knyȝtly wyse" (v.1379). When Egea hears

reports of Diomedes, she recognises that he "Hath grace fou*n*de in Fortunys siȝt" (v.1404), and

realises that he may be in a position "of knyȝthod a werre newe be-gy*n*ne" (v.1400) against her.

Instead of waiting, she instigates the reconciliation, and sends messages of repentance.

Interestingly, Lydgate says that Diomedes forgives her more from "mercy, sothly, þa*n*ne of riȝt"

(v.1420). This charitable act embodies the chivalric code and Diomedes is transformed into the

ideal medieval knight. As she receives him back as king, there is a double-meaning in Lydgate's

description of Diomedes' triumphant return to his wife: "He is repeired in ful riche array"

(v.1426) - both in his apparel and spiritually. No longer is he an exile, but has claimed his

crown, his wife, and most importantly he has recovered his chivalric ethos.

Agamemnon's fate at his wife's hands is not so happily resolved. Unlike Diomedes and Egea, there is not a "blisful lyf" (v.1431) in the future for them. Guido is critical of wives that are adulterous because, in his opinion:

> They never desire to join with anyone who would be better than or
>
> equal to their husbands, but they always descend to a lower person.
>
> Since they have become careless of their honor, they do not shrink from
>
> doing base deeds in their own right, but they only do these things with
>
> base fellows, since they would think it a crime if they did these things with
>
> men better than their husbands and themselves, or of higher rank in the
>
> world. (Meek 239)

Contrary to Guido's idea that a husband would be afflicted "with the disgraceful stigma of a rival" (Meek 240), Lydgate does not condemn women for taking lovers: "As God forbede þat any man accuse / For so litel any woman euere" (ii.5814-5). His outlook appears to be more relaxed than Guido's towards Clytemnestra and Aegisthus in this respect, but not when she motivates Aegisthus to slay Agamemnon.[32] Her husband's fame and honour is degraded by this act of betrayal, and she earns from Lydgate the title, "Þat she was þe falsest oon alyve / Vn-to hir lord in his longe absence" (v.1002-3). Aegisthus' reputation does not fare any better, because it is confirmed later that he is a villain in his previous treatment of the daughter of King Forensis:

> Þat whilom was ʒoven in mariage

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[32] "Punishment for women murderers was essentially identical to that for men who killed intentionally. Brought to trial in identical fashion, men and female felons, if found guilty, were similarly hanged. Only treasonous acts, such as counterfeiting money or king-killing differentiated punishments sexually. The man convicted of treason was drawn and quartered. The treasonous woman was burned at the stake. Just as a man killing his overlord was guilty of treason, similarly a woman murdering her husband, her overlord, was cast to the flames." Cosman, *Women at Work*, 116.

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> To Egistus . . .
>
> Þe kynges douȝter haþ outterly for-sake,
>
> And in al haste dide a lybel make,
>
> And forge a writ of repulsion. (v.1532-3, 1535-7)

Lydgate is theoretically on a slippery slope with his comments when recounting this tale of murder. Contextually Agamemnon's fate has serious undertones historically and politically as this type of adultery and regicide is similar to what occurs in Henry V's own ancestry. His great-great-grandfather, Edward II (1284-1327), was murdered, under the orders of his wife Isabella and her lover, Roger Mortimer. There is a parallel image with Orestes, who was "wonder seemly & but ȝong of age" (v.1153), and Edward's heir, his fourteen-year-old son at the time of the murder.[33] Although he succeeds to the throne, there is an echo of the myth when similarly to Orestes, Edward III comes of age, and pursues justice by executing Mortimer and dispatching "Isabella to honourable confinement" in 1330.[34] This is a less malicious punishment than that given by Orestes to his mother:

> On pecis smale he hath hir al to-shorn,
>
> And made hir bern oute of þe tovnis boundis
>
> To be vowrid of bestis & of houndis. (v.1642-4)

There is also the more difficult consideration of Henry IV's involvement in Richard II's deposition and death which would force Lydgate to tread warily in this part of the *Historia*'s

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[33] "In 1327 the fiction was maintained that Edward II had abdicated and there was no doubt that Edward's successor would be his eldest son and heir, who was crowned on 1 February 1327 whilst his father was alive . . . If people could be persuaded to believe that Edward II did not die by a murderer's hand in Berkeley Castle (and care was apparently taken that there should be no external mark on his body), then his demise might, with a great deal of luck, be accepted as natural; his eldest son could be considered to have succeeded him, and the monarchy remain inviolate." *OBM*, 210.

[34] Saul, *Oxford Illustrated History*, 112-6.

translation.[35] Lydgate's approach is to make a prayer to God, which is not in the *Historia*, that demonstrates a confidence in Lydgate's patron being thick-skinned:

> O myȝti God, þat w*ith* þin inward loke
>
> Sest eu*er*y þing þoruȝ þin et*er*nal myȝt,
>
> Whi wiltow nat of equite and riȝt
>
> Punishe & chastise so horrible a þing,
>
> And specialy þe mordre of a kyng? (v.1046-50)

Such an invocation would be risky as it is so close in time to the deposition, and there were also numerous superstitious rumours concerning the Henry IV's health. Michael Bennett gives an example of one idea that was connected to the king's person:

> Over the winter of 1405/6 Henry fell ill, and he was dogged by poor
>
> health for the remainder of his reign. It was alleged that his illness was
>
> leprosy, and that his condition was God's punishment for [Archbishop]
>
> Scrope's martyrdom.[36]

Lydgate augments the discussion on murder further: "For it excedeth in comparisou*n* / Al felonye, falshede, and tresoun." (v.1055-6). There are two possible ways to read Lydgate's action. First of all, Lydgate negates the idea that Henry IV was being punished by God for regicide with the use of denial. Lydgate is consigning Richard II's fate to have been ordained by God's purpose rather than by Henry Bolingbroke's. Secondly, Lydgate is playing to his audience's fears and memories of the two late kings; if they feel Henry IV was punished for his

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[35] When Richard II was usurped, Henry was not next in line to inherit: "Henry's anxiety to escape responsibility for dynastic overturn led him not only to assert that the defiant king had abdicated 'with a cheerful countenance'". *OBM*, 210. Henry also tried to rearrange the order of birth with the sons of Henry III in order to strengthen his claim to the throne through Edmund Crouchback.

[36] Bennett, *Richard II*, 204.

actions by illness, then Lydgate would endorse this: "For mordre wrouȝt wil han his egal mede / And his guerdon, as he hath disservid" (v.1474-5). Specifically, penance would then be borne by Henry IV alone, and his usurpation of Richard would not then carry a price for his son, nor would the throne be held "By fals title" (v.1497) by Henry V.

Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are characters that are vilified for their conduct and treachery, but their regicide is seen by Lydgate in a different light to the 1399 events. They killed for lust and power, and technically Richard was deposed from the throne before he died. Pearsall argues that "Only a poem totally innocent of contemporary reference could permit such an outburst so soon after the death of Richard II".[37] However, if it is taken in the context of Richard's murder, it is Henry IV who is responsible, and not Prince Henry for the crime. This exclamation, from such a source as Lydgate, separates the actions of the father from those of the son. It is a propaganda move for the benefit of Henry V. Lydgate would have seen the usurpation in a patriotic light; it was better for the realm to have the House of Lancaster on the throne.

Lydgate's faith in women is validated with Penelope who is a complete contrast to Clytemnestra and she looks upon her vows as "Þe trewe lok, sothly, of spousaille" (v.1093). Her husband, Ulysses, is portrayed as a cunning, deceitful warrior with an aura of murder about him; yet he is the Greek with the best wife. Even long after he is expected to return, she neither abandons hope, nor does she take a lover. Penelope has the strongest case than either Egea or Clytemnestra to believe that she could be widowed or usurped by another woman as time passes, but Penelope contains the model characteristics of a medieval wife as described by Eileen Power:

Ladies of the upper classes had to be ready in an emergency to take the

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[37] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 139.

husband's place, for in public and private wars in the Middle Ages, no one made any bones about attacking a castle occupied only by a lady whose lord was elsewhere; and ladies in this position often proved themselves adequate defenders.[38]

Guido describes Ulysses hearing of Penelope as being "plagued by so many princes and preserving her honor unharmed, and of certain others who had invaded his land and were staying there boldly against the will of his wife" (Meek 251). Penelope, hotly pursued by suitors, preserves herself and Ulysses' property for his return, and in medieval times this form of loyalty from a wife is irreplaceable. This virtue is fully appreciated by Lydgate, and he highlights Guido's injudicious lack of allocation of text to Penelope by referring to her fame from other sources:

And ȝit was she, as bokes list expresse,

Þoruȝ-oute þe world meror of fairnes,

And among Grekis born of hiȝest blood,

Called of auctours boþe fair and good. (v.2157-60)

Lydgate also dramatises Penelope's life when she is separated from her husband, thereby admonishing Guido more for his lack of trust in women's faithfulness:

When it fel she herd Hectoris name,

In any place anoon she fil a-swowne,

And gan hir silf al in teris drowne,

Of wommanhed so she was a-ferde

To here þe slauȝter of his mortal swerde,

---

[38] Power, *Medieval Women*, 39.

> List hir lord, of kny3tly surquedie,
>
> Hadde of fortune falle in iupartye. (v.2176-82)

This permits Lydgate to reprimand Guido for his views on wives (v.2192-219), and to exhibit Penelope as a woman of "wyfly trouþe" (v.2167). She is able to withstand the pursuit of her suitors, and carefully guards Ulysses' interests while he is absent. Not only is Guido guilty of wifely mistrust, but Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales* is not entirely innocent either. Ruth Mazo Karras discusses this in her work *Common Women*:

> Chaucer both implicitly and explicitly equates all unfaithful wives (and even
> faithful ones) with prostitutes . . . Yet none are called whores, and no sharp
> distinction is drawn between them in moral terms.[39]

Penelope's virtues cannot be applied to Helen as she neglects her "wyfly trouþe". While Helen's husband, Menelaus, is away, her actions allows Guido to condone what he must have been considering as the laxity of morals in his own society, especially when he describes the festival at the temple of Venus. He seems to impractically disapprove of the opportunities the festivity provides for strangers to meet. With the introduction of Helen he gives a curious admonishment on dancing:

> May he perish who first brought it about that young women and young
> men they do not know dance together, which is a manifest cause of
> many disgraceful acts. Furthermore, on account of these dances, many
> girls who were chaste till that time fall outrageously to the treacherous
> attacks of men, from which scandals often arise and the deaths of many
> follow. (Meek, 68)

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[39] Karras, *Common Women*, 93.

Lydgate does not follow Guido in this vein. Yes, he translates that Helen was wanton in her

desire to leave her house and go "among þe p*re*s" (ii.3591), and he asks, like Guido, "What gost

or spirit, allas, haþ mevid þe[?]" (ii.3589). However Lydgate also adds an additional question to

Guido: "Whi were þou wery to liue at home in pes[?]" (ii.3592). He suggests boredom in her

marriage. Therefore Lydgate is not solely blaming Helen's lust which Guido is inclined to do for

her defection:

> You, Helen, wished to leave your palace and visit Cythera so that, under
>
> the pretext of fulfilling you vows, you might see the foreign man, and
>
> under the pretext of what is lawful, turn to what is unlawful. (Meek 69)

Guido is adamant that Helen's indecorum is one reason that the venom of war has spread

throughout Greece, but Lydgate cannot bring himself to agree with Guido's attack on dancing.

When Guido speaks of Helen and Paris' wedding, the nuptials are celebrated with "eight

successive days spent . . . in continuous games and excitement" (Meek 77). Lydgate has a little

bit of playful reprisal on Guido's critical remarks on dancing:

> What schuld I write þe reuel or þe dau*n*ces,
>
> Þe fresche array or þe countenau*n*ces,
>
> Þe stole touchis, þe lokis amerous,
>
> Þe p*re*vy gruchyng of hem þ*a*t wer Ielous. (ii.4179-81)

Lydgate produces a far more sensual atmosphere than Guido's solemn and restricted morals, and

infers the basic emotion of jealousy for Guido's sourness.

Guido takes a one dimensional view of the proceedings: Helen's lust is the catalyst for the

Trojan tragedy. He conveniently forgets, even though he has written this history, that Paris'

directive is to set out to Greece to abduct a woman and hold her hostage in exchange for the release of Hesione. He ignores the fact that earlier, it was the Greeks' stubborn refusal even to acknowledge Priam's claim upon his sister, Hesione, and the Greeks' curt reception of Antenor as an emissary. No matter how Helen behaved, there would have to be a war as Paris' fate is to act as a pirate and return with his prize awarded by Venus. Guido's Paris is a pompous character as he has Paris claim to Helen, when she is disconsolate at being separated from Menelaus: "Nor should the loss of the husband you have left cause you remorse, since he is not of as high rank as I nor my peer in enterprise, nor at all equal to me in fervent passion" (Meek 76). Lydgate has difficulty in presenting one of Hector's brothers in this light as his patron could take offence as his brothers could also be considered to be mirrored by the text. Therefore Lydgate palliates Paris' arrogance to transform him into a "trewe knyȝt" (ii.3954):

> At more honour and gretter excellence
>
> ȝe schal be cherisched þan ȝe were a-fore.
>
> . . . .
>
> For, at þe lest, of þe stok royal
>
> I am discendid & comme of as hiȝe blood
>
> As Menelay, and of birþe as good;
>
> And can in loue to ȝou be more trewe
>
> Þan he was euer, and chaunge for no newe. (ii.4016-7, 4036-40)

Undoubtedly Lydgate is able to manipulate some of Guido's passages for the benefit of his own text. With Helen, Lydgate apologises for not following Guido's description of her by claiming that the English language cannot compete with the beauty of Latin: "I han non englysche þat þer-

to may suffyse" (ii.3678). Although Lydgate is "the most lavishly deferential writer of humility

topoi among the English 'Chaucerian' poets", and he is considered as "Chaucer's recognised heir

in the creation of an elevated English style" it is feigned.[40] His startling admission that English

cannot compete with Latin's beauty seems to contradict Lydgate's ambition, especially when he

declares in the Prologue that a high quality of English is required from him as he creates Henry

V's *Troy Book*:

> So as I coude, and write it for his sake,
>
> . . . .
>
> And y-written as wel in oure langage
>
> As in latyn and in frensche it is. (pr.110, 114-5)

There are two possibilities that may explain his reluctance to translate this part of the *Historia*.

In the first place the description by Guido of Helen's face may be too technical and Lydgate's

understanding of Latin may be insufficient to translate these lines properly - the risk being that

he would produce an inferior portrait of her beauty, which would undermine the work. Secondly,

Guido's description of Helen borders on the farcical. Guido describes her features from her hair,

working down her arms and torso. Her features are perfect and are contrasted to the faults that

are found on other faces. Prudence alone would restrain Lydgate from translating this passage as

the female audience might resent their own personal characteristics being represented as flaws.

With Guido's description of Helen's perfection, there also appears a little irony on the human

form. One example is Guido's description of Helen's nose:

> He [Paris] also admired the marvellously beautiful regularity of her nose
>
> which, dividing her cheeks into two equal parts did not slope with great

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[40] *Vernacular*, 16.

length toward the base, nor, diminished by excessive shortness, cause the

position of the upper lip to be unsuitably high. Thus, since it was not

swollen with too much thickness, it did not spread out in great width,

while the nostrils were joined without much space intervening, and they

did not display themselves with the sight of a great opening. (Meek 70)

As for the description of Helen's lips, Lydgate may also feel that this wording is more of an

erotic piece and not of a historical one as they are "pouting becomingly with their firm swelling

[and] caused those who saw them to desire kisses with eager passion" (Meek 71). Guido's

description is far longer than Lydgate's, and it is one of the few examples where Lydgate does not

amplify the text. Lydgate alludes to lilies and roses in his description of Helen which are used by

Guido to illustrate her beauty, and Guido's depiction of Helen finishes with Paris' imagination.

What is concealed has been undressed in Paris's mind, and he found that "nature had not gone

astray at all in anything" (Meek 71). Lydgate reserves his opinion and writes that Guido

describes her details "by ordre ceryously, / From hed to foot, clerly to devise" (ii.3676-7) if the

reader wishes to learn more.

In essence, Lydgate's portrayal of females in the *Troy Book* rejects the opinion of Lydgate

as a misogynist as he is empathetic with these characters. When contrasting the *Historia* to

Lydgate's translation, the changes that he makes to Guido's original are quite marked. As a

translator Lydgate is updating the work, and he represents women as individuals, working within

four separate groups to represent a cross section of roles. The vexed question of women's

counsel is more evident within the Trojan section, and Lydgate indirectly answers it with the

tragedy that Cassandra and Andromache were not heeded by Troy and Hector respectively.

Hecuba is seen as a monarch who abuses her authority, becoming a close mirror of Priam's own wayward emotions. Her sole ambition is to avenge the death of her sons, but she then forgets the repercussions it could have on the fate of Troy.

With the Amazons, Lydgate departs from viewing these women as outsiders, he avoids playing, "on the contravention of stereotypes through the troubling figure of the woman who takes up arms, most obviously in the classical legend of the Amazon".[41] Lydgate does not treat them as alien, he leaves that to the anti-heroes of the *Troy Book* such as Pyrrhus - who is considered by Lydgate as brutally alien as he could possibly be - and the Greeks. Penthesilea has autonomy, and it is put to use in a chivalric mode, whereas Polyxena as a king's daughter is submissive. Her position conditions her to be used as a pawn, at first with an arranged marriage, and then as a sacrifice to ensure the Greeks return home. Both sides abuse her passivity for their own purposes.

The transitional woman is one that Lydgate views as being trapped by the influences of patriarchal society. Hesione, Helen, and Cryseyde are all women that have been caught up by the authority of man. It is either through abduction or exchange that these women have had their lives changed, and even Andromache becomes subject to Pyrrhus as a prisoner in a foreign land. For these women to survive it is necessary for them to adapt to their enforced environments. Finally the Greek women, who represent characters in peacetime, and the vices that come with it: jealousy, fear, adultery and murder. Egea is perhaps the most realistic character for the democratic reader, as she consults "hir liges" (v.1310) before taking action, but she is susceptible to error as well. As for Clytemnestra, she is pilloried by Guido for taking another lover, but for Lydgate her real crime is Agamemnon's murder, "For whiche, allas! my penne I fele quake, / Þat

---

doth myn ynke blotten on my boke" (v.1044-5). However of them all, it is Penelope who is seen

by Lydgate as a fifteenth-century gentleman's redemption:

> And who-so be þat in his hert[e] museth
>
> Of any womman any þing but good,
>
> Of malencoyle mevid in his blood,
>
> Lat hym aduerte of wisdam and[y-]se,
>
> And remembre on Penelope,
>
> For his decert list þat he be blamyd! (v.2192-7)

On occasion Lydgate's works can be viewed as misogynistic as there are "satirical pieces directed

against women",[42] but if he was irritated by women, as has been suggested by later critics, he has

an empathetic approach to the Trojan and Greek women that should be considered, and which

has so far been overlooked. If Lydgate was anti-woman he would not have made the

amendments that he does to Guido's work. The *Historia* is in places condemnatory towards

women, and it would not be of any concern of Lydgate to alter or comment upon this, except

perhaps to endorse Guido on his sentiments. Yet Lydgate not only represents women as

individuals, but he also depicts them with an insight that is more conducive to a court audience,

rather than repeating Guido's prejudiced tirades. Lydgate recognises that many of the crimes that

women have committed in the *Historia* have often been the result of masculine factors

compounding their decisions.

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[42] Pearsall, *Old English*, 233.

A Trojan Mirror for a Lancastrian King: The *Troy Book* as a speculum for Henry V

"Þoruȝ-oute þe world mero*ur* of fairnes" (v.2158).

As the *Troy Book* is an amplified translation of Guido's *Historia*, and much of the *Troy Book*'s focus is directed on its ambition to be a fresh vernacular text, the *Troy Book* reflects how the Lancastrian court wished to be perceived by itself and others. Lydgate intended the *Troy Book* to resonate with his fifteenth-century audience, one that stretches from king to soldier. What must be taken into account with Lydgate's writing is that, contextually, there is also a new monarchy which is seeking to revive old ambitions, such as the conquest of the French throne. As Robert Edwards states: "For a full understanding of *Troy Book*, Lydgate's historical and literary contexts prove as important as the narrative scope and thematic complexity of the poem."[1] Therefore the amplification and alterations that Lydgate makes to the *Historia* are directly relevant to how Lydgate perceives his own contemporaneous experiences, historical events, and the ideals that the Lancastrian monarchy wishes to present as statutory within its court. This has the effect of making the *Historia* as presented by Lydgate different to Guido's perspective, but Lydgate's intention is to use the translation as the conduit for moral lessons, and use the history of the siege to all intents and purposes as propaganda to stabilise the House of Lancaster's claim to the throne. Lydgate looks back to Guido and refreshes the Troy theme for the benefit of Henry V, as others have done before:

> Ne hadde oure elderis cerched out and souȝt

---
[1] Edwards, *John Lydgate Troy Book*, 7.

> The sothefast pyth, to ympe it in oure thouȝt,
>
> Of thinges passed, for-dirked of her hewe,
>
> But thorouȝ writyng þei be refreshed newe,
>
> Of oure auncetrys left to vs by-hynde. (Pr.163-7)

   As a constructed mirror image of the court, the *Troy Book* is frequently glazed with a rose-tinted glass, but Lydgate, in places, is not hesitant to pinpoint failings in Henry V's actions through the use of his characters. The reader can draw contextual analogues between the *Troy Book*'s characters and those in fifteenth-century politics. The *Troy Book*'s relevance is to Henry V, but as a speculum it is tenable to construe that its content spreads to relationships and interactions with other figures such as the Beauforts, who were Henry IV's half-brothers; Joan of Navarre, Henry IV's widow; John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy; Charles VI, king of France; and Chaucer, Lydgate's literary master:

> To make a merour only to oure mynde,
>
> To seen eche thing trewly as it was,
>
> More bryȝt and clere þan in any glas. (pr.163-70)

Henry Bergen defines this 'merour' image as "a pattern, exemplar",[2] and Lydgate's ambition is to appropriate Troy's heroic ethos for the courtly society of Henry V. Lydgate declares in the prologue that this "emprise" began at the behest of Prince Henry in the year "Fourtene complete of his fadris regne" (pr.124), and that his aim, from the above lines, is to illuminate the translation as brightly and as clearly to his audience as he possibly can. Although the image of a mirror as a means to view the past would evoke the idea of a projection through which the tale of Troy could be viewed, it is not to be perceived that these images were solely for the purpose of

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[2] In his Glossary for the *Troy Book*.

entertainment. Lydgate has to provide realistic depictions of siege warfare, peace negotiations, and the detrimental effects that war has on society. Alan Ambrisco and Paul Strohm express the view that "the "merour" of writing is not, according to Lydgate, bent to simple reflection, but to a kind of ultra-reflection, in which the truth requires alteration and embellishment."[3] Therein lies the implication that Lydgate will manipulate the text, and not always strictly adhere to Guido's *Historia* when it does not suit him:

> I leue þe wordis and folwe þe sentence
>
> . . . .
>
> Nat purposyng to moche for to varie,
>
> Nor for to be dyu*er*se nor contrarie
>
> Vn-to Guydo, as by discordau*n*ce;
>
> But me conforme fully in substau*n*ce,
>
> Only in menyng, to conclude al on. (ii.180, 187-91)

Alain Renoir states: "Because of his respect for history, Lydgate must report the facts as he finds them, but nothing compels him to like them, or prevents him from interpreting them as he wishes."[4]

Interpretation by Lydgate in his work also has to be influenced by the expected reaction of the audience, and a hopeful, welcome reception by its patron. Lydgate's experience of commissions from Prince Henry has already indicated that Henry's taste in his reading is on a wide subject of matters. Dockray maintains that Henry's reputation of being well-read was justified:

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[3] Ambrisco and Strohm, "Succession and Sovereignty", 45.
[4] Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate*, 97.

As for Henry V's own books, they are known to have included volumes on

theology, history, law, chivalry and hunting and, specifically, he certainly

owned copies of Cicero's *Rhetoric*, St Augustine's *City of God* and

Chaucer's *Troilus*.[5]

Lydgate models the Trojan Hector as the paradigm for Henry on leadership, chivalry and

authority, but Hector's shortcomings can potentially lead to disaster and Lydgate uses these as

warnings. Prince Henry's commission of the book is an opportunity for Lydgate to give counsel

to the future king, and Lydgate's Hector is the ideal correlational character to be connected with

Henry V. The links that can be drawn between the two men demonstrate how strongly applicable

Lydgate's translation of Guido's work is to his own period:

He was example - þer-to of sobirnes

A verray merour, & for his gentilnes

In his tyme þe most[e] renomed,

To reknen al, and of goodlyhed

Þe most[e] fam*us*, [and] in pes & werre

Ferþest spoke of, boþe nyȝe & ferre. (ii.4807-12).

Andrew King comments on this passage: "the implication is that Henry must overgo Hector and

succeed, where Hector failed, to unite two mighty nations".[6] Therefore Henry must be better

than Hector.

     In order to keep the mirror-image physically similar to Henry, Lydgate omits Guido's

description of Hector's "great head of hair" (Meek 84), although every other description of

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[5] Dockray, *Henry V*, 223.
[6] King, *The Faerie Queene*, 100.

Hector by Guido is included. Philip Lindsay states that the crown was placed upon Henry's "thick dark hair".[7] Yet a portrait painted circa 1518-23 depicts Henry V with severely cropped hair which may go some way to explain this divergence from Guido.[8] In a very similar way to Hector's family, Henry's brothers are also involved in the French campaigns under his leadership: Thomas, Duke of Clarence, John, Duke of Bedford, and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester are all participating for the attainment French territories. Lydgate, in his mirror image, portrays a harmonious ideal of Hector and his brothers on the battlefield, bound together in loyalty by strong familial ties:

> But Paris þo, and þe kyng of Perse,
>
> W*ith* five þousand, as I can reherse,
>
> Of worþi kny3ts, & many Troyan mo,
>
> Be vn-to Hector alle attonys go. (iii.1863-6)

Another incident occurs earlier when Hector's horse is slain, and he is aided by a different side of the family:

> And wha*n*ne his breþer, callid natural,
>
> Sawe hym on fote, myd of alle his foon,
>
> On a frusche þei fel in eu*er*ychon,
>
> . . . .
>
> And hym to help, þoru3 her hi3e renoun. (iii.1390-2, 1395)

The involvement of natural brothers provide further examples of Lydgate departing from Guido,

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[7] Lindsay, *King Henry V*, 128.

[8] "The hair style and dress suggest that it is based on a contemporary likeness." *OBM*, 256. A copy of this portrait is used to illustrate the cover of Dockray's biography, and the portrait itself, *Henry V*, is in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

primarily with regard to the naming of Priam's sons. Guido names all the children of Priam

including the thirty sons outside of his marriage to Hecuba (Meek 42). Meek, in her

introduction, states that it is Benoit's recreation of his sources, Dares and Dictys, and from all the

tales that he knew that resulted in names for these sons:

> The names Benoit invents for Priam's bastards typify his synthesising
>
> ability; some sound vaguely classical, some Biblical, some Breton, and
>
> some, purely fanciful. (Meek xiii)

Lydgate's alterations may be because he wishes to highlight the principal protagonists of the

story, but he also avoids the repetitive absurdity that would arise if he amplified the personalities

of this list of thirty other sons. He gives more detail than Guido in relation to the seven children

Priam has with Hecuba, but of the thirty "Worþi knyʒtes and manly men" (ii.380) the reader

"schal fynde hem write vp-on a rowe . . . Begynnygne first at the eldest brother" (ii.382, 384) as

the story progresses. It could be argued that Lydgate avoids listing these illegitimate sons from a

moral aspect, but it is for a practical one. To go into detail about each man would be time

consuming and Lydgate would lose his audience's attention. It is more helpful that each

character should have his own space and authority within the text rather than being grouped

together on a particular list with the possible heading, 'Priam's Bastards'. However, a conundrum

also arises for Lydgate with regard to concerns of illegitimate issue, and he would have to tread

warily as Priam's prolific, sexual conduct corresponds with Henry V's grandfather, John of

Gaunt, who was well known to have had extramarital affairs.

In the figure of John of Gaunt, there is a complicated, and interconnected history of

familial relationships for Lydgate as John of Gaunt is not only a Lancaster, but he is also a

lynchpin for Chaucerian literature through patronage and marriage. John was the third son of Edward III, and was first married to Blanche, Duchess of Lancaster, who died in either 1368 or 1369, and with whom he had three children. He then married Constance, daughter of Peter the Cruel of Castile, in 1371, who bore him a daughter. It was a detrimental match for Constance as it was more for the advancement of John's ambitions than for love.[9] In conjunction with this marriage, John of Gaunt maintained a relationship with his daughters' governess, Katherine Swynford, who was the wife, and later widow of Sir Hugh Swynford.[10] In an unusual act for the time, John of Gaunt publicly acknowledged his paternity of his four children by Katherine, and titled them as Beaufort: John, Henry, Thomas and Joan. When he was widowed for the second time in 1394, he then married Katherine Swynford in 1396, and their offspring were granted legitimacy.[11] Katherine was connected with the Chaucer family as she was Thomas Chaucer's aunt, sister of Chaucer's wife, Philippa Roet. Katherine and Philippa were the daughters of "Sir Gilles, called "Paon," de Roet, a knight of Hainault" who was part of Queen Philippa's retinue when she married into Edward III's court.[12] Lydgate is therefore caught in the middle of issues of legitimacy, complicated on one side by court politics, and on the other is the literary inheritance that he seeks to gain through the Chaucers. He must refrain from alienating either side and avoid disparaging the sexual escapades of some of the *Troy Book*'s characters. His only condemnations of such sexual activity are when they occur with force such as Telamon's captivity of Hesione; without truth, Jason's betrayal of Medea; or without honour such as when Clytemnestra beds Aegiesthus. The latter is a man considered of lesser worth than Clytemnestra's husband and, "on

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[9] McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century*, 267-8.
[10] Brewer, *The World of Chaucer*, 91. Norman F. Cantor, *The Last Knight*, 79-80.
[11] McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century*, 473.
[12] *RC*, xiv.

hir bond of wedlok she ne þou3t" (v.1092). Even though this union is corrupt, Lydgate is

sensitive to their daughter, Erigona, who takes her own life because "For sorwe & drede [she] list

no leng*er* dwelle" (v.1774). Lydgate's pity is apparent because he softens Guido's bluntness, and

does not state that Erigona is "born of a disgraceful union" (Meek 246):

> Erigona uero filia Clitemestre et Egisti, turpi coytu suscepta, ex quo nouit
>
> Horrestem uterinum fratrem suum in regni solio confirmatum, nimio
>
> dolore commota laqueo se suspendit.[13]

Lydgate merely leaves it to the reader to judge: "I can nat seyn what lif þat þei ladde, / Except þat

she by hym a dou3ter hadde" (v.1111-2).

Erigona is not derided by Lydgate for her illegitimate status, nor does he throw any

aspersion towards any such issue in the *Troy Book*. Lydgate does not present a tale with this kind

of moral prejudice for his audience because illegitimacy is physically present and accepted

within court life. The Beauforts were respected and deeply involved in court politics, and one of

Richard II's more polished acts was to recognise his illegitimate cousins in the 1390s: "Richard

referred to them as 'our most dear kinsmen . . . sprung from royal stock'.[14]

This legitimisation was later reaffirmed again in 1407 by Henry IV, but "a clause

(*excepta dignitate regali*) was inserted excluding them from all claim to the crown".[15] He had his

own lineage's prospects to protect. However, this clause was to prove worthless later in 1485 as

Henry Tudor was a "descendent in the female and illegitimate line of John of Gaunt" through his

mother Margaret Beaufort, granddaughter of the above John Beaufort.[16] As Derek Pearsall states

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[13] Colonne, *Historia*, 256.

[14] *OBM,* 252.

[15] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 105.

[16] *OBM*, 213. Cantor, *The Last Knight*, 80.

(with regard to Lydgate's reflections on murder and adultery) Lydgate would not be so "tactless, to say the least, at a time when the Beauforts, legitimised descent of John of Gaunt's adultery with Katherine Swynford, were beginning to be powers in the land."[17] The Beaufort brothers were publicly recognised as half-uncles to Henry V, and there would have been a great deal of interaction between Henry V and these men. For example, Henry Beaufort was "reported by John Rous to have been chancellor of Oxford at the time when the prince was at Queen's College, and Beaufort acted as Henry's guardian."[18] The Beaufort relationships went further into the King's career as his other uncle, Thomas, was present with Henry V in France at Bois-de-Vincennes where the King died in 1422.[19]

With these facts in mind, it may explain why Priam is not appropriate as a mirror of Henry IV, but more as a reflection of John of Gaunt. It would seem a natural progression that Lydgate should use Priam as an extension of Henry IV in this way as with other characters that are connected to Hector, such as Andromache, but early on in the *Troy Book* there is a disassociation between Henry IV and Priam. Lydgate states in the Prologue that the Prince of Wales is "In eu*er*y part the tarage is the same, / Lyche his fader of manneris and of name" (pr.99-100). However, Lydgate carefully follows Guido's descriptions of Priam closely, but he does not stray into amplifying his character any more than is necessary. Priam is used to caution Henry V rather than to be seen as a model of his father. Priam's impetuosity as a king produces the most dire consequences for his people, and his impulsive actions are to be noted with care - a warning that intemperate conduct does not have a place in leadership: "And late Priam alwey ʒo*ur* merour ben, / Hasty errour be tymes to correcte" (ii.1898-9).

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[17] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 139.
[18] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 103.
[19] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 201.

Lydgate reproaches Priam on his foolishness for embarking on a war with the Greeks by seeking retribution for the disgrace of Hesione:

> Þou art travailed with wilful mocions,
>
> Ou*er*maystred with þi passiou*n*s,
>
> For lak of resou*n* and of hiȝe prudence,
>
> Dirked & blind from al prouidence,
>
> And ful bareyn to cast a-forne and see
>
> Þe harmys foloyng of þin aduersite! (ii.1809-14)

If read in context with the Hundred Years War, "For lak of resou*n*" is more applicable to the mental condition of Charles VI of France, and not particularly to Henry IV. Charles frequently had bouts of insanity, beginning in 1392, when he "slaughtered several of his hunting companions".[20] Although Froissart gives an account of Charles's incident in the forest, the heat of the day is blamed for his madness: "Several knights were knocked down, because they did not attempt to defend themselves, but I never heard that anyone was killed in this adventure".[21] The unfortunate Charles was afflicted with bouts of madness throughout the rest of his life, and Desmond Seward claims "the cause may have been the recently diagnosed disease of porphyria, which was later to be responsible for George III's insanity".[22] During these unstable periods the control of France was tossed between its royal dukes:[23]

> Things came to a head when Orleans was assassinated on Burgundy's
>
> orders in 1407 and civil war followed. Bernard, count of Armagnac,

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[20] Dockray, *Henry V*, 126.

[21] Froissart, *Chronicles*, 340. John Jolliffe notes: "According to *Les Grandes Chroniques de France*, four men were killed, and the *Anonyme de Saint Denis* adds a fifth".

[22] Seward, *A Brief History*, 144.

[23] Reid, *By Fire And Sword*, 244-5.

whose daughter married Orleans' son Charles, took up the challenge posed

by the Duke of Burgundy and consequently France became divided

between the Armagnac faction and that of the Burgundians.[24]

The Armagnacs and the Dauphin, Louis, upheld the French royalist side, while the Duke of

Burgundy, John the Fearless, had his own ambitions and was an inconsistent ally of Henry V.

When mirrored with the *Troy Book*, France can be perceived as conquerable as Troy when their

kings are not of a stable and impassionate mind.

Furthermore Lydgate has an opportunity to reflect upon the political tensions running

between England and France. This is especially depicted in Book II with the meeting of Priam

and the Greek emissaries, Ulysses and Diomedes. This is not a private meeting but a very public

one where the Trojans heavily outnumber the Greeks. The Trojan noblemen that are present

serve to highlight the resentment that arises from Ulysses' disrespectful address to their king.

From the moment the emissaries enter, they choose words with a deliberate contempt, and do not

show Priam the civility that is due to an unconquered equal:

> For, as Guydo doth pleynly specefye,
>
> Entryng in þei taken han her place
>
> In thoposyt of þe kynges face,
>
> And sette hem dou*n*, w*ith*-oute more sermou*n*,
>
> Any obeiyng or salutaciou*n*,
>
> Worschip, honour, or any reu*er*ence
>
> Done to þe kyng, for al his excellence,
>
> In p*rei*udyce of al gentilles. (ii.6812-9)

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[24] Reid, *By Fire And Sword*, 252.

This is not a meeting of appeasement from the Greeks as otherwise they would have been more careful to follow court protocol in order not to provoke Priam any further. Ulysses does not even try to accord Priam the common civilities that would be necessary to make such negotiations palatable. On arrival in Troy, Ulysses and Diomedes admire the city, and the tree in the courtyard that has "Stonys ynde it bare in stede of frut, / As seith Guydo." (ii.6798-9). Troy is a city that is worth plundering, and perhaps it is the lure of riches that leads Ulysses to take his provocative approach to Priam. As Ulysses is regarded as a master of diplomacy and trickery, his offensiveness has to be premeditated. Ulysses is keen for war and there is not any shape of graciousness in his speech: "For naturelly no man schal desyre / Of his enmye þe helthe nor welfare" (ii.6832-3). The wrath that arises due to the antagonism of the emissaries is highlighted at this meeting, and any chance of achieving reason with the king and his nobles is minimal:

> And sodeinly kyng Priam*us* abreide,
>
> Of hasty Ire he my3t[e] nat abide,
>
> Of þe Grekis whan he sawe þe pride,
>
> Þe grete outrage and p*res*umpciou*n* -
>
> Wiþe-oute abode or deliberaciou*n*,
>
> To Vlixes anon he gan out breke. (ii.6878-83)

It is not surprising therefore that the Trojan warriors are ready to slay the two arrogant men to salve the court's pride. There is confrontation, and it is only Priam's orders that protects the two emissaries:

> And leu*er* I hadde, I do 3ou wel assure,
>
> In my p*er*sone damage to endure,

> Þanne to suffre any messanger
>
> In my court, of ȝow þat ben here,
>
> To han a wronge, ouþer grete or lite. (ii.7023-7)

This action by Priam is to be noted in comparison to the Greek's treatment of his own emissary, Antenor; the protection of an ambassador's safety must be maintained no matter how odious the circumstances. Between France and England there were many such negotiations, and undoubtedly the failure of these talks would have been blamed on the French by the English, and vice versa. When the Emperor Sigismund arrived in England in 1416 with the hope of reconciling England and France, he was treated lavishly by Henry V, and, "No opportunity was lost in England of convincing Sigismund of the reality of *Gallicana duplicitas*."[25] Evidence of this was readily forthcoming when reports arrived "of the French occupation of the Isle of Wight and blockading of Portsmouth and shortly after that of the bad treatment given to the English embassy of 28 June."[26] Henry's distrust is still apparent because when he meets the French Queen Isabella at Meulan on the 29 May 1419, he does not wish to be outnumbered by the French.[27] The venue is also to be treated as neutral territory:

> To the whiche place nother party shulde comme with mo then [MMD] . . .
>
> men, and in the meynetyme truese shulde be on bothe parties. The
>
> wheche meyne place wasse afterwarde arayed betwene ii villagz &
>
> lymyted and marked betwene ii grete diches, (wheryn no man shulde come
>
> but only suche as shulde treete of þe pease . . .)[28]

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[25] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 166.

[26] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 166.

[27] Dockray, *Henry V*, 184.

[28] Marx, *An English Chronicle*, 53.

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Lydgate presents Priam as a mirror for Henry to reflect the qualities of a king, but also the imprudence of man. His speech reveals the turmoil of a king as leader, and as a brother bound by his own desire for revenge. The lack of stability in Priam is, for the Greeks, their opportunity for conquest. Henry would see this weakness in Charles VI causing France to be "split between two hostile factions with a mad king . . and a hesitant heir to the throne".[29] Charles' infirmity of mind is a felicitous opportunity for Henry V whose major foreign policy was to secure "the goal of an English Aquitaine in full sovereignty".[30]

Priam is undoubtedly the central, dominant figure of this meeting, and the skills required here are those of a level-headed leader - one that does not let personal slights or injuries affect his judgement. Lydgate considers Priam as a good king, but the major flaw in his character is that he is impractical, and that this is what leads to carnage:

> But seye, Priam, allas! where was þi witte,
>
> Of necligence for to take kepe,
>
> Þi trust to sette on dremys or on slepe!
>
> . . . .
>
> Allas! resoun was no þing þi guyde! (ii.2812-4, 2819)

Priam's negligence of duty allows two Greeks to manipulate his reason, and to get the better of his logic. Although he is strongly outnumbered, Ulysses manages to play on the emotions of the entire room. The behaviour of Diomedes at the meeting also reflects the internal hunger and ferocity of the Greek camp for blood and rapine. Neither Ulysses, nor Diomedes, wish to relinquish the opportunity of this siege and its rewards. Lydgate recreates the image of a king

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[29] Reid, *By Fire And Sword*, 254.
[30] Dockray, *Henry V*, 126.

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goaded by his enemies to the point of no return, and makes Priam's speech passionate. His

rebuttal of Ulysses' threats -"Þat mercyles þis riche strong cite / Schal dou*n* be bete and y-layd

ful lowe" (ii.6872-3) - is full of depth and emotion:

> Maugre ȝo*ur*e myȝt, þouȝ ȝe had it sworne:
>
> For ȝo*ur*e request, in eu*er*y wyȝtis siȝt,
>
> Wanteth a grond, boþe of trouþe & riȝt -
>
> Þat axe of me satisfaccrou*n*! (ii.6914-7)

Priam is manipulated into declaring war. Even though the terms requested by Agamemnon are

reasonable, they are presented in a manner by Ulysses that makes them repugnant. These "iust

proferes" (ii.6701) are expressed with a provocative intent that excuses Priam's reaction, but it

also emphasises how clouded his judgement becomes with rage. Priam should have seen

through Ulysses' insolence, and recognised the tactical trap that was set for him.

The Greeks, as shown by the behaviour of the two emissaries, desire war, and because of

Priam's response, they now have justification to lay siege. Up until this point the actions of

Trojans were based on retaliation. Priam had followed protocol by sending Antenor to the

Greeks who, on every instance, treated his messenger with threats. Some form of retaliation by

the Trojans for this insult was only to be expected, and only Agamemnon appreciates Priam's

position:

> ȝif we had[de] seyn þis in oure þouȝt
>
> Wisely aforn, and Exyou*n* restored.
>
> Þan had nat þe harmys be so morid
>
> On vs echon, in verray sothfastnes. (ii.6660-3)

Therefore for the war to proceed, there must be some unreasonable behaviour by the Trojans to make a declaration of war convincing: "To fyn þat we schal be more excusid" (ii.6699). Similarly Henry V was not averse to this form of logic as E. F. Jacob suggests that the delay between the resolution to attack Armagnac France and the actual departure was not dependent on the outcome of discussions with France, but that "a comfortable show of legality was of value to him for propaganda and other purposes".[31] The Trojan retaliation of abducting Helen in order to compensate for the loss of Hesione is now put aside, and a war based on pride begins. Priam's mishandling of Ulysses' manoeuvres has devastating repercussions for Troy, and he has played into the Greeks' hands.

In contrast to Priam, the Greeks have the advantage with their leader, Agamemnon, and it is he that Lydgate uses as a mirror of military kingship. It is Agamemnon who conquers Troy. He is "wyse Agamenou*n*" (iv.1616) and he is chosen by the Greeks to be their emperor because he can separate personal vendettas from state issues, and would not stumble into the same trap as Priam. It is only when he slumbers can he be murdered by his enemies - they fear his ability. If Henry is to gain a political education from any of the kings in the *Troy Book*, it has to be from Agamemnon who is a king that is desired and elected by the Greeks themselves for war. Lydgate's Agamemnon addresses the Greek assembly with his own rational view, but his words also apply to Henry V:

> For no þing may a man so moche apaire
>
> As pride, in soth, in hiȝe or lowe degre.
>
> Wherfore, I rede pleinly how þat we
>
> Þis foule vice oute of our hert arrace,

---

[31] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 148.

> Þat our quarel may haue þe more grace. (ii.6552-6)

His counsel to his brother Menelaus, who is also overcome by his emotions like Priam but in a different way, is practical. Menelaus' grief prevents him from being able to contemplate his next action: "W*ith*-out[e] more anoon he fel a-swovne" (ii.4296). He is overly distraught by the theft of Helen. Also, Menelaus has poor self-restraint as he displays his grief to the world, thereby provoking Agamemnon to tell him to put aside his sorrow and take action:

> Sith eche wiseman in his adu*er*site
>
> Schulde feyne cher & kepen in secre
>
> Þe inward wo þat bynt hym in distresse. (ii.4345-7)[32]

Agamemnon is analytical and he can see both sides of an argument; he fully appreciates the Greeks' refusal to return Hesione, and the Trojan retaliation, but his address to the Greeks reproaches their arrogance for refusing Priam's simple request:

> Whiche was of vs, w*ith*-oute avisement,
>
> Vndiscretly denyed by assent;
>
> Whiche hath to vs be non avau*n*tage,
>
> But grou*n*de & rote of ful gret damage. (ii.6643-6)

Agamemnon is the enemy who should be respected and admired; he is tactically focused and prepared for war. It is he who organises the Greek allies to come together to attack Troy, and later calls a council to discuss the proposition of talks with the Trojans in order to prevent war. With hindsight he is able to recognise that the insults hurled at Antenor were wrong, and forsees the long term, devastating effects this war will have and its "harmys, now in-eschuable"

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[32] Later readers of the *Troy Book* also took on board Lydgate's advice: "In Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.876, Agamemnon's speech to Menelaus counselling him to disguise his grief at Helen's loss (2.437-429), carries the marginal reminder, 'note thes / and follow'". Edwards, *John Lydgate Troy Book,* 1 [web version].

(ii.6668).

Priam bases his war on revenge, and even if he could see the eventual cost that this will

have on Troy, he would still proceed to risk the city's defences. The audience knows that defeat

will be Priam's fortune, and Hesione will never be recovered. The more he retaliates, the more

bound Priam and Troy become to their fates. The olive branch that Agamemnon offers is not a

sign of weakness or fear, but a means to an end. Similarly with Henry V when he, with the

advice of his council, sends:

> Ambassiatours to the Kynge off Fraunce and to his counsell, requiryng
>
> ham to yelde vp vnto hym his seide enheritaunce in peasable wise maner
>
> or elles he wolde, by the grace of Godde, wynne and gete yt be the sworde
>
> in shorte tyme.[33]

These tactics are not only an opportunity to avoid conflict, but they will also exonerate the

aggressor in appearance to any future generation if the proposal is rejected. Agamemnon also

wishes posterity to look favourably upon the Greeks:

> Obviously I do not pour forth these words among you so that we may
>
> doubt that we can overthrow the Trojans and destroy their city, however
>
> strong it may be, and swallow up all the Trojans in final ruin, but because
>
> we will deserve to be commended with great praise if in all things we are
>
> about to do in this undertaking, we exert ourselves with the guidance of
>
> discretion, and avoid pride. (Meek 102)

Priam is the victim in this tale, not only from the violence that is inflicted upon him and his city,

but from his own pride. A king may feel grief and rage, but these are not to interfere with his

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[33] Marx, *An English Chronicle*, 42.

kingship. They should be reserved, moderated in public and, above all, must not cloud

judgement nor be deaf to voices of wisdom. Hector is evidently the most fortunate, possible

future for Troy, but it is the witlessness of his father that cuts this future short because he is

bound to serve Priam as a subject, as Henry V did his father. Paul Strohm discusses Priam's

ownership over the life of his son, especially when the Trojans preserve Hector's body after his

death: "Here Priam fulfils the sovereign imperative by asserting his sway over life and his right

to continued rule - if not by conquering death at least by delimiting death's dominion".[34] Wars

should not be raged over a woman, a wrong or the past. As Hector is a model for the future

Henry V - "He was example—þer-to of sobirnes / A verray merour" (ii.4807-8) - then it can be

argued that Lydgate is making an example that the prince should also look to the worthiness of

Agamemnon's diplomatic and analytical skills, and not fall victim to "surquidie & pride"

(ii.6531). This is the key to a successful reign.

　　　These moral lessons are incredibly prevalent throughout the *Troy Book* of leaders making

impulsive judgements and taking rash actions. The war with France was a heavy burden on

England, but one of the rashest actions by the French was at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. As

Peter Reid states the Dauphin and the nobility "were haughty and full of confidence" that they

could defeat Henry's exhausted little army.[35] There are many examples of kings who act

recklessly in the *Troy Book,* and these kings' punishments always seems to exceed the severity of

their crimes. It is notable that whenever the Greeks set sail, they seem to be unable to land

anywhere without being rashly repulsed. In Book I Priam's father, Laomedon, fearing for his

city's safety, inhospitably sends a messenger to tell the Argonauts to leave his shore. This breach

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[34] Strohm, "Sovereignty and Sewage", 66.

[35] Reid, *By Fire and Sword*, 266.

of traditional courtesy to travellers causes Troy to be later destroyed. In Book II the Greeks

arrive at Sarranabo and they are instantly attacked by an armed band, united "against them with

foolish and ill-advised plans" (Meek 98-9). Then at the following city, Tenedos, they are again

assaulted (Meek 99-100). When Achilles and Telephus are sent to seek provisions at Messa they

are attacked as they land. As Telephus is a favourite of the king, Teuthras, this battle is senseless.

Both sides lose men, and Achilles demonstrates the rage of war by his assault on the king:

> And who þ*at* eu*ere* in his weye stood,
>
> W*ith*-oute mercy he kylleþ in his mood,
>
> Þat geyneþ nat in his cruelte. (ii.7261-3).

The Greeks gain advantage every time there is a hasty decision of attack from a foe. In this case

Telephus becomes heir by appointment to the kingdom. He remains behind, promising provisions

to the Greeks for the long siege (ii.7560-1). These events portend a difficult, and wretched end

for Priam's city.

Of the new Troy, Guido is factual with his description, and Lydgate follows this closely,

but with additions. These make Troy closer to a contemporary city that would be worthy of

Henry's status. Malcolm Hebron considers that "As well as offering a flattering mirror to the

modern aristocracy, the city of Troy also served as a more general image of cultural identity

across Christendom with some pleasingly positive features".[36] Guido's description of the city is

simplistic:

> Each of these gates was fortified by strong towers along the side and
>
> adorned with carvings of marble images on all sides. Each of these
>
> permitted peaceful entrance to friends wishing to enter and threatened the

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[36] Hebron, *The Medieval Siege*, 98.

fierce and bold attacks of proud resistance to any enemies. (Meek 45)

Lydgate's translation of these same gates is expanded further:

Strong and myȝty boþe in werre & pes,

With square toures set on euery syde.

At whos corners, of verray pompe & pride,

Þe werkmen han, with sterne & fel visages,

Of riche entaille, set vp gret ymages,

Wrouȝt out of ston, þat neuer ar like to fayle,

Ful coriously enarmed for batayle. (ii.606-12)

Then Lydgate adds that there are "grete gunnys sett" (ii.614) in every tower, and on "tourettis" (ii.616) there were raised figures of wild beasts: bears, lions, tigers, boars, serpents, dragons, elephants, unicorns and "many grete grifoun / Forged of brass" (ii.621). Lydgate contemporises the story for his patron, and enhances the city's majesty more to be worthy for Henry to inherit it by lineage. The description of the city is more recognisable as a European, medieval city than that of ancient Troy. With regard to the term, 'gunnys', Henry Bergen in his Glossary states that "Lydgate probably does not mean cannon although they were known in his time". Its sense becomes clearer at the siege of 'Tenedoun': "And gonnys grete, for to cast[e] stonys, / Bent to þe touris, riȝt as any lyne" (ii.6434-5).

Kelly DeVries states that Henry V used guns against Harfleur in 1415, "when his mines were continually countermined".[37] In 1420, "a combined Burgundian and English army, heavily supplied with gunpowder weapons, fought an artillery duel with an equally well supplied French

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[37] DeVries, "The Impact of Gunpowder", 230.

182

defensive force."[38] This siege at Tenedos is very compact, but it has a great deal of action that Henry would recognise from his campaigns. Whereas most of the warfare at Troy is conducted on the outside of the city, this is closer to a medieval siege. Lydgate adds weaponry to Guido's account: "quarel[e]s briȝt" (ii.6424) from a crossbow, and "bowe turkeys" (ii.6425). The castle's occupants use "lym also, and cast of wylde fyre" (ii.6427) from the ramparts. The Greeks have "large sowis lowe for to myne" (ii.6436) the castle on the ground. Yet Tenedos keeps putting the Greeks under pressure from within the walls:

> In her diffence, and made he*m* plounge lowe
>
> W*ith* caste of quarel, & with schoot of bowe
>
> Þoruȝ olietis . . . (ii.6449-51)

Guido has the Greeks scaling the walls with ladders (Meek 100), but Lydgate sees them "wiþ hokis for to holde" (ii.6443). Lydgate uses Tenedos as a microcosm in preparation for the siege of Troy. There is more activity here, from these defenders, than accounted for by Guido. Returning to Troy, Guido presents the Trojan warriors armed and gathered on "a certain level field which was situated in the middle of the city" (Meek 123). In preparation the men are "disposed according to shrewd military tactics into troops and phalanxes" (Meek 123), but Lydgate develops this image further by bringing a sense of life and movement to the scene. Lydgate extends the activity further for the audience's benefit when the men are waiting for their orders:

> And some on fote and some for to ride
>
> Arraie hem silf, her fomen for to assaile;
>
> And many on was besy for to naille

---

[38] DeVries, "The Impact of Gunpowder", 230

His felawis harneis, for to make it strong,

And to dresse it, þat it sete nouȝt wrong,

With pointes, tresses, and oþer maner þing,

Þat in swyche cas longyth to armyng. (iii.102-8)

    If the siege at Tenedos is seen as a microcosm of Troy, then the *Troy Book* can be used to

view the relations between England and France during the Hundred Years War. As Hector is to

be a mirror for Henry, this analogy could also be understood contextually by an audience to

relate to other characters such as Achilles and John the Fearless, Duke of Burgundy. Both

Achilles and John are unreliable allies in that they do not necessarily keep their promises.

Achilles reneges on his commitment to the Greek siege in pursuit of Polyxena, "List þat she were

offendid in hir herte" (iv.1559). Yet this show of devotion is undermined when Achilles, "So

lovynge was to Agamemenoun" (iv.2194), lent his Myrmidons to the Greeks. Ultimately, his

promise of withdrawal from the siege is broken when he returns to fight. Lydgate undermines

Achilles' reputation of prowess by manipulating Guido's work. In the *Historia*, the unarmed

Greeks are being attacked in their tents, and Achilles, investigating the cries, asks one of the

fleeing men for the reason.[39] He takes action when the man states that all will be killed "unless

someone rises powerfully to their aid" (Meek 194). Lydgate alters this in order to mock Achilles.

He deliberately changes the fleeing man to a reproaching messenger: one who has had enough of

Achilles' procrastination, and who approaches the warrior determinedly: "Ful sodeinly þer cam to

hym a man, / Þe whiche his tale euene þus be-gan" (iv.2523-4). Lydgate follows Guido's form,

but there is a barb in the last line when the stranger tells Achilles:

    But ȝe of knyȝthod manly take on honde

---

[39] Meek, 193-194.

> To resiste in þis silfe place,

> And like a man to mete hem in þe face. (iv.2536-8)

Achilles can be used as a mirror to John the Fearless; his prevarication of loyalty to the English campaign must have been infuriating, as "the author of the *Gesta* opined that like all Frenchmen Duke John would be found 'double dealing': 'one person in public and another in private'".[40] Achilles approaches the Trojans to wed Polyxena, and promises not to assist the Greeks in the fighting.[41] In July 1411, John the Fearless made approaches to Henry IV to secure English aid against the dukes d'Orléans and Berry. A Polyxena was involved in John's case when he proposed the "marriage of his daughter Anne to the prince of Wales".[42] Although John was open to negotiation, he inferred that he would not fight against his "own sovereign, should Charles VI become associated with the combination of Orléans-Bourbon-Berry-Armagnac":[43]

> [John] acknowledged the justice of Henry's claim to the French throne and
> recognized him as his sovereign, but decided to postpone doing homage
> until they had conquered some 'notable part' of the French kingdom. He
> would help him secretly; though he would not be seen to assist him against
> the actual French king, and indeed had to make the correct exception
> against taking arms against his suzerain.[44]

Similarly, Achilles does not abandon his loyalty to Agamemnon for the Trojans. Later, like Achilles, John proves to be an unreliable ally to Henry V in Normandy:

> In the summer of 1417 he sent no help when called upon by Henry to do

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[40] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 169
[41] *TB*, iv.733-84.
[42] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 111.
[43] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 111.
[44] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 169.

so; and in the following year, when Henry was moving into the area of the Upper Seine, his conduct was quite at variance with his promises.[45]

Achilles earns reproaches from Lydgate for breaking his word and returning to the war. He slays Troilus, and drags the body of the king's son with the tail of his horse, but this act of treachery could equally be addressed to John the Fearless for his murder of his cousin Louis of Orleans. In 1407, after an apparent show of reconciliation (by taking Communion together three days earlier), John had Louis ambushed and butchered.[46] Lydgate reflects that assassination detracts from the notions of nobility:

> For ȝif þat he had hadde his aduertence,
>
> Ouþer þe eye of his prouidence
>
> Vn-to knyȝthod or to worþines,
>
> Ouþer to manhod or to gentilnes,
>
> Or to þe renoun of his owne name,
>
> Or to þe report of his knyȝtly fame,
>
> In any wyse to haue taken hede,
>
> He hadde neuer don so foule a dede. (iv.2841-8)

Even the circumstance of John's and Achilles' deaths are similar. Achilles is lured to Troy with the promise of Polyxena's hand, and is slain by Paris in the temple:

> Whanne þei haue kauȝt in herte a fantasie,
>
> For no pereil, þouȝ þei shuld[e] deye,
>
> Þei haue no myȝt nor power to be ware,

[45] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 169.

[46] Desmond Seward. *The Hundred Years War*, 148.

> Til þei vnwarly be trapped in þe snare. (iv.3163-6)

Treachery begets treachery, and John's end is an equally sordid murder. When the city of Paris was under threat from the English, it was necessary for an alliance between the Dauphin and the duke. A meeting was arranged to be held at Montereau on the 10th September, 1419:

> On the appointed day Duke John, when he had entered the fenced
>
> enclosure upon the bridge, was felled by an Armagnac axe, while
>
> Armagnac troops attacked the Burgundians drawn up in front of the castle.
>
> The Dauphin's formal responsibility for the deed is undoubted, but the
>
> murder must have been carefully planned by his entourage and it is most
>
> unlikely that he himself devised any such thing. Burgundian sources
>
> indicate Tanneguy du Chastel as the author of the crime and the murderer
>
> in one.[47]

Further to the theme of betrayal, when comparing Guido to Lydgate's translation, Lydgate has an additional, personal lesson for Henry. On Hector's death, Guido writes:

> Hector in the meantime had rushed upon a certain Greek king, had seized
>
> him and was trying to drag him in captivity away from the troops. He had
>
> cast his shield over his back so that he might more easily snatch the king
>
> away from the troops. For this reason he displayed his unprotected chest
>
> in battle since he lacked the defense of his shield. (Meek 168)

Although Hector is a mirror for Henry, it is not only for the reflection of his virtues but a warning of his vices as well. Lydgate quite clearly presents a distorted view of Hector just before the Trojan's death. In Lydgate's account, this Greek king's "cotearmvre / Enbroudid had

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[47] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 181.

ful many riche stoon" (iii.5334-5): pearls, emeralds, and sapphires "in velwet fret, al aboue þe

maille" (iii.5343). Hector betrays his chivalric code as his ambition is to kill out of covetousness

for the king's possessions, and not in order to protect his city. His noblesse has disappeared;

Hector slays the king, and despoils the corpse:

> Like as ȝe may now of Hector rede,
>
> Þat sodeinly was brouȝt to his endynge
>
> Only for spoillynge of þis riche kyng. (iii.5370-2)

Lydgate has deviated from translation, and has inserted caution for Henry. When earlier, Hector

attempts to strip Patroculus (iii.799) and Merion (iii.1905) of their armour it is acceptable. But

why does Lydgate create this third scene of looting at this point, and condemn Hector for greed

when it is not in the *Historia*? If Lydgate was condemning the practice it should have been made

earlier when Hector was trying to seize the Greeks' armour. On both occasions Hector is

deterred from "spoilynge" (iii.1901) the corpses, firstly by Merion who is later slain for this

action by being "p*resu*mptuous" (iii.1903) and then by Meneste (iii.1906). At each stage Hector

is paying a higher price as he is wounded by Meneste (iii.1908-9), and then finally killed by

Achilles (iii.5396-7). Why has Lydgate put his own twist on Hector's end? The *Troy Book*

reflects the Hundred Years War and the slain king's glorious armour can be symbolic of Henry's

ambition to hold the French throne. As an analogy, Lydgate is firmly warning Henry not to be

consumed by one desire:

> But out! allas! on fals couetyse! . . .
>
> Desyre of hauynge, in a gredy þout,
>
> To hiȝe noblesse sothly longeth nouȝt,

> No[r] swiche pelfre, spoillynge, nor robberie
>
> Apartene to worþi chiualrye. (iii.5354, 5361-5)

Henry's occupation with France was having a detrimental effect on his personal principles, and Lydgate is drawing Henry's attention to this. In context this quotation resonates with Henry's treatment of dowagers, including his step-mother. Henry IV's widow, Joan of Navarre, was arrested in 1419 in "a ruthless and wilful act of injustice occasioned by sheer royal greed."[48] Henry seized her possessions, and "was able to pocket nearly £6,000 a year at her expense."[49] Strohm points out that Joan's incarceration was made as comfortable as possible, and that she was never brought to trial. This implies that Henry took the accusations of sorcery conducted by Joan against him, seriously:

> The year in which the charges were filed concluded a period in which
>
> Henry had found increasing difficulty in financing his French war (a war
>
> which, even in the first flush of enthusiasm, had been financed only by
>
> such expedients as sawing up and pawning parts of his royal crown!). [50]

Henry is grasping whatever assets he can to finance his campaign, and Lydgate presents a dishonourable Hector that loots the dead. This deviation from Guido indicates that he wishes this particular reflection to be taken seriously as Henry V is being publicly seen as departing from the courtly code; he is preying on the widows of retainers.[51] These are the relicts of his own subjects, (and in Joan's case, his father's consort) in order to feed the appetite of his French campaign:

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[48] Dockray, *Henry V,* 82.

[49] Dockray, *Henry V,* 220.

[50] These accusations were "based upon a 'relation and confession' of a friar, one John Randolph." Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 163-4.

[51] "Alice Countess of Oxford, Anne Countess of Stafford and Beatrice Lady Talbot." Dockray, *Henry V,* 219.

For kouþe it is, þat ofte swiche ravyne

Hath cause ben of rote of þe ruyne

Of many worþi-who-so liste take hede. (iii.5367-9)

After the *Troy Book* was presented to Henry in 1421, Dockray states that Lydgate began work on *The Siege of Thebes*:

While firmly asserting Henry V's right to rule in France by means of celebratory references to the Treaty of Troyes, however, his overriding purpose here was to plead for peace since war, all too often resulting from ambition and greed, can, if not controlled, end in the destruction of everything.[52]

V. J. Scattergood states that "Lydgate asserts the justice of his patron's attainment by force of the throne of France, but looks forward also to the settlement of the Treaty of Troyes to usher in a time of peace."[53] Lydgate is concerned that his advice should not be taken lightly, and that Henry V must "Apartene to worþi chiualrye" in his governance. The siege of Troy is a suitable tool for Lydgate to use in order to reflect the court of Henry V, his campaigns in France, and the toll that the war is taking on Henry's virtue. Hector is used progressively in the *Troy Book* by Lydgate as an early warning to Henry about greed. Hector's looting distracts him from his surroundings, and leaves him vulnerable to enemies, and to sin. Lydgate is a loyal supporter of Henry, and does not wish to let avarice gnaw away Henry's "worþines & þe noble fame" (ii.242). Lydgate's instruction for Henry V is simple:

May a prynce sothly mor avaunce

---

[52] Dockray, *Henry V*, 30.
[53] Scattergood. *Politics and Poetry*, 100.

> Among his puple hertes forto wynne
>
> Of inward love which that wol not twynne,
>
> Than gold, rychesse, pride or tyranye,
>
> Oyther disdeyne, duanger, or surquedye.[54]

Lydgate's use of mirror imagery allows him a freedom to reflect on codes of behaviour and personal conduct in a form that protects him from being accused of disloyalty. As he brings the past forward to his contemporary period, Lydgate produces a work that informs his patron on kingly conduct without risking a direct criticism towards his royal patron and his court.

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[54] Lydgate, *The Siege of Thebes*, (i.278-82).

Human Relationships and the Seven Deadly Sins within the *Troy Book*

> For wher Discord holdeth residence,
>
> It is wel wers þan swerd of pestilence!
>
> For what is worse, ouþer fer or nere,
>
> Þan a foo þat is famylyer. (iv.4515-8)

This chapter examines the multiple relationships that occur within the *Troy Book*, and it explores the issues of power and control in familial, feudal and sexual contexts. It consists of three sections which look firstly at the seven deadly sins and Lydgate's portrayal of the characters affected and the later repercussions that follow acts of sin. Secondly the tribulations of characters' marriages are examined. There are relationships that are productive, but when discord is present it becomes detrimental to society and Lydgate highlights these for the moral edification of the reader. Accompanying this discussion there are triangular relationships that occur with lovers, and the resulting consequences of adultery. The difficulties in life that follow the children of such illicit affairs are also considered which leads to the third section where illegitimacy and the paradigms of knighthood are deliberated upon.

In the *Troy Book* the desire for domination in relationships, or between realms, has at its root at least one of the seven deadly sins. These vices provide plenty of substance for Lydgate to work with in order to advise his audience to avoid sin and ultimately, to demonstrate the "malign occurrences of fortune" (Meek 58) which inflicts the most damage when pride and anger become

combined. The abuse of power, even in the pagan world, always has to face a day of reckoning.

Lydgate is trying to promote the ideal that authority must be combined with wisdom and the *Troy Book* shows that such a combination in a leader is rare, but by emulating virtue Henry V can achieve it. Lydgate's presentation of his characters shows that he must have felt that these stories are of interest to his audience, since he builds microcosms of plots to explore the everyday conditions of life to make the *Troy Book* more relevant to his audience's experiences than the *Historia*. Every member of the audience would empathise with these subplots and recognise character traits of a parent, sibling, lover, and friend. By focusing on relationships within the *Troy Book*, Lydgate enriches the ideals of society without basing the text solely on a tale of destruction. This in turn gives an emphasis to the pathos of human life, reverberating throughout the whole tale before, during and after the siege. Lydgate's deliberate expansion and attention to these subplots holds his audience's attention.

The Seven Deadly Sins and Lydgate's Troy Book

Morton W. Bloomfield in his work *The Seven Deadly Sins* suggests that there is rarely enough reference to these sins as would be expected from Lydgate:

> The poems associated with the name of John Lydgate (c.1370-1450)
>
> include some important treatments of the Sins. Although Lydgate has left
>
> us a great mass of religious poetry which can be genuinely ascribed to him,
>
> these poems actually contain very few reference to our concept.[1]

Although Lydgate does not list them in the *Troy Book* the Seven Deadly Sins pervade the text, and towards the end of Book V he comments on the cost of sin:

---

[1] Bloomfield, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, 226.

Synne ay concludynge, who-so takeþ hede,

Vengaunce unwar for his final mede -

To declare, þat in al worldly lust,

Who loke ariȝt, is but litel trust,

As in þis boke exaumple ȝe shal fynde,

ȝif þat ȝe list enprente it in ȝour mynde. (v.3561-6)

The *Troy Book* contains episodes where morality has been eroded by sin and Lydgate impresses upon the reader to avoid vice. The *Troy Book* is not solely focused on the Trojan siege as it has short tales of factions trying to gain control over others or, in essence, putting a particular race in its place because of its own self-presumption to be the superior. As in *Everyman*:

They use the seven deadly sins damnable,

As pride, covetise, wrath, and lechery,

Now in the world be made commendable. (*Everyman* 36-8)[2]

All the Trojan and Greek struggles for power highlight the sin of pride. The damage that pride can inflict makes it the worst of all the sins as it leads to destruction of the body and the soul. For example Troy's first downfall originates with Laomedon being alarmed by the Greeks' landing on his shores. Instead of following hospitable protocol, he sends a messenger to inform them that they are unwelcome visitors: "Of Troye lond þe bowndis þat ȝe leve; / Or ȝow and ȝoures he casteth for to greve" (i.991-2). As Jason comments: "He schulde of vs haue resseived be, / Lyche as it longeth vn-to genterie" (i.1071-2). Laomedon's message offends the Greeks as his actions imply that they are marauders. Laomedon contravenes an important social code of hospitality. Lydgate's monastic background would also look at Laomedon's conduct as counter

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[2] Cawley, *Everyman*, 200.

to the principles of St. Benedict. Christopher Brooke describes the Benedictine ethos:

> Yet the outer world was not excluded. 'All guests who arrive should be
>
> received as Christ himself would be received' . . . and precise instructions
>
> are given for their entertainment in a modest but becoming fashion; a
>
> special duty of hospitality is laid upon the abbot.[3]

It demonstrates the disparity between Laomedon's world and the Christian one where Lydgate

states that Saint Benedict's "hooly rewle was unto me rad" (*Testament* 684).[4] It is because

Laomedon acts "With-out[e] cou*n*sail or avisenessse" (i.958) that he fails as a standard for a

Christian leader. Christopher Brooke states that for important matters the Benedictine abbot

must seek counsel before he can make a decision:

> He cannot evade his responsibility nor pass it to others: much of the
>
> strength, and weakness of the Rule lie in this vision of the abbot, who is
>
> assumed to be both a notable spiritual director and a master in handling
>
> human relations. Such men are rare.[5]

Laomedon's mishandling of human relations proves that he is not one of these rare leaders. The

Greeks return to chastise Troy with pillage and murder, and of course Priam's sister, Hesione, is

seized.

Subsequently Priam recklessly challenges Fortune, which leads to the destabilisation of

his authority over his own retainers. Priam succumbs to anger, and he uses Hesione's captivity as

the basis for renewing war with the Greeks. For a religious cleric such as Lydgate seeking to

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[3] Brooke, *The Rise and Fall*, 22. The quote within the passage is Booke's own translation of Benedict's Rule from the *Regula Magistri*. See notes *The Rise and Fall*, 268.

[4] Halliwell, *A Selection*, 257.

[5] Brooke, *The Rise and Fall*, 22.

moralise on the evils in life, the Trojan war contains all the deadly sins to fuel his treatise for

Henry V: sloth, pride, anger, gluttony, lust, envy, and covetousness. These vices were to the

forefront of religious life in the Middle Ages as seen in William Langland's *Piers Plowman*.

Langland personifies sins and virtues with recognisable, everyday characters to drive his point

home including one that shows that ignorance is not a let-out as understood by Greed, or Sir

Hervy:

> 'That was no restitucion,' quod Repentaunce, 'but a robberis thefte;
>
> Thow haddest be bettre worthi ben hanged therefore
>
> Than for al that that thow hast here shewed!'
>
> 'I wende riflynge were restitucion," quod he, for lerned never rede
>
> on boke,
>
> And I kan no Frenssh, in feith, but of the fertheste ende of Northfolk.'
>
> (V.231-5)[6]

Lydgate uses the characters in the *Troy Book* in much the same way. Although not personified,

the vices can be apparent from characters' actions and speeches. Sloth is addressed when Priam

speaks to his sons about Hesione, and their inactivity to retrieve their aunt which irks Priam:

> Allas! why nyl ȝe do ȝour besynes,
>
> Þis hiȝe dispit knyȝtly to redresse,
>
> ȝow for to avenge vp-on her cruelte,
>
> Recure to fynde of her iniquite,
>
> Sith þat ȝe be so myȝty and so strong!
>
> Certis, me semeth, ȝe byden al to long. (ii.2115-20)

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[6] Langland, *Piers Plowman*, 73.

Telamon's lust can also be combined with sloth because he does not treat Hesione "lyche as he a kynges douȝter schulde" (i.4354). He does not rouse himself to make the effort for her station, thereby eschewing his responsibilities towards the chivalric codes: "Nor liche þe norture of [a] gentil knyȝt" (i.4366). Neither does he have any intention of redeeming the matter at a later date when he flatly tells Antenor: "Þou gest hir nat" (ii.1505).

Antenor's treatment by Priam demonstrates a decaying relationship between a king and his retainer which fills Antenor with "trecchery, / Replet of falsehod & of doubilnesse" (iv.5128-9). Even though Priam selects Antenor because he believes that he "is a man discrete and avisee" (ii.1291), he is sent on an impossible task. Castor astringently remarks that Antenor's worth must be considered very little because he is selected to perform a seemingly suicidal mission as an emissary:

> It likly is, as semeth vn-to me,
>
> Þat Priamus þe louyd but a lite,
>
> Nat þe valu, I suppose, of a myte,
>
> Whan he þe sent vp-on þis message. (ii.1619-21)

Priam's wording describes Antenor as "wyse and eloquent" (ii.1293), yet he sends him on a mission that is as deadly as Peleus sending Jason to Colchos. Peleus did not wish to see Jason come back, and Priam's motives have to be questioned here. He did not risk sending one of his sons, and Antenor's failure to open negotiations with the Greeks for the return of Hesione, as well as their caustic comments to him, must have strained Antenor's relationship with Priam when he returned. It would go some way to explain why Antenor in particular betrays Troy, and becomes the serpent in the grass that Lydgate fears for Henry V:

Lo, how þe serpent of discord can glyde

To voide away boþe hap and grace

With his venym of dissenciou*n*. (iv.4506-8)

Lydgate warns Henry V and his audience that carelessness and indifference will not cultivate any possible good from retainers. He describes the confederates' later severance from Troy as being done "wilfully, of necligence & slouþe" (iv.4552). Henry V probably had little need for this good advice because, as Keith Dockray states, Henry:

Soon demonstrated a real flair for promoting cordial relations and mutual

understanding between himself and his non-noble subjects, and ensuring

that, when he embarked on his French campaigns, he could do so in a

spirit of partnership with parliament.[7]

King Henry knew the value of harmony between lord and vassal and he was not in danger of repeating the sins of King Richard II. Henry was not going to be "guilty of both tyranny and insufficiency".[8]

The most fruitful area in which to examine sin and the vicissitudes of filial relationships is within the House of Priam. It is an example of a royal family that suffers far reaching consequences because of the vices of the individual. This is the largest family, providing a range of characters working through four generations: Laomedon to Priam, Hector with his siblings, and Hector's sons, Laomedon and Astyanax, known as "Lamedonte . . .[and] Astronanta" (iii.4901, 3) in the *Troy Book*. King Laomedon's sin is that he acts with pride - "wilfulnesse" (i.957) - which causes the city to fall. Circumstances like these provide Lydgate with a vehicle

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[7] Dockray, *Henry V*, 118.
[8] Walker, "Richard II's Reputation", 120.

to provide advice for Henry, not as much to say to rule in a particular way, but how to avoid bad governance through warnings. Colin Fewer discusses this "principle of self governance":

> Lydgate takes particular interest in the operation (or failure) of prudence. In contexts outside the most visible manifestations of aristocratic power in the poem, [are] the gatherings and deliberations of Greek and Trojan nobility.[9]

Priam is absent when Laomedon is killed and Priam is devoured by this great wrong which has been perpetrated onto Laomedon's children. Hesione's status as a concubine provides the opportunity for retribution on the Greeks, and like Laomedon, Priam's sin will have repercussions upon his children. All his sons will be slain except Helenus who is vociferously against the abduction of a Greek woman. At Priam's council, Helenus' words are disregarded because Troilus accuses them of being "þe sentence of a cowarde prest" (ii.3006). Lydgate elaborates more in Troilus' speech than Guido does on a priest's gluttony. Guido states: "Is it not suitable for priests to fear war and avoid aggression, since weakness alone makes them love pleasure and grow fat in the sole enjoyment of abundant food and drink?" (Meek 62). Lydgate has more of a Chaucerian effect in his lines, reflective of the monk in *The Canterbury Tales*: "a lord ful fat and in good poynt" (GP 200).[10] Lydgate has Troilus accusing men in priestly professions of following their "lust, w*ith*-out[e] more, / Of riȝt nouȝt ellis sette þei no store" (ii.3019-20). Priests "lyue in glotonye, / To fille her stomak & restore her mawe" (ii.3012-3), and their delight is "In etyng, drinkyng, and in couetyse / In her studie" (ii.3017-8). Helenus might as well have held his breath because the court he addresses is a warring one, not one of enlightenment. Troilus infers a cowardice on the priest's part which is general, and seemingly

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9   Fewer, "John Lydgate's *Troy Book* ", 230.
10   Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, RC 26.

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unearned by his brother. It is a slur against Helenus: he is neither a good priest, nor can he be considered a knight. This detraction is used to manipulate the court into a decision that proves destructive, and belittles Helenus, the "pusillanimis sacerdotis".[11] Geoffrey of Monmouth reveals what became of Helenus after Troy:

> After the fall of Troy, Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles, had dragged this man
>
> Helenus off with him in chains, and a number of other Trojans, too. He
>
> had ordered them to be kept in slavery, so that he might take vengeance on
>
> them for the death of his father.[12]

The sin of envy is more clearly seen with King Peleus. There is a cycle of parent and child retribution within the *Troy Book* not only on the Trojan side, but with Achilles' death, one which expands to the Greek camp with the appearance of Pyrrhus. This develops with Pyrrhus not only avenging Achilles' murder, but also adopting another role to redress the degradation of Achilles' parents, Peleus and Thetis. The audience's sympathy for Peleus, however, is muted since his character has already been denigrated in Book I where Lydgate describes Peleus' ambiguity towards his nephew Jason:

> To execute his menynge euery del,
>
> In porte a lambe, in herte a lyou*n* fel,
>
> Dowlble as a tygre sliȝly to compasse,
>
> Galle in his breste and sugre in his face. (i.214-7)

By the time the audience returns to Peleus in Book V, Priam'sTroy has been destroyed and the Greeks have either returned home or lost at sea. Peleus participated in the destruction of

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[11] Colonne, *Historia*, 64.

[12] Monmouth, *Kings of Britain*, 8.

Laomedon's Troy and he did not take part in Menelaus' feud, but his son did. In Achilles'

absence Peleus has been driven from power by his father-in-law Acastus because "of envie in an

hatful rage" (v.2333) for Achilles' family. As Lydgate's characterisation of Peleus is already

unfavourable, he gives Fortune's wheel a little nudge and makes "Hir spokes meue vn-to ȝoure

plesau*n*ce" (iv.1757). Lydgate impoverishes Peleus further by choosing to hide him in "a doolful

cave" (v.2403) as opposed to Guido's "ancient building" (Meek 254):

> For drede of deth lay hym silf to saue,
>
> Soule saue his wyf, w*ith*-out*en* any feris,
>
> Al enclosed w*ith* busshes and w*ith* breris. (v.2404-6)

When grandfather and grandson are reunited Peleus' eyes are at first fooled into "imaginynge þat

he sawe Achille" (v.2418). Guido writes that Peleus "recognized his grandson, in whose

appearance he thought he could see Achilles" (Meek 254). Lydgate's dislike of the character has

transformed the *Troy Book*'s Peleus into a doddering old coward, dissimilar to the dignified king

in the *Historia*. Lydgate says that Pyrrhus listens to Peleus' "pitous lyf, his pou*er*t &

meschau*n*ce, / And Fortunys fals[e] variau*n*ce" (v.2431-2) that came about due to Acastus' envy.

The vice that Peleus bore Jason a generation before is repeated here, and Fortune's (and

Lydgate's) wheel has thrown Peleus to the ground as punishment in rotation.

Pyrrhus' intention is to kill Acastus even though he is Achilles' and Deidania's shared

grandfather. Pyrrhus is bloodthirsty and, although Menalipus and Phillistenes are his great

uncles, Pyrrhus "slowe" (v.2509) them, and "ran hym to þe herte" (v.2502). Pyrrhus is the

monster child who wreaks havoc on the Greek world in the *Troy Book*, he is "in hert[e] wroth"

(v.2437), and "furious and wood" (v.2506). He has been Fortune's instrument against Hecuba,

Priam and now Acastus: "Fortunys turne *with* mvtabilite" (v.2636). However, by avenging his

grandfather, he is destroying his grandmother's family: "Hastow nat slayn my ȝong[e] breþer

tweyne?" (v.2568). Thetis reminds him that he is of the same line and should "haue pite vp-on þi

kynrede" (v.2572). It is only when Peleus requests Pyrrhus to spare Acastus that he quits his

murderous activities, and it can be considered that Pyrrhus was probably reluctant to do this,

grudgingly "Seynge merci myȝt[e] most avail" (v.2611).

Pyrrhus is not immune to the sin of covetousness, and he plays a role in one of the many

triangular relationships in the *Troy Book*. It is intriguing how the Christian Lydgate responds to,

and presents this theme to his audience. These relationships are made up of three to four lovers

or spouses, and the primary one is between Menelaus, Helen and Paris, without which the whole

debacle of the Trojan siege would not have occurred. Yet this is also repeated by one that links

Orestes, his wife, Hermione, and Pyrrhus together. Similarly to her mother, Hermione is

abducted by Pyrrhus and wedded to him. The reactions of the cuckolded husbands are quite

different: Menelaus swoons "For he ne myȝt endure for to stonde" (ii.4297). His son-in-law on

the other hand demonstrates an attitude that is more like his late father, Agamemnon:

> Of whiche Horestes bar ful hevy herte,
>
> And cast hym pleynly avengid for to be
>
> Whan he may haue opportunyte. (v.2746-8)

Pyrrhus' view on matrimony is at odds with his actions. Previously he made it clear to his

grandmother that Thetis' loyalty can only be to her husband; her connections with her own

family are severed by her marriage. According to Pyrrhus a husband has ownership of his wife

and her loyalty, therefore any injury to him is an injury to her, and it does not matter who the

perpetrator is. If Pyrrhus practiced this reasoning he would regard Hermione as Orestes'

property, but in Pyrrhus' world property can be stolen. According to Lydgate it is a case of power

going to Pyrrhus' head: "whan he sat hiȝest in his se, / Made ful blind w*ith* veyn prosp*er*ite"

(v.2733-4). His conduct continually becomes more egoistic as he progresses upwards on

Fortune's wheel.

Furthermore, this three-way relationship develops into four. Andromache is also in

Pyrrhus' household, and Hermione's jealousy endangers Andromache's life. Menelaus' actions

here are not worthy because he tries to slay Andromache and Lydgate comments: "It is a þing

whiche haþ nat ben herd: / To a wo*m*man a kyng to drawe his swerd" (v.2777-8). Therefore

Menelaus is attempting to break an unwritten code of kingship that would even exceed Pyrrhus'

crime of slaying Polyxena. Menelaus comes to murder a woman of another household - to

destroy his son-in-law's property. Within the Greek tribes, abduction seems to be accepted as

Menelaus does not rescue his daughter while Pyrrhus is away. Yet Troy was besieged for

Menelaus because Paris abducted his wife, and the city's pride refused to return her. It signifies

that the complications of relationships have various rules according to the instigators' levels of

status. There are other sub-plots such as the Troilus, Cryseyde, and Diomedes thread which

further develops into four with Egea in the background. The combination of Agamemnon,

Cassandra, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus is undoubtedly the bloodiest combination when three of

them are slain. While Cassandra's end is not disclosed in the *Historia* or the *Troy Book*, we know

she is killed with Agamemnon. Clytemnestra takes a lover because she is lonely, and Lydgate's

admonitions on adultery are stimulated only because it leads to Agamemnon's murder. The

murder of a king requires a particular punishment:

> Lo, how þe synne of avouterye
>
> Brouȝt in mordre by conspiracie!
>
> Synne vp-on synne lynked boþe tweyne,
>
> And, enbracid in þe fendis cheyne,
>
> Perpetuelly in helle to endure! (v.1131-5)

Lydgate's punishment for such a crime is that of the fires of hell. He sees accumulation of sins on a soul leading to the greatest crime of regicide which will take the sinner to eternal damnation. Lydgate's portrayal of chains embracing the lovers as opposed to each other is a chilling image.

The filial relationships on the female side of Priam's family are just as complex. It consists of the matriarch, Hecuba, and her daughters Creusa, Cassandra and Polyxena. Very little is said about Creusa except that "sche was weddid vn-to Eneas" (ii.330), which implies that she is submerged in a wedlock that she never resurfaces from. Creusa's faint ghost makes more of an impression on her husband than her live, physical form:

> quaerenti et tectis urbis sine fine furenti
>
> infelix simulacrum atque ipsius umbra Creusae
>
> visa mihi ante oculos et nota maior imago.
>
> obstipui, steteruntque comae et vox faucibus haesit. (Aeneid ii.771-4)[13]

Even Lydgate passes over Creusa, and instead he moves to describe Virgil's *Aeneid* for the next twenty-four lines. In the other extreme, Cassandra is louder than her sister, but she is still spurned by her family and her fellow citizens until desperation forces them to appeal to her, and then they look to her for divination:

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[13] Virgil, *The Aeneid*, (Mackail), 87.

> To Cassandra in al haste þei went,
>
> Fully to han declaracio*n*,
>
> And þer-vp-on plein exposiciou*n*. (iv.5958-60)

Daughters' lives in the *Troy Book* fall under the commands of fathers, husbands and kings. When it comes to the fates of women, decisions are made in a male-only environment. Priam discusses Hesione's fate early on with his sons and counsellors, but women are not present to give their view:

> And ceryously his menyng to declare,
>
> He in his see, his lordis envirou*n*,
>
> Gan þus to schewe his hertis mocioui*n*. (ii.1142-4)

Yet with Polyxena there is a sense that Hecuba has more control over the destiny of her female offspring than is desirable. Polyxena is incapable of acting with guile or deceit, and she is a representation of innocence as she is the pawn to be sold to Achilles in exchange for his withdrawal from the siege. Hecuba promises Achilles' messenger that she will try to promote the marriage:

> But at þe leste I wil condiscende
>
> What lyth in me to bringe to an ende
>
> Þi lordis wil, w*ith* al myn herte entere. (iv.793-5)

Priam is shaken by Achilles' proposal, and he "discloseth þe conceit of his herte" (iv.833). He is revolted by the proposal as Achilles killed Hector and, now Priam is asked to consent to the marriage for the city's sake:

> Þat in myn hert I can neu*er*e fynde

> To ben allyed w*ith* my mortal foo
>
> Rote & grou*n*de of al my sorwe & wo! ((iv850-2)

Priam's compliance with the plan is "Ageyn[e]s herte, þouʒ it for ang*er* ryve" (iv.863).

As it gradually dawns on Achilles that he cannot succeed to make peace, despair "cruelly cauʒte hym by þe herte" (iv.920). Lydgate fills Achilles' and Polyxena's tale with expressions of the heart, but at no point are her affections described. Inevitably the proposed alliance unravels when Achilles takes to the battlefield and slaughters Troilus. Paris is then persuaded by Hecuba to ambush Achilles: "Vn-to þis þing, w*ith* al myn herte, I p*r*aie, / Fro point to point my biddyng to abeie" (iv.3137-8). Likewise Paris promises her he will obey with "al his hool[e] herte" (iv.3139). It is the language of passion, not logic, that forms the plan for the murder which comes across predominantly in these lines by Lydgate. Here, between parent and child, their bond is clearly used for a malicious purpose. This ambush is concerned with the desire for revenge, and to punish betrayal. Achilles' heel is his desire for Polyxena: "He was so hote marked in his herte / W*ith* Louys brond & his firy glede" (iv.3154-5), that he "sette a-side wit and al resou*n*" (iv.3157). Hecuba's non-loving motive is to slay Achilles' heart for his treachery, and for the deaths of Hector and Troilus: "As deth for deth is skilfully guerdou*n*" (iv.3198). The ambush is instigated by anger, and Hecuba later suffers the consequences with the sacrifice of Polyxena.

Another example of a parental relationship is Ulysses and his two sons: Telemachus by Penelope, and Telegonus by Circe. The tragedy here demonstrates the repercussions of sowing wild oats, and not staying to watch over them. The reunion with Circe's son is tainted by the death of Ulysses, and Colin Fewer contemporaneously points out that this is due to the rudeness

of a porter and "the ensuing brawl [which] leaves Ulysses dead, a victim not of fate but of poor customer service".[14] The half-brothers' relationship with each other only begins after the father's death making the meeting as close as possible to a situation where an unknown offspring is revealed by his or her arrival at the funeral of a natural parent. W.B. Stanford comments that Lydgate's presentation of "the alternative version of Ulysses' ultimate fate is unfolded with a remarkable freshness of touch".[15] In the *Troy Book* Ulysses moves through stages of being a skilled warrior, an ambassador, a shipwreck, and a hostage before he is eventually reunited with Penelope. Yet this happy ending is not conclusive because he becomes a terrified recluse in Achaia when he fears his son will slay him. For all of Ulysses' cunning, he badly misreads a premonition and wrongly imprisons Telemachus. This first born has been like Penelope, faithful throughout to Ulysses, yet this is not enough for Ulysses to trust him. Lydgate alters and expands Guido's passage on Ulysses' vision. Lydgate's interest in this father-son relationship may be explained by the events before Henry IV's death. K. B. McFarlane suggests:

> His [Henry IV's] eldest son's obvious impatience to succeed him roused all
>
> his old tenacity and so, racked by sickness and remorse, he clung to his
>
> royal power until his death on 20 March 1413. The chief problem of his
>
> last years was his son.[16]

The Ulysses extract is the only one in the *Troy Book* where a son is considered a threat by his father. Ulysses fears usurpation and Lydgate manipulates the text to draw attention away from royal disagreements. Keith Dockray refers to Henry IV's suspicion that his son sought the throne before his father was ready to relinquish it:

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[14] Fewer, "John Lydgate's *Troy Book*", 232.

[15] Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme*, 289.

[16] McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings*, 104.

Whatever the truth of the matter, the prince of Wales certainly paid the

price of even seeming to threaten the king's position. By the end of

November 1411 he had been peremptorily deprived of all power and,

before long, supplanted by his younger brother Thomas.[17]

The apparition in Ulysses' dream is not "a handsome young man of such amazing beauty"

(Meek 259), but a woman "celestial of figure" (v.2960) and "of chere wonder femynyne"

(v.2962). This offsets the homoerotic condition that could be associated with Guido's version of

Ulysses wishing "to touch that apparition and to enfold if firmly in his embrace" (Meek 259).

Lydgate's substitution of a woman suggests the absurdity that after all his wanderings, Ulysses is

still pursing extra marital loves:

And in his slep for to siʒe sore,

Presyng ay with ful besy peyne,

Hir tenbracen in his armys tweyne;

But ay þe more he *pres*ed hir to se,

Ay þe more from hym [she] gan to fle. (v.2974-8)

Sir Thomas Wyatt's poem "They fle from me that sometyme did me seke" has a resonance with

Lydgate's lines. Although Wyatt is described as having "no hesitation in rejecting the old aureate

Lydgatian 'literary' style and diction in favour of simpler manner"[18], there is an uncanny

similarity in the subject here. The speaker could easily be interchanged with Lydgate's Ulysses

as he had been pursued by women, but towards his old age the number of willing candidates

dwindles.

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[17] Dockray, *Henry V,* 89.

[18] Pearsall, *Chaucer to Spenser,* 607.

Lydgate's transformation of the apparition to a woman also infers a softer image. W. B.

Stanford suggests that Ulysses is a 'woman's man' as "he seems to have met none of the suspicion

and distrust of his male associates among the women who knew him well".[19] This theory

concurs better with Lydgate's version of the encounter. In it the apparition tries to warn Ulysses

with more hints than Guido because only one clue is given to him in the *Historia*: "on the tip of

this lance there seemed to be a turret ingeniously constructed of fishes" (Meek 259). Lydgate's

female apparition is more helpful:

> He saw a baner blased vp & dou*n*,
>
> Þe felde þer-of al [of] coulour ynde,
>
> Ful of fysshes betyn, as I fynde,
>
> And in som bokys like as it is tolde,
>
> In þe myddes a large crowne of golde. (v.3020-4)

Ulysses becomes paranoid and, in order to avoid his fate, he has Telemachus "shet vp in a tour"

(v.3803), and encloses himself in a fortress. Henry IV similarly isolated his son, Prince Henry,

politically:

> By the end of November 1411 he had been peremptorily deprived of all
>
> power, [and] . . . Prince Henry ceased either to attend the council or play
>
> any role in government.[20]

This was Henry IV's response to suggestions that he should abdicate and relinquish the crown.

Ulysses and Telemachus both become prisoners due to a dream, which endorses Hector's

response to Andromache when she has her premonition. According to Hector, women and

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[19] Stanford, *The Ulysses Theme*, 65.
[20] Dockray, *Henry V,* 89.

dreams "Be nat ellis, but folkis to delude" (iii.4949). Yet the dreams are correct, as both heroes

die. Ulysses' counter measures are extreme and fruitless proving that fate is unavoidable,

confirming that even if Hector had remained in the city death would have found him:

> Now wote I wel my woful destine
>
> Fulfilled is - it may noon oþer be! -
>
> Now wote I wel þat it is to late
>
> To grucche or strive ageyn my pitous fate. (v.3231-4)

It was also to be Henry's fortune that he would succeed his father, and the alienation by Henry IV

and Ulysses of their sons only served to delay the inevitable. The accidental slaying of Ulysses

by Telegonus should cause further retribution when Telemachus arrives on the scene. The

audience expects that the natural order of things in such circumstances is another death, but like

the *Historia*, the tales at the end of the *Troy Book* seem to be turning away from pagan tradition.

Earlier Peleus begs Pyrrhus not to kill Acastus in requital, and here Ulysses "By many signe

rehersed here-to-forn, / He vn-to hym anoon for-gaf his deth" (v.3258-9). Lydgate introduces the

theme of forgiveness which is not actually stated by Guido. Guido writes that Ulysses "soothed

him [Telegonus] in the very great weakness of body in which he was" (Meek 261). Lydgate

makes sure that if a parallel is drawn between Ulysses and Henry IV, he shows that the sons are

forgiven before their fathers expire. Dockray comments that when the king "finally died in the

Jerusalem chamber at Westminster Abbey on 20 March 1413, Henry IV had indeed achieved

peace and reconciliation between himself and all four of his sons".[21] Lydgate, in an harmonious

effort for Ulysses, similarly closes the episode on a note of charity drawing from Christian and

suggestive belief for his patron.

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[21] Dockray, *Henry V*, 93.

> And alliau*n*ce of þe blod royal,
>
> Þat is knet vp by bonde of mariage. (v.3420-1)

Lydgate is a realist where marriage is concerned. He shows an understanding of marital predicaments that belie the stereotypical views that could be held from a cloistered living. Lydgate shows the happy and unhappy sides of marriage, and he manages to individualise each union with its own peculiarities and customs. When Thetis pleads for her father's life, Pyrrhus gives her his rule on marriage. He cannot comprehend why she should intervene on Acastus' behalf as he persecuted her husband. Pyrrhus reminds Thetis:

> For hath nat he be fals extorciou*n*
>
> Put Pelleus oute of his regiou*n*,
>
> Which is ȝour lord, & ȝe his trewe wif? (v.2581-3)

This convention is then contravened by the actions of Egea when she banishes her own husband, Diomedes, from his kingdom, and he has to comply: "Þer may be made no mediacciou*n*" (v.1312). As Egea was convinced by Oectus that her brother, Assandrus, was murdered by Diomedes, she demonstrates that a wife can return to her family's claims above her husband's rights. Lydgate's wording shows how Assandrus supersedes her husband:

> No wo*m*man louede bet a creature
>
> Þan she louede hy*m*, in no man*er*e age:
>
> [For] First at nouȝt she sette hir heritage
>
> In comparisou*n* of hir broþer lyf. (v.1300-3)

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The *Historia*'s depiction is similar, Guido states that she "loved her brother Assandrus no less than she did herself" (Meek 241). Lydgate does not condemn Egea's actions, but continues to describe her as "þis worþi quene" (v.1309). He recognises that the fault lies at Oectus' door: "Lo, how Oetes made a newe strif" (v.1304), and Egea has done the correct thing if the report was true. However as Oectus is the perpetrator, Lydgate holds him in distaste hoping that "in helle be he cheyned!" (v.1283) because he successfully divided husband and wife, as he did with Agamemnon and Clytemnestra.

Diverse husband and wife pairings appear in Priam's household. Hecuba seems to be overly independent of Priam, and has a form of dominance over him. Although she acts as a messenger, she is able to persuade Priam to give his consent for Polyxena to wed Achilles (iv.821-73). The idea is repugnant to Priam, yet she is empowered to influence his decisions. Furthermore when Achilles breaks his side of the bargain, Hecuba has the means, without involving Priam, to set a trap for Achilles: "Þat in no wyse he skape nat a-way" (iv.3134). Thetis' and Hecuba's marriages are similar in that they are both dealing with older husbands. Peleus is the more severely affected by age as he is in fact "Croked & olde, vnweldy to se" (v.2591); he is almost depicted as impotent as Thetis alone physically tries to protect him from Pyrrhus.[22] However these queens do not go as far as Chaucer's Wife of Bath's ruthless methods to control a husband when she manipulates his lack of memory after a night of inebriation:

> Baar I stifly myne olde housbondes on honde
>
> That thus they seyden in hir dronkenesse;
>
> And al was fals, but that I took witnesse
>
> On Janekyn and on my nece also.

---

[22] *TB* (v.2566, 87).

> O Lord! The peyne i dide hem and the wo,
>
> Ful giltelees, by Goddes sweete pyne. (380-5)[23]

Andromache's relationship with Hector is more difficult as he is evidently in his prime, and his wilfulness does not allow for wifely autonomy. Their marriage, although considered an ideal, does not represent a happy one as she is chastised by Hector even though she is like an "angelik figure" (ii.4984). She is unable to influence his behaviour to prevent him from joining the battlefield, and she needs assistance to manage Hector. Most of the women from Priam's household, including Helen, join in her pleas, but women are unable to come between Hector and his ideal of knighthood, even though chivalry demands a sense of humility. Hector spurns Andromache's "devyne oracle" (iii.4970) as he does not wish to know the hour of his death. In earlier times the knight's ignorance of the time of his death was symbolised on the day of the initiation ceremony when other knights came to help him dress:

> And then the knights should bring black hose, as symbol that he came
>
> from earth, and to earth he must return, and that he must expect to die, nor
>
> can he know the hour of his death, and so he must trample on all pride.[24]

Even the sight of his son, Astyanax, with Andromache does not move Hector to stay safe for Troy so "Þat he of manhod haue i*n* herte rouþe" (iii. 5058). Hector's lack of cowardice - "he toke litil hede" (iii.4942) - leaves his children orphaned because he has become obsessed with battle. His knightly behaviour has been lost to pride and routed by an emotion that is more akin to a blood-thirst. Therefore his sense of "rouþe" has been replaced by a "harde herte stele" (iii.5093). As Astyanax is not mentioned again, it is assumed that he is slain by the Greeks. The infant

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[23] Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, *RC*, 110.
[24] Barber, *Reign of Chivalry*, 97.

becomes a martyr to Hector's sense of chivalry. Ruth Nisse discusses the idea of child martyrs

with Lydgate's "strange short poem *To St. Robert of Bury*" whose wording could be transposed

with Astyanax's probable fate:

> Slayn in childhood by mortal violence,
>
> Allas! It was a pitous thing to see
>
> A sowkyng child, tendre of Innocence
>
> So to be scourged, and naylled to a tre. (9-12)[25]

Lydgate's empathy with the vulnerable is very evident from these lines, and it extends to the

predicament that Andromache finds herself in. She knows Hector will die, and like Cassandra,

she is disadvantaged by her society's view that her gender reduces her autonomy. She can see

Troy's fate without Hector and she pleads for the city:

> Myn owne lorde! haue m*er*cy now or þ*at* we
>
> By cruel deth passe shal echon,
>
> For lak of helpe, allas, whan ȝe ar gon. (iii. 5070-2)

By ignoring Andromache's request and disobeying Priam, Hector is failing to protect the widow

and orphans that the knight in the tenth century prayed to protect over his sword:

> Bless with the right hand of thy majesty this sword with which this Thy
>
> servant desires to be girded, that it may be a defence of churches, widows,
>
> orphans and all Thy servants against the scourge of the pagans.[26]

His father's conduct on this occasion is the more apposite to a knight's behaviour because he is

the one who heeds the women's cries, and as king acts on their behalf. Priam's reaction contrasts

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[25] Nisse, "Was it not Routhe to Se", 279.
[26] Barber, *Reign of Chivalry*, 95.

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with Hector's boorishness towards those he is supposed to protect. His father's attempts are partially successful, but it merely delays the inevitable as Hector eventually ignores Priam's orders: "Vnwist þe kyng, or who be lefe or loth - / Þer was no geyn - forþe ano*n* he goth" (iii.4243-4).

In theory subjects adhere to the king, but this spark of disobedience in the feudal system leads to disintegration. Hector disregards his father's commands, even though the orders are given by "force & praier" (iii.5130). This also applies to the formal proceedings towards marriage. If the participants deviate from the traditional methods to marriage, disgrace follows. For example when Medea abandons Cethes in Book 1 to sail away with Jason instead of seeking consent, it is disastrous for her and Lydgate is doleful: "But o Medea! þou hastest al to faste . . . For how þat he in meschefe þe forsoke" (i.3599, 3602). In the Paston letters there is a similar situation where the daughter has publicly forsaken her family's status to marry the bailiff.[27] Margery Paston insisted on being wedded to Richard Calle, and the Bishop of Norwich interviewed her to see if she had made a binding vow with Richard. In Margaret Paston's letter to her son, she recounts the bishop's efforts:

> And the Bysschop seyd to her ryth pleynly, and put her rememberawns
>
> how she was born, wat kyn and frendds that sche had, and xuld have mo
>
> yf sche wer rulyd and gydyd aftyr hem; and yf she ded not, wat rebuke,
>
> and schame, and los yt xuld be to her yf sche wer not gyded be them, and
>
> cause of forsakyng of her for any good, or helpe, or kownfort that sche
>
> xuld have of hem . . . And than the Bysschop and the Schawnseler bothe

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[27] Barber, *The Pastons*, 148-55.

seyd that ther was neyther I ner no frend of her wold resyve [her].[28]

Margery had a strong enough will to resist the coercion imposed on her by her family, even though she was ostracised by them afterwards for the act. Lydgate's audience would understand that Medea's actions were more wayward as she stole away with Jason, and therefore the repercussions were greater. It is ironic that her woes begin because she obeyed her father, Cethes:

> And bad to hir þat sche schulde goon
>
> Vn-to Iason and [to] hercules,
>
> To make hem chere amongis al þe pres. (i.2282-4)

Guido's and Lydgate's Jason never marries Medea, and he abandons her for Creusa, the king of Corinth's daughter thereby hastening the decay of Medea's moral character.[29] Just as Medea abandoned her father for Jason, he in turn leaves her for another: "Þat hathe for-sake ful vnkyndely / Þis Medea, in peyne, sorwe, and wo" (i.3694-5). This opens up a chain of events that culminates when "Medea hir bothe sonys slowe" (i.3706).

This theme of retribution for disloyalty is not only concerned with Medea, but also with Cryseyde. In fact Robert Henryson extends a theme of retributive degeneration with Cryseyde because:

> She is not punished for being unfaithful to Troilus, but for blaspheming
>
> against the gods. This is like looking for the exact letter of the law under

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[28] Gairdner, *The Paston Letters*, 364-5.

[29] Radice, *Who's Who*, 162. Radice says that Aeneas' wife Creusa is the "best-known of the rather dim women" (Radice 94), but Jason's Creusa is not Priam's daughter. According to Apollodorus, Jason left Medea for Glauce the daughter of Creon, the king of Corinth, but he also states that Medea and Jason were married while they were travelling back to Iolcos: "Arete, the wife of Alcinoos, took the initiative by marrying Medea to Jason". Apollodorus, *The Library*, 57, 55.

which someone who is 'known' to be guilty can be convicted.[30]

However Lydgate's Cryseyde is a pawn rather than a siren; she does not have a choice to remain in Troy. When Cryseyde is being exchanged, her consent is not sought; it is "By sentence and Iugement fynal" (iii.4096) of Priam that she is to leave. She is not given the option to marry Troilus, and he does not come forward to claim her either. So she cannot be punished for breaking a contract that did not exist. The ideal of *fine amor* has love as non-negotiable, but Troilus failed to act; there was not a husband to impede marriage as she is a widow. His inertia forces Cryseyde to take another protector. However, as Karras points out in medieval times: "the line between a respectable woman and a whore was a vague one. Exchange was part of matrimony as well as of retribution".[31] Certainly Robert Henryson in *The Testament of Cresseid* magnifies her lack of faithfulness to a crime to satisfy an audience's hunger for retribution which he marks through Cupid's words:

> This greit injure done to our hie estait
>
> Me think with pane se suld mak recompence.
>
> Was never to goddes done sic violence -
>
> As weill for yow as for myself I say -
>
> Thairfoir ga help to revenge, I yow pray![32]

Cupid's address to the gods is also an address to Chaucer's and Lydgate's audiences to see how Cryseyde may be struck down for her infidelity. Yet Chaucer's denouement for Cryseyde's failings is gentle:

> And if I myghte excuse hire any wise,

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[30] Pearsall, *Chaucer to Spenser*, 469.
[31] Karras, *Common Women*, 88.
[32] Henryson, *Testament of Cresseid*, (290-4).

> For she so sory was for hire untrouthe,

> Iwis, I wolde excuse hire yet for routhe. (*TC* v.1097-9)

Chaucer holds the view that Cryseyde is repentant for her crime, yet there is the question that Cryseyde's charms may also be working on Chaucer, and that he too could become seduced by her penitence.

Illegitimacy and Knighthood

In the *Troy Book* there are many affairs with illegitimate offspring produced, and Priam is prolific with his thirty other "sonys natural" (ii.378). It is also unlikely that male children were his only illegitimate issue. It is as if he took the role of repopulating Troy a little too studiously. Like the Ménagier's wife, Hecuba may be expected to be "silent regarding his secrets, and patient if he be foolish and allow his heart to stray towards other women".[33] This may go someway to explain Hecuba's autonomy in return as their marriage may be an arranged one, rather than a love match. Certainly it could be read that not only is Priam's main purpose to develop the city but also to prove the fertility of the house of Priam. To a reader it seems excessively offensive to Hecuba. Their marriage more than likely reflects a common theme in Lydgate's world where husbands are not automatically faithful. John of Gaunt is an example of this, the similarity to Priam is that his illegitimate offspring are also acknowledged publicly by him. Yet for the most part in the *Troy Book* these children have unhappy endings. Medea murders her children by Jason "For þei wer like her fader of visage" (i.3707). When Clytemnestra's and Aegisthus's daughter Erigona kills herself, Guido implies that Erigona commits this act out of rancour:

> Erigona, the daughter of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, born of a disgraceful

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[33] Power, *Medieval People*, 119.

union, hanged herself with a noose, being disturbed by excessive grief

because she had learned that Orestes, her half brother, had been

established on the throne of his kingdom. (Meek 246)

Lydgate tempers this harshness by depicting the misery, isolation, and desperation of her act. Interestingly he also suggests her innocence of murder and adultery by the insertion of a tree as its wood can be symbolically connected to the crucifixion on the cross:

For sorwe & drede list no leng*er* dwelle,

But toke a rope, & liste no þing to spare,

And þer-w*ith*-al gan hir silf to gnare,

Þe story seith, hiȝe vp-on a tre:

Þis was hir fyn, - ȝe gete no more of me -. (v.1774-8)

She becomes a desperate figure, and it is a sad, self-sacrifice as if to mollify Agamemnon's furies. When contrasted with her father's hanging, the tree's symbolism is inverted and it becomes a "galwes" (v.1657) as used for criminals. Aegisthus' sentence of execution reflects the enormity of his crime:

On a hirdel naked to be drawe

Þoruȝ-oute þe tou*n*, þat alle myȝt[e] se,

And after hiȝe [en]hangid on a tre,

For to rote & drye ageyn þe sonne. (v.1650-3)

Another example of illegitimacy is the offspring of rape. Ajax Telamonius, Hesione's son by Telamon, has an unfortunate end when he perishes at the hands of murderers: "On pecis hewe w*ith* many mortal wou*n*de" (v.278). He is half Trojan and half Greek, but, like Priam's natural

sons, his loyalties are to his father's side. His presence in the siege on the Greek side belies the

fact that Hesione is a concubine as he does not seem to have affinity with his mother's family.

His encounter with Hector opens up familial ties and causes his cousin to make a foolish act: "Þe

palme of conquest in-to Troye tou*n*, / Whiche he þat day reffusid folily" (iii.2034-5). The chance

meeting has destructive repercussions for Troy, because at this point the Trojans were winning:

"The Trojans had already set fire to the Greek ships and were already setting all the ships adrift"

(Meek 141). The disastrous acknowledgement of kinship between Hector and Telamonius leads

Lydgate to amplify this encounter in a more chivalrous setting. Lydgate changes the pattern of

the meeting. He does not have Hector promising Telamonius that he will please "him in all

things, and advised and asked him to come to Troy to see the large family of his kinsmen" (Meek

141). Instead he makes Hector's offer more meaningful than just a quick family reunion. Hector

advises Telamonius: "Grekis here forsake" (iii.2079) and "to leue hem outterly" (iii.2095).

Hector wishes him to change sides, and Lydgate has provided a carefully planned explanation for

Telamonius' response:

> From þe tyme of his natiuite,
>
> And taken had þe ordre and degre
>
> Of kny3thood eke amongis hem a-forn,
>
> And, ou*er* þis, bou*n*de was and sworn
>
> To be trewe to her naciou*n*,
>
> Makyng of blood noon excepciou*n*. (iii.2099-104)

Telamonius has chosen knighthood above familial bonds - even though he is fighting his

relations because of Priam's attempts to retrieve Hesione. Chivalry in the *Troy Book* is an

affectation of a brotherhood amongst knights. Codes of conduct are adhered to within each camp

and even after the war, when the line between these camps is erased, a former Greek knight will

even come to the aid of the sacked Troy. The city is defended in "knyȝtly wyse" (v.1379) by

Diomedes and he becomes "chef protector now of Troie tou*n*" (v.1388):

> Þoruȝ þe manhod and þe hiȝe renou*n*
>
> Of Diomede and his sowdiours
>
> And oþer knyȝtes, noble werriours.
>
> Þei were reskued & holpen outterly. (v.1374-7)

However, it is this kind of chivalrous code of knighthood that destroys Troy's chances.

Three times the essence of a knight is used in Telamonius' request to Hector to call off the attack:

"knyȝthood and of worþines" (iii.2108), "knyȝtly routhe and compassiou*n*" (iii.2114), and

"knyȝtly wyse" (iii.2118). Hector's acquiescence causes Lydgate to sum up Hector's form of

chivalry as "hasty wilfulnes" (iii.2123). In Lydgate's view chivalry is practicable only when it is

not hampering good sense:

> For fro þat day, fare-wel for eu*er*e-more
>
> Victorie & laude fro hem of þe tou*n*,
>
> To hem denyed by disposiciou*n*
>
> Of mortal fate, whiche was contrarie. (iii.2148-51)

Winthrop Wetherbee, in his "Chivalry under Siege in Ricardian Romance", discusses the

departure of faith in chivalry:

> In the poetry of Chaucer and the Gawain-poet there is a steady ironic
>
> focus on the contradictions and blind spots inherent in the chivalric

outlook . . . chivalry is effectively caught off-guard, and its limited

ideological purview is opened to a scrutiny which translates the *ambages*

of the romance narrative into social and political terms, lending a new

urgency to the traditional romance metaphorics of warfare, siege and

amorous heroism.[34]

This disillusionment, although carried from the *Historia*, is clearly evident with Hector's

wilfulness. Lydgate has distanced Hector from his apparent foolishness of granting the enemy

whatever they desire, to basing Hector's actions on "the noble facade of chivalric culture".[35]

Brothers are more predominant in the *Troy Book* than sisters are. Apart from Priam's

daughters and Egea, sisters do not feature in the tale. The interaction between Creusa, Cassandra

and Polyxena occurs with one another at scenes of communal wailing. Helen and Clytemnestra

are sisters, but this is not referred to in the *Troy Book* or in the *Historia*.[36] However the absence

of sisterhood is compensated by the Amazon women's involvement in the siege. The Amazons

act as a generalisation of the ideal relationships between sisters, and because they are warriors,

chivalric codes apply to them as well as to the knights. The interesting feature of this is the

"good side's" (in pro-Trojan literature) response to their aid. After the first skirmish Lydgate

enhances Priam's welcome to Penthesilea and Philimenis on their return:

Whom Priam*us* hath w*ith* gret reu*er*ence

Kny3tly reseved, & dide his dilligence

Hem to refreshe w*ith* eu*er*y maner þing

Þat my3t[e] be vn-to her likyng,

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[34] Wetherbee, "Chivalry under Siege", 207.

[35] Wetherbee, "Chivalry under Siege", 207.

[36] Radice, *Who's Who*, 92, 150-2.

As her hertis koude best deuyse. (iv.3955-9)

Priam offers her "Al þat he hath, tresour and richesse" (iv.3965), making her an equal to the kings that have come to support him. Lydgate also elevates her further than Guido as she becomes the inversion of *fine amour*. In general it is the knight who pines for the woman in courtly love, but here Penthesilea is weeping for Hector. Lydgate makes more of an issue out of "her great love for Hector" (Meek 204). Penthesilea is possessed: "In verray soth, where she wake or winke, / Was eu*ere* in oon vp-on hym to þinke" (iv.3825-6). In fact Lydgate suggests there is more to this than just friendship - she is either a former lover or wife: "And vn-to hym she was be bond of trouþe, / Confederat of olde affecciou*n*" (iv.3828-9). Hector is "hir owne trewe kny3t" (iv.38420). Lydgate develops an unrequited love as the audience does not know if Hector reciprocated because he should be unattainable with the 'perfect' marriage to Andromache. It poses the question that if Hector loved Penthesilea in return, how could the marriage be a happy one? Lydgate makes Penthesilea's action of coming to support Troy more intriguing, because it is based on the *fine amor* of a woman.

Relationships in the *Troy Book* are a foundation for further research. Lydgate's handling of relationships can be profound as he constructs his writing to form an intimacy between the audience and the characters. Lydgate humanises the tale in order to hold his audience's attention and to make them empathetic to the characters, while making them aware of the importance of virtue and the folly of vice. Lydgate is trying to convince them that Fortune is fickle, and loyalty to God and king is prized above all. Faith in chivalry can also be misplaced if it is not practiced in conjunction with the realities of life, and yet the essence of chivalry is extolled when it works. Lydgate's projection of the ideal are relationships that work with openness and charity, and not

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on ones that are based upon secrecy and greed. Ultimately Lydgate's response to marriage in the

Troy Book culminates with his mention of the wedding of Henry V to Catherine of Valois in

1420. Lydgate sees their marriage as a symbol of peace between England and France, but there

is an undercurrent that between husband and wife marriage should be the same as an alliance

with two countries. Lydgate hopes for tranquillity between the two warring sides with

Catherine's arrival:

> Þat Ioie, honour, and prosp*er*ite,
>
> With-oute trouble of al adu*er*site,
>
> Repeire shal, & al hertly plesau*n*ce,
>
> Plente, welfare, & fulsom abundau*n*ce,
>
> Pes & quiete, boþe ny3e and ferre,
>
> With-oute strife, debat, or any werre. (v.3431-6)

For Lydgate, successful relationships come with truth and loyalty, and he directs the reader to

"remembre on Penolope" (v.2196), who "In hir trouþe stidefast as a wal" (v.2227).

Conclusion

In Robert J. Meyer-Lee's excellent book, *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt*, he discusses

Gower's and Lydgate's roles as poets: "If Gower was an amateur poet with ambivalent laureate

pretensions, Lydgate was, in comparison, a proto-professional poet who for all practical purposes

was an acting laureate".[1] By adding to and reworking the *Historia,* Lydgate writes parallel to

political events with his *Troy Book*. His commitment is to extol the new order of monarchy

while at the same time present it as a natural progression; to promulgate the Lancastrian

hereditary claim. As he improves Guido and breaks away from the Latin source prejudices,

Lydgate disassociates the Lancastrian court from its Ricardian predecessor. He brings the court's

relationship further back to an earlier time: "Of the cite and noble Yllyoun" (pr. 342). Lydgate's

Troy Book was completed within twenty years after Chaucer's death, and the commission's intent

is to also promote Lydgate's literary relationship to Chaucer as his heir apparent. Lydgate

continues Chaucer's legacy not only to establish the vernacular's priority towards national

identity for the royal court, but to present himself as the next poet laureate. With this in mind,

Lydgate engages his audience by using literary conventions that they are familiar with from

Chaucer's works, and simultaneously convinces the reader that he has the necessary skill to use

these tools.

As the *Troy Book* is to be a mirror of the Trojan time, it in turn can be used as an analogy

to reflect how the Lancastrian court perceived itself, and how it wished to be perceived by

posterity. Lydgate's manipulation of the characters within the *Troy Book* brings them to his

audience in a manner that prompts them to empathise with the Trojan predicaments. His

presentation of scenery, warfare and weaponry provides a reflective insight into the campaigns

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[1] Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power*, 38.

and excursions into France by Henry V's retainers and their motives:

> Her hyȝe renou*n*, her manhood and prowes,
>
> Her knyȝthood eke and her worthynes,
>
> Her tryvmphes also and victories,
>
> Her famous conquest and her songe glories. (pr.199-202)

Lydgate's depiction of the House of Priam momentarily narrows the stratum between retainer and lord as the audience sees the vicissitudes of power. In turn the King is presented with a view of the most vulnerable persons in society and the distress that war brings upon them. Polyxena's beheading is one of the most tragic parts of the *Troy Book,* and one that conveys in graphic form the waste of life in war. With those that are helpless, such as the post war Trojans, the attitudes of chivalry are relevant to the Lancastrian ethos and pertinent to fifteenth-century siege warfare and politics. Lydgate does not only keep the story of Troy alive, but conveys the potential, parallel legacy of the Lancastrian dynasty:

> For elles certeyn the grete worthynesse
>
> Of her dedis hadde ben in veyn;
>
> For-dirked age elles wolde haue slayn
>
> By lenthe of ȝeris þe noble worthi fame
>
> Of conquerours, and pleynly of her name
>
> For-dymmed eke the letris aureat,
>
> And diffaced the palme laureat. (pr. 206)

For Henry V, the *Troy Book* is an ideal vehicle to mirror his military actions and his ambitions to hold and gain French territories. Lydgate portrays sieges, weaponry and combat

that would be recognisable to his audience. When the Greeks approach Priam, it is not to avoid

war with a conciliatory appeal, but to preserve the Greeks from dishonour. A view of the Trojan

court is then presented from an outsider's perspective with the arrival of Ulysses and Diomedes.

Their lack of diplomacy to Priam reflects the negotiations between France and England at that

period, and the mistrust displayed by each for the other. Intrigues of ambush and murder can be

seen in this speculum, and it is possible for the reader to draw parallels or analogies with the

actions of English and French figures such as the Duke of Burgundy, John the Fearless; in other

words, these parallels would resonate with contemporary or near contemporary events. Extended

research on political persons of the fifteenth century would yield rewarding results with the *Troy

Book*. The character of Calchas as a false diviner correlates as an analogy with the idea of

Lollardy and Sir. John Oldcastle's betrayal when it is taken in to context with Henry V's reign.

Calchas' desertion of Troy mimics revolutionary events that occurred in 1405:

> And this same yere maister Richard Scrope, Archebisshoppe off Yorke,
>
> and þe Lorde Moubrey þat wasse Erle Marshall off Engelonde, and a
>
> knyght called Ser Willyam Plymton, gadred a stronge power in the north
>
> cuntre agaynes the kynge. And the kynge sende thedur his power & toke
>
> theym, and thei were behedede atte Yorke.[2]

The elevation of Calchas' status to a bishopric brings the mirror closer again to Henry V, but

whereas Calchas is beyond the reach of Priam, "Henry sent for the Chief Justice and directed him

to pass sentence of death on the archbishop and his associates".[3]

For Henry V the best mirror for kingship is not from one figure but from three; when the

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[2] Marx, *An English Chronicle*, 35.
[3] Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century*, 61.

virtues of Priam, Hector and Agamemnon are combined. Priam's skill lies in his ability to follow

a code that does not harm the emissaries, but Agamemnon has the acumen for both the political

and military fields. Hector is used as an exemplar of chivalry, but also as a warning to Henry V

against avarice in his military campaigns. Meyer-Lee discusses Hector's end with regard to

Christine de Pizan's version:

> Lydgate also had some sort of early acquaintance with Christine's work
>
> and specifically with the *Epistre Othea*, his most explicit (if not most
>
> significant) debt appearing in the *Troy Book's* account of Hector's death,
>
> when he departs from his source to draw on the *Epistre's* moralizing
>
> explanation of the fall of this prince.[4]

Hector's end is made deliberately sordid by Lydgate because he fears that Henry could become

blind to home affairs by focusing his attention so much on France.   Henry's need to fund his

campaign necessitated seizing and taxing from whomsoever he could, widows included.

Hector's treatment of women is tarred by the relationship he has with Andromache and he

does not entirely appear in a good light. There is not the touching, domestic interaction

portrayed between them in the *Troy Book* or in the *Historia* that matches the one in the *Iliad*:

> Poor wife, please do not let your heart be too distressed. No man will
>
> send me down to Hades before my fated time - and fate, I tell you, is
>
> something no man is ever freed from, whether brave man or coward, from
>
> the first moment of his birth.[5]

The *Troy Book*'s Hector does not try to soothe his wife's distress, quite the opposite - he is obtuse:

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[4] Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power*, 64-5.
[5] Homer, *The Iliad*, 103.

"So indurat, and hertid as lyou*n* / He was alweie, co*n*tunynge in his rage" (iii.5102-3). This is

hardly a creditable characteristic of Hector, and certainly Henry V's action of confining his

widowed step-mother in 1419 for three years could be carried under the same banner. She was

put under house arrest because of charges of treason and sorcery which "devoted the

preponderance of their attention to the seizure of Joanne's goods, both dowered and other, by the

treasurer of England".[6] This gave Henry V access to her income from dowers that his father

never seemed able to have "over his wife's inherited revenues and funds".[7] However, Henry V

later rescinded this action:

> Without bothering to assert her guilt of anything, he cited an unwillingness
>
> later to bear the charge to his own 'conscience,' and proclaimed his
>
> decision not 'to occupie forth lenger the said Douair in this wise'.[8]

The drain on Henry's finances to fund his campaign in France must have been excessive to make

Henry complicit in possessing Joanne's income. Henry V's renewal of the Hundred Years War

with France created huge expenditure and demands on his revenue. The sieges of French towns

such as Caen and Rouen would be much in the public mind.

The *Troy Book* is used successfully as a propaganda tool for Henry V, smoothing over the

deposition of Richard in order to remove the taint of regicide committed by his father. In 1413,

in the year of his accession, Henry V transferred Richard's body "to Westminster Abbey as a

mark of reconciliation".[9] K. B. McFarlane discusses this, and the re-interment of Richard was

perhaps more than just a reminder that the former king was dead. There was a strong attachment

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[6] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 164.
[7] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 156.
[8] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, 164.
[9] *OBM*, 232.

between the two kings:

> Richard II took him into his own charge when his father was exiled and
> with him he went to Ireland. Richard, who seems - it is an interesting trait - to
> have exercised an easy fascination on children and peasants, completely won his
> heart.[10]

The words 'moralising' and 'prolific' are frequently associated with Lydgate's writing, especially in connection with the *Troy Book*; yet it is an unbalanced view which has come to dominate opinions of his work. Lydgate's moralising in his texts is invaluable as it brings Lydgate the translator to life for the reader where Guido falls short in achieving such a familiar interaction. Guido discusses morals in the *Historia*, but often for very negative reasons and frequently they give cause to Lydgate to reproach him. When Guido, for example, rebukes women's apparent immorality, Lydgate shows himself to be more tolerant, and he can also be quite comical. When a husband is cuckolded, Lydgate advises him to "Passe ou*er*e liȝtly and bere noon hevines / Liste þat þou be to wo*m*men odyous" (ii.5814-5). Some of Lydgate's comments on women can also be mischievously ambiguous when he describes them as being "so gode and parfyte eu*er*echon" (ii.2105). However, he does not blame them for taking new lovers, as he states, "For ofte tyme þei se men do þe same" (i.2110), and also that "It sitteth nat a wo*m*man lyue alone" (ii.2113).   Furthermore on the participation of women in society, Lydgate admires the Amazon warriors in battle. He regards them as the equal of any man in strength, but he does not damage their credibility by adding outrageous characteristics. They are welcome allies and share a sense of cohesion when they come to aid Troy - it is for Hector's sake - and with them Lydgate inverts the idea of courtly love; it is Penthesilea who comes to serve Hector.

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[10] McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings*, 104-5.

She is the female who adores the unattainable knight, and is compelled to rush to his aid only to find that she is too late:

> Anoon she gan to chau*n*gen cher and hewe,
>
> And pitously for to wepe & crye,
>
> And ferd in soth as she wold[e] deye
>
> For verray wo and hertly hevynes. (iv.3852-5)

Through her actions Lydgate strengthens the impression that Penthesilea was a lover of Hector's: "hir owne trewe kny3t" (iv.3842). However, when women participate without an invitation in the war, the consequences are grim. Hecuba is responsible for the ambush and murder of Achilles and the retribution for this is the slaying of Polyxena, at Achilles' tomb in order for the gods to give the Greeks a safe passage home.

Guido in the *Historia* rarely alludes to gods, and in fact he strips the tale as much as possible of their influence, but Lydgate as narrator relishes their participation. He merges additional mythological tales into the text, and he uses the deities to chastise them for disasters, and for their failings towards mortals. Lydgate uses them as a counterfoil to Christian belief. The deities are not physically participating in the war as in the *Iliad*, but their failings are used to exhibit the frailty of life. The smallest action by them can reverberate to have the most dire consequences, such as when Discord is not invited to Jupiter's party:

> As sche þat is of debat maistres,
>
> Hath þis appil, passyng of delit,
>
> Brou3t to þis fest, of malis and despit. (ii.2654-6)

This slight upon Discord leads to Paris' injudicious judgement that ultimately leads to the

destruction of Priam's city. A further lesson from the *Troy Book* is that discord follows when

relationships break down between lord and retainer, or husband and wife as seen by events

between Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Lydgate promotes that virtue is paramount to good

kingship, and there is not any room for "fals couetyse" (iii.5354).

  After Henry's death in 1422, Lydgate continued his literary relationship with the

Lancastrian family, but as Meyer-Lee declares: "no other English poet was patronized so

consistently by the dominant political figures of his day nor by so broad a spectrum of society".[11]

Meyer-Lee sees Lydgate as being in high demand and "that it was his patrons who sought him"

out.[12] Lydgate's fame was interconnected with the House of Lancaster, and it was this that:

> made his texts desirable cultural commodities for those nobles who
>
> sought the aura of royalty, as well as for those gentry who wished to
>
> emulate courtly behaviour. Because he was the first poet to be so closely
>
> identified with royal power, he was also the first *living* author writing in
>
> English whose name became, as it were, a name brand.[13]

As A. S. G. Edwards states, Lydgate produced "verse until virtually the moment of his death in

1449", and he provides an insight to the taste and ambitions of Henry V and his court.[14] The

Troy Book is written at an opportune stage of Henry V's reign, and bears much relation to his life

as king, and as a military leader: "As riȝtful eyr by title to atteyne, / To bere a crowne of worþi

rewmys tweyne!" (Lenvoye. 6-7). Contextually Henry's famous victory at Agincourt makes its

way into Lydgate's wording with a Christian ethos surrounding it. Henry V and his successors

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[11] Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power*, 51.

[12] Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power*, 51.

[13]   Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power*, 51.

[14] Lydgate, *Life of St Edmund*, x.

must never forget that they are nothing without Christ:

> With-oute hym al may nat availle;
>
> For he can ʒif victorie in bataille
>
> And holde a felde, shortly to conclude,
>
> With a fewe ageyn gret multitude. (v.3583-6)

Within Lydgate's text are subjects and themes that are open to further research, especially in context with the *Troy Book*'s characters, and their relevance to fifteenth-century society and politics. As a poet Lydgate, leaves an immense wealth of information within his texts of life and society in his own contemporary sphere.

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