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Committee in Charge:

Professor Maura Nolan, Chair
Professor Steven Justice
Professor David Hult

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Abstract

Chaucer's French Tradition: Coterie Poetics in Late Medieval England

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Doctor of Philosophy in English and Medieval Studies

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Professor Maura Nolan, Chair

My dissertation, "Chaucer's French Tradition: Coterie Poetics in Late-Medieval England," shows the influence of literary coteries on the formation of the earliest articulations of the English literary tradition, emerging from the founding figure of Geoffrey Chaucer. Chaucer himself engaged in coterie practices as part of his negotiation of continental, particularly French, literary traditions, and his 15th-century successors adopt and adapt the coterie model as they construct an English literary tradition. These successors — figures like Thomas Hoccleve, John Lydgate, Stephen Scrope, Richard Roos, William Dunbar, and John Skelton—articulate their own places within this tradition in terms of the intimacy of their relationships to its founder; in other words, these are coterie relationships. They are also fictive; the coterie has entered the realm of the imaginary, where it can be populated by dead writers, literary patrons, and other figures. By the end of the fifteenth century, this move to the imaginary results in a shift from the intimate logic of the coterie to the more abstract idea of a tradition – what we now know as the Chaucerian tradition, which forms the foundation of the English literary tradition.

Chaucer's coterie practices lay the groundwork for those writers who follow him. Chaucer's relationship to the French tradition is mediated by his coterie relationship to his French contemporaries, especially Eustache Deschamps and Oton de Granson. The existence of a coterie, however, depends on making distinctions between members and non-members and I explore this principle by turning to Thomas Hoccleve's relationship with Chaucer and Christine de Pizan. Despite having Chaucer's model of a French and English coterie to follow, however, Hoccleve emphasizes his relationship to Chaucer at the expense of his relationship to Christine. If Hoccleve works by exclusion, Lydgate works by inclusion. He constructs what I have termed *virtual coteries*, a literary trope in which a writer characterizes the production of his or her work as the combined effort of the older writers who may be its source or inspiration, the patrons or audience who have commissioned the work, and the writer himself or herself who brings all of these different strands together in order to create the final product. They are a half-step between coterie and tradition, abstracting the intimacy of coteries into a relationship that exists primarily on the page. A generation after Lydgate, beyond the close-knit networks found in virtual coteries, one arrives at the Chaucerian tradition, displayed in the work of Scrope, Roos, Dunbar, and Skelton. These writers signal their participation in that tradition by way of allusions that do not function to create a sense of intimacy with the older poet, but signal an affiliation to a whole body of material that travels under his banner, under the rubric of the Chaucerian tradition.

For my family.

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

There is a difference between the way that Geoffrey Chaucer refers to Ovid, who is "Venus clerk" and who "hath ysowen wonder wide / The grete god of Loves name" (*HF* 1487-89), and the way that Chaucer refers to Oton de Granson, who is called in the last line of the *Complaint of Venus* "Graunson, flour of hem that make in Fraunce" (82).[1] There is a difference, again, between the way that Chaucer describes the recently deceased Frances Petrarch, who is "deed and nayled in his cheste" (*CT* IV.29), and the way that Thomas Hoccleve discusses the recently deceased Chaucer, as when his fictional interlocutor in the *Regiment of Princes* exclaims "Thow were aqweyntid with Chaucer, pardee— / God have his soule, best of any wight!"[2] And there is, yet again, a difference between the way that John Lydgate eulogizes Chaucer, as when the *Troy Book* mentions "Noble Galfride, poete of Breteyne, / Amonge oure englisch þat made first to reyne / Þe gold dewe-dropis of rethorik so fine, / Oure rude langage only tenlwmyne," and the way that John Skelton does, when he calls Chaucer "maister Chaucer, that nobly enterprysyd / How that our Englysshe might fresshely be ennewed."[3] The first of these differences is a matter of degree; the second difference concerns relationships; the third is a question of perspective, or how the English literary tradition appears at the beginning and end of the fifteenth century. This dissertation is about these differences, about the way that writers characterize their relationship to other writers, specifically within the Chaucerian tradition. It will focus on two distinct collective forms, modes of belonging already apparent in the different relationships enumerated above: coterie and tradition. Coterie and tradition, however, are not mutually exclusive, and the work of this dissertation will be to show how these forms can help define one another through processes of inspiration, contestation, alteration, and mutual reinforcement.

A lot will depend on context. Works of art are embedded in the world both in time and space. First, one can think of a work of art's immersion in the world temporally. A work is dependent in some ways on the works of art that came before it, those older productions that pave the way for the new work of art by creating a set of expectations—be they generic, narrative, rhetorical, or social—from which the new work can generate meaning. In such a way any work of art is shaped by the past. But the present also exerts its own influences, and not only through historical topicality. A work of art must be intelligible; it must, in other words, have a potential audience. The first audience for any work is its immediate contemporaries, the individuals who live in the same historical moment with the same cultural background. It is these individuals, or a subset of them, that an artist often will have in mind while creating the work of art. But this initial audience has only a provisional hold on the work, and the creator can have a different audience in mind as well: the future generations who will interact with the work, posterity. A work of art is usually made to last, and an artist's expectations about the future reception of his or her work of art can have their own influence on the work's production.[4] What

[1] All references to Chaucer will be from Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). As they are here, all references will be cited parenthetically within the text, by abbreviated title where necessary, book or fragment when applicable, and line number.

[2] Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles R. Blyth (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), lines 1867-68.

[3] John Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. Henry Bergen, EETS e. s. 97, 103, 106, and 126 (London: Kegan Paul, 1906-1935), II.4697-4700; and John Skelton, *Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell*, in *The Complete English Works*, ed. John Scattergood (New York: Penguin, 1983), lines 388-89.

[4] In contemporary art, we see many apparent counterexamples to this tendency, productions that are meant to last only a short period of time, like the sculptures of Andy Goldsworthy, the installations of Christo and Jean-Claude, or

is more, a work of art's capacity to endure means that, in addition to an expected audience that may influence its creation, it will have an actual audience in the future, individuals who will form their own attachments to the work of art and assign it new meanings befitting the world they inhabit. We are accustomed to think of a work of art's relationship to temporality in terms of tradition. In its relationship to the past, the work of art is in conversation with the tradition that precedes it. In its present, it makes claims about the continued viability of a tradition. As the work moves into it future, it becomes a part of a tradition or it starts a tradition of its own.

A work of art is also immersed in the world spatially. One sees this perhaps most obviously in contemporary disciplinary divisions in literary studies or art history, in which works of art are grouped into categories corresponding to the divisions of the nation-state. One can get a degree in a number of different national literatures or can specialize in art from a certain place. It is true that specialization occurs in terms of periodization as well, although breadth in a discipline is often understood in terms of acquiring knowledge across temporal boundaries within the same location. But a work of art's sense of place can also be conceived as much more local or localizable than simple classification under national rubrics. Installation art, which depends on site-specific experience, and architecture are only the most obvious examples of this localization; we also refer to different kinds of novels as "city novels" or as "campus novels," referencing a general type of location, or we can analyze works of art in terms of one very specific location, as when we think of Chaucer or William Langland as "London poets."[5] Coteries are often understood in terms of such spatiality, especially in their most local forms. Often coteries are associated with a single place or household. One makes reference to the Holland House coterie in London or the coterie of Baron Paul Henri Thiry d'Holbach in Paris, and one can also think in terms of the production of manuscripts within a specific textual community.[6]

But a work of art's spatial quality also has a less concrete manifestation. A work of art does not remain bound to the place of its conception or articulation; descriptions or copies of it, whether verbal of pictorial, begin circulating at the moment of its appearance. These manifestations of the work—like the stories about Custaunce from the *Man of Law's Tale*, which circulate along the medieval trading routes between Rome and Syria—transcend geographic definitions of space (*CT*, II.183-89). Instead, one should think of such works' spatial character in terms of their consumption by their audience; space, in other words, can be understood in the more abstract terms of a public. Hannah Arendt argues that all objects, including and especially the work of art, are phenomenologically bound to a notion of the public: "everything that is must appear, and nothing can appear without a shape of its own; hence there is in fact no thing that does not in some way transcend its functional use, and its transcendence, its beauty or ugliness,

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graffiti art anywhere. However, with the possible exception of the last example, these seemingly ephemeral works of art depend on documentation, photographic and otherwise, that gives a kind of permanence to the fleeting nature of the primary event. The same thing can be said for performance art.

[5] One can get even more specific, as in Paul Strohm's recent work that almost attempts to make Chaucer into an Aldgate poet; see Paul Stohm, *Chaucer's Tale: 1386 and the Road to Canterbury* (New York: Viking, 2014). For an excellent example of this phenomenon, with a chapter devoted to Langland, see Ralph Hanna, *London Literature, 1300-1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[6] See Linda Kelly, *Holland House: A History of London's Most Celebrated Salon* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2013); and Alan Charles Kors, *D'Holbach's Coterie: An Enlightenment in Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). For a discussion of a manuscript community, see Steven Justice and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, "Langlandian Reading Circles and the Civil Service in London and Dublin, 1380-1427," *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1998): 59-83.

is identical with appearing publicly and being seen."[7] Arendt's notion of art is deeply Kantian, subjecting the work of art to the faculty of judgment that is influenced by the *sensus communis*, but it also accords well with work on the late-medieval English poets who write the literature that will be the focus of this dissertation.[8] Anne Middleton's "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Age of Richard II" argues that during the Ricardian period poets became interested in creating what "was to be a 'common voice' associated with the 'common good'" through "a new kind of experientially based didactic poetry."[9] For her, "this public voice is vernacular, practical, worldly, plain public-spirited, and peace-loving—in a word 'common,' rather than courtly or clerical, in its professed values and social allegiances."[10] Maura Nolan has argued for a different type of public in the works of John Lydgate, one that is largely representative, although it makes use of some of the same strategies as Middleton's "public poetry." Nolan claims that Lydgate's writings during the minority of Henry VI exhibit a "powerful tendency to *imagine* their audience as a public rather than as an inchoate group of readers or viewers," despite the fact that they are addressed to a small audience of "the king and his household, nobles, and the London elite."[11] Such a small group is transformed into a public, she explains, by "the way in which these texts combine didacticism—moral exhortation and pedagogical instruction—with a clear sense that their audience *represents* the only public that matters: the ruling elite."[12] Even while the audiences of their actual addresses constitute a small group of people, that is, these texts imagine them as representatives for the realm as a whole. Whether it is poetry by Middleton's Ricardians or Nolan's Lydgate, however, the notion of the public in late-medieval English poetry depends on a notion of judgment, often expressed as didacticism, that is established by a *sensus communis*, whether in relation to the Middleton's bourgeois "new men" or Nolan's representative ones.[13]

My notion of the public will depend on these different notions of the public, even as the material it addresses will necessitate certain alterations. Both Middleton and Nolan are interested in visions of the public that are both political and social, and they are concerned with the way literature addresses these different realms. My public will be largely literary, although it will certainly intersect with these other kinds of publics. Indeed, in the world of late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth century England, those three categories—the literary, political, and social—cannot be kept strictly apart. Michael Warner claims that his sense of the public of a text as "a relation among strangers" only strictly applies to a post-print world.[14] In late-medieval England, a writer might have political and social ties to those that largely constitute his or her public, and

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[7] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, second edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 173.
[8] See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For further discussion of the importance of the public to the faculty of judgment in Kant, and subsequently for her own work, see Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
[9] Anne Middleton, "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Age of Richard II," *Speculum* 53 (1978): 94-114, quote at 95.
[10] Middleton, "The Idea of Public Poetry," 96.
[11] Maura Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 4.
[12] Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture*, 4.
[13] Middleton defers a discussion of Chaucer in her public poetry essay, but she takes up those concerns in relationship to Chaucer's work, which she relates to the rise of the bourgeois "new men," in Anne Middleton, "Chaucer's 'New Men" and the Good of Literature in the *Canterbury Tales*," in *Literature and Society*, ed. Edward Said (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 15-56.
[14] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone, 2005), 74. For an argument that the public as a relationship among strangers has medieval precedence, see Spencer Strub, "Publishing before Print: The Sins of the Tongue and the Public of Middle English Poetry," (PhD dissertation, UC-Berkeley, forthcoming).

because family life is political life for the nobility at least, those political and social ties might be one and the same thing. That Chaucer's sister-in-law had a longstanding relationship with John of Gaunt probably mattered to his political, social, and literary life. That Chaucer's granddaughter eventually became one of the most powerful women in the realm certainly mattered to the way Lydgate approached both her and her deceased grandfather. The public and private spheres were muddled, but such is always the case. As Reinhart Koselleck explains,

> the private and public domains are not mutually exclusive; as a matter of fact, the public realm arises from the private one. The self-assurance of the moral inner space lies in its ability to 'go public.' The private domain can expand on its own into a public one, and it is only in the public sphere that personal opinions prove to have the force of law.[15]

Replace "moral" with "aesthetic" and Koselleck's vision of the intersecting public and private spheres is easily applicable to the literary publics—coterie and tradition—that will be my focus. A notion of the public is ultimately what allows us to see how coterie and tradition intersect, to understand how one small, constricted notion of an audience interacts with a more expansive one. It is necessary, then, to flesh out these two literary publics: coterie and tradition. I will begin with the concept of coterie, because its interaction with the public is more counterintuitive.[16]

I. Coterie's Forms

The assumption that coteries have no relationship to the public comes from the pejorative connotations that historically have come to accrue around the concept. Coteries, so the criticism holds, are little more than secretive cliques that work in the shadows, away from the public eye, in order to covertly affect society or the government. Much of the negative valence associated with the concept of a coterie come from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's persistent critique of the "coterie holbachique;" throughout much of the latter part of his *Confessions*, Rousseau casts the coterie associated with the Baron d'Holbach as a secretive cabal that works to undermine his social position. The anecdote Rousseau relates about his self-consciously absurd preparations to stay at his Hermitage, away from Paris, during the winter of 1756 is exemplary:

> I told my story to Deleyre, who came to see me during this time, and laughed with him over my military preparations. On his return to Paris he tried to amuse Diderot by passing the tale on to him; and this is how the Holbach circle learnt that I seriously meant to spend the winter at the Hermitage. This determination, which they could never have imagined, quite threw them out; and in the meantime, until they could invent some fresh

[15] Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 56.

[16] In understanding coteries as public forms, I am following the work of Lytle Shaw, who also emphasizes the rhetorical aspect of coteries discussed below. See Lytle Shaw, *Frank O'Hara: The Poetics of Coterie* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006). For a fuller discussion of Shaw's work applied specifically to Chaucer, see chapter one. As will become clear there, Shaw's work allows me to think of Chaucer as a coterie poet in a different way than the way John Donne is understood to be one in Arthur F. Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986).

> intrigue to make my life there unpleasant, they alienated this same Deleyre from me, through Diderot's agency.[17]

The efficacy of Rousseau's characterization is apparent here. Rousseau presents himself as self-effacing and jocular, able to poke fun at himself for the benefit of his friend. In contrast, the "coterie holbachique," here translated as "the Holbach circle," is made up of humorless schemers; they not only remain unamused by Rousseau, but they actively undermine his relationship to Alexandre Deleyre while secretly plotting to make his life worse. The Holbach coterie is Rousseau's foil. While he presents himself as someone making his private life something public by making a confession, they take away his social relations, relegating what should be public to the private sphere. However, Rousseau's characterization of coteries is not accurate, but instead a highly motivated and personal account of private grievances. First, it is not as if Denis Diderot—the supposedly secret agent undermining Rousseau, even though the two remained friendly—was a wholly private citizen. Diderot was a major figure of the Enlightenment and his most important work, as the co-founder and chief editor of the *Encyclopédie*, was collaborative by nature, a project undertaken by an elite intellectual coterie designed both to address and benefit the broader public. Second, the Holbach coterie, not Rousseau, is committed to a broadly social engagement. Rousseau has decided to spend the winter at the Hermitage, away from Paris, a decision the coterie "never could have imagined." They were in Paris, in the social and cultural capital, engaging with individuals like Deleyre, who they may have "alienated" from Rousseau but only by including him within their circle.

In short, what the Holbach coterie exemplifies is that coteries can have a variety of different relationships with the public at large. There is no need to think of them as primarily secretive or clandestine cabals, whose exposure to the public would be fatal to their constitution. Although a coterie work may have been designed to signify in a specific way to a coterie audience that does not mean that only the coterie audience will be able to read the work. Like Arendt's work of art that must be made to appear or Kosselleck's private sphere that "goes public," coteries can willfully and openly engage with the wider social world.[18] Diderot's *Encyclopédie* is just one instance of a coterie's engagement with a wider public. Its capacity to interact with that public stems in part from the fact that Diderot and the individuals that created it were engaged culturally, politically, and socially with the wider world, and the shape this coterie's production took is related to the way in which those individuals belonged to society at large and the role that society would afford them or their creation. Different social formations would permit (or forbid) different forms of interaction. As I will discuss in the first chapter, Eustache Deschamps sending Chaucer a poem through the intermediary of Lewis Clifford was

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[17] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, trans. J. M. Cohen (New York: Penguin, 1953), 403-04. In the original, "Deleyre m'étant venu voir dans ce temps-là, je lui contai mon eas, et ris avec lui de mon appareil militaire. De retour à Paris, il en voulut amuser Diderot à son tour, et voilà comment la coterie holbachique apprit que je voulais tout de bon passer l'hiver à l'Ermitage. Cette constance, qu'ils n'avaient pu se figurer, les désorienta; et, en attendant qu'ils imaginassent quelque autre tracasserie pour me rendre mon séjour déplaisant, ils me détachèrent, par Diderot, le meme Deleyre…" See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les confessions*, ed. George Sand (Paris: Charpentier, 1841), 451.

[18] In more explicitly political terms, Koselleck argues that the absolutist state produces robust social spaces, the literary salons and masonic lodges, which eventually coalesced into "indirect political forces." See, Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*, 62-75; quote at 67. Warner's counterpublics, like his publics, consist largely of strangers, but they make use of the same technologies and strategies of forming the public in order to form communities of individuals that might be excluded from aspects of society due to things like race or sexual orientation. See Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, especially 118-24.

not exactly an instance of a coterie "going public." It was however an action along that continuum, an instance that discloses what could have been had Chaucer's coteries decided to go public, and the means through which they would have done so.

Like Diderot, albeit under a very different social formation, Chaucer too was a public figure involved in a variety of coterie formations. No scholar has done as much to illuminate our understanding of Chaucer's various social relationships as Paul Strohm. Strohm will occasionally comment on Chaucer's relationship to the French poets on which I will focus in my first chapter, Eustache Deschamps and Oton de Granson, but for the most part he is interested in "a circle of social equals and near-equals" in England.[19] The membership changes over time and the relationships vary in intensity, but for the most part the individuals that comprise this "circle" include Richard Sturry, Lewis Clifford, John Clanvowe, John Montagu, Philip de la Vache, Henry Scogan, Peter Bukton, Ralph Strode, John Gower, Thomas Usk, and Thomas Hoccleve.[20] Strohm, however, uses the term "circle" rather than "coterie."[21] He further remarks that he is calling Chaucer's readers and acquaintances "a circle rather than a literary public at this stage, because it hasn't reached anything close to the numerical size or the breadth of appeal we might associated with the latter phrase."[22] What Strohm describes as a "circle" could just as easily be called a coterie. The concept of coterie is useful when addressing precisely the kind of situation Strohm describes Chaucer's audience occupying because, as I have shown with the Holbach coterie, it allows one to describe and makes distinctions about the various ways that those collections of private individuals engage with the public.

I define coteries, then, as a specific type of literary public. In their most basic guise, they will consist of small groups of writers—as small as two individuals—who serve as a primary audience for one another. These poets, in other words, write with one another in mind. They will produce one or more works that in some way address the other coterie members, sometimes explicitly by name although sometimes by more subtle forms of allusion. Under this definition coteries are historical, that is they involve real individuals who are related to one another in specific and historically determined ways. But coteries are also rhetorical; writers perform the fact that they belong to a coterie by a variety of literary techniques, most often by the modes of address already mentioned—using the proper names of other coterie members but also by alluding to each other's works—or by demonstrating a shared aesthetic sensibility. They may use all of these techniques. The important point is that coteries never refer simply to some historical confluence of authors living in close proximity. They instead are *a form of audience that is incorporated formally into the work itself*.

Because coteries describe something more than historical fact, because they give rise to different rhetorical and literary techniques, coteries are also a more flexible concept than their pejorative connotations let on. This dissertation in part will be an exploration of the different coterie techniques deployed by the Chaucer tradition. I have already mentioned that coteries are

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[19] Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 50. Strohm's position here supports the argument of his earlier essay, Paul Strohm, "Chaucer's Audience," *Literature and History* 5 (1977): 26-41.
[20] This is the order in which Strohm discusses them in Paul Strohm, "Chaucer's Fifteenth-Century Audience and the Narrowing of the 'Chaucer Tradition'," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 4 (1982): 3-32; discussion from 9-14.
[21] He is not the only critic to use this language. Derek Pearsall, for instance, refers to the "Chaucer circle" in Derek Pearsall, *Old and Middle English Poetry* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 194-97. The term is also used by May Newman Hallmundsson, "Chaucer's Circle: Henry Scogan and His Friends," *Medievalia et Humanistica* n.s. 10 (1981): 129-39; and R. T. Lenaghan, "Chaucer's Circle of Gentleman and Clerks," *The Chaucer Review* 18 (1983): 155-60.
[22] Paul Strohm, *Chaucer's Tale*, 195.

usually assumed to be both temporally and geographically restricted, tied to a specific period of time and a specific location, like the Holland House coterie. However, the association of coteries with aristocratic households is a specific product of the 18th century, a reaction to a particular historical situation. Some of Chaucer's coteries will exhibit a similar close association with location, as Strohm's work about Chaucer's friends and acquaintances within the city of London demonstrates. Chaucer's historical situation, though, will also provide for different sorts of coteries, ones not so bound to specific locations. His continental travel and extensive dealing with French writers both abroad and at the English court, occasioned by England's extended engagement with France during the Hundred Years War, allowed Chaucer to form a coterie with Deschamps and Granson. More radical still are the alterations Hoccleve makes to the coterie form. Whereas Chaucer extends the geographic possibilities for coteries, Hoccleve extends their temporal boundaries by emphasizing his coterie relationship with Chaucer even after the older poet's death. With Hoccleve, the rhetorical side of coterie relationships begins to predominate, exceeding the limitations placed on coteries by their historical origins.

But it was Lydgate who really exploited the potential inherent in the rhetorical aspects of coterie poetics by creating what I will call "virtual coteries." These coteries consist of both living and dead poets, as well as individuals associated with other aspects of the poem's production, such as patrons or scribes. The relationship between these individuals occurs primarily on the page, but virtual coteries are not simply a form of intertextuality. Instead, they refer to the interaction between complexly interconnected webs of individuals, not just texts. Some clarification of the difference is necessary as this point. Intertextuality in contemporary discussions is something of a confused category.[23] As the recent editors of a collection on intertextuality in medieval texts write, intertextuality "has frequently been used as a synonym of quotation, allusion, parody, source, and even context," and that the term has been loosely applied "to designate intentional acts of reference or unconscious assimilation of existing ideas, or anything between these two poles."[24] Insofar as intertextuality refers to something as foundational to Lydgate's poetry, or medieval poetry in general, as allusion or citation, then

[23] In its original connotation, in Julia Kristeva's attempt to bridge Saussurian semiotics and Bakhtinian dialogism, intertextuality performs some of the general functions of a virtual coterie. Kristeva defines a text in semiotics as a "productivity," which means in part that it is "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another." One's duty as a semiotician is to create a "typology of texts" that "define[s] the specificity of different textual arrangements by placing them within the general text (culture) of which they are part and which is, in turn, part of them." One creates that typology by identifying an "ideologeme," the materialization of the "intertextual function," which is "the intersection of a given textual arrangement (a semiotic practice) with the utterances (sequences) that it either assimilates into its own space or to which it refers in the space of exterior texts (semiotic practices)." That is, when one reads a text, one looks for those moments where the text names other texts or alludes to them—by mimicking their style, for instance—and out of these moments one can determine the relative cultural position of a variety of different texts. The way Chaucer parodies romance in *Sir Thopas*, for instance, is a moment of intertextuality that tells us about Chaucer's text, the Auchinleck Manuscript, and their cultural importance in fourteenth-century England. The preceding sentences all come from Julia Kristeva, "The Bounded Text," in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 36.

[24] Yolanda Plumley, Giuliano Di Bacco, and Stefano Jossa, "Preface" in *Citation, Intertextuality and Memory in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Vol. 1 Text Music and Image from Machaut to Ariosto*, ed. Yolanda Plumley, Giuliano Di Bacco, and Stefano Jossa (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2011), ix.

certainly virtual coteries will display the marks of that technique.[25] The aspect of virtual coteries that intertextuality does not cover, however, is the space exterior to texts, which is to say Lydgate's relationship to people, to the Chaucer family more specifically, a relationship mediated by texts, to be sure, but one that is not solely contained by textuality. Turning from the intertextuality of someone like Julia Kristeva to the textuality of Roland Barthes, one might say that Lydgate's virtual coteries produce texts that are on the border of a "readerly text"—those texts that Barthes labels as "classics" and who occasion an awed response from a reader who only consumes them—and a "writerly text"—those texts that call out for more writing as the proper response to them.[26] Like a "readerly text," Lydgate's various commissions have him translate a variety of texts, like his translation of Giovanni Boccaccio, that were already "classics" in his time, but like the "writerly text" Lydgate interacts with them by writing, by producing more texts and expanding on the texts he encounters. Virtual coteries, then, mediate the relationship between people as a relationship between texts, and vice versa. Lydgate's relationship to Chaucer's granddaughter, Alice, is partially constituted through his relationship to Chaucer's texts and Lydgate's relationship to Chaucer's texts is partially determined by his relationship with Alice and her husbands.

In describing Lydgate's relationship to Chaucer as a coterie relationship, I raise the specter of tradition. To a certain extent, the relationship between these concepts is easy enough to describe. Each of the members of a coterie will have some individual relationship to the literary traditions they have inherited. The way they understand these traditions—the preference for Ovid over Virgil or the relative emphasis on some aspect of the *Roman de la Rose*, for instance—may be an important element of the coterie relationship, a sensibility the members share and one of the reasons they may have formed a coterie together in the first place. Thus do traditions shape coteries. Coteries, however, can also shape traditions. They can do so, in part, because, while coteries describe an author's relationship to his or her primary audience, that does not mean that the author has a relationship only to that audience. An author will have a relationship with those writers who have preceded her as well as those writers that will succeed her at the same time as that relationship with the primary audience. In other words, an author will have a relationship to both a coterie and to a tradition, and those relationships will influence one another. But they also influence the creation of the work of art, albeit in different ways. Chaucer's work is shaped by literary tradition, by the influence of Jean de Meun or by his expectation about what those who read his work will learn from it; and it is also shaped by his coteries, by the way that his relationship to Granson influences how he translates the French poet's work. Hoccleve, Lydgate, and the poets who come after them will have their own set of relationships, sometime placing Chaucer in a coterie role and sometimes in one determined by tradition. In addition to describing the different forms of coterie poetics the Chaucerian tradition practiced, this dissertation will also explain how those different coterie forms help create the Chaucerian tradition.

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[25] Yolanda Plumley's recent work has made a strong case for the indispensability of intertextuality for medieval art. See Yolanda Plumley, *The Art of Grafted Song: Citation and Allusion in the Age of Machaut* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[26] The terminology is drawn from Roland Barthes *S/Z*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 2-3. Even for Barthes, these are not hard and fast categories. As Barthes writes elsewhere, "the discourse on the Text should itself be nothing other than text, research, textual activity, since the Text is that *social* space which leaves no language safe, outside, nor any subject of the enunciation in position as judge, master, analyst, confessor, decoder." See Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *Image- Music- Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 164, emphasis in the original.

II. Tradition's Old Books

It is time to think once again about literary traditions. The timing is propitious, in part, because critics have taken up questions of literary form with a vigor seldom seen since the first half of the twentieth century.[27] Scholars of later medieval English literature have taken part of this larger trend as well.[28] And tradition as a concept of inquiry, after all, was closely associated with the formalism of the New Critics, who despite a focus on the text itself either implicitly or explicitly operated under a notion of a shared literary tradition. T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" provides the foundation for all subsequent discussions of the category and my discussion will be no different.[29] By the time F. R. Leavis's *The Great Tradition* appeared, however, the obviously contentious claims inherent in the idea—particularly, as I will address shortly, the fact that including some works means excluding other—had begun to be a problem, as Leavis himself acknowledged in that work's opening sentences.[30] Even so, if we are to have a truly robust notion of literary form, we—like the New Critics before us—need to have a sense of the history of that form, a tradition. As Steven Justice has argued,

> to treat literature historically (as distinct from stipulating certain forms of power as "history" and treating literature as their excrescence) requires the ability first to delineate what is made and received as "the literary" in a given historical moment, and then to offer immanent accounts of literary sequence—accounts, for instance… of how poetry

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[27] It should be said that "form" as a concept never really went away; it was just mixed with other concerns. Fredric Jameson in *The Political Unconscious*, for instance, understands his ultimate object of analysis as the "ideology of form" or even the "content of form." See Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), especially 98-102. The now classic examples of this New Formalist turn in the profession at large are Marjorie Levinson's *PMLA* essay, "What is New Formalism?" and Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus's "Introduction" to the "Surface Reading" issue of *Representations*. See Marjorie Levinson, "What is New Formalism?" *PMLA* 122 (2007): 558-569; and Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," *Representations* 108 (2009): 1-21.

[28] There are several possible examples one might adduce here, but particularly effective recent works include Arthur Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages: Forming Compilations of Medieval London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); and Eleanor Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk, and Hoccleve* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). As Andrew Galloway points out, this interest in the "medieval literary" is not new, although its sustained engagement in book length works is. See Andrew Galloway, "Introduction: The Medieval Literary," in *Answerable Style: The Idea of the Literary in Medieval England*, eds. Frank Grady and Andrew Galloway (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013), 1-12; especially 2-3.

[29] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *The Sacred Wood and Major Early Essays* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1998). For fuller discussions of Eliot, see below and chapter 1.

[30] After claiming that the "great English Novelists are Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James and Joseph Conrad," Leavis acknowledges that "critics have found me narrow, and I have no doubt that my opening proposition, whatever I might say to explain and justify it, will be adduced in reinforcement of their strictures." See F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (New York: New York University Press, 1960), 1. For a further general discussion of the problems with literary canons, see John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Guillory has recently returned to a concern with the constitution of the canon in order to discuss the deleterious effects that not having an official and stable canon has had on the culture at large, as evinced in such things as the Common Core curriculum: "evidently, the choice of what literary works to teach is a matter so fraught, so hedged about with social inhibitions and political minefields, that it was simply impossible for the authors of the Common Core to offer anything more than what they call 'text exemplars,' sample texts that in no way constitute a curriculum." See, John Guillory, "The Common Core and the Evasion of Curriculum," *PMLA* 130 (2015): 666-72, quote at 667.

> got from the generation of Chaucer and Langland to the generations of *Richard the Redeless* and Hoccleve and Lydgate, of how later poets work out formal and sensational possibilities opened up by their Ricardian predecessors, or outflank them with others. The return of aesthetics to Middle English studies, if it is not to dwindle into preciosity, needs a conception of poetic form substantial enough to produce such histories.[31]

The term "tradition" is absent here, which is striking because that is precisely what is under discussion, another name for a "literary sequence" and containing exactly the list of authors that Justice mentions. Literary histories, in fact, either require a pre-existing tradition to be their object of inquiry or construct one as they proceed.[32] Of course, these are not mutually exclusive activities, and even works that draw on a pre-existing critical agreement about what does and does not belong within a tradition will affirm those judgments by dint of what they include or exclude; what is more, literary histories will often combine the two activities, sketching the contours of a given canon even as they expand the boundaries with this or that new inclusion.[33]

In returning to a discussion of tradition, it is important to meet head-on the most prominent and obvious objection to the concept: that the inclusions are never inclusive enough, that the exclusivity inherent in the concept of tradition means that it must be discarded. I take up the issue of the Chaucerian tradition's exclusions in chapter two, in order to look at the way in which that tradition in its incipient moments was formed by excluding both French authors and women in the same instant through Hoccleve's suppression of his debts to Christine de Pizan, but the objection regarding exclusivity is powerful enough to warrant some further discussion here. The objection comes from several quarters. Feminist critics have long pointed out the tendency of tradition to favor male authors to the detriment of female ones and my comments in the second chapter directly address that. More recently, postcolonial criticism has explored the way that a hegemonic European Middle Ages could have only been constructed through the exclusion of a colonial other, that the nationalistic focus of literary traditions as they have been conceived,

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[31] Steven Justice, "Literary History," in *Chaucer: Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Susanna Fein and David Raybin (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), 199-214; quote at 211. Compare his comments elsewhere: "Literary history examines how works emerge from the conditions they inherit from older works, and how they in turn set the conditions of later ones; it is a history internal to literary composition and notionally distinct from its place in cultural and political history. Any work is conceivable only against a background of context and expectation, established by works already extant, which shapes style, structure, form and conceptual presupposition for literary performance—that, indeed, defines what is 'literary.' Such expectations can be constraints, but also questions or provocations, embodiments of what has already been accomplished and therefore starting points for what has been not: ambitions already realized imply and help formulate others. So it is useful to regard every literary work as an answer to questions implicitly posed by what preceded it and a source of new ones posed to what follows." See Steven Justice, "Literary History and *Piers Plowman*," in *A Cambridge Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. Andrew Cole and Andrew Galloway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 50-64; quote at 50.

[32] Any number of works fit the first bill, but one might think of Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); or Helen Barr, *Signes and Sothe: Language in the Piers Plowman Tradition* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994). For an example of a work that constructs a tradition, one might think of the way that James Simpson draws new lines of connection between medieval and early Tudor works in James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution: The Oxford English Literary History, Vol. 2, 1350-1547* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[33] A paradigmatic instance of this is the recent essay by Seth Lerer that acknowledges the critical consensus about who one should include in the Chaucer tradition—Hoccleve and Lydgate—even while he expands the tradition to include vernacular letter writers like the Pastons; see Seth Lerer, "Receptions: Medieval, Tudor, Modern," in *Chaucer: Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Susanna Fein and David Raybin (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 83-95.

especially throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, coincides and ideologically justifies a history of political violence and oppression.[34] Finally, in terms of the specific exclusions that formalism occasions, Christopher Cannon has mused, "it is strange to think that a mode of scrutiny which ignores most forms is formalist;" formalism constructs a "chain" of tradition in which "each writing is part of this chain merely by virtue of knowing that the chain exists: all any text needs to be in order to be literature according to this definition is the statement 'I am literature'."[35] In defining a literary tradition, Cannon worries, formalism relies too heavily on a tautological and not at all self-critical understanding of what literature is that excludes all manner of texts, including the early Middle English works that are Cannon's concern.

I will only quibble with this last point of Cannon's critique. As for the others, I will concede that a notion of the English literary tradition in general, and the Chaucerian tradition in particular, may well tend toward these postcolonial and feminist exclusions especially as they have been conceived in the past. I would hasten to add, though, that such exclusions are not necessary, as the recent work on a global Middle Ages testifies in relation to postcolonial criticism, and we still might benefit from further exploration in feminist criticism about, say, Margery Kempe's relationship to Chaucerian literature. In any event, and more importantly for my own project here, attempting to understand a literary tradition is not the same thing as approving of its content or affirming its judgments. In other words, one can have a self-critical understanding of a literary tradition, even if it is constituted primarily by those texts that announce their own literary worth or the fact that they should be associated with other works. My point will not be to legitimate the Chaucerian tradition—as if it needed my help—or to make a case for the transhistorical aesthetic worth of its constituent works—even if I believe in it. Instead, I will be asking how it is that the tradition formed, what were the mechanisms by which it constituted itself, and how did it understand its own make-up? In other words, modern critics, and our modern critical prejudices, are not the only ones who formulate the Chaucerian tradition, not the only ones who determine what texts are included and what texts are excluded in such an oeuvre. Modern critics, after all, respond to their medieval predecessors, to the way in which the Chaucerian tradition constitutes itself, the way that it was invented by Hoccleve, or Lydgate, or Chaucer himself.[36]

Individual chapters will address the way in which individuals within the Chaucer tradition deal with specific other individuals or texts. For the moment, though, it will be beneficial to provide a short overview of the way that Chaucer, as the point of origin for the Chaucerian tradition, refers to the concept of tradition *tout court*. I will begin by considering what makes up Chaucer's concept of tradition, what provides it with its material. The first and

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[34] This is a vibrant field of study and so any attempt to account for it will only be partial. An early discussion of the problem, especially as it relates to the canon wars of the 1980s, can be found in Allen J. Frantzen, *Desire for Origins: New Language, Old English, and the Teaching of Tradition* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991). For more recent theorizations of the problem, see Kathleen Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty: How Ideas of Feudalism and Secularization Govern the Politics of Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Lisa Lampert-Weissig, *Medieval Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010); Karla Mallette, *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean: Toward a New Philology and a Counter-Orientalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

[35] Christopher Cannon, *The Grounds of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 43.

[36] On such an invention, Eric Hobsbawm has written "'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past." See Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions" in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hosbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-14; quote at 1.

most obvious way that Chaucer refers to a tradition is through its particular instantiations in the person of particular authors. Chaucer's poetry is filled with the proper names of the individuals that form the tradition that Chaucer, like any medieval author, inherited. I mean, here, those authors of antiquity—the *auctores*—who provide the medieval schoolroom with some of its content and the medieval imagination, extramurally, with its sources and exempla.[37] Probably the most famous instance in Chaucer's works of such naming is at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, where he wishes his "litel book" would "subgit be to alle poesye; / And kis the steppes where as thow seest pace / Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace." (*TC* V.1789-92). The *House of Fame*, though, is really the Chaucerian work most concerned with these names. Chaucer provides suggestions for further reading, instructing those who wish to know more about the stories he references to "Reed Virgile in Eneidos, / Or the Epistle of Ovyde," or elsewhere that "He mote rede many a rowe / On Virgile or on Claudian / Or Daunte, that it telle can." (*HF* 378-79; 448-50). Then there are the named poets who are associated with different stories. The reader encounters "The Ebrayk Josephus, the olde, / That of Jewes gestes tolde," and "The Tholosan that highte Stace, / That bar of Thebes up the fame" as well as "Daun Claudian, the soothe to telle, / That bar up al the fame of helle, / Of pluto and of Proserpyne." (*HF* 1433-34; 1460-61; 1509-1511). I will address the *House of Fame*'s treatment of Homer in chapter one, but for now it is worth pointing out that the *House of Fame* includes all the poets mentioned in *Troilus*, including the ones I have just adduced, as well as Homer and

> The grete poete Daun Lucan,
> And on his shuldres bar up than
> As highe as that I mighte see
> The fame of Julius and Pompee.
> And by him stooden alle these clerkes,
> That writen of Romes mighty werkes. (*HF* 1499-1504)

The *House of Fame* evinces a particular mania for proper names, but they show up in other places as well. The *Physician's Tale*, we are informed, was originally told by "Titus Livius" (*CT* VI.1). The Miller tells us that the Carpenter of his tale "He knew nat Catoun, for his wit was rude" (*CT* I.3227). In her tale, the Wife of Bath suggests, if we want to know more about Midas, that "The remenant of the tale if ye wol heere, / Redeth Ovyde, and ther ye may it leere" (*CT* III.981-82). And of course, in the *Melibee*, Prudence's advice is full of these classical *auctores*, as in moments when she "remembred hire upon the sentence of Ovide, in his book that cleped is the *Remedye of Love*"(*CT* VII.976). I will have much to say, especially in chapters one and four, about how this type of reference to a proper name works in a poem, but for now I simply want to point out that these names construct a kind of list, a syllabus of classical authors that Chaucer expects an educated audience to recognize.

These named authors, as I have said, are the *auctores*, those writers of classical antiquity that provide their medieval descendants with a model for what an author is and, as such, a foundation for what will comprise a tradition.[38] These authors are cited again and again as their

[37] See Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, second edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

[38] On the relationship between tradition and authority, derived from the *auctoritas* of the *auctores*, Hannah Arendt writes "tradition preserved the past by handing down from one generation to the next the testimony of the ancestors, who first had witnessed and created the sacred founding and then augmented it by their authority throughout the

stories are retold in new forms and new languages. Despite whatever novelty medieval authors bring to the *auctores*, they are always treated as individuals, or stories, that are already known. Their names are mentioned but not by necessity. When, in *Troilus*, Pandarus finds Criseyde and her ladies reading a "romaunce… of Thebes," Criseyde gives him a partial summary, to which he replies "Al this knowe I myselve, / And al th'asege of Thebes and the care; / For herof ben ther maked bookes twelve" (*TC* II.100; 106-08). Pandarus knows this story, as does Chaucer's audience, all without Chaucer needing to mention Statius by name. These *auctores* are so well known that one can refer to them without having to specify whom one is discussing; their stories themselves will do that work of specification. They are so well known, in fact, that one can broadly signify an entire tradition by reference to the culture from which they sprang. The *Man of Law's Tale*, for instance, mentions that "In'th'olde Roman gestes may men find / Maurices lif" (*CT* II.1126-27). In the *Legend of Good Women*, the God of Love's accusation of Chaucer introduces the damning evidence of "alle thy bokes," which consist of "sixty bokes olde and newe" that are "alle fulle of stories grete / That bothe Romains and eek Grekes trete / Of sundry wemen" (*LGW* G.269-276). The Romans and the Greeks, of course, supply us with the vast majority of the named *auctores*, but other cultural traditions receive similar reverence, as when the Franklin begins his prologue with "Thise olde gentil Britons in hir dayes / Of diverse aventures maden layes" (*CT* V.709-10).

Often, in terms of tradition's content, it is less classical antiquity that is determinate, but antiquity as such, the simple fact that something is old. After the God of Love's accusation, Alceste's defense of Chaucer categorizes the Greek and Roman stories under the general rubric of age, arguing that "He ne hath nat doon so grevously amis / To translaten that olde clerkes wryten" and that it would be far worse if "he of malice wolde endyten / Despyt of love, and had himself it wrought" (*LGW* F.369-72). The *Legend of Good Women* also mentions "the doctrine of these olde wyse" and "the olde approved stories" (*LGW* F.19; 21). The *Knight's Tale* begins with "Whilom, as olde stories tellen us," which becomes a sort of refrain as the tale progresses: "as olde bookes seyn" or "as olde bokes seyn, / That al this storye tellen moore plein" (*CT* I.859; 1198; 1463-64). As the narrator of the *Book of the Duchess* attempts to fall asleep, he tries to read a book, "And in this book were wryten fables / That clerkes hadde, in olde tyme, / And other poets, put in ryme" (*BD* 52-54). Here, as in the *Knight's Tale*, sometimes it is the books themselves that are old, as when *Troilus* mentions that Criseyde feels in embracing Troilus "as writen clerkes in hire bokes olde" (*TC* III.1199). The setting of the *Manciple's Tale* is "Whan Phebus dwelled here in this erthe adoun / As olde bookes maken mencioun" (*CT* IX.106). "Out of olde books," we are told in the *Parliament of Fowles*, "cometh al this newe science that men lere," specifically in this case from "a book, was wryte with lettres olde" (*PF* 24-25; 19). As with these old letters, sometimes the language itself makes the story old. *Anelida and Arcite* claims its origin lies in "This olde storie, in Latin whiche I finde" (*AA* 10). In *Troilus*, where we are told "in forme of speche is chaunge," and we sometimes witness that change: "Lo here, the forme of olde clerkis speche / In poetrie, if ye hire bokes seche" (*TC* II.22; V.1854-55).

For Chaucer, these *auctores*, or "olde clerkis," as well as their "olde stories," written in "olde books" with "lettres olde" in "olde tyme," constitute the matter of tradition, the content he inherited from those writers who preceded him. The Chaucerian tradition inherited these

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centuries. As long as tradition was uninterrupted, authority was inviolate; and to act without authority and tradition, without accepted, time-honored standards and models, without the help of the wisdom of the founding fathers, was inconceivable;" Hannah Arendt, "What is Authority?," in *Between Part and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 91-141; quote at 124.

formulations from him.[39] Hoccleve, for instance, refers to the second part of the *Regiment of Princes*—the *Fürstenspiegel* he compiles for prince Henry out of the *Secreta Secretorum*, Giles of Rome, and Jacob de Cessolis—as "the avys / That I compile out of thise auctours olde."[40] Eventually Chaucer himself is included under this category. John Shirley, a scribe closely associated with Lydgate and himself an author of verse prefaces that are also influenced by Lydgate—and therefore part of the broader Chaucerian tradition—writes about the contents of his manuscript, London, British Library MS Additional 16165, that "wryten haue þees olde clerkes / Þat beon appreued in alle hir werkis / By oure eldres here to fore."[41] Shirley raises the specter of "þees olde clerkes" as part of a larger modesty topos; his prologue begins addressing the reader, "If þat you list for to entende," then begs for sympathy, "Where fore dere sirs I you beseche / Þat ye disdeyne not with my speche," because he has written "Þis litell booke with myn hande" only "after þe symplesse of my witt / So as feblese wolde suffice hit."[42] This rhetoric will become quite familiar in the course of this dissertation, especially with Lydgate, and it can easily be read as Shirley partaking in a larger convention or as an attempt to dodge responsibility for what he has written. Even so, if one takes any aspect of the antiquity ascribed to "þees olde clerkes" or "oure eldres" seriously then the remainder of the prologue—which lists and discusses the works contained in the manuscript—reads very strangely indeed. The manuscript contains work by Chaucer, John Trevisa, Edward, duke of York, and John Lydgate. BL Additional 16165 is most likely a product of the mid-1420s; Chaucer died in 1400; Trevisa in 1402; Edward, duke of York, was the highest-ranking English casualty at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415.[43] These are not long dead Greek or Latin writers, but English authors who died within the lifetime of the scribe calling them "olde."

Something has changed between Chaucer's use of these formulations about antiquity and Shirley's. When Chaucer mentions these old writers, books, or words, he is signaling the material from which he draws his own works, his sources. Sometimes these are genuine ascriptions of a story's origin, but Chaucer also plays fast and loose with source material, failing to name Giovanni Boccaccio despite his obvious importance or creating the source of Lollius for the *Troilus*.[44] If this is the material that constitutes tradition, in other words, Chaucer displays a range of attitudes towards tradition, from reverence or at least a kind of genuine appreciation—as when he identifies Lucan holding up the fame of Rome's Civil War—to ironic detachment or playful jesting—as when he incorrectly tells the story of Midas and directs his readers to look it up in Ovid. This range of attitudes is no doubt reflective of Chaucer's personality, and his understanding of himself as a writer, but it is partially made possible by two forms of distance. First, temporal: it is no accident that Chaucer uses "olde" as an adjective so often to talk about

[39] Such a process remains a focus for the Chaucer tradition for some time. See, for instance, Seth Lerer's comments that "*Tottel's Miscellany* remains a collection of old books—early texts, epitaphs, elegies, sonnets, love laments, and inscriptions that, whatever their religious or doctrinal content, function as monuments to literary life." Seth Lerer, "Literary Histories," in *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, ed. Brian Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 75-91, quote at 89.

[40] Hoccleve, *Regiment of Princes*, lines 2187-88.

[41] For the verse prefaces see the appendix in Margaret Connolly, *John Shirley: Book Production and the Noble Household in Fifteenth-Century England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 206-11; these are lines 5-7.

[42] Connolly, *John Shirley*, 206; lines 1-13.

[43] For the dating of the manuscript, see Connolly, *John Shirley*, 28-32.

[44] George Lyman Kittredge long ago identified the particular delight a fictional construct like Lollius would afford one type of audience for Chaucer's work, that of "a very limited group of men of learning" including Gower and Strode, what I have been calling a coterie. See George Lyman Kittredge, "Chaucer's Lollius," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 28 (1917): 47-133; quote at 55.

the works that make up tradition. The antiquity of these works is a major reason they have such authority, and their authority in turn both explains Chaucer's reverence for them and his expectation that his educated audience will know them intimately. But Chaucer's and his audience's intimate knowledge of these works is also what makes them available for Chaucer's playful appropriation, a guarantee that his audience will get the joke when Chaucer misquotes Ovid or cites Lollius. Second, these works are also distant in terms of language. They are written in Latin, Italian, or French. The fact that they were originally written in another language is what allowed Chaucer to translate them in the first place, altering them along the way and demonstrating the ability of the English language to convey what those works originally did. Chaucer's relationship to tradition, then, is variable, vacillating between reverence and audacious meddling, and everything in between. Within this range of responses, moreover, Chaucer made room for himself, becoming both the "grant translateur" Deschamps calls him as well as "father" Chaucer for the poets who came after him.[45]

III. Tradition's Forms

None of the writers in Shirley's volume, however, seem to be "olde clerkes" in the way Chaucer means "olde clerkes;" instead, Shirley's preface engages with two different versions of tradition. First, there is the explicitly genealogical model, by which older writers hand down material from generation to generation like a form of property. The authors Shirley mentioned, to quote him once more, "beon appreued in alle hir werkis / By oure eldres here to fore." The approval of generations past, the fact that these are old works and are handed down to the present generation as such, supplies these authors and their writings with authority. Except, these authors—Chaucer, Trevisa, Lydgate, and Edward, duke of York—are English. These are not the Latin *auctores* that Chaucer cites as supplying the matter of tradition, but English writers on whom Shirley is attempting to bestow the same sort of *auctoritas* by virtue of the fact that they too have been handed down genealogically. What is more, even Chaucer died no more than 25 years or so prior to the creation of Shirley's preface; the others were more recently deceased than that, and Lydgate was still very much alive as Shirley is writing the manuscript, and likely supplying him with fresh material.[46] If these authors are approved by Shirley's "eldres" then he must simply mean those of only one generation prior to his own, "oure" mothers and fathers. This brings me to the second sort of version of tradition, one that operates more like a conversation among friends. The approval Shirley mentions is very important in this model, because not only must past generations approve of these writers, but contemporary ones must too. Shirley must approve of that approval, must decide to include these writers in his manuscript and write down their works in order to draw them into the material of tradition.[47] This circular system of approval, by which each generation ratifies the choices of the earlier ones, more obviously allows for some

[45] Deschamps's epithet for Chaucer comes from Eustache Deschamps, *Oeuvres Complètes de Eustache Deschamps*, eleven volumes, ed. le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire and Gaston Raynaud (Paris: Societe des Anciens Textes Française, 1878), ii. 138-140.

[46] See the comments on the final quire in Connolly, *John Shirley*, 40-46.

[47] Arendt claims that "the strength of this tradition, its hold on Western man's thought, has never depended on his consciousness of it. Indeed only twice in our history do we encounter periods in which men are conscious and over-conscious of the fact of tradition, identifying age as such with authority;" Hannah Arendt, "Tradition and the Modern Age," in *Between Part and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 17-40; quote at 25. Arendt is writing about political authority more specifically, and so identifies these two ages as that of Ancient Rome and Romanticism. What this dissertation shows, though, is that in terms of literary history and authority medieval England would be another such period.

give and take than the genealogical model. In this give and take it begins to look more and more like a coterie, and like a coterie it can include writers that one knows. Shirley can include his own contemporaries, writers like Lydgate with whom the idea of conversation is not simply metaphorical, but an established fact of life. Shirley is making a canon, a literary tradition of new "olde" clerks, including Chaucer as well as his heir and Shirley's contemporary, Lydgate.[48]

This dissertation will consider the interplay between these two models of tradition—the genealogical and the coterie—not in order to affirm one over the other, but to consider the way in which they dialectically constitute one another. When writers in the Chaucerian tradition installed Chaucer as the head of a new idea of English literary history, they partook of both models in order to do so. To claim that these writers did that gives them a great deal of agency in constructing their own literary history, but that should come as no surprise due to the dynamism with which traditions can be invested. When Derek Pearsall defined "the real qualities of the English Chaucerians," he ascribed to them qualities that he would later discuss as Lydgate's, "the patient, thorough exploration of areas of literary experience that [Chaucer] had opened up for them," and held them responsible for activities like "the consolidation of Chaucer's poetic language."[49] In both of these things, though, they accomplish their tasks by augmenting the tradition they inherited, by "the blending of Chaucerian with more traditionally English genres and techniques" and "the appropriation to the tradition of new modes of thought as the ferment of the age threw them up," resulting in "the final creation of a kind of literature."[50] Even earlier, in 1925, Aage Brusendorff began his *The Chaucer Tradition* with a general statement of principle, a codification of what Pearsall would later adduce in the specific instance of the English writers following Chaucer: "tradition means the handing down of information in such a way that it is laid open to the influence of successive generations through which it passes."[51] Brusendorff agrees, in short, with the idea that traditions must change, a principle set down just a handful of years earlier by T. S. Eliot, whose discussion in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" still provides the foundation for any discussion of tradition in the world of English literature. Eliot explains that "the existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the new (the really new) work of art among them."[52] After Eliot, any critic, even Harold Bloom, for whom this change can be stifled by anxiety in certain cases, recognizes that

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[48] One might consider Shirley engaged in a particularly self-aware and well-connected instance of what Ralph Hanna describes as the condition of miscellanies as such: they are "highly individualistic canon-creating efforts by individuals variously inserted into discrete and fragmented social positions." See Ralph Hanna, "Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Literary Production in Late Medieval England," in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 37-51, quote on 47.

[49] Derek Pearsall, "The English Chaucerians," in *Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature*, ed. D. S. Brewer (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1966), 201-39, quote at 201. Later, for Pearsall, in Lydgate we find "good sense in its own sober garb, and the modest pleasures of conventional expectations conventionally fulfilled" and "in him we can see, at great length, and in slow motion, the medieval mind at its characteristic work." See Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), 14. It is true that, for Pearsall, Chaucer breaks free from these medieval conventions, but at the same time "it is Chaucer who introduces the element of the unexpected into Lydgate, who raises his ambitions and extends his horizons and leads him out to and beyond the frontiers of his ability;" see Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 43.

[50] Pearsall, "The English Chaucerians," 201. Chapter four returns to many of these concerns.

[51] Aage Brusendorff, *The Chaucer Tradition* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965), 13.

[52] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 28.

the nature of tradition is that it changes over time, even if it gives off the perception of stability and timelessness.[53]

But how does it change? Eliot goes on to describe the modification as follows: "for order to persist after the subvention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted."[54] We can see the change in every part of the tradition, because changing one part necessarily changes the whole, but Eliot does not explain how the change is carried out. He does say that it is not "preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past."[55] The poet, for Eliot, must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past," although he reiterates that he means "judged, not amputated."[56] The works of the past help form the new work, although not in any determinate way, because "the difference between the present and past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show."[57] In the language of Theodor Adorno, "tradition is not to be abstractly negated but criticized without naïveté according to the current situation: thus the present constitutes the past."[58] In the language of Pearsall above, such a knowing and critical consciousness is precisely what allows for "exploration of areas of literary experience" or "the consolidation of… poetic language." Tradition, then, is a dialectical mediation between the past and present. The past, as it is handed down, shapes tradition, but tradition is also shaped by the way the present understands, and through its understanding constitutes, the past.

Tradition as a dynamic relationship between past and present, shaped in part by a process of understanding, has been most thoroughly examined by the critics associated with *Rezeptionsästhetik*, popularized in the United States by the work of Hans Robert Jauss and founded on the philosophical work of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Many of the points just discussed are found in these critics. First, tradition allows the present to shape the past. For Gadamer, "literature is defined by the will to hand on" so that "what is fixed in writing has detached itself from the contingency of its origin and its author and made itself free for new relationships."[59] Succinctly, it follows that "tradition means transmission rather than conservation. This transmission does not imply that we simply leave things unchanged and merely conserve them. It means learning how to grasp and express the past anew." [60] In fact, despite their philosophical differences, Adorno's call for criticism "without naïveté" is likewise found in Gadamer, who writes in *Truth and Method*,

> every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of a tension between the text and the present. The hermeneutic task

[53] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973). Bloom distinguishes between "strong" poets who can alter tradition through creative misreadings, and "weak" poets who can only derivatively imitate the strong poets who have preceded them.
[54] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 28.
[55] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 28.
[56] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 28-29.
[57] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 29.
[58] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. and trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 41.
[59] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004), 396-97.
[60] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," In *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1-53, quote at 49.

> consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naïve assimilation of the two but in consciously bringing it out.[61]

The capacity for the existing order of artworks to be altered by the appearance of the new one in Eliot reveals itself, through Gadamer, to be an epistemological principle about how the present experiences the past. The present teaches itself how to understand the past as it reads it.

The role of understanding in Gadamer is crucial to this process; he is, after all, discussing a hermeneutic. It is in his explanation of the hermeneutic circle, in fact, that one finds his second commonality with thinker like Eliot: it is not only the present that shapes the past by understanding it, but the past and present shape each other through a dialectical mediation that is tradition as such. Here is Gadamer on the hermeneutic circle and its relationship to tradition:

> It is neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter. The anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the commonality that binds us to the tradition. But this commonality is constantly being formed in our relation to tradition. Tradition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves."[62]

As we read and anticipate meanings, we either confirm or alter those meanings as we move through a given text. The anticipation of those meanings, though, are not produced by some whim of the individual, but are the product of the fact that that individual is part of a particular culture with a particular history, expressed as a tradition that shapes the individual's "anticipation of meaning." For Gadamer, "historical understanding always implies that the tradition reaching us speaks into the present and must be understood in this mediation—indeed *as* this mediation."[63] But this mediation is dialectical; it is how the past and present speak to each other. In our understanding of a text, we affirm aspects of a tradition, or alter it through new insights about it caused by the text itself—"we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves"—shaping tradition as it is inherited and as it passes through the individual understanding. Tradition is, then, both the impetus and the product of an act of understanding. Such an understanding allows for, in the words of Eliot, an "awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show." As Eliot later elliptically puts it, "some one said: 'the dead writers are remote from us because we *know* so much more than they did.' Precisely, and they are that which we know."[64] Because we have inherited a tradition, we can come to an understanding about it, and that understanding alters the tradition and propels it into the future.

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[61] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 305.
[62] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 293.
[63] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 325.
[64] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 29. Rebecca West concedes that "the retort is very neat," but wants to know "who made the imbecile remark that provoked it?" See Rebecca West, "What is Mr. T. S. Eliot's Authority as a Critic?" in *Modernism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 713-16. We need not posit a real individual. The original comment recalls the well-known image, first recorded in John of Salisbury: "Bernard of Chartres used to compare us to [puny] dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants. He pointed out that we see more and further than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are borne aloft on their gigantic stature." See John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon: A Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal*

The formation of a tradition—and this is the final point of convergence—is therefore an ongoing process, which become visible in and as an aesthetic experience. In the work of the *Rezeptionsästhetik* thinkers, the open-ended nature of tradition necessitates a language of "horizons." The term is present in Gadamer, who claims broadly that "the horizon of the past, out of which all human life lives and which exists in the form of tradition, is always in motion."[65] But the language is perhaps most familiar from Jauss, who explains that "the new text evokes for the reader (listener) the horizon of expectations and rules familiar from earlier texts, which are then varied, corrected, altered or even just reproduced. Variation and correction determine the scope, whereas alteration and reproduction determine the borders of a genre-structure."[66] Jauss provides us with concrete examples of what kinds of motions create changes to tradition or reinforce aspects of it, but he is taking from Gadamer the fact of its movement, the iterative nature of its appearance. The association of the act of perception with the notion of horizon is perhaps part of the latter concept's appeal; it necessarily calls to mind a perceiving viewer, one who can apprehend the horizon aesthetically. For Jauss, "the form and meaning of a work formative of tradition are not the unchangeable dimensions or appearances of an aesthetic object, independent of perception in time and history."[67] Aesthetics is not a timeless quality; it is embedded in and changes with history: "its potential of meaning only becomes progressively visible and definable in the subsequent changes of aesthetic experience, and dialogically so in the interaction between the literary work and the literary public."[68] These works have an origin, to be sure, and are understood first within that origin, because "the tradition-forming potential of a classic work can be seen by its contemporaries only within the horizon of its first 'materialization'," that is their potential must first be grasped at the moment and within the culture in which works of art are first written.[69] Jauss concludes, though, by affirming the tradition's capacity to change, creating new vistas of understanding: "only as the horizon changes and expands with each subsequent historical materialization, do responses to the work legitimize particular possibilities of understanding, imitation, transformation, and continuation—in short, structures of exemplary character that condition the process of the formation of literary tradition."[70] Jauss's earlier modes of movement in tradition—variation, correction, alteration, and reproduction—are abstracted here into "understanding, imitation, transformation, and continuation," which are "structures of exemplary character." They are aesthetic processes that require aesthetic comprehension, meditation on what makes their character exemplary. It is through subsequent aesthetic production that one varies, correct, alters, or reproduces a tradition; it is through the "historical materialization" and sedimentation of these iterations that tradition can be understood, imitated, transformed, or continued.

Scholars of the Chaucerian tradition have traced these iterations. Seth Lerer has argued that fifteenth-century writers take their understanding of Chaucer from hints he provides them in

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and Logical Arts of the Trivium, trans. Daniel D. McGarry (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2009), 167. Eliot's retort alters the statement in order to simply return to it the proper reverence for "our predecessors," to make the dwarf look down, as it were.

[65] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 303.

[66] Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," in *Toward and Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 3-45, quote at 23.

[67] Hans Robert Jauss, "History of Art and Pragmatic History," in *Toward and Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 46-75, quote at 64.

[68] Jauss, "History of Art and Pragmatic History," 64.

[69] Jauss, "History of Art and Pragmatic History," 64.

[70] Jauss, "History of Art and Pragmatic History," 64.

his own writing; they imitate him by reproducing the styles and forms they associate with Chaucer's Clerk or Squire.[71] Stephanie Trigg has taken a longer view, exploring the way that different writers throughout the English literary tradition have understood Chaucer, transforming him from Hoccleve's "father" to Dryden's "Soul congenial."[72] The strength of Trigg's account lies in the fact that she—like Eliot, Jauss, and Gadamer—allows later writers to alter how they understand Chaucer; Lerer's account is ultimately too determinate, makes tradition seem like some unchangeable monolith in which later authors can only play out well-trodden roles.[73] Trigg's scope, however, does not allow for fine-grained explorations of change, how it is that one gets from one version of Chaucer to another. If different generations are allowed to construct the Chaucer that best suits their time and place, then they must be able to pick up all of the earlier versions, sort though them, and alter or correct them where they see fit.[74] There will be some sort of anxiety, no doubt, but there will be a great deal of creativity and control as well. This dissertation, especially in my fourth chapter, will be concerned with the way that traditions and coteries allow form such changes, even in the face of anxiety.

Ultimately fifteenth-century poets, especially Hoccleve and Lydgate, had an extraordinary amount of agency when it came to how they would shape their relationship to Chaucer.[75] One must keep in mind that "father Chaucer" is a metaphor for even fifteenth-century writers. Such a metaphor is one of the ways that they aesthetically apprehend their relationship to their predecessor, and in fact it is one of the ways that they have already altered Chaucer, for whom no English poet is an acknowledged forebear and who claims paternity over no other writer.[76] But these later poets also characterize their relationship to Chaucer in other ways, ways

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[71] Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*.

[72] Stephanie Trigg, *Congenial Souls: Reading Chaucer from Medieval to Postmodern* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

[73] Lerer basically assumes, in the terms of Harold Bloom, that all fifteenth-century poets are "weak" ones. As he claims, his is "a book about subjection," about "the self-conscious invention of an author by those apparently least qualified to do so." The writers he discusses, many of whom I also discuss, like Hoccleve, Lydgate, or John Skelton, follow "figures from Chaucerian fiction to articulate their understandings of authorial and interpretive control. As children to the father, apprentices to the master, or aspirants before the laureate, those who would read and write after the poet share in the shadows of the secondary." Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, 3. Other writers have applied the anxiety that plagues the Chaucerian tradition to Chaucer himself. Stephanie Trigg writes that "Chaucer is the first writer in English to reveal any kind of anxiety about authorship as a mark of originality." See Stephanie Trigg, "Chaucer's Influence and Reception," in *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 297-323; quote at 301.

[74] A fascinating book that provides one such exploration, but is out of the purview of my concerns, is Candace Barrington, *American Chaucers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[75] Such emphasis in their agency is in keeping with Hobsbawm's "invented tradition": "where the old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived nor invented. Yet it may be suggested that where they are invented, it is often not because old ways are no longer available or viable, but because they are deliberately not used or adapted;" see Hobsbawm, "Introduction," 8.

[76] As A. C. Spearing has pointed out "yet Chaucer, though by far the larger part of his work is derived from existing literary sources (chiefly in Latin, French and Italian), never refers to any of his predecessors as father." See A. C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 99; see pages 88-110 for a more general discussion of "father Chaucer." Spearing states that Chaucer "was the first English poet to establish a personal tradition of influence;" see Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, 59. My point is that writers like Hoccleve and Lydgate are the ones who establish this "personal tradition" of influence," which I call a coterie relationship, after Chaucer's death. Chaucer suppresses his debt to his English predecessors, but that does not mean such a debt does not exist. See, for instance, J. A. Burrow's comments: "Even Chaucer, whose knowledge not only of French and Latin but also of the new Italian poetry must have made him acutely aware of the insufficiencies of *Guy of Warwick* and *Sir Orfeo*, cultivated an English style which is much more traditional than

that alter or supplement the paternal metaphor. Hoccleve might call Chaucer his father, but he also claims acquaintanceship with him, an intimate first-person knowledge. Traditional metaphors of paternity are not the only mode of understanding by which Chaucer's fifteenth-century followers apprehend him; he is a coterie figure too. These relational modes, tradition and coterie, play off one another, as Chaucer can be both a father and a friend at the same time. The idea of the coterie allows us to approach literary history using a different rubric and a different set of metaphors. The coterie invites metaphors that operate differently than the hierarchical metaphors of familial belonging; they can be structured along metaphors of friendship as well, even if that too will certainly be hierarchical and perhaps even fiercely contested, something closer to Emerson's "beautiful enemy."[77] I will show that fifteenth-century authors used both sets of metaphors—the paternal and the coterie—in order to construct the Chaucerian tradition, that these sets of metaphors defined one another as these authors sought to articulate their relationship Chaucer, their mode of belonging to the English literary tradition that they were in the process of creating.

IV. The French Tradition

Before I turn to an overview of the dissertation's chapters, I would like to explain the dissertation's recurrent references to France and to French literature. There is something right in G. K. Chesterton's suggestion long ago that "if the Victorians could have actually had a vision of Chaucerian England, they would have thought the Englishman was a Frenchman."[78] He goes on to say that the imagined Victorian would not recognize England, because "not only was there another nation, but it was in a sense a Franco-English nation. It was partly because France and England were so nearly one nation, that the kings struggled so long to make them one nation," and concludes that "France and England did not unite; and the great English nation was founded, very largely by Joan of Arc."[79] Chesterton is concerned with the peculiar Englishness of Chaucer's England—by which he means its difference from nineteenth century Englishness—which he attributes to medieval England's Frenchness. My dissertation is founded on a related claim: that the Chaucerian tradition is in part a French tradition. This claim is familiar from the work of Charles Muscatine, but I have modified it in two essential ways.[80] First, I have introduced the idea of coterie poetics, which stress across the English Channel to include both English and French poets.

Second, I have extended the idea of a "French tradition" into the fifteenth century, showing how Hoccleve, Lydgate, and later poets engaged with French poetry as they constructed

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many people assume;" J. A. Burrow, *Ricardian Poetry: Chaucer, Gower, Langland and the 'Gawain' Poet* (New York: Penguin, 1971), 12. For classic treatments of the relationship between Chaucer and his English forebears, see E. T. Donaldson, "The Idiom of Popular Poetry in the *Miller's Tale*," in *Speaking of Chaucer* (New York: Norton, 1970), 13-29; and Ian Robinson, *Chaucer and the English Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972). For a more recent, and the most thorough, discussion, see Christopher Cannon, *The Making of Chaucer's English: A Study of Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[77] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Friendship," *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 211.

[78] G. K. Chesterton, *Chaucer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1942), 188. He continues, in a passage that might be an interesting starting point for queer theory readings of Chaucer, "all the jokes against the Frenchmen would be jokes against the fourteenth-century Englishman. Al the emotions were there, especially those considered most un-English. If Jules and Jacques kissed each other, it would seem altogether absurd to Thackeray. If Palamon and Arcite kissed each other, it would not seem in the least absurd to Chaucer."

[79] Chesterton, *Chaucer*, 189.

[80] Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).

the English literary tradition. It was these poets who, as Derek Pearsall has suggested "made Chaucer English." Pearsall characterizes "English with the following adjectives: "sober, serious, unironic, preoccupied with moral, social and political issues." These are the aspects of fifteenth-century literature that Pearsall identifies as "genuinely of its own age," but they also provide a foundation for what comes after them.[81] In part I too, like Pearsall or Chesterton, am concerned with how the English literary tradition became English. I will be retelling an old story about the difference, as Chesterton would put it, between Chaucer and Thackeray, or more precisely about how the tradition forms between Chaucer and Skelton. But, as distinct from Chesterton or Pearsall, I will not be relying on assumptions about nationalism or national character to do so. There is currently a great deal of interest, following largely the work of Ardis Butterfield, in how thoroughly English and French culture are intermingled, how blurry the boundaries between them are.[82] My persistent concern with French literature and the French literary tradition is a part of this ongoing reevaluation, stemming from the belief that English and French culture must be thought of together, especially in the situation of the Hundred Years War, which made their unity an essential ideological belief for the nobility and for the poets they sponsored.[83]

While my focus will remain primarily on the relationship between coterie and tradition, a secondary argument of this dissertation is that the English literary tradition became English through continued interaction with the French tradition, not a thoroughgoing rejection or complete denial of it. The entry point into this interaction is the fact that Chaucer knew two French poets, Deschamps and Granson, and formed a coterie with them through which he would navigate his own relationship to the French literary tradition. The English interest in French literature perhaps most obviously persists throughout the fifteenth century in the form of English translations of French authors, and I will look at such translations by Hoccleve, Lydgate, Scrope, and Roos. Theoretically, this association of translation with tradition makes perfect sense; as Gadamer explains, "the phenomenon of translation provides a model for the real nature of tradition. The ossified language of literature only becomes art when it becomes part of our own language."[84] We are always translating artworks as they come down to us in tradition and the literal act of translation is only the most overt version of this phenomenon. More generally, though, the French literary tradition provided English authors with a model for what a vernacular literary tradition might look like. In other words, the French taught the English tradition to be English.[85] The English nobility's claim, as Chesterton argued, that England and France were one culture was only successful to the extent that writers could imagine that unity. On this point, the English writers were more invested in imagining unity than the French authors, but that is because unification was largely an English project carried out at the expense of the French. French writers on the whole were more skeptical about idealizing a unity manufactured by an invading army. It is not Joan of Arc, in other words, who made England England and France

[81] Pearsall, "The English Chaucerians," 201-02.
[82] Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language and Nation in the Hundred Years War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[83] For the political situation—the argument that the English kings were the rightful heirs of the French throne—that allowed the nobility, at least, to link England and France, see Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War, Volume 1: Trial by Battle* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), especially 100-22.
[84] Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," 49.
[85] As Elizabeth Salter puts it, Chaucer's "use of English is the triumph of internationalism." See Elizabeth Salter, "Chaucer and Internationalism," in *English and International: Studies in the Literature, Art and Patronage of Medieval England*, eds. Derek Pearsall and Nicolette Zeeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 239-44; quote at 244.

France. It was the constant process and negotiation between the two cultures that made their differences visible and their identities distinct.

V. Plan of the Dissertation

I begin by exploring Chaucer's relationship to tradition and coterie. Chaucer's first sustained engagement with a vernacular literary tradition is with the French tradition; he translates the *Roman de la Rose* and his early poetry, like the *Book of the Duchess*, is heavily indebted to late fourteenth-century French poetry, especially Guillaume de Machaut and Jean Froissart. However, Chaucer's relationship to the French tradition is also mediated by his personal relationships to his French contemporaries, especially Eustache Deschamps and Oton de Granson. Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson exchanged poetry in which they cited and influenced one another and were cited and influenced in turn. These men, in other words, formed a coterie. My first chapter demonstrates that a literary coterie is, in the first instance, a sociological and historical phenomenon, descriptive of a small group of individuals in a specific time and place who know each other personally. It is also a rhetorical gesture, composed of stylistic flourishes that both testify to the fact that its participants know each other and performatively constitute their relationship at the same time. When Chaucer translates Granson's poetry in the *Complaint of Venus* or when Deschamps writes a ballad to Chaucer, these literary works both acknowledge the fact that these men know each other through the use of each other's names and broker a relationship between the poets. That brokerage centers on the extent to which the two poets share a sensibility – in this case, a mutual engagement with the French poetic tradition. Constituting a coterie relationship means finding that shared sensibility, looking for points of agreement among members about aesthetic value and the elements of their common literary tradition they mutually favor. At the same time, like any group, coteries have internal hierarchies and disagreements among members. It is the combination of a shared sensibility with internal tensions that makes coteries particularly dynamic: they are entities that form at a given time, play host to a series of debates, and eventually dissipate. With Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson, those internal debates center on the *Roman de la Rose*: which poet has a better interpretation of that foundational work? Who best deploys that interpretation in his poetry? It is obvious that a literary tradition influences the literary coteries that form in its wake. As the *Roman de la Rose* example shows, however, the lively exchanges among members of a coterie can reverse that effect, as the coterie shapes the understanding and reception of the literary tradition for present and future readers.

My second chapter is built on the proposition that any act of inclusion is also an act of exclusion: coterie formation depends on making distinctions between members and non-members. I explore this principle by turning to Thomas Hoccleve's relationship with Chaucer and Christine de Pizan. Hoccleve translates Christine's *L'epistre au dieu d'amours* as his *Letter of Cupid*, but he neither credits her as his source, nor acknowledges how much his translation owes to Chaucer. Such concealment has laid Hoccleve open to charges of misogyny, but I argue that it is the poem's status as a coterie production that explains his suppression of his sources. Not only does Hoccleve's use of Chaucer in the poem bolster Christine's anti-misogynist project, but he also clearly presumes that his coterie audience will recognize his poetic interlocutors. The *Letter of Cupid*, however, is only legible as a coterie production because Hoccleve is later forthcoming about his literary affiliations in his *Regiment of Princes*. In that work, Hoccleve includes a series of reminiscences about his personal relationship with Chaucer, which enables him to construct a coterie with the recently deceased poet, extending the concept of coterie back

in time. Despite having Chaucer's model of a French and English coterie to follow, however, Hoccleve continues to suppress his reliance on Christine, even as he incurs greater debts to her work. It is Christine, not Chaucer, whom he follows in writing a "mirror for princes" in the second half of the *Regiment*, for example. But the political situation with France has changed dramatically since the days of Deschamps and Granson and the Hundred Years War makes it impolitic for an English writer to advertise his indebtedness to a French poet and a woman at that. In her exclusion from Hoccleve's coterie with Chaucer, Christine thus is excluded from the English tradition, which then becomes truly English and predominately male.

Whereas Hoccleve excludes, Lydgate includes. My third chapter examines the three poems Lydgate produced while he was in France during the year 1426: *The Title and Pedigree of Henry VI*, the *Danse Macabre*, and especially *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*. *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* exemplifies Lydgate's use of Chaucer; while his poem is a translation of an older French work, by Guillaume Deguileville, at one point Lydgate incorporates the entirety of Chaucer's *ABC*, which is a translation of an embedded lyric in Deguileville's work. Rather than translate the lyric anew, Lydgate says that he "ymps," or grafts, Chaucer into his text. This metaphor of "grafting" characterizes all of Lydgate's literary interactions – with sources, other poets, texts, and authorities – as they are made manifest in his poetic texts. By this process, Lydgate constructs what I have termed *virtual coteries*, a literary practice that emphasizes the rhetorical aspect of coterie formation. Such coteries are composed of the older writers who may inspire or be the source of the work, the patrons or audience who commission it, and the writer himself or herself who creates the final product. Virtual coteries eschew the limitations of geography or temporality and emphasize the rhetorical aspect of coterie construction, allowing the individual poet a considerable amount of agency. Lydgate's virtual coteries are an important half-step towards tradition, in which the intimacy of personal relationships in a coterie have begun to be abstracted into an imaginary relationship between a living author and dead ones that he never met. The *Pilgrimage* clearly illustrates these virtual coteries in practice. The poem was written for Thomas Montacute, the earl of Salisbury and the second husband of Chaucer's granddaughter, Alice. Lydgate's citations of Chaucer in the text take on new significance in light of the patronage of his very powerful living descendants: they become part of a single Chaucerian virtual coterie. The function of this virtual coterie is signaled by two other poems from 1426, *The Title and Pedigree* and the *Danse*; its function is to critique the ongoing English occupation of France, an occupation for which Salisbury was one of the current architects. Such is the power of the virtual coterie as a literary technique; it enables both the creation of literary tradition, because it incorporates past and present writers and texts, and the production of political commentary, because it casts its nets very widely among patrons and readers as well as poets.

A further abstraction from virtual coteries produces the Chaucerian tradition. My final chapter addresses the work of Stephen Scrope, Richard Roos, William Dunbar, and John Skelton. The first half, on Scrope and Roos, discusses the way in which these writers deploy allusions to Chaucer's poetry. These allusions are muddled, something like approximations, because they do not refer specifically to Chaucer. Instead, they make use of figures or ideas that have been altered, largely by Lydgate. These allusions, then, do not create a coterie or some sense of intimacy with Chaucer, but signal an affiliation to a whole body of material that travels under his banner and influence. It is an affiliation not to Chaucer as a person but to the Chaucerian tradition. The second half of the chapter returns the discussion to the use of proper names. Roos uses proper names in a way that approaches the construction of a virtual coterie, but

his use of them is too vague, his allusions too diffuse, to actually pin down a meaningful group that his poem calls into being. Dunbar, however, uses proper names to construct both a tradition, with Chaucer at its head, and a coterie, with fellow Scottish poet Walter Kennedy. The differences between his use of names in these two cases demonstrates that while coteries use names for pedagogical purposes—teaching an audience the identity of a named individual in a poem or demonstrating the poet's and the audience's shared familiarity with certain names—traditions use names in order to create circuits of praise that authorize later poetic productions. Such a use of names is fully on display in Skelton's *Garlande of Laurell*, in which Skelton imagines Chaucer, John Gower, and Lydgate admitting him into the circle of laureate poets in Fame's court. Skelton's praise of these figures is returned through their praise of him, in a kind of circular logic of adulation that builds a literary tradition.

Ultimately, then, coteries and traditions can be mutually reinforcing and vivifying. The fact that coteries and traditions can inform one another stems from two distinct qualities. First, they are both dynamic concepts. Neither their memberships nor their internal hierarchies are stable. They change over time, admitting new members and excluding others, crowning new kings who lead them on new courses and exiling those they deem traitors. Second, coteries and traditions can influence one another because they use many of the same strategies to produce their own internal dynamism, strategies like literary allusion and the use of proper names. Texts within both coteries and traditions use these strategies in order to announce their association with certain individuals or with other texts. Both coteries and traditions make use of these rhetorical performances because they are both modes of belonging. Coteries may tend toward the particular and localizable, whereas traditions skew more toward the abstract and general, but both are attempts by artists to place themselves and their work in relationship with other artists. The intimacy of these personal relationships in coteries becomes more theoretical as a tradition develops out of them, but tradition has learned from coterie how to inculcate forms of belonging. In the formation of the Chaucerian tradition, the changes Chaucer's fifteenth-century followers made to the concept of coterie allowed them to abstract from their local interactions with other poets to create the general category of the English literary tradition.

Chapter 1
Negotiating Tradition: Chaucer, Deschamps, Granson

There are only two surviving mentions of Geoffrey Chaucer by his contemporary French poetic peers. Both are justifiably famous and both correspond to what scholars would now describe as the two facets of Chaucer's professional life: his work as a poet and his employment in a wide variety of bureaucratic positions.[1] Chaucer's poetic career provides the basis for Eustache Deschamps's *Balade to Chaucer*, which includes a refrain that praises the "Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier," and promises that Deschamps will send Chaucer some poetry.[2] Chaucer's time as a diplomat in France during the Hundred Years War occasions the other reference, in which the poet and chronicler Jean Froissart reports that Chaucer attended peace negotiations in Montreuil-sur-Mer in 1377.[3] One of the arguments of this chapter is that the best way to understand these two references to Chaucer by his French contemporaries is in relation to each other. Chaucer's diplomatic ability is informed by his poetic work and, in turn, Deschamps's ballad about Chaucer's poetry takes his diplomatic work for granted. Such a correspondence between Chaucer's aesthetic activity and his bureaucratic occupation would not have seemed unusual to a medieval understanding of diplomatic activity and, during the Hundred Years War, it was common for poets to be diplomats as well.[4] In addition to Chaucer, Deschamps, and Froissart, Oton de Granson, who Chaucer had translated in the *Complaint of Venus*, was employed by the English as a peace negotiator during the same period as Deschamps was working for the French, and in earlier decades the English used Jean de la Mote and the French used Philip de Vitry, both poets writing in French, to conduct diplomatic discussions.[5] Diplomats and poets have related occupations; they both construct the objects of their craft, treaties or poems, out of carefully chosen words.[6] But in the case of Chaucer's dual professions, the connection runs deeper than a shared concern with language. Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson all personally knew each other as both diplomats and poets. Their relations to one another were not conditioned simply by their political allegiance, nor were they solely interested in one another's literary productions. Politics and aesthetics do not operate as wholly separate realms of experience in this instance, but they intersect in these poets' personal relationships

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[1] The attempt to bridge these two facets characterizes a large portion of Chaucer criticism. One of the most important, and still most successful, attempts is Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1989). For a more recent systematic attempt, see David Carlson, *Chaucer's Jobs* (New York: Palgrave, 2004). Strohm's focus on individual relationships was instrumental to my thinking in this dissertation.

[2] Eustache Deschamps, *Oeuvres Complètes de Eustache Deschamps*, eleven volumes, ed. le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire and Gaston Raynaud (Paris: Societe des Anciens Textes Française, 1878), ii. 138-140.

[3] For the relevant extract of Froissart's *Chroniques*, see *Chaucer Life-Records*, ed. Martin Crow and Clair Olson, from material complied by John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, with the assistance of Lilian J. Redstone (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 49-51.

[4] On Richard II's peace negotiations, see May McKisack, *The Fourteenth Century, 1307-1399* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 127-151; and Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 135-147. For the continued tumult of the war, even in times of peace, see Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War, Volume 3: Divided Houses* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

[5] For an excellent discussion of Jean de la Mote and Philip de Vitry, see Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language and Nation in the Hundred Years War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 111-30.

[6] On the shared concern with language for diplomacy and literature, see Timothy Hampton, *Fictions of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). Hampton's text deals with a period that has professional diplomats in the form of resident ambassadors. The same concern for language that he finds in both diplomats and authors of literary works, however, is not something specific to the early modern period.

with one another. It is the argument of this chapter that the work these poets produce in relationship to one another is the product of their personal relationships, as a coterie, in dialogue with larger impersonal forces, like political codes of behavior and literary tradition.

These poets, in short, were able to mediate between multiple and sometimes conflicting levels of authority and association, both in terms of politics and literary history. In the association of Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson, the language of politics provides them with a form in which they use to address one another. Froissart describes a meeting between Chaucer and four other men—Sir Guichard d'Angle and Sir Richard Stury for the English and Sir Nicholas Braque, Lord de Coucy, and Sir Nicolas le Mercier, Lord de la Rivière, for the French—in which they "parlementèrent" or "traittièrent," depending on the manuscript, about a possible marriage between Richard, then Prince of Wales, and Princess Marie of France.[7] Whichever verb one chooses in this instance, Froissart depicts a conversation among these men of a particularly political sort, a conversation they have on behalf of absent authorities, but with men of similar rank. Each man is oath-bound to his monarch and is at the negotiations representing the monarch's interests. However, because they are all similarly positioned in regard to the monarch, these men all share a similar status.[8] Froissart refers to these men as "messires," denoting their equality as they enter into conversation.[9] But the conversation also constitutes them as equal; political treaties require that negotiators be able to propose and entertain suggestions made by each side in good faith.[10] That is, to put the situation tautologically, peace negotiators must be able to trust that their fellow negotiators can in fact negotiate. Peace negotiations, then, are conducted under more than one sort of affiliation. Each negotiator is tied to a vertical model of hierarchical authority, namely to his king, while at the same time the negotiators rely on each other for the possibility of a successful negotiation, creating a horizontal model of affiliation between members who serve a similar function. If one were Georg Lukács, one might call this horizontal model "class consciousness."[11] Stereotypes about the Middle Ages tend to present it as a society excessively tied to vertical models of authority alone and the prevalence of formulations like the three estates model explain such commonly held views, but there were modes of understanding class identification in the Middle Ages that recognize affiliations among members of the same class or that even create that class.[12]

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[7] *Chaucer Life-Records*, 50.

[8] Sovereign favor can create an ideological coherence as readily as oppression. For a discussion of how the latter functions during these same years, see Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[9] *Chaucer Life-Records*, 50.

[10] At least that is the case with certain kinds of diplomats. Some kinds of diplomats serve as little more than glorified messengers. Given that Froissart describes Chaucer as one of the principal negotiators discussing and creating the particulars of a treaty, though, we can guess that Chaucer might have been a "procurator," a particularly important kind of diplomat, who was given his commission by letters of "procuration," and who was able to not only propose specifics of a treaty but also agree to them in the absence of the monarch. For this distinction, see Pierre Chaplais, *English Diplomatic Practice in the Middle Ages* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003), 153-157.

[11] Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingston (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972).

[12] The classical discussion of the three estates model, which nevertheless stresses the capacity for innovation within the model, is George Duby, *The Three Orders; Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982). Of course, Chaucer's *General Prologue* demonstrates the inadequacy of such a simplistic model of hierarchy even as it uses it for formal purposes, starting with a discussion of those who fight and those who pray before moving on to the vast number of those who toil, which includes a great number of individuals who have professions that are more mercantile than what one finds in the traditional model. For a discussion of the

When Deschamps calls Chaucer "noble," he references one such understanding of equality, that of gentility and chivalry. Chaucer, in fact, was not a member of the nobility. Whether or not he even received a coat of arms has been a matter of some debate. Chaucer was often called an *armiger*, and we have seen that Froissart calls him a "messires;" the former designation places him in the general knightly class, as an "esquire", and the latter makes him a knight outright if we take it literally.[13] When Chaucer's granddaughter, Alice, constructed her and her father's tombs, however, she had all of the relevant coats of arms inscribed on them, without inscribing one for Geoffrey Chaucer.[14] Whatever Froissart thought, Alice awards Grandpa Geoffrey no special status. However, the late fourteenth century witnessed a variety of challenges to strict hierarchical class structures. Materially, it saw the rise of the gentry, as well as the rapid expansion of the merchant class and its vast accumulation of wealth.[15] There was also the creation of various guilds that contained members that spanned the social hierarchy; such guilds, as David Wallace has argued, claimed that "they owed their corporate existence to the free will and spontaneous action of their neighbors (and not to some external or delegated source of authority)."[16] The relationship between nobility and gentility had long been a contested one. For a contemporary critique, one might recall the old woman from the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, who claims that "gentilesse nis but renomee / Of thin auncestres for hir heigh bountee, / Which is a straunge thing to thy persone" and instead affirms that "he is gentil that dooth gentil dedis" (*CT* III. 1159-61, 1170). The sense of affiliation between the peace negotiators, then, was determined not simply by the political structures under which they operated, but also by the ideological constructs that confirmed they were all "gentil," "noble," because they were engaged in a job that required nobility. The dictates of that nobility, codified by the concept of chivalry, were not unique to one kingdom.[17] The ideology of chivalry, in short, allowed peace negotiators from opposite sides of a conflict to approach each other as equals because the nobility encapsulated by chivalry was not bound by geographic boundaries nor by the favor of the king, but was instead a

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way Chaucer plays with this model, see Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

[13] For a discussion about the difference between an esquire and a knight, as well as other associated ranks, see Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), especially 144-45; and Nigel Saul, *Chivalry in Medieval England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 159-63. Both argue for a decline in the numbers of individuals that attain the rank of knight, properly speaking, and who instead remain at the level of esquire. Saul points out that Thomas Chaucer, Geoffrey's son, was one such individual, 160-61.

[14] For a discussion of Chaucer's status as an esquire and the coats of arms on Thomas and Alice Chaucer's tombs, see Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 279-84.

[15] For the rise of the gentry, see and its effects on the knighthood, see Saul, *Chivalry in Medieval England*, 163-72. For a discussion of the impact of the rising merchant class on Middle English literature, see D. Vance Smith, *Arts of Possession: The Middle English Household Imaginary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). For a more recent discussion related to form, see Andrew Galloway, "The Account Book and the Treasure: Gilbert Maghfeld's Textual Economy and the Poetics of Mercantile Accounting in Ricardian Literature," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 33 (2011): 65-124; and, as merchants relate to multilingualism, Jonathan Hsy, *Trading Tongues: Merchants, Multilingualism, and Medieval Literature* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013).

[16] David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 75. Wallace's guilds are important because they represent an "associational form" that cuts through normal hierarchical structures, something with which Chaucer experiments and fails to maintain in the form of the Canterbury pilgrims. The peace negotiators, however, were not creating a social form that cut through existing hierarchies, but instead they were creating a new social form with its own hierarchical position, as well as its own duties and obligations, its own form of allegiance.

[17] On the international character of chivalry, see Keen, *Chivary*, 33-43.

quality that men expressed by their individual actions toward one another.[18] Chivalry was an international ideology that expressed itself in very local terms, by codifying forms of address and modes of behavior. As such, chivalry allows for the formation of new social groups, groups that are afforded a place within an already existing hierarchy by displaying their aptitude with the rules and conventions that constitute the already existing social order. Of course, chivalry does not create true equality between individuals and whatever groups form as a result of chivalric ideology will still be given over to infighting and the petty squabbles that can plague any collection of people. But nevertheless, chivalry provides Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson with a language in which they might stage a performance of equality with one another.

Individuals who form local groups within and in response to an already existent hierarchy, and whose existence is characterized by a performance of association, already exist as a specific category in the world of literary criticism: we would call such a group of individuals a "coterie." Whereas the peace negotiators create a shared sense of affiliation based on their place in a political structure and an ideological commitment to chivalry, Chaucer and his French contemporaries develop in addition what should be considered a kind of coterie poetics, if one expands the notion of coterie beyond geographic and temporal boundaries. Chaucer's *Complaint of Venus* translates a ballad sequence by Granson in a playfully mocking manner by referencing their shared literary inheritance. Deschamps picks up certain metaphors of Chaucer's as well as his literary references and directs them back to Chaucer in his ballad to him. Both Chaucer's *Complaint of Venus* and Deschamps's *Ballad to Chaucer*, then, make recourse to the *Roman de la Rose* as the literary authority that informs and legitimates their own poetic achievements. Because they both operate within the same French literary tradition, their poetic productions are intelligible to one another, and therefore open to comparison and evaluation. Where the king stands in diplomacy's political mode, as an absent authority that legitimates the gathering, the literary mode has the *auctores* of both the Latin and vernacular traditions. The authors of the *Rose*, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, are not present to actually judge Chaucer, Deschamps, or Granson's poetry. They, like all the medieval literary *auctores*, are absent, dead authors.[19] It is the living poets that make judgments about one another's poetry, which is why Chaucer's interactions with Granson and Deschamps primarily reference the French tradition—claims based on the English or even Italian literary traditions would not be especially meaningful to them. But in having recourse to the same tradition, they also make value judgments about that tradition; by emphasizing the *Roman de la Rose* rather than the *Roman de Fauvel*, for instance, or by making one's knowledge of the *Roman de la Rose* a test of one's aesthetic prowess, these poets are constructing the value of that tradition together. The French tradition legitimates their poems, but they also legitimate the French tradition. As with their political situation, then, Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson write at the border of conflicting and intersecting modes of affiliation, with obligations to tradition and to a coterie interacting and competing with one another, ultimately creating a distinct sense of literary agency.

In order to trace the contours of this coterie, I will begin by discussing Chaucer's relationship to French poetry in the 1370s. Chaucer was deeply indebted to the French poetic

[18] For a discussion of chivalry's individualistic quality and its later political ramifications, see Maurice Keen, *The Origins of the English Gentleman: Heraldry, Chivalry and Gentility in Late Medieval England, c. 1300- c. 1500* (London: Tempus, 2002).

[19] As Alastair Minnis puts it "the only good *auctor* was a dead one." See Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, second edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 12.

tradition; he translated one of its central texts, the *Roman de la Rose*, into English very early, perhaps as a kind of training to be a continental poet.[20] But Chaucer's relationship to French poetry was also personal. He, Deschamps, and Granson all knew one another and their mutual acknowledgements of one another made their way into the poetry these men produced. The acknowledgements were not strictly personal, however, as each of these men had public personas that would in part dictate their private behavior, and so before one considers the personal relationships among these poets one must first attend to their public interactions. Their roles as peace negotiators in particular necessitated that they behaved toward one another with a certain civility, which they expressed through chivalric modes of address. Chivalry as both an ideology and as an aesthetic practice, then, provides a form of address that Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson will use in their coterie creations. This chapter, then, first attends to the large overarching structures of social behavior—the international ideology of chivalry—before turning to the more local interactions constitutive of coterie poetics and the way those sometimes conform to chivalric expectations and sometimes frustrate them. Having moved from the generalities of chivalry to the particulars of coteries, this chapter will then move back to the general in the form of literary tradition, to see how the individual forms and judgments of coterie poetics coalesce into something that exceeds their particular instantiations.

I. English and French "Fleurs"

Chaucer's relationship to and dependence on French poetry is one of the oldest and most important chestnuts of his criticism. Its New Critical apotheosis is Charles Muscatine's *Chaucer and the French Tradition*, which demonstrated the extent to which the *Roman de la Rose* and the tradition stemming from it influenced Chaucer's style.[21] James Wimsatt's more recent discussion of Chaucer with figures including Deschamps and Froissart, in his *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, largely argues for a unidirectional model of poetic influence, this time from the tradition influenced by Guillaume de Machaut and codified by Deschamps's writings on poetry as "natural music."[22] The exception to this simple model of poetic sources is Granson, who Wimsatt claims both influenced Chaucer and was influenced by him.[23] Ardis Butterfield's recent work, *The Familiar Enemy*, was the first to thoroughly contextualize Chaucer's relationship to his French contemporaries in terms of the Hundred Years War. She not only expands the number of French authors who influenced Chaucer, but she also reassesses Chaucer's innovations to his French sources, even implying that Chaucer, and not Deschamps, might be responsible for adding an envoy onto the ballad form and longer narrative works.[24] As these important works demonstrate, the history of criticism regarding Chaucer and French poetry is a history of expanding agency for Chaucer: his knowledge of sources increases, as does his ability to innovate rather than to imitate. My focus on Chaucer's relation to Deschamps and Granson suggests two further points about Chaucer and the French tradition: one, certain French poets were as aware of Chaucer's work as he was of theirs and, two, that awareness took the form of

[20] For Chaucer as a continental poet, see Winthrop Wetherbee III, "Chaucer and the European Tradition," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 27 (2005): 1-21.
[21] Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).
[22] James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries: Natural Music in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).
[23] Ibid, 210-41.
[24] Or, at least, Chaucer and Deschamps develop the ballad with envoy simultaneously. See Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy*, 187-200. Butterfield expands on suggestions from Wimsatt for the ballad, but the discussion of Chaucer's innovative addition of envoys onto narrative poems is all her own.

assessments of each other's innovations. The critical history of Chaucer's relationship to the French tradition has disclosed to us, perhaps unsurprisingly, something of which Chaucer and his French contemporaries were already well aware, namely that they were intervening in the French tradition and their discussion of one another's response to that tradition constituted the terms of their exchange. But so did diplomacy. These poets knew not only each other's written work, but they also knew each other's work as diplomats, and diplomacy demands courtesy. They had to do more than acknowledge one another; they had to display their appreciation for each other's work by behaving chivalrously. Chivalry, then, is the ideological form that shaped Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson's personal interactions with one another; it is the form in which the personal and private becomes public.

First, though, their acknowledgements of each other. Chaucer knew Granson, Granson knew Chaucer and Deschamps, and Deschamps at least knew of Chaucer and together these recognitions link their poetry in a network of mutual address. Chaucer's *Complaint of Venus* is a translation of Granson's *Le cinq balades enseivans*, and Chaucer refers at the end of that poem to Granson as the "fleur of hem that make in Fraunce" (82). Apart from John Gower, Granson is the only living poet ever mentioned by Chaucer, despite the fact that Chaucer was borrowing more often from other poets, especially Giovanni Boccaccio. It strikes me as likely that Granson warrants a mention, whereas someone like Boccaccio does not, because Granson, unlike Boccaccio, was reading Chaucer's poetry, and doing so often. James Wimsatt has shown that echoes of Chaucer's poetry can be found in Granson's *La Complaint de l'An Nouvel*, *Le Songe Saint Valentin*, *Complainte de Saint Valentin*, and in his most ambitious work, the *Livre Missire Ode*.[25] There are several things to note about Granson's use of Chaucer in these works. First, as is apparent from the titles, Granson shared with Chaucer (as well as Gower) a penchant for writing Valentine's Day poetry, a penchant unique to these three poets in the fourteenth century. Chaucer and Granson seem to have created this tradition together.[26] As one might imagine, given this shared interest, Granson was quite familiar with *The Parliament of Fowls*; in addition, his *Livre Missire Ode* and *Le Songe Saint Valentin* show that he knew *The House of Fame* and *Troilus and Criseyde*.[27] Granson's allusions to these poems reveal that he had access to very early works of Chaucer. The fact that very few manuscripts of these works have survived suggests that they were coterie poems, discussed further in the next section; their circulation would have been limited to Chaucer's closest circle of friends and fellow poets.[28] Granson and Chaucer, moreover, were engaged in diplomatic missions at different times, although they both were likely to have been at the 1368 marriage of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, in Milan, and subsequently they both spent a good deal of time at the English court in the 1370s.[29] With such ample opportunity to meet one another, and such obvious interests in each other's poetry, imagining that Chaucer and Granson did not know each other strains credulity.

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[25] For Granson's poems, see Oton de Granson, *Poésies*, ed. Joan Grenier-Winther (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010); or, with facing page English translation, see Oton de Granson, *Poems*, ed. and trans. Peter Nicholson and Joan Grenier-Winther (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2015).

[26] On Chaucer and St. Valentine's Day, see Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Chaucer and the Cult of St. Valentine* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986).

[27] See Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, 219-241.

[28] There are only three surviving manuscripts each for *The Book of the Duchess* and *The House of Fame*, whereas *The Parliament of Fowls* exists in fourteen manuscripts. See the textual notes in the *Riverside Chaucer*, 1136, 1139, and 1147, for these respective numbers.

[29] For Chaucer, see Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 71. For Granson, see the biography in Arthur Piaget, *Oton de Grandson, sa vie et ses poésies* (Lausanne, Payot: Société d'histoire de la Suisse romande, 1941).

Deschamps's and Granson's acquaintance is certain. Both served as peace negotiators at the same time, Granson for England and Deschamps for France. In a 1384 ballade, Deschamps describes an encounter between the two, which makes it clear that they were already quite familiar with one another.[30] He writes:

> Je fu l'autrier trop mal venuz
> Quant j'alay pour veir Calays;
> J'entray dedenz comme cornuz,
> Sanz congie; lors vint .II. Anglois,
> Granson devant et moy après,
> Qui me prindrent parmi la bride:
> L'un me dist "dogue," l'autre: "ride;"
> Lors me devint la coulour bleue:
> "Goday," fait l'un, l'autre: "commidre."
> Lors dis: "Oil, je voy vo queue."
>
> Pour mal content s'en est tenuz
> L'un d'eulx, qui estoit le plus lays,
> Et dist: "Vous seres retenuz
> Prisonnier, vous estes forfais."
> Mais Granson s'en aloit ades
> Qui en riant faisoit la vuide:
> A eulx m'avoit trahi ce cuide;
> En anglois dist: "Pas ne l'advenue."
> Passer me font de Dieu l'espite;
> Lors dis: "Oil, je voy vo queue."
>
> Puis ay mes talons estenduz
> De mon roucin, le serray pres,
> Lors sault, si furent espanduz;
> Delez Granson fut mes retrais.
> La ne me vault treves ne pais,
> De paour la face me ride,
> De tel amour me mort me cuide;
> Au derrain leur dist: "Je l'adveue."
> "Chien," faisoit l'un, "vez vous vo guide?"
> Lors dis: "Oil, je voy vo queue."[31]

> I was, the other day, so badly welcomed when I had gone to see Calais; I entered without being given permission, like a fool; so two Englishmen approached [us] (Granson was in the lead, and I behind him), who took me by the bridle: The one says to me, "dog," the other "ride;" then I became the color blue: "Good day," said the one, [and] the other "come hither." Then I said, "Yes, I see your tail."

[30] 1384 is the date given to this poem, since it is the date in which Granson and Deschamps were both in Calais negotiating for peace. See Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, 239.
[31] Deschamps, *Oeuvres Completes*, v. 79-80. The translation that follows is mine.

> One of them, who was the uglier one, became malcontent and said "you will be held prisoner; you are forfeit." But Granson kept going, who laughing left me behind: I believed he had betrayed me to them; and he said in English "I deny [knowing] him." They made me endure the spite of God. Then I said, "Yes, I see your tail."
>
> Then I extended my spurs over my horse, and gripped it close. Then it jumped and they scattered. Then I retreated near Granson. There I did not find a treaty or peace. The color left my face. With that friendship, I thought I would die; at last he said, "I vouch for him." "Dog," said the one, "do you see your guide?" Then I said, "Yes, I see your tail."

This ballade reveals a great deal not only about the relationship between Granson and Deschamps, but also about the kinds of aggressive playfulness that can serve as a sign of real intimacy.[32] First, the linguistic community portrayed by the poem is complex and provides a tense social and political backdrop against which the humor of the anecdote can shine more brightly. Deschamps seems to know at least some English, and Granson certainly does. The words "dogue," "ride," "Goday," and "commidre" are all innovative phonetic renderings of what Deschamps heard the English soldiers say, though it is unclear from this evidence whether or not Deschamps could read or write English. An English author would be unlikely to use the word "commidre" as an equivalent of "come hither," but since the phonetic renderings clearly are meant to mock the English soldiers, their oddity may be part of Deschamps's joke. In any event, the exchange occurs in the liminal space of peace negotiations between two warring parties, parties that speak different languages, allowing for a great deal of miscommunication. Granson's joke and Deschamps's poem depend on exactly such a possibility for miscommunication.

Two further observations about Granson and Deschamps shed light on the complex humor of the poem: one, Granson and Deschamps knew each other well and, two, they both seem to have appreciated a good prank. Deschamps was riding to visit Granson on the opposite side of the peace negotiations but he did not have permission. Granson obviously knew Deschamps well enough to vouch for him, with "Je l'adveue," but he also seems to have felt comfortable enough with Deschamps to play a practical joke on him, disavowing him, with "Pas ne l'adveue." Deschamps comments on the nature of the joke, "De tel amour me mort me cuide," emphasizing its pointed humor in a sort of "with friends like these…" moment. His language, it should be stressed, is emphatically one of friendship and intimacy, "amour," and not the language of duty. What Deschamps and Granson display in this exchange are the interpersonal limits of diplomacy, the fact that their roles as official representatives of kingdoms cannot wholly encompass their actions. Their personal relationship exceeds the possibilities of acceptable action for a diplomat, who in no way would be able to jokingly offer up his colleague to hostile guards without causing what we would now call an "international incident." What allows Granson to play this kind of joke is not his official capacity as a peace negotiator, but instead is his actual friendship with Deschamps. The joke is possible because their actions are

[32] Ralph Waldo Emerson, after all, refers to a friend as a kind of "beautiful enemy." See Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Friendship," *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 211. For a discussion of the importance of this concept of friendship to a later poetic community, see Andrew Epstein, *Beautiful Enemies: Friendship and Postwar American Poetry* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2006). I'll only just point out the suggestive resonance with Ardis Butterfield's *Familiar Enemy*, which raises the question of the possible identity of familiarity and beauty, especially among coterie poets.

not bound by the expectations of duty and office or by the civility that governs interactions between men who are not as intimately connected.

Finally, the third side of this poetic triangle is Chaucer and Deschamps, who may not have actually met one another.[33] However, there is evidence connecting these men: Deschamp's ballad, which is certainly famous, but more often referenced than read.[34] Here is the ballad in full:

> O Socrates plains de philosophie,
> Seneque en meurs et Anglux en pratique,
> Ovides grans en ta poeterie,
> Bries en parler, saiges en rethorique,
> Aigles treshaulz, qui par ta rheorique
> Enlumines le regne d'Eneas,
> L'Isle aux Geans, ceuls de Bruth, et qui as
> Semé les fleurs et planté le rosier,
> Aux ignorans de la langue pandras,
> Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier.
>
> Tu es d'amours mondains Dieux en Albie:
> Et de la Rose, en la terre Angelique,
> Qui d'Angela saxonne, est puis flourie
> Angleterre, d'elle ce nom s'applique
> Le derrenier en l'ethimologique;
> En bon anglès le livre translates;
> Et un vergier ou du plant demandas
> De ceuls qui font pour aulx auctorisier,
> A ja longtemps que tu edifias
> Grand translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier.
>
> A toy pour ce de la fontaine Helye
> Requier avoir un buvraige autentique,
> Dont la doys est du tout en ta Baillie,
> Pour rafrener d'elle ma soif ethique,
> Qui en Gaule seray paralitique
> Jusques a ce que tu m'abuveras.

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[33] The only time they were in the same place at the same time, they were unlikely to have met. Deschamps and Guillaume de Machaut were inside Rheims, while Chaucer was part of the army laying siege to the town. It was during that siege that Chaucer was captured as a prisoner of war. For a general account of this period of the war, see Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War, Volume 2: Trial by Fire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); he mentions Chaucer's capture at 433.

[34] The tendency to mention the poem rather than provide a reading of it is evident in even the most accomplished works on Chaucer's reception. It is not even mentioned in Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), or in Stephanie Trigg, *Congenial Souls: Reading Chaucer from Medieval to Postmodern* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). For brief mentions, see Stephanie Trigg, "Chaucer's Influence and Reception," *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 297-323; and Michael Hanly "France," *A Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 2002), 149-166.

Eustaces sui, qui de mon plant aras:
Mais pran en gré les euvres d'escolier
Que par Clifford de moy avoir pourras,
Grand translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier.

L'envoy
Poete haulte, loenge destruye,
En ton jardin ne seroye qu'ortie:
Considere ce que j'ay dit premier
Ton noble plant, ta douce mélodie.
Mais pour sçavoir, de rescripre te prie
Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier.[35]

Oh Socrates full of philosophy, / Seneca in morality, Aulus in the world, / great Ovid in your poetry, / concise in speech, and wise in rhetoric, / an eagle on high, who, by your knowledge / illuminates the kingdom of Aeneas— / The island of the Giants, those of Brutus— / and who has sown flowers and planted the rosebush, / you will take the language to those who don't know it [or, Pandras for the ignorant of the language]: / Great Translator, noble Geoffrey Chaucer.

You are the earthly God of love in Albion, / and of the Rose, in the (angelic) land of Angles, / which from the Saxon Angela, then flowered / into the name of Angleterre, the last name / in the etymological series; / and you translated the Rose [or, the book] into good English; / and for a long time you have been constructing an orchard / for which you asked for plants from those / who create authority for themselves. /Great translator, noble Geoffrey Chaucer.

And for this reason, from the fountain of Helicon / I ask to have from you a genuine draught / of which the source is entirely under your jurisdiction / with which to quench my feverish thirst, / and I'll remain in Gaul paralysed / Until the time you let me drink it. / I am Eustache; whose plants you will have; / But take them in good spirit, these school-boyish writings, / That you will receive from me by Sir Lewis Clifford. / Great translator, noble Geoffrey Chaucer.

Elevated poet, famed among squires, / I would be a mere nettle in your garden / if you consider what I said at the beginning / about your noble plant and your sweet melody. / But I beg you to provide me with an official response, so that I can confirm it: / Great translator, noble Geoffrey Chaucer.[36]

The ballade consists of an extended garden metaphor driven by textual allusion; the guiding image is supplied by Chaucer's translation of the *Roman de la Rose*. His *Romaunt of the Rose* is explicitly referenced in the first two stanzas: Chaucer "planté le rosier" and it is the book "de la

[35] Deschamps, *Oeuvres Complètes*, 138-40.
[36] Translation from Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy*, 144-46. Butterfield's is the clearest translation I could find of what is a very difficult poem, too clear in parts. I've suggested in brackets a couple of alternative renderings that will bear on my discussion of Deschamps's knowledge of Chaucer's works.

Rose" that Chaucer has translated "en bon anglès."[37] Furthermore, if we imagine that the "fountaine Heyle" is meant to play off the audience's expectation to encounter the fountain of Narcissus, then one of the key images in the *Roman de la Rose* provides the bridge into the concerns of the third stanza. The content of the entire ballade and not just its refrain, then, relies on the point that Chaucer is a "grand translateur." At the same time as he makes the judgment about Chaucer's ability as a translator, Deschamps also uses Chaucer's translation of the *Rose* to assert his own authority as a literary judge: he reveals himself to be qualified to designate Chaucer a "grand" translator —as opposed to some other evaluative adjective.

But Chaucer does not plant only the *Rose*; he also spreads the "fleurs": "semé les fleurs et planté le rosier." Given that the ballade is emphatically about Chaucer's ability as a translator, and this action is mentioned alongside his translation of the *Roman de la Rose*, the "fleurs" here are likely to refer to other poems translated by Chaucer. Deschamps, I think, is referring to the *Complaint of Venus*, connecting all three poets in one subtle reference. According to Chaucer, after all, Granson is the "flour of hem that make in Fraunce." The complement of Granson being the "flour" of something is a minor detail, but one that seems to have caught Deschamps's attention. "Flour," sometimes "fleur," is one of the many words that are identical in Middle English and Middle French, words that would be of particular interest to anyone translating between the two languages. Deschamps himself was fond of flower imagery, and often uses it in encomiastic verse, just as Chaucer does here. Usually "flour" is reserved for addressing those who have particularly noble qualities, or it is used to address one's beloved in love poetry. For Deschamps, "flour" means primarily one of three things: the best of some noble quality, the source of something, or simply a plant.[38] The notable thing about Chaucer's use in calling Granson the "flour of hem that make in France" is that he is applying the noun to one "of hem that make," to a poet. It is true that Granson was a minor noble, but the very idea that such an honorific term could be applied to a poet, and a fellow French poet at that, may have made the term stand out for Deschamps. In Deschamps's ballade, Chaucer's reference to Granson as a "flour" is picked up and re-imagined under the governing metaphor of gardening, suggesting that Deschamps's use of the word "flour" most likely refers to Chaucer's use of the term in *The Complaint of Venus* and the "fleurs" Chaucer plants are those ballads.

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[37] Chaucer's translation is found in Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 685-767. The translation we have of the *Roman de la Rose* was most likely not completely done by Chaucer. The portion we have that most scholars agree was actually by him does contain, however, the fountain of Narcissus, and so we know he would have completed at least that much.

[38] A complete survey of Deschamps use of "flour," along with its possible variants, shows that it breaks down as follows: "flour" meaning "plant" is by far the most common use; "flour" as a superlative is the second most common use; "flour" meaning "source" is the third most common use. "Flour" meaning "the best of persons who do something," occurs only four times. Here I list the occurrence of meanings by volume and the number assigned to the work by Deschamps editors, see Deschamps, *Oeuvres Completes*. For flour as "plant," see: i. 8, 39, 57, 78, 88, 89, 94, 164, 128; ii. 269, 280, 299, 305, 306, 308, 309, 310, 311; iii. 334, 373, 411, 416, 440, 460, 463, 469 (mislabeled as ccccxix), 474, 484, 486 (mislabeled as cccccxxvvi), 487, 499, 539, 543; iv. 553, 555, 561, 574, 588, 620, 654, 664, 714, 723, 728, 730, 747, 750, 756, 761, 764, 765, 766; v. 862, 880, 881, 960, 969, 984, 990, 1008, 1020, 1042, 1077; vi. 1110, 1141, 1169, 1197; vii. 1356, 1357; viii. 1495 (*La Fiction du Lyon*), 1496; ix. *Le Miroir de Mariage* . For flour as "the best of something," see: i. 3, 79, 88, 89, 161, 169; ii. 193,206, 207, 307, 308, 309, 313; iii. 354, 409, 421, 431, 447, 453, 523, 526, 532, 539, 546; iv. 721, 724, 710; vii. 1396 (*L'art de Dictier*). For flour as "source," see: i. 88, 89, 168, 249; iv. 558, 654, 730, 746, 748; v. 875, 1011; vii. 1360, 1396 (*L'art de Dictier*); viii. 1444, 1451, 1495 (*La Fiction du Lyon*); iv. *Le Miroir de Mariage*. The remaining instances are: "fleur des fleurs" for Machaut (i. 124), "fleur des fleurs" for Souhaits au Roi (ii. 242), and "flour de theologie" for various biblical lives (ii. 236, iii. 470).

Identifying the "fleurs" with *The Complaint of Venus*, further, allows one to see that Deschamps's characterization of Chaucer as "noble" returns the compliment that Chaucer paid Granson when he called him a "flour." At issue in the reciprocity of these designations are the rules of behavior governing the interaction of the nobility, what we call "chivalry." Chivalry and nobility are intimately linked concepts but their association was a point of some contention in the late fourteenth century. As we have seen, Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale* denies the nobility an automatic inheritance of gentility, a quality related to chivalry, and instead affirms it as a quality one must earn through one's actions. From its earlier association with a martial ethos, by the early fourteenth century chivalry was "an aristocratic ethic of restrained behaviour, an assumption on the part of the elite that they would treat one another with respect."[39] By the late Middle Ages, however, and occasioned especially by the military and social transformation tied to the Hundred Years War, chivalry's close association with the nobility, as a guide to ethical conduct amongst themselves, was beginning to break down.[40]

Chivalry, then, began to signify less of an actual military code of conduct, used and practiced in among fighting men engaged in actual warfare, and more of an aesthetic practice, a mode of performing subjecthood. Johan Huizinga said as much in his study of the end of the Middle Ages: "the conception of chivalry as a sublime form of secular life might be defined as an aesthetic ideal assuming the appearance of an ethical ideal."[41] Nigel Saul agrees that chivalry ultimately becomes "a culture marked by a liking for romance, heroism and display."[42] Here one might think about the pageantry surrounding tournaments, huge multimedia spectacles that showcased knightly prowess in a setting accompanied by the trappings of heraldry, including banners, rolls proving one's lineage, and various storytellers proclaiming a knight's past deeds. The very virtues associated with chivalry on display in such a context are largely performative. Maurice Keen lists the "classic virtues of good knighthood: *prouesse*, *loyauté*, *largesse* (generosity), *courtoisie*, and *franchise* (the free and frank bearing that is visible testimony to the combination of good birth and virtue)."[43] Like Keen's definition of *franchise*, these virtues are all dependent on "visible testimony;" they denote actions that the knight is meant to perform in public, like the bestowal of gifts (*largesse*), displays of aptitude with weapons (*prouesse*), subservience to the king (*loyauté*), and polite bearing towards others (*courtoisie*). Despite the undeniable influence Christianity had on the construction of the chivalric ideology, these chivalric virtues are not the hidden, private virtues like faith, hope, and love associated with the good Christian life. Chivalry's virtues demand to be displayed, to be performed; they demand, in other words, a spectacular aesthetic.

Of course chivalry always had an aesthetic component, and Saul's reference to the genre of romance above points to its most obvious manifestation, but as chivalry changed in the later Middle Ages that aesthetic component took on new forms. In Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, the aesthetics of chivalry often conform to the expectations one might have of a romance. For

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[39] Saul, *Chivalry in Medieval England*, 8.

[40] Of particular importance to this breakdown were the *chevauchées*, fast-moving small bands of armed men made up of both knights and men of lower ranks, such as esquires, who ride horses, wear the same armor and execute the same maneuvers in battle. The *chevauchées* were essentially used as raiding parties, harassing the larger French army and terrorizing local villages in order to undermine the authority of the French king. They became the characteristic fighting unit under Edward III, and "the effect of the new style of fighting was to bring about the blurring of the distinction between knights and esquires." See, Saul, *Chivalry in Medieval England*, 165.

[41] Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, trans. F. Hopman (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1924), 58.

[42] Saul, *Chivalry in Medieval England*, 39.

[43] Keen, *Chivalry*, 2.

instance, describing the Theseus's army, Chaucer writes that Theseus had "in his hoost of chivalrie the flour" (*CT* I. 982). This line would not be out of place in any Arthurian romance, setting up the exploits of some famous member of the king's company. Chaucer uses this line to play with generic conventions by shifting focus to Palamon and Arcite, two knights not in Theseus's company rather than one of the supposedly illustrious examples of chivalry already riding with Theseus. And yet, one must have generic conventions in order to play with them, and Theseus's "hoost" full "of chivalrie the flour" constitutes just the sort of literary backdrop against which Chaucer can perform the kind of play he does best.[44] When Chaucer calls Granson a "flour," he creates the same kind of effect, albeit in a different genre. Chivalry's literary genre *par excellence* is the romance, but that does not mean that chivalric conventions are confined to those texts alone. The lyric poetry of the troubadours was foundational in constructing chivalric conventions, especially as they pertained to expressions of love. The lyric descendants of that troubadour poetry in the fourteenth century are the *forme fixe* lyrics, the roundeau, virelay, and above all the ballad, the same form that constitutes the poetic exchange among Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson. One of Machaut's major innovations in the mid-fourteenth century was to use the same language of love poetry inherited from the troubadours and instrumental in the ideological formation of chivalry in order to compose *forme fixe* lyrics to not only to address a beloved lady, but also patrons or other poets. That Chaucer addresses Granson in the envoy to a ballad sequence, or that Deschamps writes ballades to Chaucer or Granson, simply indicates that they are following Machaut's example. And yet, they alter the form of address, ever so slightly. When Chaucer calls Granson a "flour" he is conforming to expectations, both for addressing someone who like Granson is actually a knight and for the generic conventions of the *forme fixe* lyric. But Chaucer shifts the ground under that address by specifying that Granson is a maker, a poet. Deschamps follows Chaucer's lead by referring to Chaucer as "noble" despite the fact that Chaucer was not born into a noble family, never had a title bestowed upon him, and never even became a knight. Chaucer was, however, a poet, and Chaucer had recently praised the nobility of a poet, and so Deschamps could as well. Assisted by chivalry's categorical expansion and the resulting confusion, Chaucer and Deschamps could play with forms of address proper to the genre in which they were working, although heretofore improper in relation to their personal status.

Chivalry, then, is the broad ideological formation that produces the modes of address that Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson all use for one another. At the same time, it is those mutual relationships that expose the limit point of ideology, which ceases to function as an explanation when the connections between the poets become subjective and personal. That these three poets would fall back on the conventions of chivalry in addressing one another should come as no surprise. They were from different kingdoms, and warring kingdoms at that, but chivalry's rules were not confined to the borders of any kingdom. As Huizinga pointed out almost a century ago,

[44] For a rich discussion of Chaucer's critique of chivalry in this tale, see H. Marshall Leicester, Jr. *The Disenchanted Self: Representing the Subject in the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 221-382, and Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 165-230. For Patterson, Chaucer's reflections on chivalry take the form of "ideology critique": "by making the central issue of the *Tale* not the idea of order per se but the *chivalric* idea of order, Chaucer himself historicizes his world. Chivalry's seemingly ubiquitous and transhistorical claims were revealed as merely local currency, a demystification that permitted Chaucer to explore chivalry's contradictions both in its contemporary practices and, more profoundly, in the idea of chivalry itself," 168.

> Medieval thought in general was saturated in every part with the conceptions of the Christian faith. In a similar way and in a more limited sphere the thought of all those who lived in the circles of court or castle was impregnated with the idea of chivalry. Their whole system of ideas was permeated by the fiction that chivalry ruled the world.[45]

As the dictates of chivalry and their jobs as peace negotiators both demanded, in their addresses to one another these poets would need to cultivate polite public personae. Insomuch as they adhere to the rhetoric of chivalric gentility, the ballads that these men produced for one another were a form of "public poetry."[46] As Granson's prank on Deschamps or Deschamps teasing of Chaucer suggests, though, these poems also had a personal meaning under that public façade, a meaning that occurs at the boundary of public and private. I turn, then, in the next section to the less public nature of these poems, those aspects of the poems these men write about and for one another that have as their intended, and perhaps exclusive audience, just the other poets. The problem with writing about personal and nearly private material, of course, is that it is not necessarily material written with many other readers in mind, let alone a critic writing 600 years later. There will be some things that we simply cannot know. But scholars have developed a rich conceptual formulation for dealing with writing about the personal interactions of poets that will be of some use here: the concept of the coterie.

II. Performing Coterie

I would like to begin my discussion of coteries with a thought experiment about a hypothetical historical situation.[47] What if we assume that Granson played a role in introducing Chaucer's poetry to Deschamps? Granson was in the right place at the right time and even had a motive: after all, one of the poems is about him.[48] The biggest obstacle to this counterfactual scenario would seem to be the critical truism that while Granson knew a wide variety of Chaucer's verse, Deschamps's ballad suggests he knew only Chaucer's translation of the *Romance of the Rose*. There are, however, quite a number of possible references to Chaucer's work in the *Ballad to Chaucer.* I have already shown how Deschamps uses Chaucer's *Complaint of Venus* to construct

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[45] Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, 56. Keen agrees that the "ideology of chivalry" was "effectively international;" see Keen, *Chivalry*, 37.

[46] Classifying these *forme fixe* works as "public poetry" extends the concept found in Anne Middleton, "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Age of Richard II," *Speculum* 53 (1978): 94-114. Middleton's concern is with poets interested in the "common good" and a "common voice." The ideology of chivalry, though, presents itself as a voice common to the nobility, the only public that matters under that ideology.

[47] This is not a counterfactual, but hypotheticals can do similar conceptual work. For counterfactuals, see Catherine Gallagher, "What Would Napoleon Do?: Historical, Fictional, and Counterfactual Characters," *New Literary History* 42 (2011): 315-336.

[48] This proposition brings up the question of dating, which is uncertain for all of these short poems. K. B. McFarlane ascribes to the traditional view that 1385 is the most likely date for Clifford to complete his errand. Murray L Brown, though, has argued that 1391 is the more likely date. See Murray L. Brown, "Poets, Peace, the Passion and the Prince: Eustache Deschamps' 'Ballade to Chaucer,'" *Chaucer's French Contemporaries: The Poetry/Poetics of Self and Tradition*, ed. B. Robert Palmer (New York: AMS Press, 1999), 187-215. While I believe the traditional date makes a lot of sense, primarily because poets tend to react to new developments at the moment of their introduction, either date would fit reasonably well with my argument. For me, the date that matters is 1384, when Granson introduces Chaucer's poetry to Deschamps, also limiting Deschamps knowledge of Chaucer to his pre-1384 work. Clifford could carry Deschamps poem back at any time after that. On the difficulty of dating Chaucer's shorter poems, see Kathryn L. Lynch, "Dating Chaucer," *Chaucer Review* 42 (2007): 1-22.

an elaborate inter-textual compliment to his English counterpart.[49] Other references, while subtle, might very well be references to some of Chaucer's other works. Deschamps's vision of Chaucer as an eagle "treshaulz" who illuminates the reign or the realm of Aeneas in a poem about Chaucer's translations could well be an allusion to the *House of Fame*, which features both an eagle and a partial translation of the *Aeneid*. In addition, the designation of Chaucer as the "aigles treshaulz" and an "Ovides grans en ta poeterie" could recall the association with birds and love poetry in *The Parliament of Fowls*. The word "pandras" is a notoriously difficult crux in the poem, but it could actually be a proper name and a reference to *Troilus and Criseyde*'s notorious go-between—which would render the translation of Deschamps's line as "a Pandaras for those ignorant of the language."[50] Many of these references have been ruled out by Wimsatt, who fails even to mention the *Complaint of Venus* and who is also adamant that "pandras" in the

[49] There is no consensus about the dating of *The Complaint of Venus*, but the suggestion I am making—that we date Granson's poems to before 1372, giving Chaucer access to them for *The Complaint of Venus* sometime between then and 1384, when Granson and Deschamps meet, finally placing Deschamps's poem after 1384—is not contradicted by the evidence. Derek Pearsall claims that *The Complaint of Venus* is "probably from the 1380s;" see Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 71. Wimsatt believes that it was begun early but probably completed in the 1390s; see Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, 233. The editors of the *Riverside Chaucer* date it anywhere between 1385 and 1392, but recognize that it could have been composed as early as 1375; see Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, 1081. Granson's sequence, at least, would have been available for translation any time after 1372, when he was released from a Castilian prison, leaving behind a manuscript that contained the ballad sequence, now Barcelona, Biblioteca Catalunya MS 8. Chaucer almost certainly did not see Granson's poems in that manuscript—indeed, the poems as they exist in the Penn MS (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Library MS 902) are closer to what Chaucer must have been looking at—but he could have had access to some version of Granson's poems any time after that point. I should rule out one other point of possible contention. Rodney Merrill makes the argument that *The Complaint of Venus* and *The Complaint of Mars* were composed at the same time and originally designed to be one unit called "the Broche of Thebes." See, Rodney Merrill, "Chaucer's Broche of Thebes: The Unity of The Complaint of Mars and The Complaint of Venus," *Literary Monographs 5* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), 3-61. The manuscript tradition suggests this is unlikely. Each poem appears in eight manuscripts and the editions of Julian Notary and William Thynne, but not the same manuscripts. In addition, *The Complaint of Venus* seems to fall into three distinct textual families, while *The Complaint of Mars* falls only into two. There is some correspondence. One manuscript family of *The Complaint of Venus* contains Bodleian Library MSS Fairfax 16 and Tanner 346 along with Thynne's edition as does one family of *The Complaint of Mars*. The other manuscript family of *The Complaint of Mars* includes Bodleian Library MS Arch. Selden B.24, Cambridge University Library MSS Magdalene College Pepys 2006 Hand B and Hand E, and Julian Notary's edition, and these manuscripts also make up one family of *The Complaint of Venus*. Apart from these, *The Complaint of Mars* is only contained in three other manuscripts, in two of which it is only a partial copy, one in each family, and these partial copies are the only ones that occur without *The Complaint of Venus*. The final full copy exists in Cambridge University Library MS Trinity R.3.20, a John Shirley manuscript. The odd thing about this copy is that, while *The Complaint of Mars* corresponds to the second manuscript family (the one that includes Julian Notary's edition), *The Complaint of Venus* contained in this manuscript is a member of a third, completely separate, textual family for that poem. The other member of this family is another Shirley manuscript, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 59. These two manuscripts, besides having a unique textual history for *The Complaint of Venus*, are further distinguished by having an incipit that more closely ties the poem to Chaucer and Granson's interaction. Rather than a simple title, these state "Here begynneth a balade made by that worthy Knight of Savoye in frensche calde sir Otes Graunson. translated by Chauciers." Regardless of Shirley's penchant for telling stories, this distinct manuscript tradition, which also accurately records one aspect of Granson and Chaucer's relationship, is indicative of independent manuscript circulation that in some way preserved this poem's point of origin. That *The Complaint of Mars* does not record this distinct tradition, and even exists beside this tradition in one manuscript, suggests that it is a later addition. See the textual notes in the *Riverside Chaucer*, with Shirley's headnote at 1187.

[50] Indeed, that is how the line is rendered in Gretchen Mieszkowski, "'Pandras' in Deschamps' Ballade for Chaucer," *Chaucer Review* 9 (1975): 327-36. I'd like to thank David Hult for this reference and for the assurance that "pandras" could in fact work as a proper name in the line.

poem is not a reference to Chaucer's character in *Troilus and Criseyde*, but instead is a "future of a verb...pandras" which he takes to signify "to disseminate or illuminate," concluding that "suggested evocations of Chaucer's other poems—for instance, that the epithet 'soaring eagle' (5) derives from the *House of Fame*—come to seem quite remote."[51] By assuming, however, that Granson was the person who introduced Deschamps to Chaucer's work, any one of these possible allusions becomes more probable. Deschamps could have heard about any of these other works from Granson and hidden allusions to them in much the same way that Deschamps subtly hints at Chaucer's translation of Granson himself by the reference to Chaucer planting "fleurs."

I am less concerned here with the accuracy of these potential references than I am with what possibilities this thought experiment might reveal about the relationship between Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson. These potential allusions are not terribly specific. Deschamps does not quote at length from any of Chaucer's works; he only mentions them, which might suggest that he never actually read any of them. But Deschamps's possible ignorance of specifics need not be an impediment to his alluding to those works. After all, it seems unlikely that Deschamps would have actually seen a copy of the one work he certainly mentions, Chaucer's *Romaunt of the Rose*. A manuscript of that size would have been too expensive to produce and carry across the channel for the benefit of a French poet, whose interest in an English translation of a French work would probably not extend to close study of the translation. If Deschamps saw manuscripts of any of Chaucer's works, they were probably his shorter poems. But he does not have to seen Chaucer's works to mention them; knowing that they existed would have been enough. If Chaucer's poetry serves as a source to Deschamps, and some of it does without question, then it may be a different type of source than scholars are accustomed to recognizing. Deschamps's real source may be little more than literary gossip.[52]

The preceding paragraphs about literary allusion and manuscript transmission are speculative, and some of their claims must necessarily be so, but the ties that bind Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson to one another are real. Those ties exist, though, in a kind of liminal space, providing tantalizing details that encourage speculation, but too few details to confirm anything more than basic facts about their knowledge of one another and of one another's work. Of course, the historical record is always fragmentary; it always presents scholars with this sort of conundrum. The situation here is complicated by the fact that the interaction between these poets resembles a type of literary affiliation for which there is a rich scholarly vocabulary and available conceptual tools, namely the coterie, but the relationship of these poets to one another does not exactly conform to our normal expectations for a coterie. Coteries are usually defined by geographic and temporal proximity. Since Paul Strohm's early work on Chaucer's "circle," at least, Chaucer's early readership has been characterized essentially and primarily as a coterie,

[51] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, 251. I should also note that Wimsatt reads Chaucer's use of "flour" simply as a reference to Granson's nobility and does not mention its use as strange nor does he argue for it being a reference in Deschamps's poem. See Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, 211.

[52] Of course gossip was most often configured as a social ill in late-medieval England, but as Susan Phillips has argued it could also be a productive force. See Susan Phillips, *Transforming Talk: The Problem of Gossip in Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2007). In coming to the conclusion that all of this might simply be a form of literary gossip, I am not far from a sentiment expressed by Paul Strohm, albeit with different primary actors. In speaking of a disagreement with Butterfield as to how acquainted Deschamps might have been with Chaucer's writings, Stohm writes "my own view is that all Deschamps knew of Chaucer's writings were things he might have been told by Clifford." See Paul Strohm, *Chaucer's Tale: 1386 and the Road to Canterbury* (New York: Viking, 2014), 274. Of course, I would replace "Clifford" with "Granson."

but one that is firmly and exclusively centered in London.[53] Even scholarly works that seek to expand the notion of coterie, such as Steven Justice and Kathryn Kerby -Fulton's suggestive work on "Langlandian reading circles," broaden it only to include the notion of bureaucratic participation in literary work.[54] These discussions of coterie poetics tend to stay focused on London, in part because there are more records of bureaucratic and manuscript culture in London than in other places, and so it is safest to make arguments based on those kinds of documents. But bureaucrats did not only stay in London, and members of a coterie could and often did travel, establishing new connections with new writers.[55] Deschamps sends his ballad to Chaucer "par Clifford," through Lewis Clifford, one of the infamous "lollard knights" that Strohm places in Chaucer's close coterie of intimates.[56] Granted, Deschamps's brief mention of Clifford is not the kind of documentary evidence that one typically uses to establish a coterie relationship, but it is real evidence of an actual relationship, and one that we cannot dismiss simply because of its fragmentary nature. Coteries do not have to be linked to a centralized geographical location, but can be mobile entities with expanding circles of membership. As Deschamps's brief mention of Clifford shows, coteries can leave evidence of interactions that we cannot necessarily "see" in the manuscript record, such as the literary gossip imagined above.

In order, then, to reconceptualize a notion of coterie poetics for Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson, I will now turn to the work of two important scholars of coterie poetics from different periods, periods that we now think of as being particularly interested in coterie associations: Arthur Marotti's work on John Donne and Lytle Shaw's work on Frank O'Hara.[57] There is, of course, a vast historical distance between their individual objects of study, as there is between each of those objects and my own concerns with the late fourteenth century. However, coterie is a more portable concept than one might at first think. It relies, after all, on the simple fact of human sociability, the basic observation that artists live and talk to other people. Art has an audience and sometimes that audience consists of people that the artists know. Sometimes, that audience of known individuals includes other artists, who might talk to each other about their artistic creations. The term "coterie," which is very seldom used by the artists themselves, is

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[53] For his first argument about the tight-knit quality of Chaucer's early audience, see Paul Strohm, "Chaucer's Audience: A Study in Social Position and Literary Taste," *Literature and History* 5 (1977): 26-41. His argument is expanded in Paul Strohm, "Chaucer's Fifteenth-Century Audience and the Narrowing of the Chaucer Tradition," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 4 (1982): 2-32; and Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989). As Strohm points out, the belief in Chaucer's small, intimate early audience is also implied by the work of Derek Pearsall and Anne Middleton. See Derek Pearsall, "The *Troilus* Frontispiece and Chaucer's Audience," *Yearbook of English Studies* 7 (1977): 68-74; and Anne Middleton, "Chaucer's 'New Men" and the Good of Literature in the *Canterbury Tales*," in *Literature and Society*, ed. Edward Said (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 15-56.

[54] Steven Justice and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, "Langlandian Reading Circles and the Civil Service in London and Dublin, 1380-1427," *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1998): 59-83. In contrast to thinking of coteries as "reading communities constituted by nothing other than a shared and exclusive knowingness about their own art," Justice and Kerby-Fulton argue that "bureaucratic service in the English fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was a first home of the vernacular literary culture of Langland's and Chaucer's generation, and that the activities of those bureaucrats participating in it were substantially, and not just accidentally, literary," 59.

[55] To be fair, Justice and Kerby-Fulton's inclusion of Dublin in their consideration allows for a geographically expanded view, but one that deals with a different generation of bureaucrats—they are looking at Dublin reading circles in the 1420s—and not the travels of individuals within Langland and Chaucer's generation.

[56] For Clifford's life, and the "lollard knights" more generally, see K. B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972). See also, Strohm, *Social Chaucer*, 24-46.

[57] Arthur F. Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986); and Lytle Shaw, *Frank O'Hara and the Poetics of Coterie* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006).

simply a way to talk about such a form of association. Of course, there will be particulars determined by historical circumstances. As Marotti claims,

> The coterie poems that found their way into manuscript or printed miscellanies [or, as I would argue, were written at all] were, to some degree, written in the culturally encoded language of the time by the occasion that generated them. Writers in particular courtly or satellite-courtly milieus adopted socially sanctioned or coterie-specific styles that marked their texts as part of a shared language.[58]

The situation Marotti describes here is one that is both historically specific, based in "particular courtly or satellite-courtly milieus," and transferable from one historical period to another, as long as the basic requirements for coterie had been met. These requirements include formal characteristics: coteries are composed of specific styles and common languages. But their most salient characteristic is rooted in the sociability I mentioned above: coteries are almost always understood to be groups of writers or artists in close contact with one another, sharing work, critiquing one another, and developing a group ethos.

On one level, then, coterie is a sociological term denoting a gathering of like-minded individuals of the same class, actual historical persons in relation with one another. The word derives from Medieval Latin "*cotārius*, *coterius*," meaning a tenant of a cot.[59] Such feudal origins are still clear in the early French meaning, "a certain number of peasants united together to hold land from a lord." As it enters into English in the eighteenth century, the word sheds its association with "peasants" but retains the connotation that coteries are drawn from one class of people, which is now understood to be the cultural elite. Its most general and benign definition—"OED, coterie, n. 2", which is "a circle of persons associated together and distinguished from 'outsiders', a 'set'"—is belied by the two associated sub-definitions: 2.a, "a select or exclusive circle in Society; the select 'set' who have the entrée to some house, as 'the Holland House coterie'," and 2.b, "A 'set' associated by certain exclusive interests, pursuits, or aims; a clique." When one uses the term coterie now, one most often refers to a group of individuals from an upper class, a group characterized by a quality mentioned in both sub-definitions, exclusivity. This exclusivity creates a pejorative connotation to "coterie." Shaw explains that a coterie poet is "in common usage, someone whose writing depends upon a small and implicitly anti-democratic model of audience."[60] Such a pejorative notion of coterie audience lies behind the criticism of some of O'Hara's most pronounced poetic tendencies, which include an "inappropriate closeness to his subjects, a troubling lack of formality, and lack of professionalism within the disciplinary matrix as it was conceived at the historical moment in which he was writing."[61] This pejorative sense of coterie is a critique aimed at coterie authors, a complaint about their decision to foreclose on a potentially broad audience by cultivating an insider style. As a tool for critics, however, a notion of coterie poetics can have immense explanatory potential. Marotti worries that without a notion of coterie Sidney or Donne's poems can lose the "precise biographical and social matrices that enliven their meaning, becoming conventional Petrarchan attitudinizing."[62] Without a notion of coterie we can miss the way in which social reality enlivens literary

[58] Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet*, 13.
[59] The following discussion of the etymology of "coterie" is drawn from the OED, "coterie, n."
[60] Shaw, *Frank O'Hara and the Poetics of Coterie*, 4-5.
[61] Shaw, *Frank O'Hara and the Poetics of Coterie*, 13.
[62] Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet*, 11.

convention, turning stock tropes and dead metaphors into something else. I have already demonstrated how Chaucer's use of "flour" in the *Complaint of Venus* supplied Deschamps with a metaphor for his ballad. Both the use of that metaphor, as a kind of coterie-language, and the fact that it is so subtly done, a sign of a small and intimate implied readership, are what one would expect from a coterie milieu, for better or worse.

However, criticism of coterie poetry's exclusivity does not acknowledge that coterie also functions on a second level of meaning, one in which coteries are not simply a historical and sociological phenomenon and are instead a rhetorical pose or literary feature. Criticism about the small audience of a coterie amounts to an assertion about the public nature of poetic writing, a normative claim that poetry must be a public and not a private discourse. Shaw persuasively argues that such a criticism misunderstands the nature of coterie poetry. For Shaw, a coterie can be "a paradoxically public social discourse from a position often misunderstood as private." For him, "coterie functions less as a pejorative charge or as an occasion for biographical detail than as a code of reading that emerges at and helps to articulate the seam between biographical, historical particulars and modes of rhetoric, between archival facts and theoretical models."[63] Coteries occur at the intersection of the public and the private. They are both a "code of reading" that can be shared as a literary and rhetorical strategy and they are "biographical, historical particulars," composed of specific individuals at specific historical moments. Although Shaw wants to stress "rhetoric of coterie," he also points out that "this will not mean that coterie is ever a purely textual phenomenon." Coterie has to be both historical and rhetorical: "it is central to the strangeness and compellingness of the term that it involves both a mode of address and an *actual* context for that address, both a range of rhetorical, formal strategies and a staging ground for these strategies in empirical life."[64] The rhetoric cannot exist without a concrete historical situation, but the fact of intimacy among historical individuals alone is not enough to produce a coterie, which requires certain "rhetorical, formal strategies." Ultimately, then, a coterie is "as much an idea about the social possibilities of affinity as it is a concrete sociological fact."[65] In order to be a coterie, a group has to act like one. Membership in a coterie is not only determined by historical facts, although those are a necessary precondition, but also by one's performance of coterie connections. But what does that look like?

Understanding what it means to act like a coterie returns my considerations to Chaucer. His historical ties to Granson and Deschamps, even if they are not absolutely clear, are apparent in the poetry but that does not necessarily mean that these poets act like members of a coterie, or specify what that would look like in late medieval England and France. Some of the aspects of coterie poetry articulated by Marotti and Shaw would still be applicable to a late medieval context but others would not. Of the three aspects of O'Hara's poetry identified by his detractors mentioned above—his "inappropriate closeness to his subjects, a troubling lack of formality, and lack of professionalism within the disciplinary matrix as it was conceived at the historical moment in which he was writing," all of which Shaw goes on to valorize—only the first one potentially applies to Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson. Even so, "inappropriate" carries with it a whole host of assumptions about the poet's relationship to his subject that would not necessarily apply to the Middle Ages; it implies the kind of modern aesthetic detachment that would be hard to imagine in a medieval devotional poem to the Virgin, for instance. Similarly, a "lack of professionalism within the disciplinary matrix" would hardly be intelligible in Chaucer's

[63] Shaw, *Frank O'Hara and the Poetics of Coterie*, 6.
[64] Shaw, *Frank O'Hara and the Poetics of Coterie*, 4.
[65] Shaw, *Frank O'Hara and the Poetics of Coterie*, 6.

case. He was not, after all, a professional poet. What professional obligations he did have, such as the diplomatic work he shared with Deschamps and Granson, ensured not an informal or casual relationship with one another, but an increased amount of formality in their modes of address, carried out under the auspices of chivalric conventions, such as that honorific "flour."

Others aspects of coterie poetry identified by Marotti and Shaw are more applicable. For Marotti, Donne's most obvious coterie traits include "his creation of a sense of familiarity and intimacy, his fondness for dialectic, intellectual complexity, paradox and irony, the appeals to shared attitudes and group interests (if not to private knowledge), the explicit gestures of biographical self-referentiality, [and] the styles he adopted or invented."[66] We have already seen all of these at play. Deschamps's casual mention of Clifford and his offer to exchange poems creates a sense of intimacy by indicating a means through which a poetic dialogue can begin. His characterization of himself and Chaucer as gardeners, both tending to their own plants implicitly derived from the *Rose* is a kind of "biographical self-referentiality" wrapped up in a complex extended metaphor. Chivalry, as referenced in the epithets "flour" and "noble," is both a shared attitude and an adopted style. Turning to Shaw's discussion of O'Hara, the following characterization of his work is apposite, even if it is supplied by O'Hara's "negative critics": O'Hara's works "both operated in and thematized a closely knit social world—a world that often explored thresholds of membership, rhetorics of belonging, [and] so-called *private* references, including proper names."[67] Here again, these are familiar traits. The "closely knit social world" of Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson is thematized in their poetic exchange. They signal one another in their poetry in order to include each other as members of a group, and their chivalric praise of each other prompts the consideration of where in the group each individual belongs, as student, teacher, lord, or servant.[68]

III. On the Name

I would like, however, to dwell for a while on a consideration of the last attribute Shaw mentions, that of "so-called *private* references, including proper names." I have already articulated how "flour" operates as a kind of private reference, but it is important to recognize that it does so in relation to a proper name, Granson's. Shaw provides a detailed defense of the importance of proper names in O'Hara's poetry. Proper names, more than any other aspect of O'Hara's poetry, "shift the idea of coterie away from its more normative sense of a sociological entity toward that of a social rhetoric."[69] In its use of proper names, O'Hara's poetry becomes an "inventive engagement with the problem of how and in which contexts names take on meaning and who has the power to enforce this meaning."[70] Shaw believes that, by using proper names, O'Hara discovered that "the idea of coterie could explore the performative power of canonization."[71] In other words, in O'Hara the use of proper names becomes a rhetorical device that allows him to construct literary canons. When O'Hara mentions Ezra Pound or T. S. Eliot, he also guides his readers' understanding of what one is supposed to think about those literary figures. Similarly, he is able to raise the profile of other writers with whom he is acquainted,

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[66] Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet*, 19.
[67] Shaw, *Frank O'Hara and the Poetics of Coterie*, 49.
[68] Here one might also consider that Shaw sees a similar kind of polite address in the works of O'Hara. In O'Hara and his followers "geniality is not merely a state of being or even a literary theme, but a style;" see Shaw, *Frank O'Hara and the Poetics of Coterie*, 44.
[69] Shaw, *Frank O'Hara and the Poetics of Coterie*, 37
[70] Shaw, *Frank O'Hara and the Poetics of Coterie*, 37.
[71] Shaw, *Frank O'Hara and the Poetics of Coterie*, 29.

such as LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) or John Ashbery. Rather than relying on stylistic similarities or literary allusion, O'Hara names other poets in order to construct an idiosyncratic poetic canon. But the capacity for proper names to create a literary canon seems to be something Chaucer recognized as well.

First, though, one should acknowledge that a coterie reference to proper names is a far cry from the ways that names, especially of authoritative poets, usually work in medieval literature. Most often, the other poets being mentioned are the *auctores*, those classical writers who every educated person was expected to know.[72] Of course knowledge of *auctores* is not innate; one must learn who these figures are. Such knowledge is the provenance of the schoolroom, specifically the medieval study of grammar. In the early stages of a grammar school education, the pupil would encounter the *auctores* via the *accessūs ad auctores*, introductory prefaces that taught students the basics about an author and his work. One such *accessus*, for Ovid's *Heroides*, claims, "at the start of his book we must enquire into six things: the life of the poet, the title of the work, the intention of the writer, the subject-matter, the usefulness of the book, and to what part of philosophy it pertains."[73] When it comes to biographical details in particular, these short introductions are still packed with information. The same *accessus* includes the following biography for Ovid:

> He was born in the region of Paeligni; his father was called Publius and his mother Pelagia. His brother Lucius joined the ranks of the rhetoricians, but Ovid studied poetry. It must be understood that before Ovid's time no one wrote letters at Rome, but Ovid, in his time, was the first to compose letters, in imitation of a certain Greek author.[74]

Ovid's biography is contextualized both in terms of his immediate family and his larger cultural moment. These two contexts are implicitly relevant to the work at hand, with his family background explaining why he was a man of deep erudition writing verse and his place in Roman literary history providing some insight into the innovative quality of his achievement. Even when the *accessus* is less explicit about the link between the author's work and his biography, it will often still provide an extraordinary amount of information, as with the following biography of Horace:

> Horatius Flaccus, the son of a freedman, was born in Apulia and migrated with his father to the Sabine country. His father sent him to Rome to receive an education, on a very

[72] On the *auctores* and authorship see Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*.

[73] This and other quotations drawn from the *accessūs ad auctores* are taken from the translation found in A. J. Minnis, A. B. Scott, eds., with the assistance of David Wallace, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c.1100-1375: The Commentary Tradition*, revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 21. In the original Latin, this is "in principio huius libri VI sunt inquirenda, uita poete titulus operis intentio scribentis materia utilitas cui parti philosophie subponatur." See R. B. C. Huygens, ed., *Accessus ad auctores* (Berchem-Burxelles: Latomus Revue d'Études Latines, 1954), 25.

[74] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism*, 22. "Ex Peligno oppido autem natus patre Publio matre uero Pelagia. cuius frater Lucius ad rethoriciam se contulit, iste uero in poetria studuit. et sciendum est ante tempus Ouidii non esse factas epistolas Rome, sed Ouidius suo tempore ad imitationem cuiusdam Greci fecit primus epistolas." Huygens, *Accessus ad auctores*, 26. In citing this edition, I have simply followed its editorial practices.

> tight allowance, but he overcame his father's straitened circumstances by his ability (ingenium), and as a young man cultivated the friendship of Brutus.[75]

Here the genre of the *accessus* approaches something nearly like historical fiction, with a narrative that makes Horace's success all the more impressive and certain details like Horace's impecunious origins providing a kind of reality effect.[76] Once again, the main concern of the biography in this *accessus* is to place Horace in both his familial and social context. When learning about the *auctores*, in short, students were introduced to the people with whom the writer associated both privately and publicly.

Most writing about the *auctores*, though, comes from the other side of graduation from a grammar school education. It assumes that an audience will already possess a basic knowledge of the *auctores* and their biographies. Chaucer's *House of Fame* is full of references to such well-known individuals; in some sense, such recognition is what that poem is most obviously about. When Geffrey, the narrator, enters the titular house of Fame, he sees various individuals standing on pillars and bearing the weight of the fame of their subject matter, as in the following description:

> There saugh I stonden, out of drede,
> Upon an yren piler strong
> That peynted was al endelong
> With tigres blod in every place,
> The Tholosan that highte Stace,
> That bar of Thebes up the fame
> Upon his shuldres, and the name
> Also of cruel Achilles.
> And by him stood, withouten les,
> Ful wonder hy on a piler
> Of yren, he, the gret Omer;
> And with him Dares and Tytus
> Before, and eke he Lollius,
> And Guydo eke de Columpnis,
> And Englyssh Gaufride eke, ywis. (1453-70).

These writers need no introduction, which is good because they are not given any. Even when Chaucer supplies Statius's bibliography, alluding to the *Thebiad* and *Achilleid*, he assumes that his readers need no information about who Achilles is or what happened at Thebes. The writers associated with the Trojan War are given even less of an introduction. Homer, Dares, and Dictys are more or less listed, as is even the fictional authority of Lollius, a figure Chaucer invented for his *Troilus and Criseyde*. Chaucer implies that his readers would not only recognize Lollius from their reading of the *Troilus*, but also identify him as one of the *auctores*.

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[75] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism*, 33. "Horatius Flaccus libertino patre natus in Apulia cum patre in Sabinos commeauit. quem cum pater Romam misisset in ludum literarum parcissimis impensis angustias patris uicit ingenio. coluitque adulescens Brutum." Huygens, *Accessus ad auctores*, 43.

[76] The discussion of the "reality effect" of details in fiction starts with Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), 141-47.

This citation of Lollius is, I think, meant to be funny and it recalls a similarly comic moment when Chaucer treats himself as a well-known figure in the *Introduction of the Man of Law's Tale*. The Man of Law makes an apology that

> I kan right now no thrifty tale seyn
> That Chaucer, thogh he kan but lewedly
> On metres and on rymyng craftily,
> Hath seyd hem in swich Englissh as he kan
> Of olde tyme, as knoweth many a man" (II. 46-50).

Chaucer here plays with the usual way one introduces a famous poet. Rather than the laudatory paeans strewn about in the *House of Fame*, the Man of Law expects that everyone will recognize Chaucer as a sub-par poet. But so is the Man of Law. The movement of "kan" through the passage conflates the Man of Law's ability and knowledge with Chaucer's, the poet who after all created the character speaking the lines. The Man of Law "kan" not tell a story as well as could Chaucer, even though Chaucer "kan" only tell lewd tales in poor English, which is simply doing the best that Chaucer "kan." What the Man of Law and Chaucer "kan" do ironically unites them in their lack of competence. Chaucer perfectly inverts the usual effect of introducing another poet, a figure of *auctoritas* into one's poem. Rather than associating oneself with another poet in order to benefit from the general consensus about that poet's capabilities, the Man of Law associates himself with a supposedly bad poet. It just so happens to be the very poet creating the scene and a poet that no one would actually mistake for a bad poet. In doing so the Man of Law casually makes reference not only to Chaucer's name but also to the aesthetic judgment that is supposedly associated with that name. The striking thing about that reference for my purpose is that Chaucer can expect that the audience will be in on the joke. The Man of Law's allusion is only funny if the audience knows that Chaucer wrote the lines that disparage him and if the audience picks up on the further self-deprecating fact that it is supposedly his incompetence that is a well-known fact about him. The reference Chaucer makes to himself in the *Introduction of the Man of Law's Tale* is only funny, that is, if one knows that references to *auctores* rely on their status as commonplace aesthetic judgments and if one can see, then, that Chaucer is both claiming himself as an *auctor* and ironically marking himself out to be the lone bad *auctor* at the same time.[77]

But Chaucer's characterization of himself as one of the *auctores* is not simply funny because of its reversal of the normal aesthetic judgment associated with such figures; the joke also depends on an unexpected temporal shift, that the *auctor* under discussion, which is of course Chaucer himself, is living in the *hic et nunc*, that the named figure has the potential to be a contemporary of the poem's audience. Names of individuals in late fourteenth century England tend to function differently in writing than the names of the *auctores* do, as two important essays on the topic can testify. The first one is Anne Middleton's "William Langland's 'Kynde Name': Authorial Signature and Social Identity in Late Fourteenth-Century England," which focuses

[77] In other words, in addition to "Chaucer the pilgrim" and "Chaucer the man," there is "Chaucer the author" who is subject to the same kind of irony "Chaucer the pilgrim" is. On these other Chaucers, see E. T. Donaldson, "Chaucer the Pilgrim," in *Speaking of Chaucer* (New York: Norton, 1970), 1-12; and Donald R. Howard, "Chaucer the Man," *PMLA* 80 (1965): 337-43. Howard, to be sure, also addresses Chaucer as an author (as does Donaldson), but Howard is less interested in Chaucer's ironic self-presentation of authorship than he is in discovering the personality behind such a performance.

more on authorial self-naming especially as it relates to William Langland's tendency to hide his name in figurative or allegorical locutions. Such anagrammatic naming practices, Middleton points out, are typical of coterie poets.[78] They are special instances of a generalizable rule, in which "acts of authorial self-naming have more than an occasional function as momentary evocations of actual of fictive social intimacy with an audience."[79] Self-naming, of course, is occasional in that it refers to a specific historical individual within a specific context, but for Middleton it is something more. Moments of self-naming are not simply "attributive" but they also function as an "*autodefinition*: their referent is not the absent maker, but his confected presence, a living 'entente,' animated and reproduced in the act of reading."[80] Such acts conferred an extraordinary amount of power on the author naming himself, power exploited by writers like Langland or the individuals associated with the Peasant's Revolt. As Middleton explains, such naming attests to the fact that "individuals and groups were suddenly able to constitute and publish themselves at will as something new and credible, to coin and circulate social redefinitions of the self and the community—fictions, if you will—as operative fact."[81] This precipitated a late fourteenth century "crisis of the proper" in which

> one's name, in effect, becomes one's own convention for an identity that coheres around one's voluntary acts and oath-bound confederates, rather than around stability of seisin and lineal status: as an instrument for claiming rights, its 'propriety,' the integrity it proclaims, is less paternal than personal; the unit it stabilizes and defends is not the holding but the life, and a community restored to self-presence by constitutively 'memorial' acts and rituals.[82]

One had, in other words, quite a bit of leeway to define oneself. Coteries form explicitly though "one's voluntary acts" and with "oath-bound" or otherwise associated "confederates." In coteries, though, one creates communities via "constitutively 'memorial' acts and rituals" that include the naming of *other authors*.

The second essay is Emily Steiner's "Naming and Allegory in Late Medieval England," which focuses on what medieval naming practices can tell us about the allegorical naming practices in literary texts, but which also includes a general consideration of medieval names that can still tell us a great deal about coterie naming practices. In general, Steiner explains,

> medieval naming, as it appears in writing, is founded upon the idea that difference is a local quality. The successful identification of a person depends upon maintaining local contexts, not geographical location *per se*, but rather any proximity of relation, order, or place… it assumes that names are inherently descriptive rather than fixed or hereditary, and thus the capacity of names to identify depends radically upon the contexts in which they appear.[83]

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[78] Anne Middleton, "William Langland's 'Kynde Name': Authorial Signature and Social Identity in Late Fourteenth-Century England," in *Literary Practice and Social Change in Britain, 1380-1530*, ed. Lee Patterson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 15-82; discussion of coteries on 36.
[79] Middleton, "William Langland's 'Kynde Name'," 41.
[80] Middleton, "William Langland's 'Kynde Name'," 28.
[81] Middleton, "William Langland's 'Kynde Name'," 69.
[82] Middleton, "William Langland's 'Kynde Name'," 71.
[83] Emily Steiner, "Naming and Allegory in Late Medieval England," *JEGP* 107 (2007): 248-75; quote at 248.

"Geographical location" is, of course, the most obvious and common descriptor in medieval names, and here one may think of almost innumerable examples, like Gerald of Wales or Marie de France. Other examples of names denoting "proximity of relation, order, or place" abound. Names like Johnson or Richardson contain reference to familial relation, as at one point some ancestor was "John's son" or "Richard's son." Geoffrey Chaucer's name itself is an example of a name denoting a place in the social order: at one point he must have had an ancestor who was a shoemaker. Chaucer's name also discloses another feature of medieval naming practices, namely that surnames were in the process of becoming hereditary rather than just descriptive. Chaucer's father was not a shoemaker, but was a vintner, yet "vintner" is not Geoffrey's last name. Steiner summarizes the variety as follows: "it might be fair to say that there was a spectrum of identification within medieval naming practices, at one end of which was description and at the other end heredity. Only for the great landholders were description and heredity ever, properly speaking, the same thing ('I own it, therefore it is me.')."[84] Even as surnames were increasingly becoming hereditary, then, medieval naming "amounted to nothing more than a *provisional distinctiveness*."[85] Names, as Steiner shows, are emphatically local and require continual reinforcement in order to maintain their ability to refer to distinct individuals.

The coterie use of proper names, found in Chaucer and Deschamps's use of each other's names, partake in different aspects of both the way that the *auctores*' names and the way that more contemporary names work in medieval writing. Like the *accessūs*, Chaucer and Deschamps teach us how to read and understand the names they use, but these names are local—they refer to individuals in close proximity of relation to the writer—and are meaningful first and foremost in the local context of the coterie. As I have mentioned, Chaucer's *Complaint of Venus* ends with an envoy lamenting the difficulty he has following "the curiosite / Of Graunson, flour of hem that make in Fraunce" (81-82). Chaucer supplies his readers with an appositive definition informing them what, or in this case who, this "Graunson" is, implying that such a definition is necessary. In doing so he seems to follow what Steiner calls the typical practice for "plebian names" which is the "use of a distinctively lower-class first name, followed by the profession preceded by the article, and the location preceded by the preposition."[86] Chaucer plays with this form. Granson is not one of the great landholders, for whom description and heredity amount to the same thing, but neither is he a member of the lower orders for whom a great deal of contextualization is necessary. And yet, during the fourteenth century "crisis of the proper" Chaucer is in a position to make of Granson's name what he wishes, to redefine who Granson is in relationship to Chaucer's poetry. Chaucer defines this "Graunson" as a maker, a writer of poetry; that is his occupation. Not only that, but Chaucer also supplies him with a location; Granson makes his poetry "in Fraunce," another proper name that delimits the geographical boundaries under consideration. In short, Chaucer packs an extraordinary amount of information about Granson into a very short space—not as much information as what one finds in the *accessūs*, true, but in a much shorter space—enough information to make sense of an unfamiliar name. Unfamiliar proper names, names especially common in coterie settings, require that the poet take on a pedagogical role, teaching the reader what the name means in a decidedly local context.

That local context is characterized as an ongoing aesthetic relationship. Chaucer evaluates Granson's making, calling him the "flour," the best of, French makers, thereby also implying that there are several other "makers" who have been considered in making this value

[84] Steiner, "Naming and Allegory," 257.
[85] Steiner, "Naming and Allegory," 255.
[86] Steiner, "Naming and Allegory," 261.

judgment. Granson's name is given the same kind of treatment here that Chaucer would elsewhere give Francis Petrarch's. In the *Clerk's Prologue*, the reader is informed that the following tale was learned from a worthy clerk and that "Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete, / Highte this clerk whos rethorike sweete / Enlumyned al Ytaille of poetrie" (*CT* IV. 27-34). Petrarch, like Granson, requires a definition and he too receives quite a laudatory one. The difference here is that whereas Chaucer describes Granson in the present progressive tense, as one whose making is an ongoing action, he describes Petrarch in the simple past tense of the deceased, someone who is "now deed and nayled in his cheste" (*CT* IV.29). Chaucer has tried, and presumably will try in the future, to follow Granson's "curiosite," his ability, and Granson is alive to judge Chaucer's success. Deschamps, likewise, must supply Chaucer with an apposition that defines who he is: "Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier." Deschamps defines Chaucer for his readers as a really talented translator with noble qualities. In the third stanza, Deschamps's poem also treats Chaucer as a living interlocutor, someone with whom he can trade work. In all three cases, then, the named individual is introduced as an accomplished writer; a judgment of the individual's aesthetic worth is encoded into the initial definition of who that person is. But with Chaucer's praise of Granson and Deschamps's poem to Chaucer, there is also a coterie character to the introduction, implying that the name being introduced is someone known personally to the author and someone who could respond to the work. In these cases, the relationship has potential to be ongoing. These references, in other words, act like coterie references: they transpose what Shaw calls "so-called private references, including proper names," of another poet into a public assessment of that poet's worth. They create and potentially sustain a relationship between poets. Mentioning each other's names is one of the key ways in which coterie poets act like they are part of a coterie.

When poets need only act like members of a coterie in order to be counted as one, the literary and political spheres share a common problem: ideological participation in a group alone constitutes that group and creates a mode of affiliation that runs against the already predetermined hierarchical models of social identity. It is the use of proper names alone that determines where an individual stands in relation to the other coterie members. Coterie poetics, in other words, functions like chivalry in this context. The coterie assumes a familiarity among the poets—Deschamps knows Chaucer's works even if he had never actually laid eyes on any of them—that in turn creates a performed equality among them despite whatever inequalities actually exist, and here one might think of Deschamps referring to both Chaucer and himself as tending plants in the metaphorical rose garden. The correspondence between coterie poetics and chivalry, however, should come as no surprise because those poets engaging in this kind of coterie play—Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson—were also participating within the codes of behavior dictated by chivalry as part of their diplomatic work. Both require honorifics, and so Chaucer calls Granson "flour" and Deschamps calls Chaucer "noble," but the nobility in this case is only accurate for Granson and not Chaucer. The titles and pageantry of chivalry, in this case, becomes the basis for a shared joke among the poets, and that kind of shared joke provides precisely the sort of idiosyncratic diction that one would expect of a coterie work. For Chaucer and his French contemporaries, chivalry has become both the form and the content of coterie productions. Clifford and Granson are both knights, whereas Chaucer and Deschamps are not, and yet Clifford and Granson are afforded no special considerations because of their existing social status, and Clifford even serves as a courier between Chaucer and Deschamps with no particular recognition from either poet that such a task might be below a man of Clifford's stature. Instead, as I will discuss in the next section, the inequalities that exist between members

of a coterie are adjudicated according to aesthetic criteria and the pre-existing order not of politics but of literary history.

IV. Love's Authority

Coteries do not operate in a hierarchical vacuum, nor are they only capable of generating egalitarian acclamations. Deschamps praises Chaucer for translating the *Roman de la Rose* into "bon anglès." In doing so, Deschamps makes an aesthetic judgment about Chaucer's poetic ability. It is a judgment, moreover, based on Chaucer's facility with an authoritative text. Behind this coterie, making their work intelligible to one another and legitimating their innovations, is a literary tradition. This coterie formed while engaged in the work of diplomacy and under the ideology of chivalry, creating a horizontal model of affiliation between the poets and giving them similar social positions. However, that horizontal model of affiliation is still contained within a larger vertical model of hierarchical authority. Diplomacy cannot do without authority; diplomats treat with one another at the request and under the authority of their respective sovereigns. Their ability to stand in for the sovereign, to place his will and their own in a kind of identification, makes them diplomats, but they still perform the sovereign's will and still need the majesty of his person to legitimate their activities and treaties.[87] Chivalry, similarly, creates a sense of equality among the nobility, but it still depends on the qualitative difference between the nobility on one hand and the peasants, merchants, or any other class on the other hand. What is more, chivalry assumes that there is a king, an authority in whose name one may fight and by whose existence one's own actions take on meaning. The coterie, too, has its authorities. One of the things that draws a coterie together and maintains its existence is a shared sense of literary taste, what genres can be profitably referenced and what allusions can be drawn upon by its members. A shared literary taste, in part, is produced by a shared literary tradition. When Deschamps makes a reference to the *Roman de la Rose*, he can depend upon the other poets in the coterie recognizing that reference because the *Roman de la Rose* is part of their shared literary heritage.[88] That shared heritage allows coteries a certain amount of experimental leeway because certain foundational aesthetic assumptions—that love's attributes can be turned into allegorical figures, for instance— guarantee that the poems will still be intelligible to one another. More than intelligible, they can be judged based on their capacity to live up to the dictates of that shared tradition, whether an innovation seems viable or whether it pushes the tradition a bit too far. Deschamps's ballad moves within these parameters of tradition and coterie play, and so does the poem from which it takes many of its concerns: Chaucer's *Complaint of Venus*. Heretofore, the bulk of this chapter has been concerned with explicating the final line of the *Complaint of Venus*, but I will now turn my attention to the work as a whole to see what it can tell us about the shared literary authority and tradition in which the coterie of Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson write.

When Deschamps makes Chaucer's ability as a translator the explicit criteria for his aesthetic judgments about Chaucer's work, he follows Chaucer's self-reflexive judgments from

[87] Here we might think of those special clauses in medieval diplomacy, called *de rato* clauses, which state that the represented monarch has to affirm the treaty before it can go into effect. On these clauses, see Donald E. Queller, *The Office of Ambassador in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 210-12. Jenny Benham, however, has recently critiqued Queller for taking medieval documents at their word, for believing that clauses like the *de rato* clause reflect actual steps in the process. See Jenny Benham, *Peacemaking in the Middle Ages* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), especially 121.

[88] For the importance of the *Roman de la Rose* as a vernacular vehicle for *auctoritas*, see Alastair Minnis, *Magister Amoris: The Roman de la Rose and Vernacular Hermeneutics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

the envoy to the *Complaint of Venus*, in the same lines that culminate with Chaucer's appraisal of Granson.[89] Here is the envoy in full, which makes explicit how Chaucer judges his translation of Granson's ballades:

> Princes, recevyeth this compleynt in gre,
> Unto your excellent benignite
> Direct after my litel suffisaunce.
> For elde, that in my spirit dulleth me,
> Hath of endyting al the subtilte
> Wel nygh bereft out of my remembraunce,
> And eke to me it ys a gret penaunce,
> Syth rym in Englissh hath such skarsete,
> To folowe word by word the curiosite
> Of Graunson, flour of hem that make in Fraunce. (73-82)

The envoy moves through three successive concerns. First, it commends the poem, which it marks generically as a "complaint" to "Princes," whose benignity and gratitude make up for Chaucer's self-professed lack of skill. Second, Chaucer blames his deficiency on "elde,"which has robbed his memory of all the subtlety of his "endyting." Third, the translation is hard, in any event, because the scarcity of rhymes in English makes it difficult to follow, word by word, the "curiosite" that Granson has made. The difficulty with translation, then, underwrites the two initial concerns of the envoy: because of the disparity between English and French, Chaucer's dwindling capacities are not able to meet the challenge of translating Granson, necessitating the patience of his addressee. Chaucer's assessment of his own achievements is nominally different than Deschamps's. Far from boasting or proclaiming that he is a "grand translateur," Chaucer invokes a modesty topos that will become the *de rigueur* mode of authorial self-presentation among his fifteenth-century followers.[90] Chaucer's "litel suffisaunce," and perhaps even "elde," are authorial poses that here allow Chaucer to play the role of the courtly supplicant to the "Princes," who is allowed in turn to display the courtly virtues of graciousness "gre" and benignity "benignite."[91] Chaucer's self-presentation in the envoy, then, seems to inscribe a

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[89] The existence of the envoy itself may even signal an aesthetic judgment about formal variations. There is no substantial agreement for when the envoy appeared as a feature of the ballad. Many critics assume that Eustache Deschamps originated that form after the death of Guillaume de Machaut. Wimsatt, following Daniel Poirion's reading of Deschamps's *Art de Dictier*, claims that Deschamps does not popularize the ballad with envoy form until after Machaut's death in 1377, noting that the ballads on Machaut's death lack an envoy. For the lack of envoys on the ballads commemorating Machaut's death, see Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, 259. For the dating of the envoy innovation and Machaut's influence on Deschamps, see Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of "Ch"*, 61, and Daniel Poirion, *Le Poete et le prince: l'evolution du lyrisme courtois de Guillaume de Machaut a Chalres d'Orleans* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965). Ardis Butterfield, more recently, has suggested that Chaucer could have invented the practice or that he and Deschamps developed it independently of one another. See Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy*, 193-94.

[90] The pioneering work that pointed to the modesty topos as a deliberate pose in the fifteenth century Chaucer tradition is David Lawton, "Dullness and the Fifteenth Century," *English Literary History* 54 (1987): 761-99. For a broader discussion, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature in the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. William R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 411-13.

[91] Chaucer's mention of his "elde" has occasionally been used in the dating of the poem. I think that takes too literally what is part of a modesty topos. Wimsatt, for one, suggests that the *Complaint of Venus* could be dated to any time between 1374, when Granson has certain composed his original ballad sequence, and 1392, when Isabel of York dies. Wimsatt claims that the complaint about "elde" "suggests the later date." See Wimsatt, *Chaucer and his*

hierarchy of courtly actors, with Chaucer at the bottom and his addressee at the top, a hierarchy necessitated by his inability to properly translate Granson.

And yet, if one pays attention to rhyme, the same quality that Chaucer singles out for aesthetic consideration, a different assessment of the translation and courtliness emerges. The rhyme scheme is aabaabbaab. The first two a rhymes place "gre" and "benignite" in relation, which is not at all surprising and only serves to emphasize the qualities associated with courtliness that the envoy evokes as appropriate to the courtly addressee of the envoy. The next set of "a" rhymes, however, associates "me" and "subtilte," which not only serves as an authorial confession that statements cannot be taken at face value—that there will be subtle, hidden, meanings—but also serves as precisely one of those hidden meanings as it suggests how subordinates behave in courtly culture. This double poetic maneuver highlights the power differential between the Princes – full of "gre" and "benignite" – and the courtier, who protests his insufficiency on the surface but includes subtle clues that point to his skill. Subtlety is not a virtue associated with princes; indeed it runs counter to the advice usually found in the mirror for princes genre. John Gower, for instance, advises that the king must embrace the virtue of truth, meaning fidelity to his promises, "so that his word be trewe and plein, / Toward the world and so certein / That in him be no double speche."[92] But *The Complaint of Venus* is not a work that seeks to advise princes, and subtlety is not associated with governance in the envoy in any case. Subtlety is associated with "gre" and "benignite," the outcome of these courtly virtues and a virtue in its own right, but only for those engaged in "endyting," for the writers that work for those in power.[93] For such individuals, graciousness and benignity are necessary to hide their own subtle meanings.

The associations produced by the rhyme scheme also suggest that Chaucer's relationships to French poetry and to France are not as obsequious as he forthrightly claims. The envoy makes a distinction between English poetry, which it associates with "skarsete," and French poetry, especially Granson, which is judged to be a "curiosite." But these "a" rhymes are also a product of Chaucer, the "me" of the envoy, and his "subtilte." Politically, Chaucer effects a revaluation of the quality of subtlety, finding a poetic duplicity to be strength for courtly servants. Here, Chaucer's subtlety allows him to combine scarcity and curiosity. He makes a crucial change to the rhyme scheme of the envoy: while the rhyme scheme in the body was ababbccb, the rhyme scheme in the envoy is aabaabbaab. Although this change extends the stanza length by two lines, it does so with fewer rhymes – the rhyme scheme in the body includes a third rhyme (c), while the envoy simply alternates between the "a" and "b" rhymes. In effect, the rhyme's "skarsete" showcases Chaucer's capacity to produce his own "curiosities." Chaucer's complaint about the difficulty of working in English ultimately serves to emphasize his own achievement; after all, despite the difficulty, he produces a translation. In addition, the "b" rhyme in the envoy associates "suffisaunce," "remembraunce," "penaunce," and "Fraunce." Chaucer's embedded

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French Contemporaries, 214. The association of the *Complaint of Venus* with Isabel of York comes from a headnote to the poem written by John Shirley. John Scattergood has challenged this association in an important essay that point out the fact that Shirley is just reporting a rumor, not affirming the association as something he believes in his own right. See, John Scattergood, "Chaucer's *Complaint of Venus* and the 'Curiosite' of Graunson," *Essays in Criticism* 44 (1994): 171-89.

[92] John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, 3 vols., ed. Russell A. Peck with Latin Translations by Andrew Galloway (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2006), VII. 1731-33. On "truth" as fidelity to one's pledges, see Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

[93] On the different senses of the verbs "endyte" and "make," see Anne Middleton, "Chaucer's New Men and the Good of Literature in the *Canterbury Tales*," 24-33.

joke is that, while he ostensibly does not have the "suffisaunce" to call forth the necessary English rhymes out of his "remembraunce," he has the "suffisaunce" of "remembraunce" to understand "Fraunce" as a "penaunce." Like the subtle boasting about his own poetic prowess, Chaucer turns his praise of Granson as the apex of French poetry into a sly jest at the expense of France, albeit in words that are all identical in French.

Turning from the envoy to the body of the complaint does nothing to allay the sense that the difficulty of producing rhymes in the English actually showcases Chaucer's strengths as a poet. *The Complaint of Venus* is in some ways a close translation of Granson, but in other ways it is quite loose. Chaucer complains about the difficulty of following Granson "word by word," but he does nothing of the sort. His complaint invites the reader to compare his work with Granson's, to note exactly how different they are. Such an invitation to the readers' curiosity functions like the Wife of Bath's suggestion that readers interested in finding out the rest of Midas's story "redeth Ovyde, and ther ye may it leere," knowing that in Ovid readers will find a very different account (*CT* III. 982). Chaucer's treatment of source texts often calls attention to the distance between his work and the work that he cites, a distance that can have a whole host of effects, including a distrust of the purported meaning of his opinions in such matters as his fidelity to Granson's source text. But there are aspects of Granson's text that Chaucer retains, such as the rhyme scheme.[94] Granson's *Le cinq balades ensievans*, is as the title suggests, a sequence of five ballades that outline the relationship between a lover and a lady. Each ballad is composed of three stanzas of eight lines, each with a rhyme scheme of ababbccb, maintaining the same rhymed sounds throughout the entire ballade. Chaucer's poem as a whole maintains a rhyme scheme of ababbccb, also changing rhymes only when moving from one ballade to the next. Although this rhyme scheme might seem solely imitative, since it duplicates that of *Le cinq balades*, it is in fact a highly original reworking of the French rhymes, in light of the difficulty of rhyming in English described by Chaucer. English is a more analytic language than French; Chaucer is not able to depend on highly regular verb or noun endings to produce his rhyming

[94] The obvious disparities between Chaucer's translation and Granson's source has led Helen Phillips to argue that Chaucer means "word for word" in a "quantitative sense… matching all the demands made by the French rhyme scheme (despite the difficulty of doing so in English)." See introduction to the *Complaint of Venus* in Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans, eds., *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1999), 27. If that is what Chaucer means, then it is a rather unusual evocation of "word for word" to describe a translation. Would it be possible, for instance, to apply the "word for word" description to a completely different series of ballads that follow the same rhyme scheme? Calling such a different ballad sequence a translation of Granson would be strange indeed because it violates the one thing that all translations have in common: that is, according to Tim William Machan, a translation "attempts to reproduce the meaning of the source and not to utilize the source in the production of an original composition." See Tim William Machan, *Techniques of Translation: Chaucer's Boece* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1985), 2. Machan more closely approximates what one usually means by the distinction between "word for word" or "sense for sense" translation when he acknowledges that "on the one hand, a translation may imitate the lexicon and syntax of its source; on the other, it may simply attempt to capture the sense; or it may even take a middle way, capturing the sense by only partially naturalizing the grammar." See Machan, *Techniques of Translation*, 2. We might say it is the distinction between a literal and a loose translation, with a possible middle ground also available. Rita Copeland also acknowledges that the distinction between "word for word" and "sense for sense," or between literal and loose, is one of "the few inherited commonplaces" that characterize medieval vernacular translation and out of which she develops her more sophisticated considerations about the vernacular appropriation of academic disciplinary boundaries. See Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1. For a further discussion of "word for word" translations, see my discussion of Lydgate's practice in chapter three.

pairs, which makes the *Complaint* a more complex poem than its source.[95] The rhyme scheme used by both Granson and Chaucer--ababbccb— requires three rhyming sounds (a, b, and c); two of those sounds appear in pairs (a and c), while the third, b, appears four times, making it the most challenging element of each stanza. Surveying the b rhymes in both languages reveals the particular difficulty of translating French to English. For example, while Granson's first ballade relies exclusively on the most common infinitive ending of verbs in French, "-er," for the four b rhymes, Chaucer uses a series of nominalizations with the derivational suffixes –nesse and –esse for the b rhymes: "hevynesse," "worthynesse," "stidfastnesse," "gentilesse," "richesse," "noblesse," "humblesse," "besynesse," and "sikernesse" (1-24). Given the need to choose rhyme words that fit the content of the poem, it is clear that Chaucer is working with a far smaller pool of available words than Granson; he is restricted to complimentary adjectives that can be nominalized using –nesse or –esse, while his French counterpart has a wide array of verbs from which to choose. Again, the "scarsete" of English rhyme highlights the "curiosite" of Chaucer's achievement.

Chaucer's more substantial alterations also serve to emphasize his ability to work with an economical narrative of a love affair. Granson's ballad sequence has its own narrative arc: the first ballad praises the lady's qualities; the second laments that, despite the lady's virtues, she refuses the lover; the third explores the spurned lover's mental state using personifications of abstract qualities; the fourth reflects on the nature of Love, as a deified concept, and its variability; and the fifth affirms the lover's hopeless commitment to the lady.[96] Chaucer, in his two most substantial alterations, changes the gender of the speaker and removes most of the second and third ballad altogether.[97] The change of gender necessitates a wide variety of further changes, most of which are minor, as when Chaucer replaces the beloved's virtues of "beauté, bonté, et grace" with the more traditionally masculine virtues of "bounte, wisdom, governaunce" (9). However, the speaker's gender also may be behind another major change: Chaucer's sequence ends happily.[98] Chaucer's *Complaint* runs as follows: the first ballad praises the beloved's qualities; the second ballad laments the changeable nature of love and pain brought about by jealousy; and the third ballad affirms the lover's faithfulness in love "Sith I have suffisaunce unto my pay," since she has been rewarded for her efforts (70). Gone from Chaucer is Granson's second ballad, which states explicitly in its refrain that the lady refuses the lover: "Car trop par est son cuer plain de reffus." Granson's third ballad, also missing in Chaucer, explores the mental consequences for the lover of the lady's refusal. In Chaucer, the lady lover's mental anguish is occasioned by no real narrative event; it is simply the product of another mental state: jealousy. In the *Complaint of Venus*, the man is praised, not blamed, and so given

[95] In this reading, I am in agreement with Butterfield's assessment that Chaucer's achievement is the more formally complex one. See Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy*, 253-254.

[96] Granson's ballad sequence can be found, with English translation in James I. Wimsatt, ed. *Chaucer and the Poems of "Ch"*, revised edition (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2009), 59-65. This edition contextualizes these poems within the manuscript that preserves their best version, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Library MS 902, which Granson might have compiled and including poems in French that may be by Chaucer. For an updated view on all of this material, which places the Penn MS in dialogue with various continental traditions, see Elizaveta Strakhov, "Channeling War: Politics and Poetics in the Pennsylvania Manuscript," University of Pennsylvania PhD dissertation, 2014.

[97] He maintains only a few phrases from each, which he works into the third stanza of his first ballad. See the discussion in John Scattergood, "Chaucer's *Complaint of Venus* and the 'Curiosite' of Graunson."

[98] For a sustained discussion on the difference the gender of the speaker makes, see Helen Phillips, "*The Complaint of Venus*: Chaucer and de Graunson," *The Medieval Translator* 4, ed. Roger Ellis and Ruth Evans (Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1994), 86-103.

his quality and his faithfulness the love story too must end happily. While Granson expands on a lover's affective state caused by a lady's rejection over the course of five ballades, Chaucer presents a narrative of a lover's changing affective states when met by the constancy of a successful love affair.

Chaucer's alterations to the sequence's narrative structure serve to emphasize the role of jealousy, a concern he takes from Granson, but which he ultimately derives from the *Roman de la Rose*. In Granson, the third ballad presents many mental states in the form of personified abstractions, mentioning "Pitié," "Dangier," "Durté [Hardness]," "Paour [Fear]," "Bien Amer [Good Loving]," and "Mercy." Granson's use of these abstractions is typical of post-Machaut love poetry. While many of them derive from the *Roman de la Rose*, they have ceased to have any kind of narrative function; they carry a kind of static quality that the lover can simply mention as he goes through his complaint without derailing his own narrative. Granson mentions jealousy in his fourth ballad, but jealousy has no special quality there, and the role it plays is no different than that of "Dangier" in ballad three, who "est fort et ses amis sont grans [is strong and his friends are great]" (12). Granson personifies "Jalousie" and calls her "la mare du déable [the mother of the deviel]," who "veult tout vëoir et escouter [wishes to see and to hear all]" (IV. 9-10). At that point, jealousy, like the other abstractions, disappears from Granson's ballad sequence. Chaucer moves Jealousy to the second, central ballad of his three-ballad sequence, but he also drops Granson's third ballad, which eliminates all of the other abstractions and makes Jealousy the focus of the poem overall. Chaucer replaces Granson's genealogy of Jealousy with "Jelosie be hanged by a cable!" and then addresses the same desire for total surveillance expressed in Granson's fourth ballad. Chaucer goes on to add two other mentions of jealousy in his translation that are not present in Granson. He describes the transformation of the beloved's gifts from a cause for pleasure to a cause of pain as a product of "subtil Jelosie, the deceyvable," who "Ful often tyme causeth desturbyng" (43-44). Finally, in affirming the lover's attachment, Chaucer writes "Now love wel, herte, and lok thou never stente, / And let the jelous putte it in assay / That for no peyne wol I not sey nay" (61-63). Jealousy and her followers may test the lover's resolve, but the lover will not waiver. From being one of many personifications of abstract mental states in Granson, Jealousy becomes the central antagonist in the lover's narrative in Chaucer.

The central role Chaucer gives to Jealousy is something he learned from the *Roman de la Rose*.[99] In the *Rose*, Jealousy occupies a similarly central position. As is well known, the *Rose* is a poem in two parts: the shorter first part is written by Guillaume de Lorris and continued in a longer second part by Jean de Meun. The first part, taken by Jean de Meun to be fragmentary, ends with the beloved rose being imprisoned in the tower of Jealousy.[100] The role of Jealousy is so central to the narrative of the first part that Jean, reflecting back on it, says that Guillaume, the narrating lover, has Jealousy as "sa contraire [his enemy]" (10531). When Chaucer translates Granson's ballads, he too gives Jealousy the role of primary antagonist in the narrative. And when Chaucer personifies the lover's heart, which must proves its worth against "the jelous," he references the agon between the lover and Jealousy in the *Rose*. As the castle of Jealousy is being built, the narrating lover reminds Bel Ami, the personification of the lady's

[99] Quotations will be from Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, three volumes, ed. Felix Lecroy (Paris: Champion, 1965-70), and will occur parenthetically by line number in the text.

[100] On the difference between these authors, and Jean's potential misreading of Guillaume's possibly finished project, see David Hult, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First Roman de la Rose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

favor, not to let "jalousie la sauvage / Mete vostre cuer en servage / Ausi com ele a fet le cors [Jealousy the savage / Place your heart in servitude / Like he also has done to your body]" (4005-08). The *Rose* taught Chaucer that, because Jealousy is the central threat to a love relationship, the lover's heart must stand against it—"love wel, herte, and lok thou never stente"—a lesson he put to use in restructuring the narrative of Granson's ballads. Chaucer, in short, corrects Granson, "the flour of hem that make in Fraunce," by invoking the most authoritative text in the French tradition. The self-deprecating Chaucer of the envoy, who called into question his own ability to translate Granson, is revealed as a subtle poet indeed, using the authoritative *Roman de la Rose* to correct and extend his source.

Chaucer's translation of Granson, then, encodes a competitive relationship between the poets, one that uses a literary tradition to evaluate the dynamics of coterie exchange. Poetic coteries need a shared literary tradition, a common set of aesthetic values and something that makes the terms of their exchange intelligible to one another, what Hans Robert Jauss following Hans-Georg Gadamer would call a "horizon of expectation."[101] What constitutes that literary tradition can be negotiated and altered, as with Frank O'Hara's devaluation of Ezra Pound or the way that Machaut's use of personifications like "Dangier" or "Jalousie" to refer to aspects of love provided a model for writers following after him. Ultimately, though, coteries must settle upon a given set of inspirations and forerunners, things to which they can append their own semi-private references. Certainly, some of those forerunners will be shared with the culture at large, and Chaucer, Deschamps and Granson's reliance on Latin *auctores* is certainly something that they had in common with almost any other writer of the age. But even with commonly held references, members of a coterie will make aspects of those works their own. Chaucer's treatment of Jealousy in his translation of Granson is just such an instance. He valorizes one aspect of their shared literary inheritance—the central role Jealousy plays in the *Roman de la Rose*— but in doing so, he implicitly critiques Granson's version of the same figure. Because a shared literary tradition is one of the things that brings a coterie together, it is also a ground by which coterie members assess each other's work. Such an assessment will be a negotiation, a conversation, sometimes only implicit, in which members of the coterie will make the case that this or that fidelity to a shared tradition should also be understood as fidelity to one another.

Coterie references depend on members who are "in the know," a shared assumption of what members all supposedly agree upon. But that shared specific knowledge has to be taught; a case has to be made for coterie knowledge either in private conversations lost to history or in poetic references that alter the terms by which a coterie understands its literary inheritance. Chaucer's emphasis on Jealousy makes the case to Granson that, while they both operate under post-Machaut assumptions about how abstract personifications of the love affair operate in lyric poetry, the roles of some of those abstractions are more important than the roles of others. Chaucer's case is made in two ways. First, it has formal coherence on its side; Chaucer's streamlining of Granson's ballad sequence allows Jealousy's central role to take on greater affective force than it had as one of the scattershot references Granson makes to abstract personifications. Chaucer's argument is in part an aesthetic one, signaled by his judgment about his own work subtly encoded for coterie members to find in the envoy but carried out across the entire translation. In effect, he says to Granson "I can do what you did, only better." Secondly,

[101] Hans Robert Jauss, "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," in *Toward and Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 3-45; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004), especially 303-05.

Chaucer makes his argument by pitting one literary authority against another. Granson follows Machaut, but by returning to the source for both Granson and Machaut, the *Roman de la Rose*, Chaucer can use the cultural authority of the older work against more recent practitioners. Chaucer cannot rely on just one or the other aspect of his argument; they must work in tandem. Tradition is not enough to make Chaucer's case and a reliance on it alone might have caused Granson to understand Chaucer's work as simply "old-fashioned." But neither is the aesthetic argument sufficient; it must be carried out under the auspices of a shared tradition to ensure its intelligibility to other members of the coterie.

What constitutes a coterie is communally determined by its constitutive members. The parameters within which the members are able to form a coterie might be given to them by society at large, but the particular valuations they hold in common of that society's productions will largely determine who is in and who is out of a coterie's membership. In *The Complaint of Venus* Chaucer makes reference to the *Roman de la Rose* to emphasize the centrality of Jealousy as the most important antagonist in a love affair. Deschamps, in turn, takes Chaucer's reliance on the *Rose* as one of the most salient qualities of his poetic career, praising the "Grand translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier," who translated the *Rose* into "bon anglès." Deschamps seems to acquiesce to the terms of aesthetic judgment that Chaucer laid down in the *Complaint of Venus*, that fidelity to the *Rose* will unite this coterie. Even as he does so, however, Deschamps introduces his own qualifications. He praises not only Chaucer's translation of the Rose, but also of Granson's ballads, the "fleurs" that Chaucer plants. Deschamps equates the importance of translating these works, reassessing the aesthetic worth of Granson's poetry and giving it more *auctoritas* than Chaucer had accorded to it. Deschamps ultimately makes fidelity to the *Rose* and to Granson the salient qualities that constitute membership in their coterie. By taking Chaucer's initial aesthetic judgment and expanding it, Deschamps demonstrates that the qualifications for membership in a coterie are never settled. We do not have a clear response from Chaucer to Deschamps's ballad. Unlike Granson, with whom Chaucer seems to have sustained a long acquaintance, Chaucer's relationship with Deschamps seems to end with Deschamps's initial contact. Perhaps Chaucer never did reply, and so the coterie connection between these men ended with Deschamps's alterations to the terms of this coterie's membership, terms to which Chaucer perhaps could not accede whether by active disagreement or perhaps simple disinterest. Positing a reason for Chaucer's silence would take us back into the realm of speculation.

The fact of Chaucer's silence, however, raises one final consideration in terms of coterie poetics that the relationship between Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson teaches us. Coteries are dynamic things. They require active participation, a call and a response among the various individuals in order for their coterie membership to remain current. Just as coteries are formed by the active interest their members take in each other's work, so too they dissolve when faced with indifference. By way of a conclusion, then, I would like to consider what the dynamism of coterie poetics can tell us about the formation and maintenance of literary traditions. As I have already argued, literary traditions supply coteries with the parameters within which their various formal procedures and aesthetic judgments make sense. But coteries do more than simply plunder tradition for their own purposes. They remake it, valorizing this or that poem or author and this or that stylistic or formal trope. In doing so, it becomes difficult to tell where a coterie stops and a tradition begins. When does a judgment about a literary tradition take on the requisite force to form a new literary tradition? Who makes that judgment? Like coteries, traditions are dynamic organisms. In some instances, as is the case with Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson, tradition relies on the poetic agency of coteries in order to prolong its existence, changing in a

dialectic with them, each constituting the other and each ultimately creating new coteries and new traditions.

V. Tradition and the Corporate Talent

I will end, then, with a passage that John Guillory claims "lies behind every subsequent reflection on tradition in twentieth-century criticism," a passage from T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent."[102] Eliot claims that tradition has "a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order."[103] He then explains that order:

> The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities.[104]

Some of what I have been arguing accords quite well with Eliot's vision here. First, one might note that tradition alone does not dictate a poetic production, and Eliot goes on to claim that "to conform merely would be for the new work not really to conform at all; it would not be new and would therefore not be a work of art."[105] Instead, the new work and tradition are mutually constitutive. Old works make room for the new works as the present alters the past. Tradition is dynamic. It is constantly changing and doing so by the agency of the practicing artist. Eliot warns them that tradition "cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour."[106] But what is strikingly different in Eliot's account of tradition and what I have been arguing about the interaction between coterie and tradition is Eliot's emphasis on the individual. Eliot envisions "the new work" entering "the existing order" of tradition, both with the definite article "the," a singular and specific new work entering a singular and specific tradition. Coterie productions suggest that Eliot's vision is too focused on individuals, whereas coterie productions focus on the relationship between tradition and the *corporate talent*.

By *corporate talent* I mean a couple of different things. First, *corporate talent* means a talent that is embodied, that is to say a living talent. The dynamism of Eliot's tradition is between the living individual and the dead. Eliot writes that "no poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead."[107] The interaction between the living and the dead is one of the reasons, along with the present's capacity to change the past, that Christopher Cannon claims Eliot's vision of

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[102] John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 142-43.
[103] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *The Sacred Wood and Major Early Essays* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1998), 28.
[104] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 28.
[105] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 29.
[106] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 28.
[107] Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 28.

artistic production is as metaphysical and mystical as G. W. F. Hegel's. For Cannon, what gets excluded from Eliot's vision are those works that do not fit easily into the "existing order," those texts without literary descendants.[108] I am more concerned with those poets and texts with which the individual work of literature is in dialogue. As with Chaucer's expectation for a continuous engagement with Granson in opposition to Petrarch, these dialogues constitute a living tradition in a literal sense, a tradition carried out among living individuals. Such a living tradition leads me to the second sense in which I mean *corporate talent*: because artists are embodied human beings, they are embodied in a world of human plurality.[109] As Arendt reminds us, "the human condition of plurality" refers to "the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world."[110] An artist never works in a total vacuum but in a world filled with other human beings with whom the artist interacts in a variety of different ways, some of which certainly impact the work of art; even Eliot needed Pound as an editor. An artist never, then, writes only for the dead, but also for the living or even for those yet to come. The coterie artists shapes his or her reactions to tradition in dialogue with other artists, and they together determine what works of the past they will valorize and what aspects of art they will promote to future generations.

But coteries cannot act with total freedom; the condition of human plurality requires codes of behavior, rules and regulations that guarantee that humans can continue living among each other with civility and in a society. Coteries cannot write without recourse to any known tradition. If they do, their works will be unintelligible, even perhaps to each other. Just as there is no private language, there is no private tradition. And there is no private literature. Literature is not a separate sphere of existence in which an artist can work without recourse to the other experiences that come from being an embodied individual in a society. Literature will be constrained, whether through legal methods or more subtle forms of self-policing, by the rules governing a society. In the late fourteenth century, as I have argued, one system of rules governing the society in which Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson lived was chivalry. Their roles as peace negotiators required a performance of chivalry, one that did not dissipate as they began writing poems to one another. This performance reveals chivalry's fundamentally literary character, the way in which its foundational principles were constructed through stories. Belief in the authority of the nobility, and in the equality of each noble to every other noble were ideals articulated in chivalric narratives, which thereby shaped the behavior of readers. The authority of nobility and their equality among themselves turned out to be constructed, made by stories that individuals tell one another, stories that one believes in enough to act according to their rules. Literature, reciprocally, turned out to be political in the same way. The authority of tradition granted individual poets the right to conduct themselves in certain ways, but that authority was constructed and tested by these same poets interacting with one another under the rubric of intelligibility provided by that tradition. Just as the political realm had its kings and diplomats, the literary realm had its *auctores* and coteries. Each model of vertical hierarchy and horizontal affiliation had their own claims on individuals as political actors and as poets.

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[108] See the excellent discussion of Eliot in Christopher Cannon, *The Grounds of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 42-49.

[109] Another way to put the difference would be that Cannon criticizes Eliot for not addressing the insights of the Hegel of the *Philosophy of History* by failing to account for the embeddedness of Spirit in matter, whereas I am critiquing Eliot for not accounting for the Hegel of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*'s emphasis on the importance of alterity, of other individuals, to self-consciousness. See G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); and *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

[110] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, second edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 7.

Even as they share a tradition or a political role, though, individual poets will have idiosyncratic positions within that tradition or polity that are determined by the other relations, both political and literary, that define them. Chaucer's position as a subject of Richard II and a diplomat in France placed him in a different relationship to French poetry than Deschamps had as a subject of Charles V. Charles V had instituted a policy of literary translation in an attempt to bolster the reputation of the Valois dynasty. He commissioned a number of Aristotle's works to be translated into French by Nicholas Oresme, including the *Politics*, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *On the Heavens*, and the pseudo-Aristotlean *Economics*. He also commissioned different individuals to translate the *De proprietatibus rerum* of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, the *De civitate Dei* by St. Augustine, the *De regimine principum* of Giles of Rome, and portions of the Bible.[111] Charles was making a bid to make the French language the language of culture, and France its seat. No wonder Deschamps felt proprietary about the *Roman de la Rose*. Chaucer, in contrast, translated Boethius for no one in particular as far as we can tell. Lynn Staley has argued that the political centralization of France was matched by Charles V's translation policy, but that there was no similar move toward centralizing English politics or literature, at least no successful one.[112] One consequence of the English situation is the oft-lamented lack of any reference to Chaucer's poetry in his life-records. That lack is regrettable, but we do have some of his diplomatic records, and that form of politics was also literary. Chaucer as a diplomat was paid to make his living using words, and he was good at it, good enough to be paid to do it three times over the course of six months in 1377 alone. Given the literary nature of diplomacy, then, it may be that his diplomatic records are as close as we are going to get to an official acknowledgement of his capabilities with words. The French poets could more easily rely on official recognition of their capabilities.

Political recognition was not the only means these poets had for establishing some sort of authority. As I have shown, they could claim an authority derived from a poetic tradition, as well as contest each other's claims to that authority. Regardless of whether their claims were accepted or not, however, these poets recognized that a literary tradition is an authority that individuals shape together. That lesson would be an extraordinarily empowering one for the fifteenth-century English poets that follow in the Chaucer tradition. The sense of agency that shared construction of tradition affords later poets places this model of poetic inheritance in diametric opposition to the one outlined by Harold Bloom in his *The Anxiety of Influence*, a model that has

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[111] For a discussion of social work of these translations, see Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 266-72. For some speculation as to why England has no comparable vernacular translation program, see Alastair Minnis, *Translations of Authority in Medieval English Literature: Valuing the Vernacular* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), especially 17-67.

[112] Lynn Staley, *Languages of Power in the Age of Richard II* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005). Of course, for many years there was a scholarly consensus about such a language policy being enacted by the Lancastrians. See the three articles that promoted the idea of a Lancastrian interest in English, which are in chronological order John Fisher, "Chancery English and the Emergence of Standard Written English," *Speculum* 52 (1977): 870-899); Malcolm Richardson, "Henry V, the English Chancery, and Chancery English," *Speculum* 55 (1980): 726-50; and, most forcefully, John Fisher, "A Language Policy for Lancastrian England," *PMLA* 107 (1992): 1168-80. If such a valorization of English by the Lancastrians did in fact exist, it is much later than the period I am addressing here. What's more, the recent work of Gwilym Dodd has called such a policy into question. See Gwilym Dodd, 'The Spread of English in the Records of Central Government, 1400-30," in *Vernacularity in England and Wales, c. 1300-1550*, ed. Elisabeth Salter and Helen Wicker (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 225-66; "The Rise of English, the Decline of French: Supplications to the English Crown, c. 1420-50," *Speculum* 86 (2011): 117-150; "Trilingualism in the Medieval English Bureaucracy: The Use and Disuse of Languages in the Fifteenth Century Privy Seal Office," *Journal of British Studies* 51 (2012): 253-83.

tended to shape discussions of those poets in the Chaucer tradition since its deployment in Seth Lerer's *Chaucer and His Readers*.[113] Allow me to return one last time to the epithet, "the flour of hem that make," to explain this point. The word "flour," as I have argued, becomes important in designating a relationship to Chaucer first in an Anglo-French coterie context. Deschamps expands on it first in his ballad, but then it is likewise picked up by fifteenth-century English poets, who used that designation to their own ends. For example, while Gower speaks of Chaucer as "in the floures of his youthe" writing "ditees…and songes glade," the new associations with the term "flour" allow Thomas Hoccleve to call Chaucer the "flour of eloquence."[114] Hoccleve was far from the only poet who made use of this new epithet for vernacular poets. John Lydgate's *The Floure of Curtesye* may be an extended play on this connotation, as might his obsession with Chaucer's laurel crown and his elevation of the English tongue. He elsewhere mentions Chaucer's "flowers of rhetoric eloquence" and "the flourys first of rethoryk" and calls him the "Floure of Poets." John Walton and William Dunbar also partake of this tradition.[115] In using "flour" to designate poetic achievement, the Chaucer tradition makes it a signature of its own investment in Chaucer's status; he is termed several different types of flowers by several different poetic inheritors. This designation is an extension of Chaucer's exchange with Deschamps. For those fourteenth-century poets, the "flour" epithet was used to signal membership in a coterie that had all inherited a similar tradition. In the fifteenth century it becomes a means to signal membership in a tradition that was now recognizably Chaucerian. The intersection of tradition and coterie that governed the work of Chaucer and Deschamps is extended through time and space in order to create a new tradition with Chaucer as its head, a tradition that would have to negotiate its own affiliations and authorizations in turn.

[113] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973). See also, Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
[114] See, John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, VIII. 2943-45; and Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles R. Blyth (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1999), line 1962.
[115] For all of these references collected in one place, see Caroline Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion 1357-1900* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), vol. 1, 10-66. I discuss Hoccleve's relationship to Chaucer in chapter two and Lydgate's relationship to Chaucer in chapter three.

Chapter 2
Traditional Exclusions: Hoccleve, Christine de Pizan, and the Limits of Coterie

This chapter begins with the axiom that any act of inclusion is also an act of exclusion, that in order to create an identity with one thing a subject must designate differences from other things, and the properly dialectical point that those identities and differences need each other in order to be meaningful.[1] At such a level of abstraction, however, this statement tells us little; its interest must come in the details, the specific mechanisms whereby identity and difference are instantiated, contested, and reformulated. If the last chapter was about the way Geoffrey Chaucer navigated identifications and distinctions both with coterie members in the persons of Eustache Deschamps and Oton de Granson and with the French literary tradition more broadly, then this chapter explores the way Thomas Hoccleve was instrumental in the formation of an identity, that of an English poet following in the wake of Chaucer, by effacing his identification with, and thereby differentiating himself from, another prominent French poet, Christine de Pizan. In certain ways Hoccleve's situation is analogous to Chaucer's: he takes inspiration from the French tradition as a whole and specifically from a prominent contemporary within that tradition. But the fact that Hoccleve postdates Chaucer is the defining condition that distinguishes the two poets. Hoccleve had an illustrious English predecessor; Chaucer did not. Whereas Chaucer engages with his French contemporaries on the shared basis of the French literary tradition, Hoccleve engages with Christine by eschewing a direct address with her and instead basing his poetic identity on a personal connection with the recently deceased Chaucer. In other words, Hoccleve chooses one coterie, made through his association with a dead poet, over another potential coterie with a living author. In effect, Hoccleve's coterie identification with Chaucer extends the notion of coterie poetics through time, creating not simply a quantitative shift but a qualitative one, as the notion of coterie begins to bleed over into a concept of tradition. The story of how a tendency toward forms of coterie association becomes instead the Chaucerian tradition is a long one, and one that it is the work of this dissertation to detail, but it begins with Hoccleve choosing Chaucer at the expense of Christine.

To say that Hoccleve identifies with Chaucer or follows him in creating coteries does not mean that he does so mindlessly or without altering the coterie forms he finds in Chaucer.[2] Chaucer's coterie with Deschamps and Granson, as I have argued, follows certain expectations we have for coterie poetics—it is constructed out of personal relationships; it uses specialized terminology including proper names; it allows for a dynamic engagement with literary tradition—even as these poets expand that notion so that it is no longer geographically bound.[3] It is not certain, though, that Hoccleve would have known about this particular coterie. There is no record of Deschamps's ballad circulating in England and without it the complexity of the relationship between Chaucer and the two French poets might not have been apparent. Certainly, Hoccleve might have heard about the relationships within this older coterie from Chaucer himself, but if he did there is no real evidence of it in his poetry, no paean to Deschamps or

[1] The dialectic of identity and difference as a generator of meaning is particularly important in the work of G. W. F. Hegel; see especially the opening movements of G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Prometheus Books, 1991). For the importance of medieval thought to Hegel's development of this dialectic, see Andrew Cole, *The Birth of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 24-61.

[2] Characterizing Chaucer's followers as being solely indebted to the way Chaucer does things is characteristic of Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). In contrast, I am interested in the way they assert their agency in creating their own versions of Chaucer.

[3] See the discussion of coterie characteristics in chapter one.

Granson that matches the treatment Hoccleve gives to the preceding generation of English poets. Even if he had known about it, there is likewise no guarantee that Hoccleve would have found following the patterns of that earlier coterie useful. As a writer, Hoccleve occupied a very different position than Chaucer did throughout his career. Nowhere was this difference more evident than in their respective social and poetic circles of colleagues and friends. Chaucer, as we have seen, was fairly well-positioned; he could create coteries abroad with prominent French poets, using English nobles like Sir Lewis Clifford as couriers. At home, the list of Chaucer's known associates extends from people as powerful as John of Gaunt to minor nobility like Sir Peter Buckton and Sir Philip de la Vache to men such as Henry Scogan, eventual tutor of Henry IV's sons.[4] Hoccleve, by contrast, was a scribe and a Privy Seal clerk, very much a member of a lower social order with the contacts to match.[5] It was one thing for Chaucer and the poets who travelled on the margins of the nobility to appropriate the affectations of that class—by calling one another "noble" and "flour"—and another thing altogether for a group of clerks to do so. The kinds of coteries that Hoccleve might form with his fellow clerks would have to conduct themselves very differently. And yet Hoccleve's position afforded him some access to wealthier and more powerful individuals, and one such potentially beneficial contact was Chaucer himself, whom Hoccleve may have met while serving as his scribe, if not before.[6] Chaucer, however, was of an older generation than Hoccleve and he died while Hoccleve was still in search of poetic and social recognition. In order to benefit from his association with Chaucer, Hoccleve would have to extend his coterie connections beyond the veil of death to include past relationships.

Another association that Hoccleve might have been able to form based on his available social resources was with the poet Christine de Pizan. Hoccleve's ties to Christine are more circumstantial than his ties to Chaucer. It is unlikely, for instance, that Hoccleve and Christine would have ever met personally. And yet, Hoccleve must have had some sort of easy access to her poetry because of the very unusual fact that he translated one of her poems—her *L'epistre au dieu d'amours* became his *Letter of Cupid*—only three years after she wrote it in 1399.[7] As I have argued in the last chapter, Chaucer's translation of Granson's ballads could have occurred in a similarly short period of time, but the swiftness of that translation is due to the close coterie

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[4] *The Book of the Duchess* was likely written for John of Gaunt and *Truth* is associated with Philip de la Vache. *L'envoy de Chaucer à Buckton* and the *Envoy to Scogan* and were written for the two named in the respective titles. For these poems, and any other work by Chaucer, see Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer* ed. Larry Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986). All further references to Chaucer's works will appear parenthetically within the text.

[5] For a discussion of the importance of the Chancery to Hoccleve's conception of himself as a writer, including a discussion of the personal relationships Hoccleve would have developed there, see Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2001). The importance of Knapp's book to the study of Hoccleve cannot be overstated; this chapter, like any other work on Hoccleve at the present moment, necessarily follows in its footsteps.

[6] Hoccleve is identified as "Scribe E" in A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, "The Production of Copies of the Canterbury Tales and Confessio Amantis in the Early Fifteenth Century," *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: essays presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. B. Parkes and A. G. Watson (London: British Library, 1978), 163-210. See also A. S. G. Edwards and Derek Pearsall, "The Manuscripts of the Major English Poetic Texts," in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*, ed. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 257-78.

[7] For Christine's work, see Christine de Pizan, "L'epistre au dieu d'amours," in *Poems of Cupid, God of Love*, ed. and trans. Thelma S. Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 34-75. Translation from Christine's French will be taken from this text. For Hoccleve's poem, see Thomas Hoccleve, "Letter of Cupid," in *'My Compleinte and Other Poems*, ed. Roger Ellis (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), 93-111. Citations of each of these works will occur parenthetically within the text.

ties between the two poets. It would be far more typical for a substantial period of time to elapse between a source text and a translation in the Middle Ages. It took around 40 years, for instance, for Giovanni Boccaccio's *Teseida* to become Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*; approximately 40 years for a lyric from Guillaume Deguileville's popular *La pèlerinage de la vie humaine* to be translated as Chaucer's *ABC*; and it took 60 additional years for Deguileville's entire poem to be translated as John Lydgate's *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*.[8] Translation takes time, as does manuscript production and circulation; there are very real intellectual and material roadblocks to a writer's ability to translate recent work from far away places. What is more, Hoccleve's specificity about the date of the translation—he keeps the location, Cupid's palace, and the month of the translation, May, but he changes the year from "mil trois cent quatre vins" (795) to "Millesimo CCCC and secounde" (476)—suggests that the year itself is meaningful, that there is some occasion that prompts the translation. Occasionality is a sign of personal relationships, often of maker of some coterie.

As Ethan Knapp suggests, the rapidity of Hoccleve's translation was probably due in no small part to Christine's contemporary reputation in England as well as to his own bureaucratic milieu:

> It is possible that the unusual speed of Hoccleve's work was due to a specific request for such a translation. Henry IV had come into possession of Salisbury's copies of Christine's work upon the earl's death in 1400 and had subsequently invited Christine to England; a quick translation may have been Hoccleve's way of offering himself as a substitute when Christine declined Henry's offer. Alternatively, this speed might suggest the existence of a bureaucratic equivalent to the close cultural links between English, French, and Italian aristocracies that Gervase Mathew outlined under the rubric of "international court culture," some bureaucratic coterie crossing national boundaries.[9]

Though Knapp presents Henry IV's court and an international network of bureaucrats as alternative sources for Hoccleve's translation, it is more likely that the two milieus were intertwined. The latter scenario involving the exchange of poetry among a coterie of bureaucrats from different kingdoms necessarily depends on certain aspects of the former scenario, in which the nobility of one kingdom conducts some sort of commerce with another kingdom. Left to their own devices, bureaucrats would not necessarily have the resources or even the inclination to carry on sustained communications between kingdoms; the impetus and ability to form a cross-kingdom coterie would have to come from the decisions of the nobility. Marriage could provide such a reason, as could war. Here it seems to be both: the marriage negotiations between Richard and Isabella were part of an attempt at the end of Richard's reign to create a lasting peace that would end the Hundred Years War. The ongoing war and the continual negotiations it produced would have necessitated sustained contact by a host of bureaucrats, who would have served as the record-keeping, document-producing foundation that undergirded the communication among the nobility. But as the war progressed, and Richard's reign was replaced by Henry's after the usurpation, the prerogatives of the nobility shifted and the interactions of the clerical class

[8] See Guillaume Deguileville, *La pèlerinage de la vie humaine*, ed. J. J. Stürzinger (London: Roxburghe Club, 1893); and John Lydgate, *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, ed. F. J. Furnivall with an introduction and notes by Katharine B. Locock, EETS e. s. 77, 83, 92 (London: Kegan Paul, 1899-1904)

[9] Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse*, 55. Knapp is referring to Gervase Mathew, *The Court of Richard II* (New York: Norton, 1968).

among themselves and with the nobility would have to change as well. Hoccleve's translation of Christine's poem is a product of this changing culture. It seems likely to me that he intended it "as way of offering himself as a substitute" for Christine, as Knapp puts it, a translation made possible by the cultural exchange between English and French bureaucrats, intended for the king even if not commissioned by him, an attempt to move from a coterie of clerks to one funded by royal patronage, an individual relationship between a poet and the king.[10]

If Hoccleve understood himself as a "substitute" for Christine, he also understood that he was not identical to Christine, that the transitive property does not extend to persons, and that while there were aspects of Christine's poetry and persona that he could not offer in her stead, there were other things he could offer that she could not. First and foremost among these additional benefits was the fact that he was an English poet who had known Chaucer. I will begin my discussion of Hoccleve's coterie poetics by looking at his *Letter of Cupid*, a poem whose coterie origins and aspirations remain implicit. The *Letter of Cupid* does not do one thing that all the other works I have heretofore discussed do: it does not name names. Christine is Hoccleve's source and Chaucer provides Hoccleve with a stylistic model as well as actual content at points, and yet Hoccleve's poem refers to neither of these other poets. Hoccleve's silence gets him into trouble with contemporary critics, for whom his effacement of Christine hints at misogyny, and it would appear that it also caused problems in the contemporary reception of his poem, problems that he addresses in his *Series*. There, as in the *Letter of Cupid* itself, Hoccleve turns to Chaucerian models to defend his translation. In so doing—in turning to a masculine authority figure to justify his translation—Hoccleve seems at first to exemplify precisely Christine's critique of the male-dominated literary tradition. In turning to Chaucer specifically—the poet of the *Miller's Tale*—he further fits her model; Christine is a relentless critic of the vulgarity of male writers as well. In contrast to these negative images of Chaucer, however, Hoccleve directs readers of the *Series* to the *Letter of Cupid*, where he uses allusions to Chaucer to enhance his translation of Christine's poem, thereby bolstering and supporting her as a poet as well. Hoccleve's supplementation of Christine, though, is not done for the benefit of, or through the means of, abstract notions of literary belonging. He is beginning to build a tradition, not making use of one that is ready-made.

Hoccleve makes use of personal ties, ties that remain implicit in the *Letter of Cupid*, but become explicit in the *Regiment of Princes*, at least in part. I will argue that, in the latter poem, Hoccleve emphasizes that his relationship to Chaucer is personal, that he knew him not simply as a poet, but as a human being. In characterizing their relationship as a personal one, built on ties of friendship and mentorship, Hoccleve claims that he and Chaucer are part of a coterie. Their coterie relationship grants Hoccleve the special capacity to judge what was important about

[10] In the early fifteenth century, Christine's English reputation was well established. Her ties to that country began when John Montagu, the earl of Salisbury, who was in France negotiating the eventual marriage between Richard II and Isabella of Valois met Christine and took her son back to England. After the Epiphany Uprising of 1400 and the earl's execution, Henry IV transferred Christine's son to the court and likewise set about trying to get Christine to come to England. Christine rebuffed the English king, but the knowledge that there was a desire to have a poet of her caliber in the royal household could have trickled down to Hoccleve, who then acted upon that knowledge by translating Christine's poem in an attempt to win royal favor for himself. For Christine's version of these events, see Christine de Pizan, *Le livre de l'avision Cristine*, ed. Christine Reno and Liliane Dulac (Paris: Champion, 2001); and Christine de Pizan, *The Vision of Christine de Pizan*, trans. Glenda McLeod and Charity Cannon Willard (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005). For a critical assessment, see J. C. Laidlaw, "Christine de Pizan, the Earl of Salisbury and Henry IV," *French Studies* 36 (1982): 129-43; and Charity Cannon Willard, *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea Books, 1984).

Chaucer's poetry. As it will turn out, Hoccleve claims that the important aspects of Chaucer's poetry are those things that seem similar to Hoccleve's work, most importantly the ability to write advice to princes. But advising princes was not really something Chaucer did. It is something Hoccleve would like to do in the *Regiment of Princes*, and it is something that Christine de Pizan most emphatically did. Hoccleve might have felt to need to supplement Christine in the *Letter of Cupid*, but supplementing Christine is not the same as superseding her and, as I will show, Hoccleve remained indebted to Christine for quite some time, even as he continued to remain silent about her. To put the relationship in the terms of an analogy, Christine is to Hoccleve as Boccaccio is to Chaucer. In both cases, the foreign poet acted as a continual source of inspiration, one of the most important influences that taught the English poet what poetry could be. But groups need outsiders just as much as they do insiders and, by choosing to align himself with Chaucer and not Christine, Hoccleve chooses to identify himself with an English poet and one whose reputation was growing, at the very moment that the Hundred Years War made the difference between England and France a topic of great concern.

I. Gender and Translation

Hoccleve's translation of Christine in the *Letter of Cupid* is a somewhat understudied poem. For much of the twentieth century, Hoccleve himself was only sparingly written about, usually as an imitator of Chaucer, part of the fifteenth century decline in literary quality as poets tried and failed to live up to Chaucer's example.[11] Critics tended to focus on Hoccleve's longer and more ambitious poems, *The Regiment of Princes* and his experimental gathering of five interrelated poems under the general title of the *Series*.[12] The *Letter of Cupid* was, comparatively, a minor poem by a minor poet, and a translation at that, the kind of work that earlier criticism, with its modernist prejudice in favor of innovation, would be sure to ignore. With the rise of feminist criticism and its interest in Christine as a kind of foundational figure, all of that changed and by the late twentieth century Hoccleve's poem had begun to receive a good deal of attention as the earliest reception of Christine in England.[13] Of course, much of that criticism focused on whether or not the changes Hoccleve made to Christine's poem were misogynist or not.[14] The critical

[11] The earlier critical neglect of the fifteenth century is now a commonplace. For an early intervention and useful summary of the problem, see David Lawton, "Dullness in the Fifteenth Century," *English Literary History* 54 (1987): 761-99.

[12] See Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles R. Blyth (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999); and Thomas Hoccleve *The Series*, in *'My Compleinte and Other Poems*, ed. Roger Ellis (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001). References to the *Regiment* will be cited parenthetically within the text. Citations of *The Series* will refer to the text, by the order in which it occurs, and line number.

[13] For an important and relatively early summary of feminist criticism's interest in Christine, see Sheila Delany, "Mothers to Think Back Through: Who Are They? The Ambiguous Example of Christine de Pizan," in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, eds. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987), 177-97.

[14] For an early essay supporting Hoccleve, see John V. Fleming, "Hoccleve's 'Letter of Cupid' and the "Quarrel' over the *Roman de la Rose*," *Medium Aevum* 40 (1971): 21-40. For a less favorable reassessment stemming from the rise of feminist criticism, see Diane Bornstein, "Anti-Feminism in Hoccleve's Translation of Christine de Pizan's *Epistre au dieu d'amours*," *English Language Notes* 19 (1981): 7-14. The critical disagreement expanded to general considerations about Hoccleve's treatment of women, especially as the *Letter of Cupid* relates to the *Series*. For an argument that Hoccleve's tone is mocking, see Karen Winstead, "'I am al other to yow than yee weene': Hoccleve, Women, and the *Series*," *Philological Quarterly* 72 (1993): 143-55. For a more sympathetic reading of Hoccleve, see Anna Torti, "Hoccleve's Attitude Towards Women: 'I shoop me do my peyne and diligence / To wynne hir loue by obedience," in *A Wyf Ther Was: Essays in Honor of Paule Mertens-Fonck*, ed. Juliette Dor (Liège: Université de Liège, 1992), 264-74.

interest in the poem's relationship to gender, both as a topic within the poem itself and as a part of its reception, continues unabated through to Knapp's treatment of the poem, in which he argues that Hoccleve uses Christine's construction of a "new hybrid identity," that of a "female clerk," in order to think through his own marginal position to literary authority.[15] The success of Hoccleve's translation, then, has become something that one judges based on his handling of the discussion of gender in his source text. But I think that our tendency to judge Hoccleve's poem according to its handling of gender would have come as no surprise to him, because Hoccleve made a series of choices in his translation that foreground that very issue.

For one, there is his choice of source text: a full summary of Christine's poem reveals how persistently it addresses medieval misogyny. Christine's poem begins with a formal opening, befitting the royalty of Cupid, the nominal author of the letter, and lays out its primary objective: to address the "piteuses plaints" made by women against disloyal men (lines 1-22; quote at 10). France is singled out as a location where the problem is particularly egregious and Cupid outlines the lovesickness that men use to guilt women into loving them (23-59). Cupid then lists the virtues that make a good lover, before claiming that women are trusting victims and that men gossip, detailing their sexual exploits, with one another, whether or nor the exploits actually happened (60-192). Using the example of good and bad angels, Cupid argues that a few bad women cannot damage the reputation of all women, and further claims that bad women should not be named (193-222). He goes on to praise contemporary examples of good men, including Hutin de Vermeilles and Oton de Granson, but refrains from adding more names to the list lest he be charged with flattery (223-258). The topic then shifts to clerks who defame women by writing school texts using Biblical examples of female treachery and especially to Ovid, whose works are particularly damning and full of lies, written out of his own frustrated experiences as a seducer of women, all of whom must be excused from some of the blame of lustful behavior because they are not the ones doing the seducing (259-388). Jean de Meun and the *Roman de la Rose* come under fire next; Jean's poem is erudite but uses its learning to trick women, who must be more faithful than their stereotypes because otherwise men would not need such outlandish methods to seduce them (389-406). These learned books are filled with tales of unfaithful women simply because they were written by men, not women (407-430). Instead, Cupid affirms that the opposite is true and that it is men who are unfaithful (431-436), which he proves using the examples of Medea (437-444), Dido (445-460), and Penelope (461-481). Cupid claims that the only men who are deceived were deceivers first themselves; that many men who slander him do so because they have become too old and tired to love; that despite their age, these lecherous old men use flattery to seduce women; and that flattery is what destroyed Troy and many other kingdoms (482-556). Against the slanders written about women, Cupid offers the example of the special role they play in the gospels and stories about the life of Christ, especially the Virgin Mary (557-590). Cupid then recuperates Eve, who was not made out of mud, like Adam, and did not deceive Adam but simply believed the deception of the serpent (591-616). Cupid claims that he does not want to judge whether men or women are better or worse than one another, but simply points out that women do not commit violent crimes or wage war, nor do they commit treason, crimes against property, or cause kingdoms to fall; and if the reason they avoid those crimes is that those things are not in their nature, then that is all the more reason to praise them, like we praise the saints (617-710). Women should be appreciated and loved because they give birth to men and are the only ones men may love by natural law, and hating what you should love is shameful (711-770). Cupid ends by banishing all who would

[15] Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse*, 73.

deceive or speak ill of women and asks that his followers help him carry out the decree, dated May, 1399, and witnessed by a variety of gods and goddesses (771- 822).

As this summary makes clear, Christine's *Epistre* is one of her earliest forays into several of the issues that will define her work for years to come. She is concerned about the traditional behaviors associated with the literature of courtly love, and yet at the same time she is a staunch defender of the virtues that literature assigns to both men and women.[16] She structures her argument around exemplary figures, beginning to create a genealogy of virtuous women. Christine's exemplary women, and the specific virtues associated with those women, would later reappear as the primary subject matter for two of her works: probably the most famous ones for modern audiences, *The Book of the City of Ladies* and *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*.[17] Perhaps most importantly for Hoccleve, though, she begins to explore the problems inherent in the fact that characterizations of women in literature are almost exclusively made by male authors, pointing to Ovid and Jean de Meun as particularly egregious offenders. Christine's criticism of male authors would shortly coalesce into the beginnings of the *Querelle de la Rose*, an epistolary debate among Christine and several of the most prominent French intellectuals of the day, including such important figures as Jean Gerson, about the literary and cultural value of the *Roman de la Rose*.[18] In the *Querelle*, Christine not only reasserts the fact that women are the authorities on women and therefore should be the ones writing about them, but she also bemoans what she considers to be the vulgarity of the *Rose* and its inappropriateness as a guide to virtue. As I will argue, one of the reasons that Hoccleve's translation has seemed to be problematic for modern readers is that he exacerbates both of these issues, by writing about women as a man as well as making use of the work of another man, Chaucer, in order to do so, and by adding occasional moments of sexually explicit imagery.

Hoccleve, one must acknowledge, anticipated this criticism of his translation's handling of gender roles. In *The Dialogue*, the second text in his *Series*, Hoccleve discusses with a friend what text he should write next and his friend suggests that he needs to make absolution for "his offense" and "his wikkidnesse," namely that as his friend tells him "on wommen greet wyt and lak / Ofte hast thow put."[19] Hoccleve first questions whether or not his patron would want such a text and then asks:

> 'Freend, hard it is wommen to greeue, I grante,
> But what haue I agilt, for him þat dyde?

[16] For a full explanation of the problem of gender relations in courtly love, see R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

[17] See Christine de Pizan, *The Livre de la cité des dames of Christine de Pizan: A Critical Edition*, 3 volumes, ed. Maureen Curnow (PhD diss. Vanderbilt University, 1975); Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York: Persea, 1982); Christine de Pizan, *La Livre des Trois Vertus*, ed. Charity Cannon Willard and Eric Hicks (Paris: Champion, 1989); and Christine de Pizan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*, trans. Sarah Lawson (New York: Penguin, 2003).

[18] See Earl Jeffrey Richards and Christine McWebb, ed and trans., *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Routledge, 2007); and, for a chronologically corrected English translation, David F. Hult, ed. and trans., *Debate of the Romance of the Rose* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). For a discussion of Christine's relation of Jean de Meun, see Kevin Brownlee, "Discourses of the Self: Christine de Pizan and the Rose," *Romanic Review* 78 (1988): 199-221. For a recent assessment about the way in which Christine attempts to create her ideal audience through the terms of the debate, see Deborah McGrady, "De 'l'onneur et louenge des femmes': Les dédicaces épistolaires du *Débat sur le Roman de la Rose* et la réinvention d'un débat littéraire en éloge de femmes," *Études françaises* 47 (2011): 11-27.

[19] Hoccleve, *Series*, II. 664-68.

Nat haue I doon why, dar I me auante,
Out of wommennes graces slippe or slyde.'
'Yis, Thomas, yis in th'epistle of Cupyde
Thow haast of hem so largeliche said
That they been swart wroth and ful euele apaid.'

'Freend, doutelees sumwhat ther is therin
Þat sowneth but right small to hir honour,
But as to þat, now, for your fadir kyn,
Considereth, therof was I noon auctour.
I nas in þat cas but a reportour
Of folks tales. As they seide, I wroot.
I nat affermed it on hem, God woot.

'Whoso þat shal reherce a mannes sawe,
As þat he seith moot he seyn and nat varie,
For, and he do, he dooth ageyn the lawe
Of trouthe. He may tho words nat contrarie.
Whoso þat seith I am hir aduersarie
And dispreise hir condicions and port,
For þat I made of hem swich a report,

'He misauysed is, and eek to blame.
Whan I it spak I spak conpleynyngly.
I to hem thoghte no repreef ne shame.
What world is this? How vndirstande am I?
Looke in the same book. What stikith by?
Whoso lookith aright therin may see
Þat they me oghten haue in greet cheertee."[20]

Hoccleve begins by stating that it is hard to offend women and he cannot remember writing anything that would have done so, to which his friend replies with comical brevity, "yes, you wrote the Letter of Cupid." Hoccleve admits that "doutelees" there are parts of that poem that "sowneth" bad. However, as his first line of defense, Hoccleve reminds his friend that he was not the "auctour" of that poem but instead was simply "but a reportour / Of folks tales." Hoccleve then offers up a defense of textual fidelity, "As they seide, I wroot," but disclaims responsibility for the content of what he records, "I nat affermed it on hem." Hoccleve's actions in this instance are part of a general principle, "Whoso þat shal reherce a mannes sawe, / As þat he seith moot he seyn and nat varie," which he names "the lawe / Of trouthe." Anyone who reads "swich a report" and blames Hoccleve for the content misunderstands the nature of Hoccleve's position and, in a reversal of accusations, is the one who really says damaging things, "He misauysed is, and eek to blame." Hoccleve, after all, was simply following the "piteuses plaints" as he found them, "Whan I it spak I spak conpleynyngly. / I to hem thoghte no repreef ne shame." After his own

[20] Hoccleve, *Series* II. 750-777.

piteous complaint—"What world is this? How vndirstande am I?"—and an appeal to look again "in the same book," Hoccleve avers that he should be praised, not blamed, for his depiction of women, if the reader "lookith aright." But Hoccleve has entered into a contradiction. The second line of defense, in which "there is nothing in there that should cause offense if you read it correctly," undermines the first, in which the offense is not Hoccleve's responsibility because he did not write the original poem.

The knotty, contradicting quality of Hoccleve's defense in the *Series* stems not only from his refusal to name Christine as his source—a refusal that comes over from the *Letter of Cupid*—but also from his suppression of another source in both texts: Chaucer. Hoccleve's model of authorial self-presentation comes from a few different moments in Chaucer. The strategy of blaming any offensive content on a source, especially a French source, comes from the prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, a text likewise important for Hoccleve's *Letter*, as I shall argue below. In the *Legend of Good Women*, the God of Love blames Chaucer for writing disparaging things about love and women. The God of Love's queen, Alceste, defends Chaucer by claiming, in part, that

> He ne hath nat doon so grevously amys
> To translaten that olde clerkes writen,
> As thogh that he of malice wolde enditen
> Despite of love, and had himself yt wroght. (*LGW* F. 369-72)

Blame for the meaning of a translation does not alight on the translator, so the logic goes, but extends back to the logic of the source. Hoccleve, quite unfairly, tries to shift the blame for slandering women back onto Christine. The language of Hoccleve's defense recalls the *General Prologue* as well. There, Chaucer prefaces the pilgrimage with a warning to his reader:

> But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye,
> That ye n'arette it nat my vileynye,
> Thogh that I pleynly speke in this mateere,
> To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere,
> Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.
> For this ye knowen al so wel as I,
> Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
> He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan
> Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
> Al speke he never so rudeliche and large,
> Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,
> Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.
> He may nat spare, althogh he were his brother;
> He moot as wel seye o word as another.
> Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,
> And wel ye woot no vileynye is it.
> Eek Plato seith, whoso that kan hym rede,
> The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede. (*CT* I. 725-42)

Even as it is apparently unrelated to her, Chaucer's warning shares one of Christine's objections to the *Rose*, vulgarity.[21] Chaucer will "pleynly speke," he tells his reader because he must "speke hir wordes properly" and "reherce" the tale as he apparently has heard it, even if the speech is "rudeliche and large." Chaucer reiterates this duty when it comes time to "reherce" the *Miller's Tale*, before which he cautions that "For Goddes love, demeth nat that I seye / Of yvel entente, but for I moot reherce / Hir tales alle, be they bettre or werse, / Or elles falsen som of my mateere" (*CT* I. 3172-75). Here in the *General Prologue*, the degree of fidelity Chaucer imagines is very precise: one "moot as wel seye o word as another." Chaucer concludes by justifying his "pleyn" speaking with reference to scripture and by invoking the ancient authority of Plato to articulate a notion of verisimilitude: "wordes moote be cosyn to the dede."

Hoccleve's defense of his translation is saturated with this logic. He too imagines his poem as something he had to "reherce" without variation. Violations of that fidelity are against "the lawe / Of trouthe," an instantiation of what happens when one changes the words to a tale, causing one to "telle his tale untrewe." Hoccleve even claims that he rehearses nothing more than "folks tales," which would be a very unusual way of understanding Christine's work. Her poem, as the summary above demonstrates, is a letter which addresses a series of complaints, and which digresses through discussions of various exemplary figures. It is no collection of tales, but Chaucer's work certainly is, and it is likely that Hoccleve had it—as well as Chaucer's axiom that "Whoso shal telle a tale after a man, / He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan"—in mind when he calls himself a reporter of "folks tales." One might object that Hoccleve's defense addresses a translation whereas Chaucer's addresses supposedly oral storytelling. As I will show in the next chapter, however, Lydgate returns to precisely this passage from Chaucer in order to think through Chaucer's own translation practices.[22] It is not as if Hoccleve, in any case, would be deceived by the frame of the *Canterbury Tales* into thinking that Chaucer was actually reporting the stories of real pilgrims. Chaucer's defense of textual fidelity is a ruse that attempts to justify his own practices, and as such it is available as a defense for a wide variety of literary works, including Hoccleve's translation.

But by using this passage from Chaucer in defense of his translation of Christine, Hoccleve exacerbates the very issues that Christine's poem and the subsequent *Querelle* rail against: allowing men to be the sole authority on women and practicing vulgar writing. But anyone that "lookith aright" at "the same book" would encounter the same problem all over again: Hoccleve turns to Chaucer in order to translate Christine. In the next section I explore the changes and additions Hoccleve makes to Christine's text as he translates it. Chaucer, especially his *Legend of Good Women*, turns out to be the unspoken paratext for Christine's poem throughout Hoccleve's translation. Parsing Hoccleve's relationship to Christine ultimately requires a knowledge of how he used Chaucer.

II. Chaucerian Christine

As with the passage from the *Series*, Chaucer's presence is apparent throughout the *Letter of Cupid*. As I have been arguing, Chaucer's presence has the potential to undermine the nominal project of Christine's poem, turning what was a defense of women into a parody, yet another instance of men controlling how women are presented in literature. But one should recall that Gavin Douglas thought that Chaucer "was evir (God wait) all womanis frend," and Hoccleve's

[21] Chaucer's work precedes Christine's but there is no real evidence that she ever read him.

[22] See chapter 3, the section titled "Open Devotion" for Lydgate's understanding of Chaucer's translation practice and how it relates to Wycliffite "open" translation.

use of him in the *Letter of Cupid* suggests that Hoccleve would have agreed.[23] At first glance the Chaucerian echoes in Hoccleve's translation, especially the rhyme royal verse structure, seem to confirm that Chaucer's presence is there to supplant Christine. However, Hoccleve's persistent allusion to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* suggests that Chaucer's role is instead supplemental, a way to make sense of Christine's poem within a tradition of English writing about the status of women. This understanding of Chaucer as a supplement, a way to "English" Christine's poem, also suggests why the poem's association with Chaucer and Christine remains implicit, why these other poets are not named in the poem. Hoccleve translates Christine's poem is such a way as to foreground what Hoccleve, but not Christine, can supply, namely knowledge of the English literary tradition, supposedly for an audience that might desire such a thing.

Undermining his claims of textual fidelity, Hoccleve makes a wide variety of changes to Christine's poem, both large and small, and not only Chaucerian ones. Hoccleve shortens the poem, mostly through omission, as when he drops the framing device at the end in which the different gods and goddesses are called upon to witness the God of Love's letter. Also at the end, he replaces the date on which Christine finished the poem, May of 1399, with the day he did, May of 1402. Hoccleve retains the conceit of the letter as a frame and the formal opening, although he shortens that as well. He also drops the contemporary examples of good lovers, Hutin de Vermeilles and Oton de Granson. Given Hoccleve's interest in Chaucer, the omission of Granson in particular is surprising, but it could be partially explained by the series of changes Hoccleve makes in order to move the poem's territorial concerns from France to England. In Christine's poem, France is both the land of famous lovers from the past and a kingdom particularly beset by unfaithful lovers now, with the two exceptions named above. In Hoccleve's translation, the country in question is "Albiuon" (16). Granson, still, could have warranted a mention; he was a well-known poet in his own right and, along with Gower, one of the two living poets that Chaucer actually names in his work and one with whom, as I argued in the last chapter, Chaucer formed a coterie. But Hoccleve, in this work at least, seems uninterested in affiliating himself with named poets, either of the past or the present. His omission of Granson, along with his refusal to name Chaucer and Christine, is a clear indication that Hoccleve has the capacity to stand apart from Chaucer when the situation calls for it and that he will form coteries along different lines as well.

Despite Hoccleve's occasional independence from him, the *Letter of Cupid* is still thoroughly infused with the form and sensibility of Chaucer's poetry.[24] One of the most notable changes Hoccleve makes to Christine's poem is his alteration of her verse form. With the exception of the end, which Hoccleve cuts in any event, Christine's poem is in rhymed

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[23] See Gavin Douglas, *The Aeneid*, in *Selections from Gavin Douglas*, ed. D. F. C Coldwell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), Book 1, 449. Douglas's assessment is contestable. Chaucer was infamously accused of rape by Cecily Champaigne; see Christopher Cannon, "*Raptus* in the Champaigne Release and a Newly Discovered Document Concerning the Life of Geoffrey Chaucer," *Speculum* 68 (1993): 74-94; and Christopher Cannon, "Chaucer and Rape: Uncertainty's Certainties," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 22 (2000): 69-72. For a medieval author, though, Chaucer's persistent interest in issues surrounding gender relations might have made him seem sympathetic to women. Chaucer's positions have been thoroughly explored by modern criticism. For the most important and sustained treatments, see Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Elaine Tuttle Hansen, *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); and Jill Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002).

[24] For a short discussion of Chaucer's influence in this poem, see the introduction to their edition of it, in Erler and Fenster, *Poems of Cupid, God of Love*, 162-64. Many of the Chaucerian allusions discussed below are also mentioned in their edition, but mostly with a simple direction to confer with the Chaucerian text. I will only cite them further when there is a substantial discussion of the allusion.

decasyllabic couplets. Hoccleve translates the poem into rhyme royal stanzas, an increasingly popular verse form and one that Hoccleve uses throughout his poetry, including the *Regiment of Princes* and the *Series*. It is a verse form, moreover, closely associated with Chaucer's work.[25] By translating Christine's verse into rhyme royal, Hoccleve was effectively introducing a new conceptual unit to the basic organization of her poem: the seven-line stanza. Unlike couplets, in which a poet could quickly move from one idea to another, rhyme royal encourages extended meditations on a topic, in which individual stanzas and not just a couplet correspond to a single conceptual point. Eleanor Johnson has recently argued that the verse form represents Chaucer's continued experiments with the aesthetic sentence, here transformed into stanzas that "force metrical and rhythmical units to coincide with syntax, using stanzas as boundaries or bumpers for sense."[26] In imagining speech, likewise, a speaker will often be given an entire stanza. This stanzaic demand for more material is partly the reason for the misogynistic passages in Hoccleve's text; what had been couplet-based badinage in Christine's original now grew to fit the rhyme royal stanza, thereby becoming a genuine exercise in medieval misogyny.

The particular demands of the rhyme royal form are on display in the following stanzas, some of the ones in which Hoccleve seems to be most in violation of the spirit of Christine's text:

> 'To his felawe anothir wrecche seith,
> "Thow fisshist fair. Shee þat hath thee fyrid,
> Is fals and inconstant and hath no feith.
> Shee for the rode of folk is so desyrid,
> And as an hors fro day to day is hyrid,
> That whan thow twynnest from hir conpaignie,
> Anothir comth, and blerid is thyn ye.
>
> "'Now prike on fast and ryde they iourneye.
> Whyl tow art ther, shee, behynde thy bak,
> So liberal is shee can no wight withseye,
> But qwikly of anothir take a snak,
> For so the wommen faren, al the pak.
> Whoso hem trustith, hangid mott he be!
> Ay they desiren chaunge and noueltee."' (99-112)

These lines translate Christine's imagined male gossip:

> Mais aux grans feus a ces soirs, ou sur couches

[25] John Gower also used rhyme royal, both in English and in French, but Chaucer's deployment of it in long narrative poems, like the *Parliament of Fowles* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, seems more likely to have influenced Hoccleve here. For more on Chaucer and rhyme royal, see James Dean, "Gower, Chaucer, and Rhyme Royal," *Studies in Philology* 88 (1991): 251-75. There were also rhyme royal ballads in French starting with Deschamps, but the direction of influence between Chaucer and Deschamps is difficult to determine. See the discussions in Tauno Mustanoja, "Chaucer's Prosody," in *A Companion to Chaucer Studies*, ed. Beryl Rowland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 58-84; and Martin Stevens, "The Royal Stanza in Early English Literature," *PMLA* 94 (1979): 62-76.

[26] Eleanor Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk, and Hoccleve* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 80.

La rigolent l'un l'autre, et par reprouches,
S'entredient: "Je sçay bien de tes fais:
Tele t'aimë, et tu le joli fais
Pour seue amour, mais plusieurs y ont part;
Tu es receu quant un autre s'en part!" (125-30)[27]

Rather than adopting Christine's method of reported speech, Hoccleve makes use of the rhyme royal stanza form to dwell on a point. After setting the scene, Christine makes good use of her chosen form, repeating the rhymed words but with a different meaning each time—"fais" as first "to do" then as "to play" and "part" first as "part" then as "depart"—creating a witty and succinct ripost between male friends. Christine's gossip remains fairly abstract; the action implied in the part that many play as one enters and another leaves is obvious but unspecified, most likely due to Christine's objections to vulgarity. In conveying the same sentiment, Hoccleve characterizes the unfaithful woman as someone who will "qwikly of anothir take a snak," with "snak" referring either to a snake or a kind of ship, introducing a rather vivid image into the discussion. What's more, as he expands the spoken dialogue through two stanzas, he introduces another graphic metaphor for sex: riding a horse. The woman is so desirable "for the rode" that she is hired out like a horse, a metaphor that is extended as the one gossip teases the other by literalizing it in the image of the lover needing to quickly return to his lady, "Now prike on fast and ryde they iourneye." As Christine had made good use of her verse form, so too does Hoccleve; by expanding the speech through two stanzas, rather than two couplets, he can add in a metaphor for sex, riding, that is then cleverly literalized in the action "prike on fast and ryde," although Hoccleve's changes in this instance open him up to the very charge of obscenity that Christine finds so offensive.

Not all of Hoccleve's additions are obscene and indeed most fit quite well with the tone of Christine's poem, even as they give it a Chaucerian flavor. In an addition to the praise of the Virgin and virginity in general, Hoccleve writes:

'Thow precious gemme, martir Margarete,
Of thy blood dreddist noon effusion.
Thy martyrdom ne may we nat foryete.
O constant womman, in thy passioun
Ouercam the feendes temptacioun,
And many a wight conuerted they doctryne
Vnto the faith of God, holy virgyne.' (421-427)

This stanza in praise of St. Margaret is odd in a poem that is supposedly a letter written by the God of Love, leading Hoccleve to clarify in the next stanza that, "we commende hir noght / By encheson of hir virginitee," but instead for her faith (428-29). Hoccleve, though, is given to writing poems in praise of the Virgin Mary and this stanza, largely a paraphrase of the *Legenda Aurea*, showcases that ability as well as his capacity to expand and supplement his source

[27] "But lolling at those toasty evening fires, / They rib each other, and by means of taunts / Exchanged they say: 'I know what you're about: / Your sweetheart's such a one, you play the beau / To have her love; but many get their part, / For you are greeted as another parts!'"

material.[28] Christine's poem is digressive, especially when praising exemplary figures, and the couplet form allow her to expend as little as two lines on a digression, but often many more. Even as Hoccleve cuts some of those digressions, here he reveals that he too has the capacity to write short but appropriate digressions of his own, within the confines of his verse form.

The stanza on St. Margaret is also part of a pattern of allusions in the *Letter of Cupid* to another appropriate source text, given the subject matter, Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*. Of course Chaucer's good women are all pagans, not saints, but the name Margaret has a special meaning for Chaucer's text. "Margaret," as Hoccleve's reference to the *Legenda Aurea* mentions, means "pearl," the "precious gemme," but the French "marguerite" also refers to a "daisy." Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* opens with the narrator professing his love for a daisy and describes his morning ritual of watching the daisy open as it greets the sun. It is there in the field, while watching the daisy, that the narrator eventually meets the God of Love and his retinue. Chaucer bases his narrator's love of the daisy on a tradition of French poems on the topic, including work by Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart, and Eustache Deschamps.[29] In adding a single stanza on St. Margaret, then, Hoccleve can easily demonstrate his capacity to write poems in praise of virgin saints as well as covertly allude to an entire tradition of French courtly poetry and its English representative in the *Legend of Good Women*.

The stanza to St. Margaret is part of a pattern of references to the *Legend of Good Women*. The most overt reference comes from the section in which Christine's version of the letter addresses three exemplary women, Medea, Dido, and Penelope. In translating this section, Hoccleve pens a stanza on Medea and one on Dido, and then drops Penelope, substituting the following stanza:

> 'In oure legende of martirs may men fynde,
> Whoso þat lykith therin for to rede,
> That ooth noon, ne byheeste, may men bynde.
> Of repreef ne of shame han they no drede.
> In herte of man conceites treewe arn dede.
> The soile is naght; ther may no trouthe growe.
> To womman is hir vice nat vnknowe.' (316-322)

"Oure legende of martirs," Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, not coincidentally contains a *Legend of Medea* and a *Legend of Dido*, but despite its stated intentions does not include Penelope. Of course manuscripts of Chaucer's poem do not call it the *Legend of Good Women*, but Hoccleve would have no trouble placing it generically and he would have known the title Chaucer gave to it in the *Man of Law's Introduction*, where it is named the "Seintes Legende of Cupide" (*CT* II. 61). The lesson of Chaucer's legends, as Hoccleve describes them, is that men and not women are breakers of oaths, incapable of feeling shame, and the reason "trouthe" is nowhere to be found. That women know "hir vice" is something that one might glean not only from the tales found in Chaucer's poem, but also from the complaints that make up the bulk of

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[28] See, Jacobus de Voragine, *Jacobi a Voragine Legenda aurea*, ed. Th. Graesse (Leipzig: Impensis Librariae Arnoldianae, 1850), 400-03.For a modern English translation, see Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, vol. 2, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 232-34.
[29] This connection is also pointed out by Erler and Fenster, *Poems of Cupid, God of Love*, 210-211, note on line 421. For a discussion of the French marguerite tradition, see James I. Wimsatt, *The Marguerite Poetry of Guillaume de Machaut* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970).

Christine's. Hoccleve's citation of Chaucer matches the tone and content of Christine's poem perfectly.

Other changes follow this pattern, in which allusions to the *Legend of Good Women* assist Hoccleve in rendering or supplementing Christine's poem. An exemplary instance comes when Hoccleve sets about translating Christine's warning to women that they should step carefully and not be naïve or they will be betrayed by the deceitful men who they love:

> Ainsi se trop ne sont apperceües,
> Sont maintes fois les dames deceües,
> Car simples sont, n'y pensent se bien non,
> Don't il avient souvent, vueillent ou non,
> Qu'amer leur fault ceulx qui si les deçoivent:
> Traÿes sont ains qu'elles l'apperçoivent! (99-104)[30]

Hoccleve, as he does generally, shortens this passage, which is formally and conceptually interesting—the rhymed couples of "apperceües"/"deceües" and "deçoivent"/"apperçoivent" link appearance and deception in a way that undermines the insistence in courtly love literature that the beloved's fair appearance is related to how morally and socially good one's beloved is—but quite verbose in terms of content. Hoccleve translates it as the much more succinct, "O feithful womman, ful of innocence / Thow art betrayed by fals apparence." (41-42). The first line of his translation refers to a line from the *Prologue to the Legend of Good Women*, "O sely wemen, ful of innocence" (*LGW* F. 1254).

Similarly, when Hoccleve cuts the references to contemporary examples of good lovers, he follows the meditation on angels and the warning not to judge all women by the actions of one with the proclamation that "euery man oghte han an herte tender / Vnto woman," because "Euery man woot þat wit hath reasonable, / Þat of a womman he descended is. / Than is it shame spek of hir amis" (169-175). He expands on this addition with two more stanzas:

> 'A wikked tree good fruyt may noon foorth brynge,
> For swich the fruyt is as þat is the tree.
> Take heede of whom thow took they begynnynge
> Lat thy modir be mirour vnto thee.
> Honure hir if thow wilt honurid be.
> Despyse thow nat hir in no maneere,
> Lest þat therthrugh thy wikkidnesse appeere.
>
> 'An old prouerbe seid is in Englissh:
> Men seyn þat brid or foul is deshonest,
> Whatso it be, and holden ful cherlissh,
> Þat wont is to deffoule his owne nest.
> Men to seye of women wel it is best
> And nat for to despise hem ne depraue,

[30] "If women, therefore, don't step cautiously, / They'll be deluded time and time again; / For women have no guile, and think but good; / And so it happens often, willed or not, / They love the very man deceiving them; /Betrayed before they've even noticed it!"

If þat hem list hir honur keepe and saue.' (176-89)

As we saw earlier, the rhyme royal form allows Hoccleve to meditate on a point for the length of a stanza or more. Here he spends three stanzas on motherhood, an issue that appears later in Christine's poem. Hoccleve cuts most of the final material in the poem, almost everything that follows the praise of the Virgin, but he preserves its sentiments about maternity in these stanzas. Men owe women praise because, in every case, women gave birth to them. How they treat women, especially their mothers, will reflect back upon them. Hoccleve advises that one should "Lat thy modir be mirour vnto thee," both as a means of reflection on one's own virtues and as one of the exemplary figures that drives much of the narrative. Hoccleve, as he did before, adds two metaphorical treatments to fill out the stanzas. First, the image of the wicked tree that produces wicked fruit, ultimately derived from Matthew's warning against false prophets: "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit" (Matthew 7:15-17). The more proximate source, though, is the *Legend of Good Women*; the beginning of the *Legend of Phyllis* reads "By preve as wel as by autorite / That wiked fruit cometh of a wiked tre" (*LGW* 2394-95). Once again, Chaucer guides Hoccleve's translation of Christine. Occasionally that guidance leads to excesses, but by and large, and especially in the allusions to the *Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer provides Hoccleve with material that is completely appropriate for the source text. In this instance, the Chaucerian allusion refers back to warnings about false prophets, and serves as a brilliantly fitting bridge between a discussion that involves angels, and how the existence of bad angels does not disprove the existence of good angels, and the portion of Hoccleve's translation that involves clerical misogyny, clerics who are by implication bad prophets.

Chaucer provides Hoccleve with more than suggestions for rendering French into English, or with thematically appropriate material for additions; he provides Hoccleve with a way to make sense of *English* literature. Hoccleve's other metaphorical figure in the stanzas to motherhood gives us a sense of this additional use for Chaucer. Hoccleve relates an "old prouerbe," which is specifically "in Englissh," which amounts to "a bird that fouls its own nest is dishonest and churlish." The proverb is old indeed, showing up in English literature as early as *The Owl and the Nightingale* "Tharbi men segget a vorbisne: / 'Dahet habbe that ilke best / That fuleth his owe nest."[31] Of course Hoccleve does not mention this early English poem, just as he does not mention Christine or Chaucer, although in this case there is no need to imagine that he read the source text. Hoccleve's use of it explicitly mentions its status as a commonplace, not something that must be tied to an earlier text; it is an "old prouerbe" that might be found anywhere—anywhere in England that is. The reference to this proverb and the numerous allusions to Chaucer allow Hoccleve to continue a process of "Englishing" Christine's poem. Hoccleve does not simply change "France" to "Albioun" in the poem's opening and leave the matter at that; he systematically, from the verse form, to the omission of contemporary French lovers, to the Chaucerian allusions, translates the poem in such a way as to make this French poem sound English. Simply ascribing these changes to the process of cultural translation does not quite explain them; Granson, after all, was well known in England and would have been in no need of "translation." Hoccleve's English additions and allusions are, instead, excessive or

[31] Neil Cartlidge, ed., *The Owl and the Nightingale* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001), lines 98-100.

supplemental. One way of understanding Hoccleve's English supplement to Christine's work is that he adds something to her poem that she could not; he showcases, in other words, in addition to his felicity with his French source, his own capabilities and understanding of what it means to be an English poet.

III. Personal Audiences

One must keep in mind, however, that an English poet, for Hoccleve, is not simply an abstraction but is instead something like a concrete particular, a poet with a proper name: John Gower (to a certain extent) or Geoffrey Chaucer. In some manner, proper names have always been the material from which literature is made. Medieval writers thought of literature as a succession of great names, starting with Homer—though they knew his name and nothing else—and moving on to Ovid, Horace, Virgil, Lucan, Statius, and so on. These entities, used to define the category of literature, exist at the border between proper names and proper nouns.[32] These proper names do not signify individual writers as persons alone; as they do today, they stand in for an oeuvre of writing, so that "I'm reading Virgil" means "I'm reading a poem written by Virgil." But in the present, literary history has become a profession, with professional standards by which such things as oeuvres are established. When someone now says "I'm reading Virgil," she means that she is reading one of a limited number of authenticated texts. The situation in the Middle Ages was quite different. A reference to the proper name of a past poet, like Virgil, was a much less specific, much more general reference to a body of work.[33] "I'm reading Virgil" also meant "I'm reading something Virgilian;" "I'm reading Ovid" meant "I'm reading Ovidean love poetry." Other proper names also signified in this general way, like the *Aeneid* or the *Brut*—names of heroes that became names for large bodies of writing. When Hoccleve speaks of English poetry, a different sort of reference is at work. He names English poets whom he expects his audience to know, and to know well; a reference to Chaucer is a reference to an identifiable person and set of texts that both form part of the English literary tradition. This vision of the English tradition differs from that outlined by Christopher Cannon in relation to early Middle English and its influence on later poets.[34] Hoccleve's own reference to the proverb from *The Owl and the Nightingale* illustrates this difference clearly. He does not name his source; he may not even have read *The Owl and the Nightingale*. He does not attribute the proverb to the "debate of the birds" or something like that. When Hoccleve speaks about Chaucer in the *Regiment of Princes*, however, he names him, presenting him as a known entity, both to himself and to his audience. The *Letter of Cupid* is an exception. Hoccleve does not name Chaucer or Christine in that poem, although his reason for doing so is not that they are unknowns, like the anonymous English proverb, but that they are all too well known.

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[32] This shifting of a name's meaning is the kind of thing that deeply troubles analytic philosophers. Someone like Saul Kripke, for instance, would argue that the loosening of referent in the names here is proof of a causal theory of naming, in which a name's referent is determined by a community's use of that name. See Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

[33] Christopher Baswell has argued that Virgil would have the same sort of name recognition in late medieval England as someone like Sigmund Freud enjoys today, with the same kind of confusion about what exactly the figure in question accomplished. See Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the Aeneid from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[34] For the influence of early English on later writers, see Christopher Cannon, *The Making of Chaucer's English: A Study of Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For a discussion of works in early Middle English providing a basis for the English literary tradition, see Christopher Cannon, *The Grounds of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Too much of a known entity, that is, to Hoccleve's audience. Hoccleve's use of the *Legend of Good Women* suggests that Henry IV, if he did not actually commission the *Letter of Cupid*, was its intended recipient. Hoccleve's defense of the *Letter of Cupid*, from the *Series*, is occasioned by the fact that his friend asks him to produce a poem in order to atone for his earlier work critiquing women. The narrator of the *Legend of Good Women*, Geoffrey Chaucer, was asked by the God of Love's queen, Alceste, to make the same kind of penance for the same infraction; the actual legends that constitute the remainder of the poem are supposedly Chaucer's fulfillment of that commandment. The logic of allusion is complicated here: in a passage from the *Series* that alludes to the *Legend of Good Women*, Hoccleve is asked to make a poem as penance for the *Letter of Cupid*. He replies with further allusions to Chaucer, arguing that the *Letter* is not offensive if read properly. If the *Letter* is read with Chaucerian allusion in mind, then a concerted program of allusions to the *Legend of Good Women* appears. In other words, the *Letter* contains its own penance; Chaucer's penance becomes Hoccleve's. But Chaucer's penance was requested by a royal. If the *Letter* is already its own penance, what royal requested that penance in the first place? The most likely candidate is Henry IV, the man who had just offered to house at his court the author of Hoccleve's source, and been turned down.

If the pattern of allusion suggests Henry IV as the one who commissioned the *Letter of Cupid*, the text's silences suggest he was simply the intended recipient, and one who may have never actually received the poem. We have no surviving presentation copies of the poem and Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes* intended for Henry IV's son, soon to be Henry V, makes no mention of the *Letter of Cupid* as an earlier work done for the prince's father. Although, one might quickly add, there must be some reason that Hoccleve received the commission for the *Regiment*. Whether Henry IV commissioned the *Letter of Cupid* or not seems impossible to determine without this sort of external evidence. However, the poem does seem to imagine itself, through its connection to the *Legend of Good Women*, as something intended for royalty. Imagining Henry IV as the poem's intended audience makes sense of Hoccleve's choice of source text and his translation's pervasive Englishness. In this scenario, Hoccleve presents himself to the king as someone who can take Christine's place after she refuses to come to England, and as someone who is equally capable of working with English and French poetry. The *Letter of Cupid*, in this manner, acts as a kind of job letter, advertising Hoccleve's many strengths. Imagining Henry IV as the poem's intended audience also makes sense of Hoccleve's elision of the names associated with his source text and the poem's English qualities. There would be no need to tell Henry IV who originally wrote the *Letter of Cupid*; he knows all too well. He had just offered her the position that Hoccleve is now offering to fill. If Hoccleve assumed further that, based on wanting a French poet at court, Henry was interested in literary works in general, then it would have been no stretch to imagine that Henry would be familiar with Chaucer's work. Chaucer, after all, had written a poem to Henry, *The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse*, and Chaucer's manuscripts were circulating widely among the nobility. If Henry IV is the intended recipient of the *Letter of Cupid*, then Hoccleve's silence on the topic of Christine and Chaucer is part of a mode of self-presentation in which Hoccleve presents himself as an ideal producer of both English and French poetry, who does not even have to name the proximate sources for his poetry because he is, as is his audience, "in the know."

The role of Henry IV in the creation of the *Letter of Cupid* is speculative, but that does not mean that the assertions about Hoccleve's silence surrounding Christine and Chaucer are nothing more than castles built on air. In the discussion above, Henry IV could be replaced with any knowledgeable reader and the only thing that would have to be considered anew is

Hoccleve's motive, why he translates the poem if he does not expect some sort of reward from Henry for it. In any event, the sense of the poem as a personal event remains the same, something Hoccleve created because he had connections both to his sources, albeit more distantly with Christine, and to his audience. There are many reasons for a poet to efface his source material.[35] In a coterie production, one prominent reason is that all of the individuals involved know each other and so there is no need to speak what is already clearly understood. Given the nature of his allusions, their numerousness and subtlety, one imagines that Hoccleve must have in mind an audience that would know a good deal about English poetry. Returning to the earlier options as to how Hoccleve was able to make use of Christine's poem in such a short period of time—either through Henry IV or through a bureaucratic coterie—it now seems likely that these same groups are also the ones best able to appreciate Hoccleve's poems, the noble and the clerical readers who were circulating Chaucer's material in the early fifteenth century.[36] Hoccleve has intimate relationships with these two groups of individuals, both as a colleague and as an employee. He would have had a very clear sense of their knowledge of Chaucer, having copied Chaucer's texts alongside some of them and at the request of others. Given his connections to these groups, it is very likely that Hoccleve knew when he could simply remain silent.

And he would also know when he should speak up. When it comes to the way in which Hoccleve handles his Chaucerian influence, the *Letter of Cupid* is an anomaly. Fortunately, anomalies do not exist in a vacuum; they must have other instances to which they can be compared and revealed as anomalous. The silence of the *Letter* about its sources and influences can be made meaningful because Hoccleve speaks elsewhere, and what he reveals allows one to speculate about what those earlier silences mean. Indeed, these other works enable a further step, allowing us to speculate about the coterie audience for the *Letter*. In the next section, then, I turn to Hoccleve's extended discussion of Geoffrey Chaucer in the *Regiment of Princes*. In the *Regiment*, rather than silence, Hoccleve references his personal relationship to Chaucer several times. These instances are not simple encomia for a recently deceased poet; instead they foreground Hoccleve's personal knowledge of Chaucer. Hoccleve's treatment of Chaucer, in other words, is not as an abstracted presence of the founder of the English literary tradition, but as someone he knew as a living human being. Hoccleve wants to claim coterie membership with Chaucer, in which they have a special relationship with one another, figured in terms of friendship and mentorship. In emphasizing the personal nature of their relationship, Hoccleve grants himself the capacity to judge what exactly is so special about Chaucer's poetry. It turns out, perhaps unsurprisingly, that what makes Chaucer's poetry great is the extent to which it resembles Hoccleve's.

IV. "Buddy" Chaucer

[35] Two recent articles, for instance, argue that Chaucer refuses to name Boccaccio as his source in either the *Knight's Tale* or in *Troilus and Criseyde* because he was following a literary convention of erasure, something he learned from Statius and the material surrounding Thebes, material important to both of Chaucer's poems. See Leah Schwebel, "The Legend of Thebes and Literary Patricide in Chaucer, Boccaccio, and Statius," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 36 (2014): 139-68; and Elizaveta Strakhov "'And kis the steppes where as thow seest pace': Reconstructing the Spectral Canon in Statius and Chaucer," in *Chaucer and Fame: Reputation and Reception*, ed. Isabel Davis and Catherine Nall (Martelsham, UK: Boydell and Brewer, 2015), 57-74. I would like to thank Elizaveta Strakhov for sharing an early version of her work with me.

[36] These groups are discussed in Paul Strohm, "Chaucer's Fifteenth-Century Audience and the Narrowing of the Chaucer Tradition," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 4 (1982): 2-32.

As I argued in my first chapter, coteries have a dual quality. They are in part historical and sociological phenomena, the name we give to a group of writers who know one another and who share work, reading and responding to what the other members produce. But coteries are also rhetorical productions, the result of performative utterances made by the participants in a sociological and historical group who identify one another as members of a coterie. Coteries must announce themselves as such; they call themselves into being by virtue of the acknowledgement that writers pay to one another. In the *Regiment of Princes*, Hoccleve produces just such a rhetoric of coterie belonging. Chaucer becomes much more than a literary reference or influence; he is a real person with whom Hoccleve shared a friendship based on a mutual knowledge of each other's works and life. Hoccleve's coterie rhetoric is unusual, however, because it is necessarily one sided. When Hoccleve makes claims about his personal knowledge of Chaucer, he is drawing into his coterie a dead poet, one who may have once reciprocated Hoccleve's interest and identification, but who is no longer in a position to do so. Drawing a dead man into a coterie makes Hoccleve's coterie construction different than Chaucer's, who wrote about exchanging work with living French poets. Whereas Chaucer and his French contemporaries had expanded the geographical limits of the coterie, so that the poets no longer had to be in the same place, Hoccleve expands the temporal boundaries, so that past and present poets can simultaneously occupy a coterie. Hoccleve gains a distinct advantage from doing so: rather than the normal contestation of aesthetic taste and literary influence that surrounds coterie membership, Hoccleve himself can determine exactly on what grounds he and Chaucer belong to the same coterie.

The *Regiment of Princes*, as is well known, has an odd formal structure, in which the purported prologue takes up almost half of the entire work, the first 2156 lines of the 5463 line poem, and it is on the figure of Chaucer that the two halves of the *Regiment* pivot. The first half is autobiographical poetry of a kind, in which Hoccleve the poet-narrator complains about being unable to sleep because of his financial worries and the general instability of worldly affairs. He rises and leaves his home, only to encounter an Old Man, who seems intended to serve a kind of Boethian role as a Lady Philosophy stand-in, meant to console the poet, but who actually launches into a series of his own complaints about heretics and the wasteful habits of courtiers.[37] After the Old Man laments his own misspent youth, Hoccleve meets the old man's self-pity with some of his own, complaining for his part about the difficulty of scribal labor and the poor remuneration he receives as a Privy Seal clerk. At this point, near the end of the prologue, the Old Man decides that the best way for Hoccleve to improve his financial situation is to write something for Prince Henry, the soon to be Henry V.[38] The Old Man cautions that Hoccleve should "wryte him nothyng that sowneth into vice" but instead "kythe thy love in mateere of sadnesse," ultimately recommending, that Hoccleve should "looke if thow fynde canst any tretice / Growndid on his estates holsumnesse," to which Hoccleve replies "Fadir I assente" (1947-53). At this moment, Hoccleve inserts a lamentation about Chaucer's death and another short discussion along with an associated address to the Prince, before moving on to the rest of the poem. The rest of the poem fulfills the Old Man's task by presenting the king with a mirror for

[37] The dream-vision quality of the prologue has been apparent to scholars since, at least, C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study of Medieval Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936). For Hoccleve's Boethianism, see Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages*, 202-31.

[38] For the relationship between Hoccleve and Henry V, see Derek Pearsall, "Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes:* The Poetics of Royal Self-Representation," *Speculum* 69 (1994): 386-410; and James Simpson, "Nobody's Man: Thomas Hoccleve's Regement of Princes," in *London and Europe*, ed. Julia Boffey and Pamela King (London: Westfield Publications, 1995), 150-80.

princes, an extended discussion of the vices a king must avoid, like prodigality, and the virtues a king must cultivate, like mercy, along with advice about how to go about making these moral decisions, such as always keeping counsel.[39]

The lament for Chaucer marks a distinctive turning point in the *Regiment* overall. As soon as Hoccleve assents to the Old Man's suggestion, he begins to reminiscence about Chaucer, using language that will become very familiar to English readers in the decades to come. Hoccleve replies to the old man,

> "With herte as trembling as the leef of asp,
> Fadir, syn yee me rede to do so,
> Of my symple conceit wole I thee lasp
> Undo and lat it at his large go.
> But, weleaway, so is myn herte wo
> That honour of Englissh tonge is deed,
> Of which I wont was han conseil and reed.
>
> "O maistir deere and fadir reverent,
> My maistir Chaucer, flour of eloquence,
> Mirour of fructuous entendement,
> O universel fadir in science!
> Allas that thow thyn excellent prudence
> In thy bed mortel mightiest nat byqwethe!
> What ieled deeth? Alas why wolde he sle the?
>
> "O deeth, thow didest nat harm singular
> In slaghtre of him, but al this land it smertith.
> But natheless yit hastow no power
> His name slee; his hy vertu astertith
> Unslayn fro thee, which ay us lyfly hertith
> With books of his ornat endytyng
> That is to al this land enlumynyng.
>
> "Hastow nat eek my maistir Gower slayn,
> Whos vertu I am insufficient
> For to descryve? I woot wel in certayn,
> For to sleen al this world thow hast yment.
> But syn our lorde Cryst was obedient
> To thee, in faith I can no ferther seye;
> His creatures musten thee obeye. (1954-1981)

[39] Hoccleve tells us that this portion of the work is drawn from three sources: the *Secreta Secretorum*, Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum*, and Jacob de Cessolis's *Chessbook*. For these sources, see footnote 55 below. For a discussion of the mirror for princes, or *Fürstenspiegel*, as a genre that addresses the *Secreta Secretorum* directly, see Julie Orlemanski, "Genre," in *A Handbook of Middle English Studies*, ed. Marion Turner (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 213-16.

This is no small tribute, to be sure. Chaucer is cast as an exemplary mirror, one who knows everything a man can know and has the accompanying prudence to turn that knowledge into wisdom. He is Hoccleve's "maister" and a "flour of eloquence," which makes use of the connotation Chaucer had given to "flour" in reference to Granson, here deployed in praise of Chaucer himself.[40] This encomium to Chaucer is preceded by a modesty topos, which Hoccleve deploys in contrast to Chaucer's brilliance, and followed by a lament about the damage death has done to England by slaying Chaucer, although it acknowledges death's inability to stamp out Chaucer's name. The final couplet of the third stanza, "with books of his ornat endytyng / That is to al this land enlumynyng" could have been written by Lydgate, with its interest in ornate writing practices and the association of Chaucer with "enlumynyng."[41] I have included the final stanza on Gower, though, to temper the praise somewhat. As Knapp points out, Hoccleve's dirge for Chaucer is something he has to share with Gower. Even the honorific title, "fadir," used here as part of a very strange epithet, is something Hoccleve uses both to address Chaucer and to address the Old Man with whom he has been speaking.[42] This lamentation for Chaucer, in other words, is sometimes stirring, occasionally conventional, and devoid of relationship categories that are unique to Hoccleve and Chaucer.[43]

But if death does not grant Chaucer some special status in Hoccleve's estimation, life does. In two other instances where Hoccleve mentions Chaucer in the *Regiment*, the fact that he knew Chaucer in life is of paramount importance. The first comes as the old man asks Hoccleve's name:

> "What shal I calle thee, what is thy name?"
> "Hoccleve, fadir myn, men clepen me."
> "Hoccleve, sone?" "Ywis, fadir, that same."
> "Sone, I have herd or this men speke of thee;
> Thow were aqweyntid with Chaucer, pardee—
> God have his soule, best of any wight!
> Sone, I wole holde thee that I have hight.
>
> "Althogh thow seye that thow in Latyn
> Ne in Frensshe neithir canst but small endyte,
> In Englissh tonge canstow wel afyn."
> "Fadir, therof, can I eek but a lyte."
> "Yee, straw! Let be! They penne take and wryte
> As thow canst, and thy sorwe torne shal
> Into gladnesse—I doute it nat at al." (1863-76)

The Old Man asks for Hoccleve's name and Hoccleve answers. The Old Man makes sure the name is correct and then immediately says that he is familiar with the name as someone who is

[40] See the discussion in chapter 1.
[41] See the discussion in chapter 3.
[42] Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse*, 111-15.
[43] The conventional moments in this address have led some critics to deny the friendship between Hoccleve and Chaucer. See, for instance, Jerome Mitchell, *Thomas Hoccleve: A Study in Early Fifteenth-Century English Poetic* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968). J. A. Burrows dismisses those objections with a useful reminder that something can be conventional and heart-felt at the same time; see J. A. Burrows, "Autobiographical Poetry in the Middle Ages: The Case of Thomas Hoccleve," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 68 (1982): 389-412.

"aqweyntid with Chaucer." Following a short tribute to Chaucer, the Old Man judges Hoccleve's facility with the three languages of late medieval England, deciding that "in Englissh tonge canstow wel afyn." Hoccleve's moment of modesty is summarily dismissed by the Old Man, who tells him to write something in order to feel better, advice that Hoccleve will be given again later in the *Series*. The tone of these lines is humorous; the old man's character shines as a foil to Hoccleve, defeating any attempts at self-serious earnestness. But, focusing on the information they convey, these lines are extraordinary for how emphatically they associate Hoccleve with Chaucer. Hoccleve's name alone calls forth the specter of Chaucer, and that association informs the Old Man that, despite his modesty, Hoccleve is a perfectly proficient writer of English. Such an immediate association between Chaucer and Hoccleve's capabilities as a writer lends a new sort of credence to those moments where Hoccleve laments the fact that Chaucer can no longer give him "conseil." Hoccleve's potential, in other words, seems to naturally and immediately follow from the fact that Hoccleve is "aqweyntid" with Chaucer; if "maistir" and "fadir" confer no special significance to the relationship between Hoccleve and Chaucer, their acquaintance does. That is why theirs is a coterie relationship: it is based on personal acquaintance between the two poets, which has led Hoccleve to be closely identified with his predecessor.[44]

But if Hoccleve maps out a coterie relationship built on his personal acquaintance with Chaucer and Chaucer's mentorship, Hoccleve also imagines that relationship confers certain privileges.[45] One such privilege is a special capacity to judge knowledge about Chaucer. One sees that claim at work in the final moment where Hoccleve mentions Chaucer in the *Regiment*. In the section on the need for kings to keep council, Hoccleve reflects on Chaucer as follows:

> The first fyndere of our fair langage
> Hath seid, in cas semblable, and othir mo,
> So hyly wel that it is my dotage
> For to expresse or touche any of tho.
> Allas, my fadir fro the world is go,
> My worthy maistir Chaucer—him I meene;
> Be thow advocat for him, hevenes queene.
>
> As thow wel knowist, o blessed Virgyne,
> With lovyng herte and hy devocioun,
> In thyn honour he wroot ful many a lyne.
> O now thyn help and thy promocioun!
> To God thy sone make a mocioun,
> How he thy servent was, mayden Marie,
> And lat his love floure and fructifie.
>
> Althogh his lyf be qweynt, the resemblance

[44] For other discussions of the relationship between Chaucer and Hoccleve, see J. A. Burrows, "Hoccleve and Chaucer," in *Chaucer Traditions: Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer*, ed. Ruth Morse and Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 54-61; and Derek Pearsall, "The English Chaucerians," in *Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature*, ed. D. S. Brewer (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966), 222-25.

[45] One might think of this along the lines of Lee Patterson's claim that with Hoccleve self-representation is always foremost in his mind. See Lee Patterson, "'What Is *Me*?': Hoccleve and the Trials of the Urban Self," in *Acts of Recognition: Essays on Medieval Literature* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 84–109.

Of him hath in me so fresh lyflynesse
That to putte othir men in remembrance
Of his persone, I have here his likenesse
Do make, to this ende, in soothfastnesse,
That they that han of him lost thought and mynde
By this peynture may ageyne him fynde. (4978-98)

Hoccleve begins with more praise for Chaucer, again specifically about Chaucer's capability with the English language, related to such epithets as the "honour of [the] Englissh tonge" or the "flour of eloquence." As one would expect, Chaucer's praise is met with an associated instance of modesty on Hoccleve's part and a lament for Chaucer's passing. Hoccleve ends his lament with a plea to the Virgin Mary, about whom Chaucer supposedly "wroot ful many a lyne," a somewhat dubious claim unless one considers the *ABC* "many a lyne" and a judgment to which I will shortly return. Hoccleve hopes that Mary will "make a mocioun" and intercede on Chaucer's behalf.[46] Asking Mary to keep Chaucer in mind causes Hoccleve to reflect on his own ability to do so. Hoccleve wishes other men would have the same ability and in order to aid them he claims that he will include a "peynture." When Hoccleve writes, "I have here his likenesse," he means it literally, as some of the manuscripts, such as London, British Library MS Harley 4866, accompany this passage with what is arguably the most famous portrait of Chaucer (fig. 1).[47]

The mimetic quality of the Chaucer portrait has occasioned a good deal of discussion, but I am less interested in the portrait's verisimilitude than I am in the fact that Hoccleve presents himself as someone who can adjudicate that claim.[48] Hoccleve assures his reader that "the resemblance / Of him hath in me so fresh lyflynesse," that he can help others remember him by placing "here his likenesse," and that he does so "in soothfastnesse." The rhyme scheme bolsters Hoccleve's claim, associating "lyflynesse," "likenesse," and "soothfastnesse" on the one hand, and "resemblance" and "remembrance" on the other. The final couplet addresses the reasoning behind having the portrait here, so that the mind is able to find it when needed. But of course, the portrait can only work to recall Chaucer if it accurately represents him, an accuracy the first five lines of the stanza are at pains to emphasize. Behind this insistence on the portrait's accuracy is an implicit claim: Hoccleve knew Chaucer well enough to judge whether or not a portrait of him is accurate in the first instance. The "lyflynesse" of Chaucer in Hoccleve's mind is a direct result of the fact that Hoccleve knew him in life. That knowledge puts Hoccleve in a position where he is a uniquely qualified judge of representations of Chaucer, as here in the form of a portrait or, it would be no stretch to imagine, in other written recollections of Chaucer's life and work.

[46] On this language of stirring up a "mocioun" see the discussion of Lydgate's *Dance Macabre* in chapter 3.
[47] For a meditation on this likeness, especially the way its hands resonate through Chaucer's work and the period more broadly, see Helen Barr, *Transporting Chaucer* (Machester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 82-139.
[48] See David R. Carlson, "Thomas Hoccleve and the Chaucer Portrait," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 54 (1991): 283-300; Jeanne Krochalis, "Hoccleve's Chaucer Portrait," *Chaucer Review* 21 (1986): 234-45; and the discussion in Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 285-305.

Figure 1- Chaucer portrait from Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes* in London, British Library MS Harley 4866

Such a special position for Hoccleve is ripe for abuse, and in the stanzas that follow Chaucer's portrait one begins to see what licenses Hoccleve will take with it. Hoccleve follows the stanzas calling for the Virgin's intercession and the stanza announcing the inclusion of the Chaucer portrait with two stanzas that explain how images work on the mind and that defend images against their critics:

> The ymages that in the chirches been
> Maken fol thynke on God and on his seintes
> Whan the ymages they beholde and seen,
> Where ofte unsighte of hem causith restreyntes
> Of thoughtes goode. Whan a thing depeynt is
> Or entaillid, if men take of it heede,
> Thoght of the liknesse it wole in hem breede.
>
> Yit sum men holde oppinioun and seye
> That noon ymages sholde ymakid be.
> They erren foule and goon out of the weye;
> Of trouthe have they scant sensibilitee.
> Passe over that! Now, blessed Trinitee,
> Upon my maistres doule mercy have;
> For him Lady, they mercy eek I crave. (4999-5012)

Images in church, Hoccleve tells us, cause people to think about God and the saints; without images reminding people to turn their minds to these holy individuals, they would simply forget to have "thoughtes goode."[49] Images multiply, in fact, because when one takes heed of an image it breeds its likeness in one's mind. At this point, Hoccleve informs his readers that certain people do not think images should be made. Such people "erren foule" and have "scant sensibilitee" for "trouthe." These lines, a digression within a digression within a digression—recall that nominally the topic here is the need for a king to keep council, which became a lamentation on Chaucer's death before it addressed the function of images—return to an ongoing concern of Hoccleve's, namely the issue of Wycliffism. Hoccleve includes one such digression on the topic in the *Regiment's* prologue, in which the Old Man criticizes the position that the recently executed Wycliffite John Badby took on the Eucharist and praised the behavior of Henry IV at Badby's trial. In 1415, Hoccleve would return to a critique of Wycliffism in his *Address to Sir John Oldcastle*.[50] Similarly, the stanzas end with another plea to the Virgin to intercede on Chaucer's behalf, turning what is ostensibly a lament for Chaucer into one of Hoccleve's favorite modes of writing, prayers to the Virgin. As we have seen, Hoccleve extends one such prayer in the *Letter of Cupid* and he writes several shorter poems on the topic as well, such as the *Conpleynte paramont* and the *Item de beata Virgine*.[51] Hoccleve, in short, has turned a eulogy for Chaucer into a chance to write about two of his favorite topics.

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[49] For a discussion on Thomas Hoccleve's religious images, see Shannon Gayk, *Image, Text, and Religious Reform in Fifteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 45-83.
[50] For a full discussion of Hoccleve's relationship to Wycliffism, see Andrew Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 103-30.
[51] These latter two poems are included in Thomas Hoccleve, *'My Compleinte' and Other Poems*.

This method, whereby Hoccleve uses the figure of Chaucer in order to write whatever poetry Hoccleve wants to write, becomes one typical way of proceeding in laments for Chaucer. Using Chaucer in this way does not make Hoccleve a pure cynic, however, ruthlessly exploiting his audience's fondness for Chaucer to his own ends. As the Chaucerian allusions in the *Letter of Cupid* demonstrate, Hoccleve learned a great deal from Chaucer, whose poetry he genuinely seems to hold in high regard. The sentiments expressed in the *Regiment* probably are authentic. But life is for the living and Hoccleve was smart enough to know an opportunity when he saw one. By casting himself in a coterie relationship with the recently deceased poet, Hoccleve could make determinations about the forms of poetry and aesthetic tastes that constitute membership in that coterie by fiat; what is usually a contestable series of claims that coterie members have to negotiate, Hoccleve could simply pronounce as fact. But Hoccleve's apparent self-determination here does not mean that he had no other influences. In the final section, I will return to the figure of Christine. The kinds of poetry that Hoccleve attributes to Chaucer in the *Regiment*, the kinds that Hoccleve himself writes, are genres in which Christine, not Chaucer, wrote extensively. Christine, however, once again goes unnamed, but the reason for that is different in this instance. Whereas in the *Letter of Cupid*, coterie membership between Hoccleve and his audience meant that he simply did not need to name her, in the *Regiment* the ongoing pressures of the Hundred Years War renders Christine an unsuitable coterie member.

V. Christineian Chaucer

I began this chapter by noting the simple fact that groups are constituted by exclusion as well as inclusion, that in order for something to be considered as a part of a group something else must be left out. A group cannot consist of all possible things, that after all is what made Michel Foucault laugh while reading Jean Luis Borges.[52] I addressed an inclusion that seemed to be an exclusion, the silent incorporation of Christine and Chaucer into Hoccleve's *Letter of Cupid* and the recognition that they were being treated as known entities by a coterie group of which Hoccleve was already a member. In the *Regiment*, once again Hoccleve incorporates the work of Christine and Chaucer into his poem, but this time Hoccleve announces his coterie affiliation with Chaucer, while he remains silent about his debt to Christine. When Hoccleve forms a coterie with Chaucer by excluding Christine, he begins a process of differentiation that would eventually result in the English literary tradition, insomuch as it understands Chaucer as its "fadir," and helps to explain what makes that tradition *English*. Our disciplinary distinctions, based as they are on nineteenth century assumptions about the nation-state and its linguistic identity, naturalize such distinctions: "of course Christine would not be part of the English literary tradition," we tell ourselves, "because she wrote in French." It seems to us impossible that it could have been otherwise. But to Hoccleve and his fifteenth century contemporaries, the idea that a French poet would automatically be excluded from the English tradition was by no means a given. French was still a living language spoken in England, still very much a cultural presence; poetry written in England in the French language, like Gower's *Mirour de l'homme* would certainly seem like English poetry. When Hoccleve decides to keep quiet about Christine it is not because tradition tells him that he should talk about Chaucer instead; Hoccleve makes that decision about coterie membership and it is that decision, and many others like it, that begin to form a tradition.

[52] See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1994), xv.

Before turning to Hoccleve's exclusion of Christine, though, I should briefly discuss what he learned from her. The basic lesson was about the kinds of things a poet could address. The last discussion of Chaucer in the *Regiment*, the one that includes the Chaucer portrait, comes in a section on the need for kings to keep council on matters of state. The following stanzas precede Hoccleve's lament for Chaucer:

> Excellent Prince, eek on the holy dayes
> Beeth waar that yee nat your conseiles holde;
> As for tho tymes, putte hem in delayes
> Thynkith wel this: yee wel apaid be nolde
> If your soget nat by youre heestes tolde.
> Right so our lord God, kyng and commandour
> Of kynges alle, is wroth with that errour.
>
> In the long yeer been werk-dayes ynowe,
> If they be wel despent for to entende
> To conseiles. To God your herte bowe
> If yee desire men hir hertes bende
> To yow. What kyng nat dredith God offende
> Ne nat rekkith do him disobeissance
> He shal be disobeyed eek, par chance. (4964-77)

These lines constitute explicit advice about specific matters of policy. The Prince should not hold council on holy days, Hoccleve warns, because such disrespect for authority, and God's authority at that, will both result in God's wrath and breed disrespect for the king's authority. The tone of the passage is occasionally humorous, "in the long yeer been werk-dayes ynowe," but mostly it is a serious recommendation about what the narrator sees as a serious matter. What is more, the consequences for the king ignoring this advice are spelled out, and are particularly dire, both God's displeasure and the possibility of rebellion. Built into this discussion about the importance of how the king interacts with a council is a threat about what happens if the king does not listen to counsel, specifically the counsel given in the *Regiment*.

It is supposedly on this matter of holding council during holy days that Chaucer has written, and "in cas semblable, and othir mo," but that is not true. The tone of these lines is far more didactic and earnest than Chaucerian. It is Gowerian, to some degree, though Gower would have put the point differently, either by including an exemplary figure from antiquity or using such a figure's story in order to make the point allegorically.[53] But the model Hoccleve was most likely to have adopted for this kind of writing—a direct address on matters of statecraft by a poet—was Christine de Pizan. After her *L'epistre au dieu d'amours*, Christine had begun to intersperse her productions of courtly poetry, such as *Le Duc des vrais amans* of 1404-05, with prose works on the practice of governance, a concern already present in works like *Le Livre de cité des dames* but explicitly and extensively explored in *Le Livre du corps de policie* of 1406-07

[53] Hoccleve's tone follows the lead of Gower in the creation of "public poetry," poetry meant to address the "public" on the topic of the "common good." See Anne Middleton, "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II," *Speculum* 53 (1978): 94-114. On the different uses and styles of exemplarity, see Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

and the *Livre de paix*, completed by 1414.[54] These latter works, in particular, use some of the same sources as the second half of Hoccleve's *Regiment* and share in its rather straightforward dispensing of advice.[55]

Though Hoccleve does not mention Christine as one of his sources, he does list his sources at the start of the second half of the *Regiment*—the portion devoted to advice to princes—and they are both prestigious and complex. He claims he will translate from "Aristotle, moost famous philosophre / His epistles to Alisaundre sente,"—which is the *Secreta Secretorum*—and "of Gyles of Regiment / Of Princes"—which is the *De regimine principium* of Aegidius Romanus, or Giles of Rome—and "a book Jacob de Cessolis / Of the ordre of prechours maad, a worthy man, / That the Ches Moralysed clepid is"—which is the Jacob de Cessolis's *Chessbook* (2038-39; 2052-53; 2109-11).[56] But Hoccleve's work is not a systematic translation of these three texts; instead, Hoccleve announces that "plotmeel thynke I to translate" (2053). "Plotmeel" has only two attestations in the MED: in Hoccleve and in the later *Promptorium parvulorum*, an English to Latin dictionary completed about 1440, which contains a "beplotmele" and glosses the word as meaning "particulariter, partitive," that is "in parts or piecemeal."[57] Hoccleve is true to his word. He thoroughly combines his source texts, taking from each whatever he needs, often drawing exempla from the *Chessbook* and his conceptual divisions from the *De regimine principium*. Even moments of fairly close translation are a kind of patchwork. For example, when discussing a king's coronation oath to uphold justice, Hoccleve writes

> And a kyng in fulfilling of that is
> To God lyk, which is verray rightwisnesse.
> And men of Ynde seyn and holden this:
> 'A kynges justice is as greet richesse
> Unto his peple as plentee or largesse

[54] See Christine de Pizan, *Le livre du duc des vrais amans*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1995); Christine de Pizan, *Le livre du corps de policie*, ed. Angus J. Kennedy (Paris: Champion, 1998); and Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Peace*, ed. and trans. Karen Green, Constant J. Mews, and Janice Pindar (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2008). This edition of the *Book of Peace* also contains the French original.

[55] On Christine's sources, see Kate Langdon Forhan, "Reading backward: Aristotelianism in the Political Thought of Christine de Pizan," in *Au champ des escriptures. III^e Colloque international sur Christine de Pizan, Lausanne, 18-22 juillet 1998*, ed. Eric Hicks, Diego Gonzalez and Philippe Simon (Paris, Champion, 2000), 359-381. But, see also Angus J. Kennedy, "Christine de Pizan's *Livre du corps de policie*: Some Problems in the Identification and Analysis of Her Sources," in *Miscellanea mediaevalia: Mélanges offerts à Philippe Ménard*, ed. Jean-Claude Faucon, Alain Labbé and Danielle Quéruel (Paris, Champion, 1998), 733-743.

[56] For late medieval versions of the *Secreta Secretorum*, see M. A. Manzalaoui, ed. *Secretum Secretorum: Nine English Versions*, EETS o. s. 276 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); and Robert Steele and T. Henderson eds. *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum*, EETS e. s. 74 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1898). For a Middle English translation of the *De regimine principium*, see John Trevisa, *The Governance of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of the De Regimine Principium of Aegidius Romanus*, ed. David C. Fowler, Charles F. Briggs, and Paul G. Remley (New York: Routledge, 1997). For the *Chessbook* in Latin see Sister Marie Anita Burt, ed., *Jacobus de Cessolis: Libellus de Moribus Hominum et Officiis Nobilium ac Popularium super Ludo Scachorum*, Ph.D. dissertation (Austin: University of Texas, 1957); and in French, see Carol S. Fuller, ed., *A Critical Edition of Le Jeu des Eschés, Moralisé translated by Jehan de Vignay*. Ph.D. dissertation (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America, 1974).

[57] A. L. Mayhew, ed., *The Promptorium Parvulorum: The First English-Latin Dictionary*, EETS e. s. 102 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1908), 30.

> Of eerthely good, and better than reyn
> Fallyng at eeve from hevene," they seyn. (2521-2527)

This stanza condenses material from the *Secreta secretorum*. In the English translation made shortly after 1400 in London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 501, the chapter "off right" begins with the reflection about justice and the divine right of kings, "right ys a louable praysynge of properties of þe heye simple glorious, wherefore swilk oon shulde reygne þat god hauys chosyn and stabyld on his servauntȝ, to whom þe nedes and gouernance vpon subgitȝ fallys to." After extended praise of justice itself, the anonymous translator claims "and þerfore þay of Inde sayen, þe right of hym þat reygnyth ys more profitable to subgitȝ þan plente of good tyme; And also þai sayd þat right of a lord ys mor better þan rayn wel norsshant."[58] Hoccleve extracts his encomium to justice from these two moments in order to create a single stanza in which the rhyme scheme creates links among "rightwisnesse," "richesse," and "largesse." He mines this section of his source for two separate analogies—a king is like God and a king is like rain—in order to bring together images of kingship that originate "from hevene. " His translation of this passage, in short, is guided not by fidelity to the base text or by the logic of argumentation but by the appropriateness of metaphor. It is a "plotmeel" translation indeed.

If Hoccleve does something so complex the sources he cites explicitly, then it is even more likely that he would radically alter material taken from Christine's work, which he does not credit. In fact, instead of direct citations, Hoccleve takes a methodology from Christine. She provides Hoccleve with a model for making alterations to his sources: the introduction of topicality. Christine's prose works of this period take the broadly applicable advice that she finds in her source texts and apply it directly to the political situation in France. In the *Livre du corps de policie*, Christine twice mentions that the prince, whose nominal instruction provides the book with its purpose, should look to the example of Louis, Duke of Orléans, who she calls "le tres prudent prince le duc d'Orleans."[59] Later in a discussion of the "bel maintien," "good bearing," of the prince Christine writes that while we may look to "exemple les estranges anciens," "examples of ancient foreigners," for "parlent plaisant et aourné langiage," "pleasant and ornate speech,"

> N'est mie drois, ce me semble, que nous oublions de noz princes françosi ceulx entre les autres que nous avons veu[s] et weons a noz yeux tres especiaux et excellens en ycellui aournement de belle faconde, si comme fu le tres ylustre sapient et prudent saige roy de France, Charles quint du nom… Et de cestrui tres notable aournement de parleure sans doubte moult bien lui retrait son tres excellent filz Loys, duc d'Orliens.
>
> But it is not right, it seems to me, to forget our French princes, especially those that we have seen and see daily with our own eyes; they are very special and excellent in the adornment of fair eloquence, as was the very illustrious, knowledgeable, wise, and prudent Kind Charles V… And this this very noble quality of speech, without doubt descended to his very excellent son Louis, duke of Orleans.[60]

[58] Steele and Henderson, *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum*, 92-93.
[59] Christine, *Le Livre du corps de policie*, 5.
[60] Christine, *Le Livre du corps de policie*, 45-46. English translation from Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Body Politic*, ed. and trans. Kate Langdon Forham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 47.

The authority of the ancients is all well and good, but Christine wants her contemporaries to be recognized as well, and to serve as models for those who had known them. Her insistence here is behind the much more thorough treatment she gives the topic with her *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*.[61] That work, like her mention of Charles V here, is a response to her contemporary situation in France. Charles V was succeeded by Charles VI, who slipped into madness, leaving the kingdom without a strong centralized monarchy and in the grips of perpetual civil strife; her evocations to Louis, duke of Orléans, display Christine's hope that he will follow in the footsteps of his father, Charles V, even if his brother, Charles VI, will not. The implicit concern with the French political situation becomes explicit by the time, seven years later in the *Livre de paix*, when Christine prays to God that another Louis—Louis, duke of Guyenne—will "saner et curer la mortelle playe et dure hayne et l'effusion de sang tres orrible ja tout enviellie de ton catholique royaume de France qui tout perissoit," "to bind the mortal wound of bitter hatred—to staunch the fearsome, unremitting bloodshed from which your catholic kingdom of France was dying."[62] Of course, the *Livre de paix* was written after Hoccleve's *Regiment* and so he would not have seen such a brutally evocative version of this concern, but the kingdom of France was in truly dire straights before Christine's *Le Livre du corps de policie* and Hoccleve would have been able to read between the lines of the earlier work in order to access its topical relevance.

Hoccleve, then, followed Christine by adding contemporary concerns to his "plotmeel" translation of older material. The section on justice alone provides plenty of examples. In addition to what Christine calls the "estranges anciens" whose examples Hoccleve derives from his source text, he also includes an apostrophe to "worthy Kyng benigne, Edward the laste" who in order to find out is he "cursid were or blessid" would travel "into countree in simple array alone / To heere what men seide of [his] persone" (2556-62). Hoccleve also includes

> Of Lancastre good Duke Henri also,
> Whos justice is writen and auctorysid—
> Why sholde I nat thee rekne amonges tho
> That in hir tyme han justice exercysid? (2647-50).

Hoccleve follows Christine's strategy of showcasing exemplary figures from his royal addressee's immediate past and family. He is writing for prince Henry, soon to be Henry V, and so as examples of justice he mentions Edward III, the prince's great-grandfather, and another Henry, this one the duke of Lancaster, and the person who held that title before it passed to John of Gaunt, the prince's grandfather. Hoccleve even copies Christine by asking a rhetorical question about the propriety of including recent examples: why should he not include such a distinguished individual as Duke Henry in this list of paragons of justice?

Alongside these exemplary figures from the prince's bloodline, though, Hoccleve includes critical commentary about the state of affairs in England. As Christine has asked her Louis, duke of Orléans, and Louis, duke of Guyenne, to stop the civil strife in France, Hoccleve asks Henry for something similar:

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[61] See Christine de Pisan, *Le Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, 2 vols., ed. Suzanne Solente (Paris: Champion, 1936-1940).
[62] Christine, *The Book of Peace*, 202 (French original) and 60 (English translation).

Now in good faith, I preye God it amende,
Lawe is ny fleemed out of this countree,
For fewe been that dreden it offende.
Correctioun and al is longe on thee:
Why sufferest thow so many assemblee
Of armed folk? Wel ny in every shire
Partie is maad to venge hir cruel ire.

They with hir hand wrong to hem doon redresse.
Hen deyneth nat an accioun attame
At commune law; swiche unbuxomnesse
Suffred us make wole of seuretee lame.
Whoso may this correct, is worthy blame
That he ne dooth naahgt. Allas, this souffraunce
Wole us destroye by continuance.

Is ther no lawe this to remedie?
I can no more, but and this foorth growe,
This land shal it repente and sore abye,
And al swich maintenance, as men wel knowe,
Susteened is nat by persones lowe,
But cobbes grete this riot susteene.
Correcte is good is whil that it is greene. (2787-2807).

These stanzas address "maintenance," the practice of keeping standing armies, loyal not to the king but to individual nobles. In part, this passage registers a fatigue about the civil strife—not dissimilar, once again, to Christine's concerns—that had plagued the country throughout the first years of Henry IV's reign as a result of the deposition of Richard II.[63] Hoccleve lays the blame for this situation not at the door of the poor, but instead on "cobbes grete." In his notes to this line, Charles Blyth explains that "the OED is more helpful on *cob* (n.1) than the MED, but neither is clear whether the word has a pejorative connotation. The best guess is that it refers to prominent leaders in a colloquial fashion, which implies disrespect."[64] Indeed, the MED claims the word can either mean "a male swan" or "a gang leader, ?bully," with this line from Hoccleve the only attestation for that second meaning. The OED suggests that it might mean "A great man, big man, leading man" with Hoccleve's line as the earliest instance of that meaning. I would suggest that it also could refer to Sir John Oldcaste, Lord Cobham as of 1409, two years before the composition of Hoccleve's *Regiment*. Oldcastle's greatest offenses against the crown would not occur for some time, and he was still quite close to the young prince in these years, but already by 1410 churches on his wife's estates in Kent were under interdict for unsolicited

[63] Paul Strohm has written extensively about the literary consequences of these early years of political unrest in Henry IV's reign. See Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), especially 128-52 for a discussion of Hoccleve and Sir John Oldcastle. On the early years of unrest under Henry IV, see also the article mentioned by Charles Blyth in his notes to this passage: Edward Powell, "Restoration of Law and Order," in *Henry V: The Practice of Kingship*, ed. G. L. Harriss (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 53-74. Chris Given-Wilson's forthcoming book on Henry IV in the Yale English Monarchs series will hopefully address these events substantially.
[64] Hoccleve, *Regiment of Princes*, 228.

preaching, that is for their association with Wycliffism.[65] One should note, however, that Hoccleve's complaint here is topical, but not that topical. There is not enough specificity to say for certain whether this reference is indeed to Oldcastle, but the mere chance that it might be tells us something important about Hoccleve's literary inspirations. The discussion of civil strife and maintenance, never mind the possible reference to Oldcastle, is a far more specific political intervention than anything Chaucer would write. It is far more like Christine.

And yet, when Hoccleve mentions his sources, he mentions Chaucer, not Christine. Between his references to Giles of Rome and Jacob de Cessolis, Hoccleve includes a digression that becomes another encomium for Chaucer:

> Symple is my goost and scars my letterure
> Unto your excellence for to wryte
> Myn inward love, and yit in aventure
> Wole I me putte, thogh I can but lyte.
> My deere maistir, God his soule qwyte,
> And fadir, Chaucer, fayn wolde han me taght,
> But I was dul and lened lyte or naght.
>
> Allas, my worthy maistir honurable,
> This lands verray tresor and richesse,
> Deeth by thy deeth hath harm irreparable
> Unto us doon; hir vengeable duress
> Despoillid hath this land of swetnesse
> Of rethorik, for unto Tullius
> Was nevere man so lyk amonges us.
>
> Also who was heir in philosophie
> To Aristotle in our tonge but thow?
> The steppes of Virgile in poesie
> Thow folowedist eek. Men woot wel ynow
> That combreworld that thee, my maistir, slow,
> Wolde I slayn ere! Deeth was to hastyf
> To renne on thee and reve thee thy lyf. (2073-93)

An avowal of modesty once again leads to an assessment of Chaucer's worth and Hoccleve's failings. Hoccleve's effusive modesty is mixed with a claim about his special relationship to Chaucer: Chaucer tried to teach him, and whatever failings Hoccleve has come from the fact that he "was dul and lened lyte or naght." The passage returns once more to the accusations that Death has harmed all of England by taking Chaucer away. Chaucer's achievements are also discussed again, in what might seem to be fairly conventional terms, "maistir honurable" and "this lands verray tresor and richesse." The trifecta of great writers with whom Hoccleve associates Chaucer—Cicero, Aristotle, and Virgil—might seem excessively laudatory, but if one wants to praise Chaucer as the "flour of eloquence," who would be better to compare him with than Cicero? But the Aristotelian comparison once again points more to Hoccleve's work than to

[65] On Hoccleve, Oldcastle, and Wycliffism, see Andrew Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 103-30.

Chaucer's. Hoccleve asks "who was heir in philosophie / To Aristotle in our tonge but thow?" Chaucer may have translated Boethius, but he was not a philosopher, and he did not make extensive use of Aristotle. Hoccleve did, or at least he thought he did. One of his major sources for the second part of the *Regiment*, the part this passage introduces, is the *Secreta Secretorum*, which presents itself as a letter Aristotle wrote to Alexander the Great. It is not Chaucer who is heir to Aristotle; it is Hoccleve. Or, it is Christine, who uses the *Secreta Secretorum* in her *Livre du corps de policie*, albeit not "in our tonge."

That final qualification is key, I think, because as sympathetic as Hoccleve might have been to Christine's latter work she could not serve as any kind of role model for him, nor could he place her in that kind of coterie position in which he places Chaucer. Christine was important for Hoccleve; she was the source behind one of his earliest poetic works and she showed him how to advise kings on affairs of state. Knapp has identified in the *Regiment*'s passages to Chaucer "a strategy of poetic usurpation," in which Hoccleve is able to assert his own practices and position against those of Chaucer.[66] Hoccleve does so, however, by both a coterie identification with Chaucer as well as a disidentification with Chaucer at the same instant, in which Christine serves as his real role model. If Hoccleve could usurp the role of "fadir" Chaucer, it was in part because he had a "mother to think back through." But, acknowledging Christine would have been problematic in a couple of different ways. First, Hoccleve projected a mode of writing political poetry onto Chaucer that was actually Hoccleve's in order to usurp that newly created role of poet-political advisor for himself. In general, should a medieval poet define a role for himself, he would do better not to give credit for that role to someone who plays it with greater skill, especially if that someone is a woman.

One reason for suppressing Christine's influence, then, is a personal reason; it has to do with Hoccleve's own reputation and status. But a further reason is political: Hoccleve is writing at a moment during the Hundred Years War when crediting a French writer for an English text would be decidedly impolitic. Between 1402, when Hoccleve translated the *Letter of Cupid* and when Henry IV was attempting to get Christine to come to his court, and 1410-11, when Hoccleve was writing the *Regiment*, the political scene had changed substantially as had Christine's place in it. Henry IV launched no full-scale assault on France, as his son would soon do, but neither was he as desirous of peace as Richard II had been.[67] In France, things had begun to fall apart. Charles VI was suffering bouts of madness and unable to rule. In the resulting power vacuum, the French nobility descended into what was for all intents and purposes a civil war. Open hostilities began with the assassination of Louis, duke of Orléans, by the forces of John the Fearless, duke of Burgundy, in 1407. In the wake of this event, both the Burgundian and the Armagnac factions sought to align themselves with the English in order to defeat their cousins, a situation that would eventually have disastrous consequences for France as a whole when the Armagnac faction aided the English in the battle of Agincourt, with the eventual result that Charles VI signed the Treaty of Troyes, making Henry VI eventual ruler over both England and France. Even before the fighting turned bloody, but especially after it, Christine's political

[66] Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse*, 109.

[67] Only Richard's relative pacifism, see see Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). The last major biographical work of Henry IV is the first half of K. B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), which is based on lectures written in 1947. These give an indication as to why Henry IV was more ambivalent towards peace with French; the English nobility, largely for political reasons, wanted war to resume. For the best discussion of the economic funding and political complexities of the Hundred Years War, see Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War, c.1300-c.1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

writings were directed toward the declining conditions in France. Christine's *Livre du corps de policie*, as well as *Le livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V* of 1404 and *Le livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie* of 1410, all had the same ostensible purpose.[68] In the last text listed, written after the *Livre du corps de policie* but before Hoccleve's *Regiment*, Christine writes in a discussion of a "just war":

> Et de ceste voye tenir bien donna l'exemple le bon saige roy Charles le Quint du nom, pere de cestui qui a present reigne. Lequel tost après qu'il ot esté courroné, qui fu si comme en l'aage de .xxv. ans, comme il regardast que les Anglois tenissent mauvisement les convenances faittes ou traittie de la paix que il avoit par neccessité et diverse fortune accordee a eulx—tout lui fust tres dommaigable et que non obstant leur fust gree a tenir grant part de la duchie de Guienne et plusiers autres terres et seigneuries ailleurs ou royaulme de France—ne souffisoit mie, ains demarchoient, fouloient et grevoient par leur orgueil et oultrecuidance les autres contrees voysines qui ne leurs appartenoient. Manda paisiblement le dit roy, ains que autre chose en faist, par auttorisiez ambaxadeurs au Duc de Lancastre, filz du roy Edouart d'Angleterre, par lequel et ses gens estoit fait le dit oultraige, que de ce voulsist souffrir et faire admende de griefs et dommaiges faiz puis la ditte paix. De laquel chose fut tel l'effait, quoy que la response fust assez gracieuse, que les diz ambaxadeurs furent occis en ycelle voye.[69]
>
> In this tradition, to set a good example, the good and wise King Charles, fifth of the name, father of the one who at present reigns, soon after he was crowned at the age of twenty-five, saw that the English were keeping badly the agreements of the peace treaty he had concluded with them out of necessity and their good fortune, which treaty was so damaging to him. In spite of the agreement that allowed them to keep possession of a great part of the duchy of Guyenne and several other lands and lordships elsewhere in the kingdom of France, this treaty was not good enough for them. Rather because of their overweening pride they also trampled under foot neighboring territories that did not belong to them. Therefore this king, before he did anything else, peacefully sent envoys to the duke of Lancaster, son of King Edward of England, by whom this outrage was carried out, inquiring if they wished to allow amends to be made for the suffering and damage inflicted since the treaty; whereupon it resulted that although the reply was gracious, the ambassadors themselves were killed.[70]

Here is the topicality that Hoccleve learned from Christine, but not in any form that he could readily use; Christine's text amounts to slander of prince Henry's grandfather. Christine wanted the French nobility to cease their fighting with one another and to work together to drive out the English, who according to Christine had behaved and continued to behave atrociously. As Hoccleve was writing the *Regiment*, then, even if there were not ideological reasons for wanting

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[68] For a modern edition of *Le livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie* in English translation, see Christine de Pizan, *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry*, ed. Charity Cannon Willard, trans. Sumner Willard (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1999); for an edition of the French original, see Christine Moneera Laennec, *Christine Antygrafe: Authorship and Self in the Prose Works of Christine de Pisan, with an Edition of B.N. Ms. 603 "Le Livre des Fais d'Armes et de Chevallerie*," 2 volumes (Ph.D. diss, Yale University, New Haven, 1988).

[69] Christine, *"Le Livre des Fias d'Armes et de Chevallerie"*, vol. 2, 32.

[70] Christine, *The Book of Deeds of Arms and of Chivalry*, 20-21.

to differentiate oneself as an English poet from other French poets, there were specific reasons not to mention an association with Christine.

VI. Coterie Poetics and the Politics of Tradition

Hoccleve's silence about Christine in the *Regiment* is very likely political, but then again so is any process of canon formation, and I would like to conclude this chapter with some thoughts about the politics of tradition. Our reasons for excluding Christine from the English literary canon are different than Hoccleve's, but they are not unrelated. Hoccleve, some have argued, is part of a conscious policy about raising the status of English undertaken by the Lancastrian regime, a language policy whose existence is now contested, but which corresponds well with nineteenth-century assumptions about the identity between nation-states and national literatures.[71] Even if this argument were convincing in the abstract, it does not take account of the particular, embodied choices made by individual poets writing in English rather than French. The Ricardian poets could and often did choose to write in French and in Latin, but they also chose to write long and important works in English. The Lancastrians self-consciously chose the narrower path of writing only in English, thereby aligning themselves with Chaucer. Hoccleve was no exception. His decisions to write in English and to imitate Chaucer were historically determined, but they were still decisions—choices he made from among a variety of options. He is unlikely to have experienced writing in English as "carrying out a language policy." Such an explanation allows our theories about history to flatten Hoccleve's experience of it. Reading Chaucer and Christine and negotiating between English and French would have been a dynamic and open process.

Hoccleve made use of that openness, in what Knapp has called a usurpation, introducing a metaphor taken from the politics of royal lineages in order to understand Hoccleve's actions and his goals.[72] But such a metaphor can explain only part of Hoccleve's motivations, and other metaphors are needed here as well. Knapp discusses a related metaphor, and what is perhaps the most familiar one, as follows:

> Perhaps no ideology is so central to the institution of literary history as that of filial piety. Despite recent debate over the content and function of literary canons, and despite

[71] The case for a Lancastrian language policy is built in John Fisher's two articles, "Chancery English and the Emergence of Standard Written English," *Speculum* 52 (1977): 870-89; and "A Language Policy for Lancastrian England," *PMLA* 107 (1992): 1168-80; both collected in John Fisher, *The Emergence of Standard English* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996); and in Malcolm Richardson, "Henry V, the English Chancery, and Chancery English," *Speculum* 55 (1980): 726-50. The recent work of Gwilym Dodd has convincingly challenged this position; see Gwilym Dodd, "The Spread of English in the Record of Central Government, 1400-1430," in *Vernacularity in England and Wales, c. 1300-1550*, eds. Elisabeth Salter and Helen Wicker (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 225-66; "The Rise of English, the Decline of French: Supplications to the English Crown, c. 1420-50," *Speculum* 86 (2011): 117-50; "Trilingualism in the Medieval English Bureaucracy: The Use and Disuse of Languages in the Fifteenth Century Privy Seal Office," *Journal of British Studies* 51 (2012): 253-83.

[72] Literary history often uses such metaphors in order to describe itself. Such a metaphorical logic is part and parcel of the process of *translatio imperii et studii*, in which political legitimacy and cultural authority are passed down as if they were parcels of property in a certain patrimony. The concept of *translatio imperii et studii* has been the object of a great deal of scholarship and, as an assumption about the way in which literature serves as cultural capital to legitimate political dynasties, it conceptually lays behind a great deal more. For two of the most influential discussions, see Lee Patterson, "Virgil and the Historical Consciousness of the Twelfth Century: The *Roman d'Eneas* and *Erec et Enide*," in *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 157-95; and R. Howard Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages*, revised edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

> theoretical critiques of organic, continuous historical models, the implicit frame within which we read and teach is still grounded, in the last resort, on notions of sources and influence thoroughly genealogical at their core. It is, indeed, hard to imagine a form of literary history that would not be genealogical. Could we imagine the field of literature other than as a succession of texts arrayed in time, locked together as a category by the influence of the earlier over the later and given meaning by the dynamic interrelations among them? In the assumed parthenogenesis of this tradition, the metaphor of paternity, the relation of fathers and sons, has always been central.[73]

Insomuch as this is an issue of temporality, Knapp is absolutely correct; it is difficult indeed to imagine a literary history that would not proceed as history does, in accordance with time's arrow. But, paternity is an incredibly exclusionary model; it rejects as a matter of course any number of bastards, or step-children, not to mention anything that exists on completely different lines of kinship. The ideology of masculinity behind the metaphor is certainly one of the reasons a writer like Christine could have languished in obscurity for as long as she did.

And that is one of the consequences of Hoccleve's choice. It could have been otherwise. Hoccleve chose a coterie relationship with Chaucer, a dead poet, rather than one with Christine. He could have made the opposite choice, or he could have included Christine in the coterie he made with Chaucer. Understanding Hoccleve's relationship to Chaucer in these coterie terms allows us to be alive to the possibilities for a literary tradition that would have been present to Hoccleve. Such a notion about the interaction of coteries and literary traditions would, in any event, stress the agency of poets later in a tradition for its maintenance and ongoing importance. It would provide us a way to understand Chaucer's place in the English literary tradition as constructed in part by Hoccleve as well as a way to see that Christine's exclusion from that tradition was a deliberate choice made by Hoccleve rather than an automatic exclusion based on the fact that she wrote in French rather than English or that she was a woman, even though those qualities no doubt mattered in the choice Hoccleve made. Such choices would still be political, insofar as any public relationship between a number of individuals must be, but understanding tradition as something that develops out of coterie relationships allows us to see that those political choices, like tradition itself, is something with which individuals live.

Such an understanding would also still be exclusionary, as coteries or any group of individuals can be. There will always be exclusions. We need them for the work of conceptualization. Things must be differentiated; we must be able to make determinations, to make things determinate.[74] Hoccleve, like any other writer, cannot contain the entirety of literary history of every single literary tradition in his work. Even a work that attempts such a thing, like *Finnegan's Wake*, would still contain certain dearths. Hoccleve begins the process of forming the English literary tradition as a determinate thing and begins to define what that means: something consisting of works written in English, not simply pertaining to England. Christine would fit the latter definition, even though she writes critically about England, but she does not fit the former one. That the former definition is the one that came to predominate was the result of a process that began with Hoccleve's formation of a coterie with Chaucer and not with her. Hoccleve also chose to emphasize his relationship to "fadir" Chaucer at the expense of "mother" Christine.

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[73] Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse*, 107.

[74] In Hegel's *Science of Logic*, after all, it is the dialectic of identity and difference between being and nothing that produces determinate being, which is the specific form of a thing: "its determinateness is in the form of *being*, and as such it is *quality*." See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 109.

That the metaphor of paternity fits the English literary tradition so well is the result of choices like Hoccleve's. Christine's exclusion from Hoccleve's coterie with Chaucer, in other words, was an important first step toward her exclusion from the English literary tradition broadly conceived, even though Henry IV wanted her to live and write in England and even though she was critically important to English writers.

Chapter 3
Lydgate in Paris: Patronage and Coterie Poetics during Wartime

If, in 1426, John Lydgate had been stopped at an international border and ordered to declare his reasons for travelling to Paris, he might have said "business and pleasure." Of course, no such event happened. There were no guards stationed at the borders between realms in the later Middle Ages. Although travelers did need documents to move between kingdoms, the bureaucratic regulation of travel was still in its infancy. But even the minimal requirements for border crossing would not have been imposed upon an English person traveling to Paris in 1426. There was, effectively, no border to cross. Since defeating the French at Agincourt and signing the Treaty of Troyes in 1420, the English had controlled Paris and much of France.[1] English rule extended from Flanders in the east, to the Duchy of Burgundy and the city of Orléans in the south, west across the entirety of northern France (including all of Normandy and Brittany), with the additional southwestern outpost of Gascony. Given Lydgate's probable route – crossing the channel at Calais, travelling overland to Rouen, and then down the river Seine to Paris – it is likely that he never officially left the kingdom of England. Indeed, Lydgate's trip to Paris saw him engaged in *English* business, writing poems that were meant to legitimate English rule of France, poems like *The Title and Pedigree of Henry VI* , commissioned by Richard de Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, on 20 July 1426.[2]

But writing poems in praise of the dual monarchy was not the only poetic activity in which Lydgate engaged during his sojourn in France. He also embarked upon a project of cultural appropriation, designed to render French texts accessible to English readers. Some of these translations were commissioned; Thomas Montagu, earl of Salisbury requested an English version of the *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*.[3] Others appear to have been suggested by Lydgate's "pleasure" on the trip, his sightseeing in Paris; his visit to Holy Innocents cemetery resulted in his translation of the *Danse Macabre*, a work for which there is no noble patron.[4] Taken together, these three poems provide a snapshot of Lydgate's poetic process at a specific moment in a specific place. What one finds is not the poet as propagandist, a flatterer whose only output is the unthinking aggrandizement of those patrons who brought him to France in the first place. Instead, one finds Lydgate appropriating French culture to speak back to his English patrons. The method by which he does so, however, is subtle. In the poems of his Parisian period, Lydgate critiques the nobles that are both his patrons and his primary audience; while these poems are sympathetic to the English cause, they simultaneously express concern about the actual costs of war. In so doing, Lydgate articulates a sense of poetic agency and vocation that can support the leaders of the realm even as it asks them to reflect upon their actions. In order to

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[1] For Agincourt and the subsequent English rule, see Juliet Barker, *Agincourt: Henry V and the Battle that Made England* (New York: Little Brown, 2005); Juliet Barker, *Conquest: The English Kingdom of France, 1417-1450* (New York: Little Brown, 2009); and Jonathan Sumption, *The Hundred Years War, Volume 4: Cursed Kings* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

[2] References to *The Title and Pedigree of Henry VI* will come from John Lydgate, *Minor Poems*, vol. 2, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS o. s. 192 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 613-22. Citations will be parenthetical within the text by line number.

[3] References to the *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* will come from John Lydgate, *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, ed. F. J. Furnivall with an introduction and notes by Katharine B. Locock, EETS e. s. 77, 83, 92 (London: Kegan Paul, 1899-1904). Citations will be parenthetical within the text by line number.

[4] For references to the *Danse Macabre*, see John Lydgate, *The Dance of Death*, ed. Florence Warren, with Beatrice White, EETS o. s. 181 (London: Oxford University Press, 1931). Citations will be parenthetical within the text by line number. There is no consensus on how one spells "macabre;" I follow Derek Pearsall's spelling.

produce such an agency, Lydgate creates a distinct form of coterie poetics—a form that extends not only through time and space but that also transcends social hierarchies. As this chapter will detail, Lydgate detaches the coterie from its mooring in quotidian time, just as Chaucer had extended the coterie in geographical space. In so doing, he invents what I have called *virtual coteries*, coteries made up of persons both living and dead, real and fictional, local and distant, brought together imaginatively in fellowship with Lydgate as he creates his poetry. This notion of coterie poetics would be enormously influential in nascent understandings of the Chaucerian tradition, not only for Lydgate, but for figures like Richard Roos, Stephen Scrope, William Dunbar, and John Skelton, whom I discuss in the final chapter of this dissertation.

The length of Lydgate's stay in Paris is uncertain. We know he was there in 1426 because he lets us know, mentioning the date of commission and its Paris location in both the *Pilgrimage* and the *Title and Pedigree*. Scholars tend to claim that Lydgate lived in Paris from 1426 to 1429, in the "train" of John of Lancaster, duke of Bedford, before returning to England to write a series of poems on Henry VI's coronation, which took place on 5 November, 1429.[5] However, as a brief discussion of the movements of the English governing nobility during this period will show, this timeline is almost certainly incorrect.[6] Lydgate was indeed in Paris in 1426, but the duke of Bedford was not.[7] When his eldest brother Henry V died in 1422, Bedford became Regent of France and his youngest brother Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, became Protector of England and leader of the conciliar government during the minority of their nephew Henry VI, who was only nine months old at his father's death.[8] Gloucester occasionally clashed with other members of the extended royal family, including his uncle Henry Beaufort, cardinal and bishop of Winchester.[9] The tensions between Gloucester and Beaufort resulted in an armed encounter in October of 1425, and by December of that year Bedford was back in England to prevent the dispute between his brother and his uncle from becoming a civil war.

Settling this dispute caused Bedford to be absent from France until March of 1427, during which time Richard of Warwick governed the English-controlled portions of France.[10] While Warwick governed France, his former position as custodian of Normandy fell to Thomas Montagu, earl of Salisbury.[11] When Bedford returned to France, Warwick took up his old post,

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[5] See the claim in Derek Pearsall: "Lydgate returned from France in time for the coronation of Henry VI, now nearly eight years old, at Westminster in November, 1429." Pearsall also places Lydgate "in the train of the duke of Bedford." See Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), quotes at 160 and 169. The same timeline and association is followed in Lois Ebin, *John Lydgate* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985). At 2: "From 1426 to 1429, Lydgate lived in Paris, in the train of the duke of Bedford."

[6] During the minority government, Henry VI was on the throne but his uncles were, by and large, controlling England and France. The person of the king was exceptionally important for the Lancastrians, and so Henry VI was always nominally the head of government, whereas his uncles became "regents" or "protectors," positions which actually handled the business of governance but whose ideologically uncertain place gave rise to occasional tensions. See John Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[7] For the Duke of Bedford's biography, and travels, see Jenny Stratford, "John, duke of Bedford (1389–1435)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., Sept 2011.

[8] For a brief biography of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, see G. L. Harriss, "Humphrey, duke of Gloucester (1390–1447)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., May 2011.

[9] For Henry Beaufort, see G. L. Harriss, "Beaufort, Henry (1375?–1447)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., Jan 2008.

[10] For Richard de Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, see Christine Carpenter, "Beauchamp, Richard, thirteenth earl of Warwick (1382–1439)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., Sept 2013.

[11] For Salisbury's biography, see Anne Curry, "Montagu, Thomas, fourth earl of Salisbury (1388–1428," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., Jan 2008.

and Salisbury returned to England, where he served on the king's council from July of 1427 to June of 1428, as well as in parliament, returning to France with major English reinforcements in July 1428. As we shall see, Lydgate knew all of these men. It is possible that he returned to England as part of Salisbury's train in 1427, an itinerary that would have allowed him to attend the Christmas production of the *Disguising at London*, which Derek Pearsall dates to 1427. This revised schedule places Lydgate in Paris for just over a year, during which time he was in close contact with the two most powerful English nobles in the country, Warwick and Salisbury, both of whom requested poems from him.

For Lydgate, though, the English nobility were more than his meal tickets or occasional travel agents, and his connection to Thomas Montagu, earl of Salisbury, in particular, has important ramifications for understanding Lydgate's relation to his poetic ancestor, Geoffrey Chaucer. Chaucer was Montagu's ancestor too, in a different sense. In 1421, Montagu married Alice Chaucer, daughter of Thomas Chaucer, and granddaughter of Geoffrey Chaucer.[12] This marriage is part of the impressive rise of the Chaucer family over the course of the fifteenth century. Geoffrey's son, Thomas, was a prominent landowner in Oxfordshire, the speaker for the House of Commons intermittently from 1407 to 1431, and eventually member of the royal council.[13] His only child, Alice, married three times, eventually becoming countess of Suffolk and arguably the wealthiest and most powerful woman in England. When citing Chaucer, then, Lydgate was not only referring to the recently deceased poet. He was also engaging with a powerful family whose influence was very much alive in fifteenth-century England. In so doing, Lydgate imagined himself to be engaging with the realm as a whole, the public sphere. His vision of the public, however, is limited to the ruling elite, whom he imagines to be representative of the realm as a whole. As Maura Nolan has shown, for the Lancastrians, especially during the minority of Henry VI, the public sphere was both broadened to include those outside of the immediate context of the court, and yet the public was still "limited and representative rather than expansive and inclusive." Lydgate's public voice, then, is caught "simultaneously addressing new audiences and limiting his address to a tiny elite."[14] This "tiny elite" includes Alice Chaucer; it includes the earl of Salisbury, the duke of Warwick; and it still includes the traditional representative of the public as such, the king. Even when Lydgate's works speak to the concerns of a larger audience, they are also addressed to these powerful noble families. The public, after all, is made up of private individuals and some of those individuals matter more than others. In addressing the reputation and poetic prowess of Geoffrey Chaucer, to whatever other public Lydgate speaks, he must also think of Alice Chaucer as a potential listener.

In his address to this representative public, Lydgate imagines his relationship to the English nobility as a collaboration, in which poet and patron work together to construct a vision of English history and culture that satisfies them both. In so doing, he creates what I have described as virtual coteries. These coteries are composed of Lydgate himself, his patrons, fellow poets, and important influences, living and dead. Figures like the Earl of Salisbury or the Duke of Gloucester appear in Lydgate's verse as patrons and collaborators. He also imagines

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[12] For Alice's biography, see Rowena E. Archer, "Chaucer, Alice, duchess of Suffolk (*c.*1404–1475)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., May 2011.

[13] For Thomas's biography, see Carole Rawcliffe, "Chaucer, Thomas (*c.*1367–1434)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., Jan 2008.

[14] Maura Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 7. Questions about the nature of the English public were powerfully raised by Anne Middleton, in her influential essay, "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II," *Speculum* 53 (1978): 94-114.

himself collaborating with deceased figures of influence, like his "master" Chaucer and the recently deceased Henry V. Sometimes coterie members are other poets, such as Chaucer or Laurence Calot, the original author of the *Title and Pedigree*, and other times they are simply interested individuals, such as the nameless French clerics of the *Danse*.[15] Reading Lydgate's poetry with an eye for these virtual coteries reveals that his public voice is inextricably bound up with his notion of poetic collaboration and the understanding of agency that subtends it. Because Lydgate's coteries are structures of collaboration, they create a sense of intimacy between poets, patrons, and literary forebears, an intimacy that authorizes Lydgate's work and his agency to judge both his poetic ancestors and his politically powerful contemporaries. Coteries bring together, for instance, Lydgate's agency as a poet with Salisbury's agency as an earl, at least in the rarified realm of literary production, and show English culture to be a product of the work of both individuals. The various exertions of agency are recorded in the poem, which allows for cooperation or conflict influenced by, but not beholden to, social conventions. Lydgate in other words, can do more than grovel at the feet of his powerful patron. He can critique the patron, as a sort of literary equal and advisor, who might hope, in turn, to effect historical change. The public voice of the poet, in other words, becomes a polyvocal voice, one that can advocate in new ways for the "common good." I argue in this chapter that Lydgate imitated this voice not from his "master Chaucer," but from a source whose influence he suppressed: John Gower. Gower provided a model of the poet as political commentator and advisor to princes, an exemplary poetic voice aimed at enhancing the common good. Lydgate's embrace of this model, however, depended upon his ability to construct a socially prestigious lineage for his poetry—and that lineage could only be founded on Geoffrey Chaucer. It was Chaucer and not Gower who gave Lydgate access to those individuals that represented for him the public as such, the nobility. Not only was Geoffrey the paterfamilias for the very successful Chaucer family in the fifteenth century, but he also was widely accepted as the most significant English poet of his age. It is a small wonder that Lydgate suppressed his debt to Gower in favor of attributing his identity as a public poet to Chaucer.

I will begin, as Lydgate himself so often does, with a poem by Chaucer and Lydgate's appropriation of it. In the midst of the *Pilgrimage*, the long translation commissioned by Salisbury, Lydgate quotes Chaucer's *ABC* in its entirety. Chaucer's poem has two functions in this new context. First, it represents—and Lydgate's appropriation of it causes it to functionally become—an aesthetic of excess, of extensive ornamentation. Lydgate's introduction to the poem explains how the *ABC* alters the poem around it, transferring value to Lydgate's work by virtue of its ornamental quality; his introduction to Chaucer's poem gives us some insight into how Lydgate understands the process of translation and what he values aesthetically. But the ornamentation serves different purposes for Chaucer and for Lydgate, both of whom use that ornamentation to express devotion to two very different sorts of patrons: the Virgin Mary for Chaucer and the Earl of Salisbury for Lydgate. Such a difference becomes most apparent in the *ABC*'s second function: Lydgate uses the addition of Chaucer's poem to the *Pilgrimage* in order to place Chaucer in the same coterie formation with Lydgate, Salisbury, and his wife, Alice Chaucer, the poet's granddaughter. This coterie first appears in the seemingly laudatory passage to Salisbury in the prologue to the *Pilgrimage*, but is later modified by the addition of Chaucer's *ABC* to the poem, which implicitly alters the coterie's membership.

Understanding why Lydgate would alter the coteries membership will require placing the *Pilgrimage* in dialogue with the two other important poetic works of Lydgate's Parisian sojourn,

[15] Each of the preceding instances will be discussed in more detail in the course of the chapter.

the *Title and Pedigree* and the *Danse*. As the *Title and Pedigree* shows, Lydgate constructs virtual coteries in several different contexts for several different purposes and each coterie, moreover, may fulfill more than a single purpose, not all of which will be instrumental. Adding Chaucer to the virtual coterie associated with the *Pilgrimage* was likely due to the fact, in part, that Lydgate expresses real affection for Chaucer's work. But the addition of Chaucer has other effects as well, ones that touch on the politics of the French war. It should come as no surprise that Lydgate's Parisian poems afford him a chance to think through England's relationship to France, especially given the fact that two of the poems contain virtual coteries that include the nobility serving as the rulers of France: Bedford, Salisbury, and Warwick. In the *Title and Pedigree*, the coterie Lydgate creates by once again narrating his commission includes the king, the two men effectively ruling France in the king's stead, Warwick and Bedford, and the French poet, Laurence Calot, who composed the poem Lydgate is translating. Here Lydgate's agency as a poet is subordinate to the most powerful men in the realm, part of larger project of speaking for the king. However, the coterie blurs the distinction between those agents—poet and patrons—undermining the poem's ability to function as pure propaganda. The poem supports the Henry VI's right to rule France, it is certainly true, but it also allows Lydgate to engage in a bit of self-promotion.

In the *Danse*, the multiple purposes of Lydgate's virtual coterie move from something more or different than simple propaganda to something closer to a direct critique. The king in the *Danse* is a "myrroure," an individual who is "a trewe resemblaunce" to "al estates," but who is ultimately nothing more than "mete vnto wormes" (636-39). The *Danse* becomes a *Fürstenspiegel* that is directly associated with England's occupation of France, through the virtual coterie Lydgate constructs with "frensshe clerkes" (22). With such a *Fürstenspiegel*, Lydgate is able to assert a form of poetic agency in order to critique England's ongoing war with the French. Lydgate's pacifism in the *Danse* allows us to see the *Pilgrimage* in a new light. In the *Pilgrimage*, Lydgate reminds his readers, including Salisbury, that "ffor worthynesse in Armes nor vyctórye / Arn in effect but thingës transytórye" (37-38). Lydgate's objections to the French war, then, suggest why he might expand the coterie of the *Pilgrimage* to include both Chaucer and his descendants; the figure of Chaucer allows Lydgate a means by which he can imply just how inadequately Alice Chaucer and her husband represent the Chaucer family. By turning his virtual coterie into an opportunity for political reflection, Lydgate performs the kind of critique associated with the poetry of Gower, but does so by foregrounding the importance of Chaucer's work. The aesthetic becomes political, as poet and patron, the living and the dead, come together to create Lydgate's poem for Salisbury and Warwick. Lydgate's inclusion of Chaucer's *ABC* in the *Pilgrimage*, then, takes us right to the heart of what it means to be a court poet in Lancastrian England.

I. Illuminating the *Pilgrimage*

Lydgate's *Pilgrimage* is based on Guillaume Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*, which is the first of Deguileville's three pilgrimage texts (the others are the *Pèlerinage de l'âme* and the *Pèlerinage de Jhesucrist*). Deguileville produced two versions of this initial pilgrimage: an initial, shorter, version in 1330-31 (Vie^1) and an expanded version in 1355 (Vie^2). [16] As one might

[16] Deguileville's poems are finally beginning to get some of the critical attention they deserve. The most thorough reassessment is Stephanie A. Viereck Gibbs Kamath, *Authorship and First-Person Allegory in Late Medieval France and England* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012). For a discussion of them in a specifically English context,

expect given his love of amplification, Lydgate chose the longer version of 1355 as his source text and expanded it further, increasing its 18,123 lines to 24,832 lines.[17] The particular lyric Chaucer translated occurs both in *Vie*[1], where it is the only inset lyric, and in *Vie*[2], to which Deguileville added several other inset lyrics and, in one manuscript at least, a prose sermon.[18] Chaucer's *ABC*, then, is an instance of formal variation in a work that is marked by such variety. Lydgate singles out this instance of formal variation as particularly notable, in what is obviously an addition to his source text; Lydgate introduces the *ABC* with one of his numerous paeans to Chaucer:

> And touchynge the translacioun
> Off thys noble Orysoun
> Whylom (yiff I shal nat feyne)
> The noble poete off Breteyne
> My mayster Chaucer, in hys tyme,
> Affter the Frenche he dyde yt ryme,
> Word by word, as in substaunce,
> Ryght as yt ys ymad in Fraunce,
> fful devoutly, in sentence,
> In worshepe, and in reuerence
> Off that noble hevenly queen,
> Both moder and a maydë clene.
> And Sythe, he dyde yt vndertake,
> ffor to translate yt ffor her sake,
> I pray thys [Quene] that ys the beste,
> ffor to brynge hys soule at reste
> That he may, thorgh hir prayere,
> Aboue the sterrys bryht and clere,
> Off hyr mercy and hyr grace
> Apere afforn hyr sonys fface,
> Wyth seyntys euere, for A memórye,
> Eternally to regne in glorye.
> And ffor memorye off that poete,
> Wyth al hys rethorykës swete,
> That was the ffyrste in any age
> That amended our langage;
> Therfore, as I am bounde off dette,
> In thys book I wyl hym sette,
> And ympen thys Oryson
> Affter hys translacïon

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including Lydgate's translation, see Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28-46.

[17] For these numbers, see Furnivall's introduction, xiii.

[18] *ABC* circulated quite extensively in manuscripts collecting Chaucer's shorter works, such as Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 16 or Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Gg.4.27. The *ABC* also circulated without attribution in manuscripts of the early fifteenth-century prose translation of *Vie*[1], such as Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ff.5.30 and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 740; see the textual notes in the *Riverside Chaucer*, 1185.

My purpós to détermyne,
That yt shal énlwmyne
Thys lytyl book, Rud off making,
Wyth som clause off hys wrytyng.
And as he made thys Orysoun
Off ful devout entencïioun,
And by maner off a prayer,
Ryht so I wyl yt settyn here,
That men may knowe and pleynly se
Off Our lady the .A. b. c. (19751-90)

"In thys book I wyl hym sette"; Lydgate seems to mean this literally. He even repeats his intention: "I wyl yt settyn here, / That men may knowe and pleynly se." The surviving manuscripts of Lydgate's poem do not actually include the *ABC* at this point, but that is likely an accident of history. All the manuscripts are quite late, but the earliest one, London, British Library MS Cotton Vitellius c.13, dating from about 1475, includes blank space where the *ABC* should be and a note at the end guiding the reader to its location in the text.[19] The makers of Cotton Vitellius c.13 intended to include Chaucer's *ABC* as a lyric insert, an intention that they found in Lydgate's text itself.

Lydgate tells his readers that he "wyl… sette" Chaucer's poem within his translation in a specific manner: he claims he will "ympen thys Oryson" into his translation. As with "fleur" from chapter one, "ympen" is a metaphor drawn from gardening; it most often means "to graft (a scion on a tree or branch)," the process of inserting a branch or stem into a larger and rooted pre-existing plant, usually done with fruit trees in order to make the inserted branch hardier or make it produce fruit earlier than it otherwise would have done.[20] Lydgate uses the term to describe formal practices. Earlier in the *Pilgrimage* the term comes up in a discussion between the pilgrim and Venus. The pilgrim tells Venus that she has no right to claim ownership over the *Roman de la Rose*, but Venus objects, claiming that she is the subject of the *Rose* and decrying Jean de Meun's additions about other matters:

But for al that, forth he wente,
Not abaysshed in hys entente,
But boldëly, or I was war,
fforth with hym hys stelthe he bar,
Ympyd yt in my romaunce,
Wych was to me gret dysplesaunce;
ffor my wyl was, that he no thyng
Sholde he set in hys wrytyng,
No thyng (as to myn entent)
But yt wer to me pertynent,
Or accordynge to my matere. (13249-59)

[19] See the discussion in Locock's introduction, lxvii.
[20] See MED s.v. "imp" (1), and OED s. v. "imp," (1). The typical sense of the word lies behind William Langland's comment: "Impe on an ellere, and if thyn appul be swete, / Muchel merveille me thynketh." See William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Critical Edition of the B-Text Based on Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17*, second edition, ed. A. V. S. Schmidt (London: Everyman, 1995), 137 (IX. 149-50).

Venus implies that Guillaume de Lorris in the first part of the *Rose* solidified her position as the poem's true subject and, stemming from her foundational position, she imagines the work as having an ideal unity that is centered on her. Anything that Jean de Meun wrote in his addition to Guillaume that does not explicitly address Venus is extraneous, a digression that has been improperly grafted onto the text. Leaving aside Venus's wounded ego, "ympen" here denotes a formal procedure that introduces a subsidiary or alternative "matere" into a text.

To "ympen" is a problem for Venus, but Lydgate elsewhere uses the term with a much more positive valence. Late in the *Troy Book* Lydgate uses "ympen" in its more neutral register in reference to a digression, reporting that "myn auctor…/ Here Impeth in a litel incident."[21] In the prologue to the *Troy Book*, however, the term takes on clearly positive connotations when Lydgate identifies and praises his source as follows:

> And of Coumpna Guydo was his name,
> Whiche had in writyng passyng excellence.
> For he enlumyneth by crafte & cadence
> This noble story with many fresche colour
> Of rethorik, and many riche flour
> Of eloquence to make it sownde bet
> He in the story hath ymped in and set,
> That in good feythe I trowe he hath no pere,
> To rekne alle þat write of this matere,
> As in his boke ȝe may beholde and se.
> To whom I seie, knelyng on my knee:
> Laude and honour & excellence of fame,
> O Guydo maister, be vn-to thi name,
> That excellest by souereinte of stile
> Alle that writen this mater to compile.[22]

The effusive praise of Guido delle Colonne foreshadows many of the compliments Lydgate will later pay Chaucer.[23] Guido "enlumyneth" the story of Troy, with colors of rhetoric and "many riche flour" of eloquence. He has done so by having these stylistic flourishes "ymped in and set" in the text. To "ympen" is unquestionably a laudable activity here; it is the method by which Guido elevates his text and Lydgate uses it as his chief example of the "passyng excellence" of Guido's writing. As with Venus's complaint against Jean, Lydgate still considers the matter itself as wholly given beforehand; he does not think that Guido made up the story of Troy after all. But Guido "compile[s]" the Troy story and what he adds are not necessarily digressions, although he does add those, but ornamentations. To "ympen," then, is to add more than just a digression in

[21] John Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. Henry Bergen, EETS e. s. 97, 103, 106, and 126 (London: Kegan Paul, 1906-1935), lines V. 2871-72. Lydgate uses the term one other time in such a relatively neutral manner. Shortly after this citation, he says that he "mote spende a fewe lines blake / Þe last chapitle shortly to translate / Of al þis werke, and ympen in þe date / Of þilke day deth sette on hym arest, / Ful execute by hym he louede best." See Lydgate, *Troy Book*, V. 2932-36.

[22] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, Prologue 360-74.

[23] For a discussion Lydgate's relation to his source, Guido, see C. David Benson, *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature* (Woodbridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1980), 97-129.

"matere" to a text; it can refer to any kind of additional flourish, including stylistic ones. Ultimately, to "ympen" is a form of *amplificatio*, Lydgate's favorite rhetorical figure, and a stylistic technique that allows one to add material to the text as a whole in the form of narrative digressions and to elevate the language of a text in particular moments through the use of added rhetorical tropes or colors. To "ympen" is also an organic metaphor, an image of how a new addition can grow out of older more established material.

Returning to the *Pilgrimage*, Lydgate "ymps" Chaucer's *ABC* into his translation as both a digression and an ornament. It breaks the narrative action of the *Pilgrimage* for a prayer, which Lydgate hopes "shal énlwmyne / Thys lytyl book, Rud off making, / Wyth som clause off hys [Chaucer's] wrytyng." Lois Ebin argues that "enlumyne" is one of the words that Lydgate associates with his own poetic project.[24] Generalizing "enlumyne" as a characteristic of Lydgate, however, effaces how consistently and emphatically "enlumyne" is associated with Lydgate's sources, as we have seen with Guido. More often than with anyone else, Lydgate uses it in reference to Chaucer. In the *Troy Book*, he writes of "Noble Galfride, poete of Breteyne, / Amonge oure englisch þat made first to reyne / Þe gold dewe-dropis of rethorik so fine, / Oure rude langage only tenlwmyne."[25] Chaucer, in the *Life of Our Lady*, "fonde the floures, firste of Retoryke / Our Rude speche, only to enlumyne."[26] In *The Serpent of Division*, Chaucer is "the flowre of poetis in owre englisshe tonge & þe firste þat euer enluminede owre langage with flowres of Rethorike and of elloquence."[27] In *The Siege of Thebes*, Chaucer method is described as "voyding the Chaf, sothly for to seyn, / Enlumynyg þe trewe piked grene / Be crafty writing of his sawes swete."[28] In these examples, Chaucer's words "enlumen" the English language itself, showing readers its brightest capabilities through the process of rhetorical enrichment. In the case of Lydgate's *Pilgrimage*, however, the terms have shifted. Chaucer's writing no longer "enlumens" the English language as such; instead, one of his poems (an *ABC*) illuminates *another poem* by bringing to it "rethorykës swete" and "floweres of Rethorike." Throughout his career, Lydgate persistently describes himself and his verses as lacking illumination, culminating in the prologue to the *Fall of Princes*, in which Lydgate asks his audience to "Favoure the metre and do correcyoun; / Off gold nor asewr I hadde no foysoun, / Nor othir colours this processe tenlvmyne, / Sauff whyte and blak; and they but dully shyne."[29] Here Lydgate introduces the metaphor of manuscript illumination to compare his poetry to Chaucer's. "Gold nor asewr" (gold and azure), the most expensive colors used in manuscript decoration, stand in for Chaucer's heightened "colors" of rhetoric, while Lydgate writes in "whyte and blak"—that is, in a plain style on a plain page. The introduction of manuscript illumination as a metaphor for poetry is part and parcel of a move to the concrete that similarly appears in Lydgate's depiction of Chaucer's *ABC* "enlumyning" the *Pilgrimage*.[30] What was a fairly abstract trope of praise for

[24] Lois A Ebin, *Illuminator, Makar, Vates: Visions of Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), see especially 20-24.
[25] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, II. 4697-4700.
[26] John Lydgate, *Life of Our Lady*, ed. Joseph A Lauritis, Ralph A. Klinefelter, and Vernon F. Gallagher (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1961), lines 1635-36.
[27] John Lydgate, *The Serpent of Division*, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken (London: Oxford University Press, 1911), 65.
[28] John Lydgate, *The Siege of Thebes*, ed. Robert R. Edwards (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS, 2001), lines 54-56.
[29] John Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. Henry Bergen, EETS e. s. 121-24 (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), lines IX. 3397-3400.
[30] Lois Ebin also associates "enlumyn" with manuscript illumination. She does not, however, discuss Lydgate's mention of Chaucer in the *Pilgrimage* in these terms.

Chaucer—describing how he "enlumyned" language itself—is replaced with a concrete and specific instance of "enlumyning"—the shining light of the *ABC* as it is embedded in the *Pilgrimage*. In both of these cases—the *ABC*'s incorporation into the *Pilgrimage* and the *Fall of Princes*—Lydgate engages the particulars of style in order to draw his reader's attention to his own style, to sharpen their readerly gazes as they encounter his own work.

The association of Chaucer's "enlumynyng" with manuscript illumination suggests that something different is happening here than the post-facto creation of Chaucer's laureateship or genuine self-evaluation on Lydgate's part.[31] The "enlumynyg" trope comes from Chaucer's *Clerk's Prologue*, in which the Clerk praises "Frauncis Petrak, the laureate poete, / Highte this clerk, whos rethorik swete / Enlumined al Itaille of poetrye" (*CT* IV.31-33). Seth Lerer has argued that the combination of laureateship and aureation found in the Clerk's eulogy for Petrarch provides Lydgate with a guide for his poetic self-fashioning.[32] I will reserve a discussion of laureation for the later section on Lydgate's patronage during the Paris years. Aureation, however, pertains directly to the picture Lydgate paints about his relationship to Chaucer in the *Pilgrimage*. As David Lawton has argued, Lydgate's apologies are simply a modesty topos, and that aureation is more characteristic of Lydgate's diction and verse than Chaucer's.[33] One should not, in short, take Lydgate at his word when he modestly dismisses his own prowess in order to praise Chaucer. Instead, Lydgate's use of Chaucer in the *Pilgrimage* is one more instance of his aureate practice. Lydgate's aureation tends to take the form of Latinate diction—aureation itself serves as an example of such a word—or heightened rhetorical tropes, such as apostrophe or encomia. In other words, Lydgate inserts a word or a figure in order to ornament his verse and increase its complexity. With Chaucer's *ABC*, Lydgate inserts an entire poem into his *Pilgrimage* for the same reason. By including Chaucer's translation, rather than simply translating the lyric for himself, Lydgate allows the aureate effect of the *ABC* to function like a manuscript illumination.[34] The meaning of "enlumyne" as "illuminate" obtains here in a

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[31] I should note that recent discussions of the *Pilgrimage* discuss it in terms of manuscript illumination, but they do so under the rubric of Lydgate's orthodoxy and his relation to Wycliffism, not Chaucer. See the discussion in Michael Camille, *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 293-97; his "The Iconoclast's Desire: Deguileville's Idolatry in France and England," in *Images, Idolatry, and Iconoclasm in Late Medieval England*, ed. Jeremy Dimmick, James Simpson, and Nicolette Zeeman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 151-71; as well as Lisa H. Cooper, "'Markys…off the Workman': Heresy, Hagiography, and the Heavens in *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*," in *Lydgate Matters: Poetry and Material Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown (New York: Palgrave, 2008), 89-111. For a thorough discussion of Lydgate's theological reflections on images, see Shannon Gayk, *Image, Text, and Religious Reform in Fifteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 84-122. For Lydgate's relationship to Wycliffism, see Andrew Cole, *Literature in Heresy in the Age of Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 131-52. Below I too read this "enlumynyg" in terms of devotion, although I take devotion to be an aesthetic as well as a theological quality.

[32] See the chapter, "Writing like a Clerk," in Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 22-56.

[33] David Lawton, "Dullness in the Fifteenth Century," *English Literary History* 54 (1987): 761-99. See also the comments in Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*; and Robert J. Mayer-Lee, *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), esp. 49-87.

[34] Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet points out the association between manuscript illumination and heightened diction in French medieval poetry: "authors seek to 'illuminate' their works, not only in the technical sense, with miniatures that accompany them, but also with their very words." See Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, *A New History of Medieval French Literature*, trans. Sara Preisig (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 85. Cerquiglini-Toulet discusses this association between words and images under the aesthetic category of "light." Unfortunately, the structure of her text, a kind of lyrical overview, does not allow her to say any more about it.

way that is somewhere between the metaphoric and literal levels. The lyric is set off from the text, framed by it; it is separate from the narrative, but related to it. The inset lyrics in Deguileville's original already function in this way, but Lydgate's additional introduction to the Chaucerian translation beckons the reader to consider the lyric's difference from the surrounding text, to admire its quality and craftsmanship. Lydgate points out that Chaucer's poem, like an illumination, is an artistic production that supplements his own work of translation, adding aesthetic value to the original work. That supplementation is complexly layered, since Chaucer initially transformed the lyric from Deguileville's rather plain French octosyllabic couplets into a far more elaborate and ornamented verse form in Middle English, the pentameter stanzas found in the Monk's Tale. This transformation through ornamentation is one of several techniques Chaucer used in his translations and adaptations of other poets' work; he was just as capable of shortening and streamlining as he was of embellishing and elaborating his source texts.[35] In contrast, Lydgate was deeply invested in ornamentation as a guarantor of aesthetic value. His insertion, his "ymping," of Chaucer's ABC into a translation of Deguileville's *Pilgrimage* not only "enlumyns" the text, but also announces to readers the aesthetic principles on which his translation will be based.

In making the claim that Chaucer's *ABC* "enlumyns" his translation, then, Lydgate articulates the difference between his text and the Chaucerian one in explicitly visual terminology. Chaucer's text illuminates itself, making it an "orysoun" the reader can "pleynly se." Helen Phillips argues that the insertion of the prayers, including Chaucer's *ABC*, arrests the action of the *Pilgrimage* to create a devotional interlude.[36] Lydgate, however, makes no similar appeal to his reader's vision before the other inset lyrics, which are in stanzas of Latin poetry, nor does he draw attention to the fact that his prologue is in iambic decasyllabic couplets before he switches to the octosyllables of his source. The introduction to the *ABC*, then, operates less as a meditative break and more like the line in the *Miller's Prologue* where Chaucer's narrator tells squeamish readers to "turne over the leef and chese another tale" (I.3177). Both make reference to the reader's experience of the book as a written object. In the *Miller's Prologue*, the narrator points out the reader's capacity to navigate through the book at the reader's discretion simply by moving the physical pages. Lydgate expects that the reader will "pleynly se" the Virgin Mary's ".A. b. c." Lydgate's reference to the individual letters here points to one of the more obvious formal features of Chaucer's poem: it is an abecedarian, a poem that begins each stanza with the appropriately ordered letter of the alphabet. Such a formal change would be apparent. The bulk of Lydgate's poem is in octosyllabic couplets, the workhorse of French verse forms, used in French poetry ranging from the romances of Chrétien de Troyes to the *Roman de la Rose* to Deguileville's pilgrimage poems and the works of Machaut. Chaucer's *ABC* is in decasyllabic lines of five stresses, which appear in stanzas of 8 lines with a rhyme scheme of ababbcbc, the *Monk's Tale* stanza, each beginning with a different letter of the alphabet in their proper sequence. With the increase in the length of the line and the formation of the poem into stanzas set off by their corresponding opening letter, the reader would be able to see the difference between the forms of poetry on the page.

The inset *ABC*, then, is specifically demarcated as different from the rest of the *Pilgrimage*; its shining light revealing a highly ornamented verse form that, in turn, Lydgate uses

[35] See, for instance, J. A. W. Bennett's discussion of Chaucer reducing 50 stanzas of the *Teseida* to 50 lines of verse in the *Knight's Tale* in J. A. W. Bennett, "Chaucer, Dante, and Boccaccio," in *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*, ed. Piero Boitani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 89-114, especially 95-97.
[36] Helen Phillips, "Chaucer and Deguileville: The *ABC* in Context," *Medium Aevum* 62 (1993): 1-19.

both to ornament his own work and to justify his own ornate stylistic choices. Working with the same source material, Chaucer and Lydgate produce similar kinds of ornamented and stylistically intricate work. In fact, subsuming Chaucer's work into his own is precisely one of the ways in which Lydgate adorns his text. Even so, in order for Chaucer's text to supply such rarified stylistic value, it cannot be exactly like Lydgate's text, or else it would simply be absorbed, unable to do the work of illumination Lydgate wants it to do. Even as he extols the similarity between Chaucer's aesthetic practices and his own, Lydgate must maintain a distinction between their poetic works. In this next section, I return to Lydgate's introduction to the *ABC* in order to show that, for Lydgate, the difference between Chaucer's text and his lies in their practices of translation. Here too, however, Lydgate will characterize his translation and Chaucer's as following the same methodological procedure, performing a delicate balance in each case between literal and loose translations. Ultimately, Lydgate will suggest that the real difference between the two comes down to a matter of biography: for whom, in each case, was the translation created.

II. "Open" Devotion

Lydgate uses the *ABC* to augment the *Pilgrimage* by subsuming their supposed difference under the same aesthetic of ornamentation, but he maintains a distinction between Chaucer's practice and his own, especially as it pertains to their roles as translators. A word or two, then, is needed about late medieval translation practices. The late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries were a moment in which translation was at the forefront of intellectual debate and controversy. The Wycliffites, the followers of John Wyclif, spurred on the discussion by arguing for the need to have a Bible in English, a need they eventually addressed by producing their own translation, the Wycliffite Bible.[37] Even after the condemnation of Wyclif's teachings at the Blackfriars Council of 1382, translation of the Bible into English remained a topic of intellectual discussion, occasioning a debate about biblical translation in Oxford in 1402.[38] Chaucer would have known about Wycliffism and its translation theory through his personal connection to the so-called "lollard knights," those members of the nobility who supported Wyclif and his followers in the early days of the Wycliffism, men like Lewis Clifford and Richard Sturry who constitute what

[37] The foundational text in the study of Wycliffism is Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Since the publication of Hudson's book, there has been a good deal of work that traces the literary consequences of Wycliffism. For the impact of Wycliffism on Lydgate and Chaucer, along with the other canonical authors of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, see Andrew Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer*. For the circulation and influence of the Wycliffite Bible itself, see Mary Dove, *The First English Bible: The Text and Context of the Wycliffite Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For a discussion of the broader circulation of Wycliffite writings see two monographs by Fiona Somerset: *Clerical Discourse and Lay Audience in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and *Feeling Like Saints: Lollard Writings After Wyclif* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014).

[38] For the Blackfriar's Council and its relation to the dissemination of the Wycliffite heresy, see Cole, *Literature and Heresy*, 3-22. For the Oxford translation debate, see Nicholas Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409," *Speculum* 70 (1995): 822-64. Watson's essay has often been used in arguments that claim Archbishop Arundel's Constitutions of 1409 stifled all translation of the Bible into English, and its circulation, as well as all other innovative religious writings in English. Such arguments overstate Watson's point and have recently been rejected in the essays assembled in Kantik Ghosh and Vincent Gillespie, eds., *After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2012).

Paul Strohm has termed "Chaucer's circle."[39] Lydgate was perhaps in Oxford during the translation debate, or at least arrived shortly thereafter.[40] But more important than Lydgate's direct knowledge of Wycliffite translation theory would be what he learned about it through the intermediary of Chaucer. It is Chaucer's version of Wycliffite translation, in any event, that Lydgate addresses in his introduction to the *ABC*.

Lydgate claims about Chaucer's *ABC* that "Affter the Frenche he dyde yt ryme, / Word by word, as in substaunce, / Ryght as yt ys ymad in Fraunce" and that it was completed "fful devoutly, in sentence, / In worshepe, and in reuerence / Off that noble hevenly queen, / Both moder and a maydë clene." One might be tempted, given the proximity between "ryme" and "word by word," to follow here Helen Phillips's suggestion that Chaucer's claim to follow his source "word for word"—as "word by word" is more commonly known—in the *Complaint of Venus* should be understood as a claim about following the rhyme scheme of the source.[41] But, as I have discussed, Chaucer's *ABC* radically alters the rhyme scheme of the source as he translates Deguileville's octosyllabic couplets into the *Monk's Tale* stanza, and so Lydgate's claim about "word by word" translation cannot be applied directly to the rhyme scheme. But neither here can it refer generally to what we might call literal translation practices. Normally "word for word" is understood in binary opposition to translations that proceed "sense for sense," mapping loosely onto what might be understood as literal or loose translation practices. The binary is derived from Cicero's *De Oratore* and Horace's *Ars Poetica* as they come down to the Middle Ages after being altered by their transmission through St. Jerome. Jerome stresses fidelity to the meaning of the text, and thus evinces a slight preference for the "sense for sense" side of the binary. At the same time, however, Jerome was translating the Bible, a sacred text with special authority, and he refused to license translations that wander too far from the words of their source.[42] Consequently, except in special cases such as school texts, translations tended to partake of both "word for word" and "sense for sense" practices in uneasy combination.

In the late fourteenth century, another biblical translation project, that of the Wycliffites, influenced both how Chaucer and Lydgate understood this "word for word" and "sense for sense" binary and what kinds of mixed practices Wycliffite translation allows. As Andrew Cole has argued, the Wycliffites favored what they refer to as "open" translation practice, which amounts to particular understanding of the Hieronymian preference for translating according to the sense of the passage but that, in addition, cautions explicitly against using words that are superfluous or excessive. Cole argues that "open translation" is a more "dialectical consideration" of translation that amounts to "a way of licensing the authority of the translator;" he further suggests that it is this understanding of translation that Chaucer theorizes in his

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[39] For the "lollard knights," see K. B. McFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), especially 139-85. For Strohm's discussion of the "Chaucer circle," see Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 24-46.

[40] We know from a letter that the Price of Wales, later Henry V, during Richard Courtney's term as Chancellor of Oxford that Lydgate was there sometime between 1406-08. See the discussion in Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 29-31. John Norton-Smith, in an edition of Lydgate's poems, assumes that Lydgate was in Oxford from 1397-1408. See John Lydgate, *John Lydgate: Poems*, ed. John Norton-Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 195.

[41] See Helen Phillips in the introduction to the *Complaint of Venus* in Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans, eds., *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 1999), 27. See also my discussion of her claim in chapter one above, page 55, footnote 94.

[42] For a discussion of the distinction between Cicero, Horace, and Jerome's practices, see Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1991), 42-55.

prologue to the *Treatise on the Astrolabe*. [43] Lydgate certainly knew Chaucer's text, mentioning it in the prologue to the *Fall of Princes* as a "tretis" he made for "his sone, that callid was Lowis."[44] In the *Pilgrimage*, to recall the passage at issue, Lydgate explains that

> My mayster Chaucer, in hys tyme,
> Affter the Frenche he dyde yt ryme,
> Word by word, as in substaunce,
> Ryght as yt ys ymad in Fraunce,
> fful devoutly, in sentence,
> In worshepe, and in reuerence
> Off that noble hevenly queen,
> Both moder and a maydë clene.
> And Sythe, he dyde yt vndertake,
> ffor to translate yt ffor her sake.

Lydgate twice emphasizes Chaucer's fidelity to the sense of the text: he translates both "in substance" and "in sentence." It is in relation to Chaucer's fidelity to the meaning of the text that one must understand Lydgate's insistence that Chaucer translates "word by word." So long as Chaucer's propinquity to the sense of the text remains, he is still translating "word by word" despite radically altering the verse form of his translation.[45] Of course, what Lydgate considers "close" to the text and what a Wycliffite or even Chaucer might consider "close" may very well differ—the risk one takes by allowing the translator to decide what counts as proximity to the sense is that the text becomes subject to a potentially fallible or contestable interpretation—and in this instance Lydgate's judgment as to what constitutes excessive words seems fairly lenient. For Lydgate, after all, Chaucer's capacity to "enlumen" is predicated upon his ability to rhetorically heighten his source text. Lydgate's praise of Chaucer's talent would seem to be based on the very kind of excessive or superfluous style that might cause Wycliffites to worry. [46]

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[43] Cole, *Literature and Heresy*, 90.
[44] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, lines 293-94.
[45] One might also consider here Chaucer's fidelity to another text to which he radically altered the form: his *Boece*. For a discussion of Chaucer's translation practice in the *Boece* as a kind of formal experimentation, See Eleanor Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk, and Hoccleve* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), especially 55-78.
[46] For a modern reader, a style that exceeds what is simply necessary to its sense can often be a mark of the aesthetic as such, even though that excess must too have its limits (lest it becomes "gaudy"). Understanding the aesthetic as an excess in modern discussions can be traced back at least as far as Kant's third critique, in which the aesthetic judgment occurs when the object under consideration frustrates and exceeds the subject's capacity to fit it into any one of the categories for determinate judgments. See Immanuel Kant *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2000). In medieval studies, Maura Nolan has argued that "the best indices to the power of the aesthetic within history and culture" are found in "excesses" of the medieval poem, the "way in which it solicits meanings that seem, at first glance, to be unauthorized or illicit, and to exceed the brief of the manuscript of the words on the page." See Maura Nolan, "Lydgate's Worst Poem," in *Lydgate Matters: Poetry and Material Culture in the Fifteenth-Century*, ed. Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 71-87, quote at 82. For Nolan, one such excess is the way the aesthetics of sensation brings multiple temporalities into contact, as she discusses in Maura Nolan, "Medieval Sensation and Modern Aesthetics," *minnesota review* 80 (2013): 145-158. Arthur Bahr has taken Nolan's notion of the excess as a sign of the aesthetic in order to argue for "an interpretive freedom that somehow avoids becoming license." See Arthur Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages: Forming Compilations of Medieval London* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2013), 40. Bahr's emphasis is on one's response to the aesthetic,

In response, Lydgate might point out that his lenient take on what constitutes an excessive use of words in Chaucer's text is due to the nature of the text's sense, that the text's meaning, which is praise of the Virgin Mary, justifies its rhetorical ornamentation. Chaucer's actual translation process matters to me less here than Lydgate's discussion of it. Even with less lofty subject matter, Lydgate could have felt he had a good reason to characterize Chaucer as translating "in substance" and "in sentence." In the *General Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*, the narrator explains his decision to record even some of the more unsavory things the other pilgrims say:

> Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
> He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan
> Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
> Al spake he never so rudeliche and large,
> Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,
> Or feyne thyng, or fynde words newe. (*CT* I. 731-36)

Even when a source speaks "rudeliche," the tale-teller must stay faithful to the text to the best of his ability, rehearsing "everich a word." If he does not, three options are left: he tells "his tale untrewe," he makes something up, or he "fynde[s] words newe." Of the three, this last option would seem to be the most reasonable by far. Indeed, in translations, it is the unavoidable consequence of rendering a text written in one language into the idioms of another. For Lydgate, finding "words newe" might hardly register as an infraction, because "words newe" are the building blocks of aureation. If the narrator's axiomatic statements about textual fidelity, saving a new word here or there, apply to the very worldly pilgrimage of the *Canterbury Tales*, how much greater the fidelity must be to the heavenly *Pilgrimage*? If that devotion is what is owed to the men and women of the Canterbury pilgrimage, how much greater must the devotion be to the Virgin Mary, the subject of the *ABC*? In the lines explicitly characterizing Chaucer's translation, Lydgate includes several references to Chaucer's devotion to the Virgin Mary. Chaucer's poem is what is due to the "maydë clene;" he wrote it "fful devoutly," with "worshepe," and "reuerence." With great devotion, then, is how one is meant to understand "ryght as yt ys ymad in Fraunce;" devotion to the Virgin clarifies the "substance" of the text, the sentential content that licenses what Lydgate thinks of as Chaucer's ornamental elaboration, his illumination, as he translates "word by word." One's devotion to the Virgin, which cannot be excessive, affords any number of stylistic adornments and embellishments, any possible means to "fynde words newe" in order to demonstrate the glory of the Virgin.

Lydgate's ornamentation comes from a different sort of devotion. His assessment of his own translation practice in the *Pilgrimage* details a similar translation method albeit to a different end:

> Thys consydred full wysly of my lord

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allowing for excesses without letting them becomes excessive. The excesses, however, must be in the work as well, or else one's critical activity will have already become what Nolan calls building "mere castles in the air." See Nolan, "Lydgate's Worst Poem," 82. With regard to Lydgate specifically, Nolan elsewhere discusses his writings during the minority years: "It is in the forms at work in these particularly functional texts that historicity declares itself, as that which solicits and demands not simply an instrumental response—pure propanganda—but also an aesthetic surplus, something extra." See Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture*, 29. I turn to the question of instrumentality and propaganda in the next section.

Of Salysbury, the noble manly knyht,
Wych in Fravncë, for the kyngys Ryht,
In the werre hath many day contunyd;
Whom God & gracë han ful wel ffortunyd
In thenpryses wych he hath vndertake;
Lyff and godes, for the kyngys sake,
Knyhtly Inpartyd thys prince vertuous
Ay in the ende being victoryous,
Swych grace & Eur, God to hym hath sent,
Wych gaff me ffyrst in comaundement
Thys seydë book in Englysshe for to make,
As I koude, [al] only for hys sake.
Because he woldë that men shold[e] se,
In ovre tonge, the grete moralyte
Wyche in thys book ys seyde & comprehendyd,
That yt ne myhte (me semyth) be Amendyd;
The auctour, wych that dyde hyt ffyrst compile,
So vertuously spent ther-on hys whyle.
And of entent to do my lord plesaunce,
In hys worschepë, for a remembrvance,
As I am bovnde for to be hys man,
I wyl translate hyt sothly as I kan,
After the lettre, in ordre effectuelly.
Thogh I not folwe the words by & by,
I schal not faillë touchyng the substaunce,
Thogh on making I ha no suffysaunce;
ffor my wrytyng in conclusion,
ys al yseyd vnder correction. (122-50)

This is classic Lydgate—once again the modesty topos makes an appearance and Lydgate ends with the associated request for correction. Deguileville occupies an analogous position to Chaucer: he has worked "vertuously" to produce a poem of such "grete moralyte" that it cannot be "amendyd." Lydgate, presented with such an impressive work, does his best. He characterizes his translation process as one that works "sense by sense;" he can guarantee is that he "schal not faillë touchyng the substaunce." His claim that he "wyl translate hyt sothly as I kan, / After the lettre, in ordre effectuelly" suggests that he will follow the same "open" translation procedure that Chaucer did, that by keeping "after the lettre" Lydgate will only introduce stylistic variation and elaboration when the sense of the text gives him the leeway to do so. And yet, Lydgate clarifies that he will "not folwe the words by & by," which means in part that occasionally he will introduce aesthetic excesses that the sense of the text cannot support. He concludes by breaking away from the assertion that he will deliberately choose not to "folwe the words" by offering his text for "correction," suggesting that while Chaucer's elaborations to Deguileville text were always justified, Lydgate's are not. An echo between this passage in the prologue and the later introduction to Chaucer's *ABC* suggests that this distinction might stem from a difference in their intended primary audiences. Regarding the *ABC*, Lydgate writes that Chaucer "dyde yt vndertake, /ffor to translate yt ffor her sake," the sake of the Virgin Mary. In the

prologue to the *Pilgrimage*, Lydgate mentions the earl of Salisbury, Thomas Montacute, "wych gaff me ffyrst in comaundement / Thys seydë book in Englysshe for to make, / As I koude, [al] only for hys sake." There is a difference, in other words, in producing a work that displays one's devotion to the Virgin and a work that displays one's devotion to the earl of Salisbury. The former devotion, Lydgate implies, underwrites all manner of aesthetic elaboration, whereas the latter will only allow for so much.

Devotion, then, has some bearing on the creation of Lydgate's poem as well, but it would be a different sort of devotion than one finds in Chaucer's *ABC*, one less associated with the divine and more associated with social hierarchies. Lydgate figures Chaucer's poem to the Virgin as a kind of deep devotion; it is "ffor her sake" that Chaucer translated the poem as an elaborate demonstration of his devotion to her. The genesis of Lydgate's poem is very different. He produces it for a patron. He is given a "comaundement," after which he is "bovnde" both to task of producing a translation and to the patron as "hys man." Lydgate's production occurs not under the auspices of a freely given devotion, but under the obligations of duty. Devotion to the Virgin Mary, incorruptible mediatrix and mother of God, is necessarily different than devotion to a man that, no matter how high he may be on the social hierarchy, is simply a flawed and fallen human being. That difference, though, does not mean that Lydgate laments his task or shirks his responsibilities to his patron. In this next section, then, I tease out that different sort of devotion by turning to the question of Lydgate's relationship to his patrons, and the broader issue of Lydgate's laureate status. Lydgate's time in Paris raises these aspects of Lydgate's poetry in the particularly problematic context of Lancastrian propaganda; Lydgate, after all, was working for the English nobility governing France as conquered territory. As I will argue, though, Lydgate's devotion to these nobles is far from the perfect devotion to the Virgin he ascribes to Chaucer. Finally, Lydgate's devotion to Chaucer will itself become a question, as he interacts with the very much alive, and very powerful, descendants of Chaucer. Those descendants and the nobility governing France are, after all, closely related.

III. Lydgate's Virtual Coteries and Lists of Names

Lydgate's introduction to the *Pilgrimage* seems typical of his work not only because of its modesty, but also because it evinces a certain kind of relationship to a literary patron. First and foremost, it is laudatory. Salisbury is a "noble manly knyht," who is blessed by God with "swych grace & Eur [happiness]" and who is always "victoryous." Salisbury's nobility, virtue, and military prowess are all connected to one another, and they allow him to protect the king's "lyff and godes," which the king deserves for being "vertuous." By rhyming "vertuous" and "victoryous," Lydgate creates a causal link between them: Salisbury's victory is the result of the king's virtue, and therefore it functions as a symbol of that virtue. God has rewarded the king by giving Salisbury military prowess; it is God who "ffortunyd" "thenpryses wych he hath vndertake" to restore the "kyngys Ryht" to France. Praise bleeds into propaganda; flattering Salisbury seems to make Lydgate a Lancastrian mouthpiece, a wartime apologist. But there is more at stake for Lydgate here than the broad political concerns of the dual monarchy. All politics is local, and Lydgate's praise of Salisbury, rather than confirming any sweeping generalizations about Lydgate's desire for patronage or work as a propagandist, actually indicates a series of concrete relations between Lydgate and individuals in the Chaucer family. These relations have a generalizable importance for Lydgate's poetic practice, to be sure, but they originate from interactions between historical persons and are meaningful first in that

context. These interactions allow Lydgate to use his relationship with specific individuals in order to create an implicit critique of the Lancastrian war.

Another way of saying that Lydgate's praise for Salisbury is not just general flattery, but specific to him as a person, is to point out that when Lydgate deals with Chaucer in the *Pilgrimage* he is dealing with a living member of the Chaucer family at the same time. In 1426, when Lydgate is writing the *Pilgrimage*, Salisbury is married to Alice Chaucer, but Lydgate's interactions with the Chaucer family predate the *Pilgrimage* by some years. While it is unlikely that he ever knew Geoffrey Chaucer, Lydgate wrote a poem about Geoffrey's son, Thomas, titled "On the Departing of Thomas Chaucer," about Thomas leaving on a diplomatic mission to France in either 1414, 1417, or 1420.[47] Scholars generally assume that, after this, Lydgate made great use of the Chaucer family's connections. Pearsall posits that "it was presumably at Alice's instigation that Salisbury commissioned the *Pilgrimage*."[48] Both Pearsall and Lois Ebin expand the circle of patrons introduced to Lydgate by the Chaucers to include Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, and William de la Pole, duke of Suffolk.[49] I will reconsider these last introductions shortly, but for now it is enough to point out that the Chaucers were connected with very wealthy and powerful individuals, up to and including members of the royal family. If they introduced Lydgate to any number of these individuals, then they certainly did him a favor. What is more, even as they potentially introduced him to other patrons, the Chaucer family continued to support Lydgate. Alice, as countess of Suffolk, commissioned Lydgate to write *Virtues of the Mass*, a didactic poem explaining the different aspects of the mass to a fairly sophisticated audience. In some sense, then, the Chaucer family was the well from which Lydgate sprang, and the well to which he periodically returned for refreshment. Lydgate's Chaucer was never quite like the Petrarch of the *Clerk's Prologue*, "deed and nayled in his cheste" (IV. 29); his Chaucer was alive, by proxy, and able to both support and aggrandize his poetry.

Turning briefly to the *Virtues of the Mass* clarifies how Lydgate interacts with Chaucer the poet and a living representative of the Chaucer family at the same time. We are not certain when Alice Chaucer commissioned *Virtues* from Lydgate, but a colophon in Oxford, St. John's College MS 56 states that it was written for the "Countesse de Suthefolchia," suggesting that it must have been some time after Alice's marriage to William de la Pole in May of 1432. A date in the early 1430s means that *Virtues* was composed after all of the poems that praise Chaucer's capacity to "enlumyne," including the *Troy Book*, the *Life of our Lady*, the *Serpent of Division*, the *Siege of Thebes*, and the *Pilgrimage*. In *Virtues*, Lydgate once again uses "enlumyne," but in a different, yet revealing, context. In the stanza explaining the priest's invocation of the "Kyrie," Lydgate writes:

> Kyrie and Cryst, in nombre thryes thre
> Wordys of Greke, playnly to determine
> Of mer[c]y callying to the Trynyte
> With gostly grace hys pepyll to enlumyne.[50]

[47] See Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 161.
[48] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 162.
[49] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 162; Ebin, *John Lydgate*, 8-9.
[50] For *Virtues of the Mass* see John Lydgate, *Minor Poems*, vol. 1, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS e. s. 107 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 87-115, lines 185-88.

Before one objects that the reference to Chaucer in the *Virtues* is tenuous at best, allow me to point to a much more overt reference in the poem's envoy:

> Go lytyll tretyse, requyre the folk of grace
> That shall of the haue inspeccion
> Be nat to bolde to appere in no place
> Of malapertnesse nor presumpcion
> Thyne Auctor sympyll, though of affection
> He meneth well, pray hem that shall the rede
> With goodly support to do correccion
> Thee to reforme where as they se nede.[51]

First, the relatively easy matter of the envoy's connection with Chaucer. The reference, of course, is to the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, where Chaucer bids adieu to his work, "Go litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye" (V. 1786), before addressing "moral Gower" and "philosophical Strode," who are told "to correcte" the book if "ther nede is" (V. 1856-58). Such envoys become something of a commonplace in Lydgate's poetry, part of the deeply Chaucerian habits of thought upon which Lydgate relies. But these moments can be commonplace and, in each instance, refer to Chaucer at the same time. If the end of the *Virtues* is explicitly supposed to recall his patron's grandfather, what about Lydgate's use of the Chaucerian activity of "enlumynyng"? Some of the concerns of that earlier passage have to do with the specific concerns of the *Virtues*. For instance, the obsession with threes, tied to the Trinity, is inherited from the mass itself. The activity of "enlumynyng," however, is both appropriate to the object of analysis and as a reference to Alice's illustrious ancestor. Chaucer's "enlumynyng" dispensed a heightened aesthetic value to the surrounding text and to the reader; here, the priest "enlumyne[s]" those individuals at mass with "gostly grace." Grace, like Chaucer's aesthetic worth, spreads through whatever surrounds it. In this instance, the priest's activity is both aesthetic and performative, both in excess of the words he speaks and effected by them. Lydgate, in writing a poem to Alice Chaucer, analogizes the role of her grandfather, the poet, and a priest. In the *Virtues*, the looming figure of Alice has led Lydgate to recall his earlier panegyrics to Chaucer by referring to that same diction in his poem to her.

But would the *Virtues* use these references or have its Chaucerian envoy without Alice as its commissioner? Would the *Pilgrimage* contain Chaucer's *ABC* without Salisbury's marriage, or would Lydgate just have translated the poem himself? Patronage can shape a poem; it provides the writer with a very specific audience to keep in mind as he produces his text, an audience to whom he is particularly bound for his livelihood. Lydgate was certainly familiar with how patronage works; he worked for an impressive number of individuals throughout his career.[52] His facility in dealing with patrons led, in part, to the creation of a new Lydgatian concept of coterie poetics. In praising Chaucer in the *Pilgrimage* or the *Virtues* Lydgate can flatter Alice Chaucer or her husband, and he seemingly could reap the reward of both continued patronage and solicitation on his behalf to other members of the nobility. But there is no need to see Lydgate's references to Chaucer as purely instrumental. They are too numerous, in too many

[51] Lydgate, *Virtues of the Mass*, lines 657-64.
[52] On poetry and patronage more broadly, see Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); see pages 155-57 for Lydgate's patrons.

different contexts, and too thorough to be made simply out of the expectation that Lydgate would receive fame or wealth as a result. Instead, like the mass of the *Virtues* whose priest recalls Chaucer, they create something in which Lydgate, his patrons, and Chaucer can all participate, the form of community that I call a virtual coterie. Lydgate's virtual coteries erase both temporal distances and social hierarchies in order to create a poem through the efforts of several individuals. Such coteries are produced because Lydgate's poetry does not happen in a vacuum. Lydgate can be quite vocal about his patrons and his influences. Rather than understanding these disparate individuals as having a unidirectional influence on the poetry, thinking of them as a virtual coterie allows us to understand them working together, as interlocking pieces, in the production of a poem. Virtual coteries allow the poet, the patron, and his literary ancestors all to exert a form of agency on the creation of the literary work. Deguileville wrote his poem; Salisbury requested that Lydgate translate it; Chaucer wrote his "ABC"; Lydgate decided it "illuminated" Deguileville's work; and all of those actions are necessary in order for Lydgate to write the *Pilgrimage*. Virtual coteries, then, allow the living poets and dead ones, powerful patrons and poets in need of patronage, to come together and make a poem.

Lydgate has no qualms about citing Chaucer or any number of other poets, but he often does so in reference to real individuals, with whom Lydgate had interactions that were not simply literary, but concrete historical interactions as well. As I have shown, Lydgate's references to Chaucer are often not simply references to this or that *text*, but also identify Chaucer as a person, as a deceased member of a living family made up of powerful individuals who are irreducibly present in Lydgate's social and political worlds. Virtual coteries flesh out intertextuality, quite literally. Lydgate does not always make use of them (even for Lydgate, sometimes an allusion is only an allusion), but virtual coteries do suggest something fundamental to Lydgate's poetic practice: often he treats texts like people. It is no accident that his longest work, the *Fall of Princes*, maintains the organizing fiction of its source. In the *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*, Boccaccio imagines that the various figures whose stories he is recounting visit him while he is writing the text. Lydgate keeps Boccaccio's fiction, making Boccaccio a character in the poem as well and blurring the line between textual characters and real historical persons.

The propensity of Lydgate's virtual coteries to treat texts as if they were individuals is expressed stylistically by a profusion of proper names throughout his works, but especially in his prologues. To a certain extent, those lists of proper names are explicable as part of the encyclopedic or epic nature of some of Lydgate's poems, and here one might think of the entirety of the *Fall of Princes* as such an encyclopedic list or of the long battle scenes in the *Troy Book* as epic lists that report over and over again, in the fatigued language of Henry Bergen, who "unhorses" whom.[53] Such lists in classical literature, often categorized as epic catalogs, are often comprised of fictional characters or individuals at the borderline of fiction and history, such as Homer's Greek chieftains, and are meant to do such things as provide a sense of narrative's sweeping scope or heighten the dramatic irony of the work by introducing characters for whom the audience knows their fate.[54] Lydgate's versions of these epic catalogs may work similarly, but in the prologues, and in the construction of virtual coteries, these lists have more specific ends. In such moments—as when the prologue to the *Pilgrimage* makes reference to "my lord / of Salysbury," the king, and the book Lydgate is translating, what he calls the "Pylgrymage de

[53] See Bergen's increasingly terse running commentary for Lydgate, *Troy Book*, III. 2821-3660.
[54] For a discussion of the different literary work such lists can do, see Jan Felix Gaertner, "Homeric Catalogs and their Function in Epic Narrative," *Hermes* 129 (2001): 298-305.

Monde"(115) —the list that comprises the virtual coterie always contains at least some historical persons, and not only ones from the distant past, but often those that are only recently dead, like Chaucer, or still living, like the king or the earl of Salisbury. The scope of reference and the audience's knowledge such lists evoke are local, rather than epic, binding Lydgate, his sources, his patrons, and at least certain members of his audience into a tight-knit community of individuals who know one another intimately. But a sense of intimacy is not the only thing such lists produce; they are also catalogs of activities, assigning different tasks to different individuals—patrons commission texts, sources write them—and providing a sort of history about how Lydgate's poem came to be produced.

These lists of individuals in a virtual coterie, then, serve as a record of distributed agency, Lydgate's attempt to document a delicate balance between the agency of the patron and the agency of the poet. This balance is most clear in the *Pilgrimage*. Salisbury is one in a line of patrons who actively solicit Lydgate's work and seem in some way invested in its outcome. Each of the three longest poems has such a patron. In the *Troy Book*, the "eldest sone of the noble kynge, / Henri the firþe," the soon to be king Henry V, requests Lydgate's translation, and Lydgate says that he will

> … obeie with-oute variaunce,
> My lordes byddyng fully and plesaunce,
> Whiche hath desire, sothly for to seyn,
> Of verray knȝthod to remembre ageyn
> The worthynes, ȝif I schal nat lye,
> And prowess of olde chiualrie."[55]

In the *Fall of Princes*, Lydgate relates that the "Duc off Gloucestre" "gaff to me in comaundement" the "noble book off this Iohn Bochas" to translate because it "was, accordyng in his opynyoun, / Off gret noblesse and reputacioun / And onto pryncis gretli necessarie / To yiue example how this world doth varie."[56] Lydgate credits Henry V, Salisbury, and Gloucester each with giving him the subject matter of his longest works. Gloucester seems to have been particularly involved, even going so far as to lend Lydgate books.[57] Each has his own reasons for doing so: Henry to glorify the old exploits of chivalry, Salisbury in order to showcase "the grete moralyte" of the *Pilgrimage*, and Gloucester to provide examples of variability in order to instruct princes. Each patron, then, uses his position not just to exert his agency, by commissioning the poems in the first place, but does so with a specific agenda in mind and a sense of what Lydgate should foreground in his translation.

But coteries are communal activities. No matter how much agency the patrons are able to assert, Lydgate has his own agency as well. In Lydgate's second rendition of his commission in the *Pilgrimage*, that agency is on display:

> And of the tyme plainly, & of the date
> Whan I began thys book to translate,

[55] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, Prologue 73-96.
[56] Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, I. 393-430.
[57] On Lydgate's relation to Gloucester, see Eleanor Prescott Hammond, "Poet and Patron in the *Fall of Princes*: Lydgate and Humphrey of Gloucester," *Anglia* 38 (1914): 121-36; and Andrew Galloway, "John Lydgate and the Origins of Vernacular Humanism," *JEGP* 107 (2008): 445-71.

yt was a thovsand (by computacion)
Affter crystys incarnacion,
ffour hundryd ouer, nouther fer ne nere,
The surplus ouer, syxe & twenty yere,
My lord that tymë being at Parys,
Wych gaff me charge, by hys dyscrete avis,
As I seyde erst, to settë myn entent
Vp-on thys book to be full dyllygent,
And to be-gynne vp-on thys labour,
Allë folkys be-sechyng of ffavour,
That on thys book after-ward schal rede;
And that hym lyst nat to taken hede
To the making, but to the sentence;
ffor I am bareyn of all eloquence.
Ther-for I pray, what so that be seyde,
[Off gentyll]esse nat to be evel apayde,
And my rudnessë helpyn to excuse,
ffor in metre I ha ne with me no muse:
Noon of the nyne that ys [the] lady of the welle,
Calliopë, be sydë cytheron,
Gaff to my pennë, plente nor fuson
Of hyr licovr, whan thys work was [be]gonne.
Nor I drank no-wer of the sugryd tonne
Of Iubiter, couchyd in hys celer,
So strange I fonde to me hys boteler,
Off poetys icallyd Ganymede. (151-79)

Salisbury offers "dyscrete avis" but Lydgate is going "to settë myn entent / Vp-on thys book." "Entent" most clearly means "attention" here, but the meaning of "intention" is also lurking, bolstered by the enjambment, which clarifies the meaning but only after a beat. Lydgate, then, offers up a typical modesty topos, asking those who read the book "nat to taken hede / To the making, but to the sentence; / ffor I am bareyn of all eloquence." But Lydgate immediately undercuts that claim by one of the more accomplished rhetorical displays in the poem, an invocation that invokes nothing. Lydgate's employment of synecdoche, "my pennë" or "sugryd tonne," is both appropriate and skillfully done. The classical references, to "Calliopë," "Cytheron," "Iubiter," and "Ganymede," accrue in great density in these lines, despite being largely absent from the rest of the *Pilgrimage*. Here one list of names, the historical one associated with the virtual coterie, produces a second list of names, fictional ones that fall under the purview of poetry and allow the poet to demonstrate both his learning and his role as the purveyor of culture. In short, Lydgate asserts his poetic prowess here, reminding the patron that the style of the translation lies completely in Lydgate's choosing. Following the content instead of the form, as Lydgate suggests, leads to the same conclusion. Lydgate ends with the figure of Ganymede, Jupiter's "boteler," who he finds, "so strange." One can read this as a comment on Ganymede's sexuality, but it is also a disavowal of servitude.[58] Ganymede is strange to Lydgate,

[58] On the history of Ganymede, from Plato to the early modern period, see Leonard Barkan, *Transuming Passion: Ganymede and the Erotics of Humanism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991). For a consideration of

especially in this passage of rhetorical independence, because of Ganymede's complete surrender to Jupiter, to the whims of his lord. Lydgate, while he often avows that subservience, maintains his agency. Lydgate's virtual coterie does not simply re-inscribe a hierarchy. Instead it allows multiple and competing agents to assert and reassert their own prerogatives, eventually reaching some sort of compromise, which constitutes the production of the poem.

Although the creation of virtual coteries is particularly clear in the case of the Chaucer family, there are many other examples of this poetic practice in Lydgate's work, including examples from his time in Paris. In *The Title and Pedigree of Henry VI*, Lydgate deploys many of the same techniques he used for establishing a coterie between poet and patron that he used in the *Pilgrimage* and the *Virtues of the Mass*, but with a crucial difference: this coterie has new members. Commissioned by Richard de Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, the *Title and Pedigree* is a translation of a French poem by Laurence Calot, commissioned by John of Lancaster, duke of Bedford. The French original, meant for a French audience, gives a short genealogy of Henry VI, his claim to the French throne, and the history of French civil strife that preceded the current English occupation. Lydgate's translation of Calot runs about 250 lines, to which he attaches a 74-line prologue explaining the circumstances of Lydgate's commission. As above, the patron who commissions the poem, Warwick, has a sense of what the poem should accomplish:

> Trouble hertis to sette in quyete,
> And make folkys their language for to lette,
> Which disputen in their opynyons
> Touching the ligne of two regions,
> The right, I mene, of Inglond and of Fraunce,
> To put awey all maner [of] variaunce,
> Holy the doute and þe ambyguyte,
> To sette the ligne where hit shuld[e] be,
> And where hit aught iustly to abide,
> Wrongfull claymes for to set aside,
> I meved was shortly in sentiment
> By precept first and commaundement
> Of the nobly prince and manly man,
> Which is so knightly & so moche can,
> My lord of Warrewyk, so prudent & wise
> Beyng Present that tyme at Parys. (1-16)

Warwick is another active patron, commanding Lydgate to translate the *Title and Pedigree* in order "to put awey all maner [of] variaunce, / Holy the doute and þe ambyguyte" about the question of inheriting the French throne. He wants a univocal poem with an unequivocal message. If ever Lydgate wanted to write propaganda, here is his opportunity, but propaganda this is not. Lee Patterson claims that Lydgate tries to be a propagandist here, but ultimately fails because the poem "bespeaks by the very ardor of its commitments the tenacity of the doubts it means to remove."[59] Scott-Morgan Straker has challenged Patterson's claims, arguing that

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Ganymede that deals with an explicitly monastic context, see V. A. Kolve, "Ganymede/Son of Getron: Medieval Monasticism and the Drama of Same-Sex Desire," *Speculum* 73 (1998): 1014-67.

[59] Lee Patterson, "Making Identities in Fifteenth-Century England: Henry V and John Lydgate," *New Historical Studies: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History*, ed. Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds (Princeton:

Lydgate means to undermine effectiveness of the work as propaganda by effacing his own political position, attributing "responsibility for the poem to Warwick, to Bedford, to Calot himself, perhaps even to the stars—everywhere, in fact, but to Lydgate."[60] There is no need, though, to remove Lydgate's sense of agency in order to counter Patterson's picture of him as a failed propagandist. Lydgate distinguishes between Warwick's agency and his own. The narration of events in this initial sentence follows the inverse order of the events it depicts. Warwick commanded Lydgate, and he was then "meved" to translate the poem. Taking up Patterson's language of identity and difference, although to an opposing end, by mentioning himself first Lydgate creates the appearance that he agrees with Warwick about the need "to sette in quyete" the "trouble hertis." And yet, their opinions are not identical, and their actions are certainly different. Warwick's commandment moves Lydgate "in sentiment," although what that sentiment is precisely is not stated. Ambiguity is the enemy of propaganda; if Lydgate were truly a propagandist here, he could have avowed his agreement with Warwick. He does not and instead simply states that he was "meved" to translate the poem. Straker is right that Lydgate never whole-heartedly endorses Warwick's plan, but that does not mean that Lydgate's voice is silent.[61] Lydgate asserts his agency in the form of creating a translation, an agency that responds to, yet remains distinct, from Warwick's commission.

Instead of remaining silent, Lydgate uses his agency to create a coterie by informing the reader that his commission follows from a previous one:

> My lord of Bedford, of Fraunce þe regent,
> Was the first that did his [Henry VI's] entent,
> By grete advys and ful hy prudence,
> Thurugh his labour & his diligence,
> That made serche in cronycle full notable,
> By the clerk which he knew moste able,
> Renomed of wisdom and science,
> Worthie eke of fame and of credence.
> And I, as he that durst not withsey,
> Humbly his biddyng did obey,
> Ful desirous him to do plesaunce,
> With fere suppresed or my ignoraunce,
> And in my hert quaking for drede;
> And as I kend began to taken hede
> Vnto the Frenssh compiled by Laurence,
> In substaunce filowyng the substaunce
> Of his writing and compilacioun.
> All be þat I in my translacioun
> To my helpe nor to my socoure
> Of rethoryk have no maner floure,

Princeton University Press, 1993), 69-107; reprinted in Lee Patterson, *Acts of Recognition: Essays on Medieval Culture* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 120-54; quote at 149.

[60] Scott-Morgan Straker, "Propaganda, Intentionality, and the Lancastrian Lydgate," in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, ed. Larry Scanlon and James Simpson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 98-128; quote at 118.

[61] Straker, "Propaganda," 118.

Yit shal I folow my maistre douteles,
Calot, and be not recheles
Liche his writing my stiel to direct;
Wher I dar pray hem to correct,
I mene tho þat shall hit sene or rede;
And right forth, who so lyst take hede,
Vndir favour and supportacioun,
Thus I begyn on my translacioun. (47-74)

Another list of names. Laurence Calot is the Chaucer substitute here, receiving his share of praise even as Lydgate applies the usual modesty topos to himself. The difference between Bedford's agency and Calot's, though, is fairly difficult to parse at certain points. "His labour & his diligence," in line 50, refers to Calot's search through the "cronycle[s]," and yet by delaying the introduction of Calot, Lydgate intimates that the labor and diligence might be Bedford's. Similarly, "his biddyng," in line 56, must refer to Warwick, who actually commissioned the poem from Lydgate, and yet Warwick is last mentioned over 30 lines earlier, leaving the "biddyng" to seemingly refer to Bedford, or perhaps even Calot. In a sense, all of those readings are correct, and the possessives are confusing because the collective agency of a virtual coterie can make it difficult to ascribe specific portions of a text to specific individuals or their influence. This coterie is rooted in the "entent" of Henry VI, which the poem describes Bedford as following. The king's "entent" exerts a centrifugal force on the coterie, drawing the disparate men—Warwick, Bedford, Calot, and Lydgate—together to work on the king's behalf. The coterie contains Englishmen and Frenchmen, dukes and poets, kings and subjects, all lending their own agency to the creation of the *Title and Pedigree*, bringing together men of different of social positions, national origins, and political power.

Lydgate, then, was capable of forming coteries of a specific sort, appropriate to his style of commissioned work, with the most wealthy and powerful men and women in England. Lydgate's perpetual return to the Chaucerian well should not be mistaken for a reliance on the Chaucer family to find new patrons. As the *Title and Pedigree* shows, his ability to form coteries does not depend on the aid of any Chaucers, living or dead, although he often will include them. As Pearsall points out "the cross-connections between these aristocratic families are endless and the multiplication of literary contacts and commissions would be easy."[62] This intricate network of connections form the backdrop against which distinctive coteries emerge, with significant differences that might affect our understanding of a given poem. For instance, perhaps even before Lydgate made the acquaintance of Thomas Chaucer, he already knew someone from a much more prominent family: Prince Hal, the son of Henry IV, soon to be king Henry V. The young Henry, we know, wrote a letter in support of Lydgate's continued studies at Oxford, and probably met him shortly thereafter.[63] In 1412, Prince Henry commissioned Lydgate to write the *Troy Book*, which was completed in 1420, by which point Prince Hal had become Henry V. With the king as one of his patrons, Lydgate could have been introduced to Bedford or Gloucester, the king's brothers, without the aid of the Chaucer family, and Lydgate's connection to Bedford's deceased brother might even stand behind Warwick's choice of Lydgate to translate the *Title and Pedigree*. So, when Lydgate adds effusive praise to Chaucer throughout the poem that Gloucester commissioned, the *Fall of Princes*, it likely testifies less to his

[62] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 168.
[63] For this letter, see Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 29-31.

instrumentalization of the Chaucer family for pecuniary ends and more to his desire to have Chaucer's skill and success be a part of that poem's creation. Raising the specter of a dead Henry V or Geoffrey Chaucer brings out one final point about the distribution of agency in Lydgate's virtual coteries. Ultimately, it is Lydgate, the poet writing in his present moment, who forms the coterie. I stated earlier that virtual coteries stretch beyond intertextuality because they are not limited to purely textual intersections. Coteries include historically identifiable individuals whose interactions were embodied and took place at specific moments in time and space. It must be admitted, of course, that these historical interactions are only recoverable in texts. While these historical figures certainly had relationships that were not textual, it is only in texts that those relationships are revealed to history. When Lydgate forms a virtual coterie, he arrogates to himself substantial agency over its members; he makes himself responsible for recording their relationships to each other and their actions. Chaucer creates his poem, Henry V introduces Lydgate to Gloucester, and Alice commissions him to write a poem: in the virtual coterie Lydgate brings together these disparate actions and relationships, thereby enabling them to make new meanings together. If, as with Henry V's potential introduction of Lydgate to Bedford, an action fails to be recorded by the poet assembling the coterie, then the individuals cannot participate in the coterie; they cannot lend their actions to the creation of the poetic work. In Lydgate's virtual coteries there can be several kinds of agency displayed by several different kinds of agents, but they always need a poet to bring them together.

But, to what end? In his virtual coteries, Lydgate asserts his agency against his more powerful patrons, who are nominally responsible for his poetic productions, but what does Lydgate use that agency to do? In order to address this question, I turn primarily in this next section to his final major Parisian poem, the *Danse Macabre*. There was no powerful patron commissioning the *Danse*, and yet Lydgate presents it too as a collaborative enterprise, a poem brought into being by a coterie of mostly nameless individuals. Heretofore this chapter has been largely concerned with those works of Lydgate's that were commissioned by powerful patrons. Turning to the *Danse* allows for a consideration of a poem addressed to what Nolan calls one of Lydgate's "new audiences" in one of what David Benson refers to as Lydgate's "civic" productions.[64] The poem began as a piece of public art, a mural on the wall of the ossuary at Holy Innocent's cemetery in Paris. After Lydgate translated it, it would become a piece of public art again, eventually as part of a mural at St. Paul's in London.[65] Even addressed to such a broadly public audience, however, the *Danse* presents itself as a coterie production, albeit of a vague set of individuals. This lack of specificity allows Lydgate to address his voice widely but to target it at a small group of addressees at the same time. Like the *Danse* itself, moving between the general experience of death and the particular lamentations that accompany it, Lydgate gestures to a broad audience but simultaneously focuses on a narrow class of people: the nobility. The virtual coterie allows Lydgate to speak to his patron as an intimate, to speak to the nobility as if he were one of their own, and to persuade them as a voice that speaks from within their own ranks to address the most pressing political issue of 1426, the ongoing French war.

IV. Criticism during Wartime

[64] C. David Benson, "Civic Lydgate: The Poet and London," in in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, ed. Larry Scanlon and James Simpson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 147-68.
[65] For more on the St. Paul's mural, see Amy Appleford, "The Dance of Death in London: John Carpenter, John Lydgate, and the *Daunce of Poulys*," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38.2 (2008): 285-314.

Virtual coteries, then, afford Lydgate a particular kind of space for critique, both sympathetic and intimate but didactic and moralizing at the same time. Such criticism, addressed to a group with which Lydgate identifies, resists classification under the categories that scholarship tends to place political writing. The Parisian poems are certainly not propaganda, even if they at times flirt with that mode.[66] Neither, though, are they a full-fledged criticism of those in power; Lydgate is not William Langland. The subtle nature of Lydgate's criticism, further, does not necessarily mean that he hides his "true" beliefs for fear of censorship.[67] There is a space between propaganda and criticism, between support for a political regime and rebellion against it, even between censorship and approbation. One can be part of a class and still have reservations about how it conducts itself. It is precisely from such a standpoint, participating in the activities of the ruling elite but still concerned about their decisions, that the *Danse* and even the *Pilgrimage* speak. The *Danse* as a poem without a specific patron clarifies what such a critical position might look like. Attending to the criticism of the Hundred Years War in the *Danse* gives one a better sense of how similar criticisms in the *Pilgrimage* are meant to be read. The *Danse* toggles between the universal and the particular, between the universality of death and the particular ways individuals are fated to meet their end. Such movement, between the general state of mortality and the various forms of agency individuals can express when confronted by death, stems precisely from the Hundred Years War and the social antagonisms it unleashed.[68]

The *Danse Macabre* is a translation, made in 1426, of a poem Lydgate found inscribed on a mural at Holy Innocents Cemetery in Paris; Lydgate's own verses were subsequently inscribed on the wall at St. Paul's in London.[69] In discussing the genre of the *Danse*, Johan Huizinga somewhat melodramatically proclaimed almost a century ago: "toward 1400 the conception of death in art and literature took a spectral and fantastic shape. A new and vivid shudder was added to the great primitive horror of death."[70] One can imagine why Huizinga was drawn to the genre. It provides him with a culturally ubiquitous artistic form that focuses on death and decay; it is a form that seems perfectly suited for his vision of the Middle Ages as a completely unified culture that was obsessed with its own decline. The French poem, which was created shortly before Lydgate's arrival in Paris, consists of dialogues between Death and members of various estates. Death calls these individuals to a dance; they lament their invitation, but eventually capitulate in terms appropriate to the estates satire genre, which is blended with the *de casibus* genre's emphasis on the eventual fall of every individual. Bookending these exchanges are reflections on death's inevitability and the need for individuals to prepare

[66] In addition to the critical discussion of the *Title and Pedigree* as propaganda discussed above, the *Pilgrimage* has also been understood as anti-Wycliffite propaganda. See Lisa H. Cooper, "'Markys…off the Workman'," discussed in note 33 above.

[67] At issue here, then, is not the kind of social control at stake in Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change."

[68] This discussion of the *Danse* is a shortened and somewhat altered version of what I have argued elsewhere, which discusses in much greater depth the relationship between the *Danse* and trauma theory, on the one hand, and the genre of tragedy, on the other. See R. D. Perry, "Lydgate's *Danse Macabre* and the Trauma of the Hundred Years War," *Literature and Medicine* 33 (2015): 326-47.

[69] Simpson claims that Lydgate's poem is a "point across which this poem traverses," as it moves on to different media in different contexts. See Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Reformation*, 59. Seeta Chaganti has recently discussed how the architectural inscription of the poem and mural allows for multiple experiences of the poem, and a reversal of the relationship we tend to assume between text and image. See Seeta Chaganti, "*Danse Macabré* and the Virtual Churchyard," *postmedieval* 3 (2012): 7-26. For more on the St. Paul's mural, see Amy Appleford, "The Dance of Death in London."

[70] Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (New York: St. Martin, 1924), 129.

themselves for death, as well as an additional stanza about a dead king just before the final musings of the author.[71] When Lydgate translates the French original, he makes a variety of alterations, including the addition of female interlocuters. He also adds an initial five stanzas of introduction to the work, called "verba translatoris" in the manuscript, and a final two stanzas of "lenvoye de translatoure."[72] In the initial "words of the translator" Lydgate's first stanza addresses "yee flokes harde herted as a stone" and asks,

> Where ys ȝoure witte where ys ȝoure prouidence
> To see a-forne the sodeyne vyolence
> Of cruel dethe that ben so wyse and sage
> Which sleeth allas by stroke of pestilence
> Both younge and olde of low and hie parage. (4-8)

In these lines we find most of the commonplace assumptions about the genre of the *Danse*. Death is portrayed as sudden; it demands that the Christian soul be provident, always prepared for God's final judgment. Death is also socially leveling; young, old, poor, and rich all meet the same fate. In addition, death slays by means of illness: the "stroke of pestilence," or plague. Certainly Huizinga would read it in just this way, although there are alternatives. In his discussion of Lydgate's *Danse*, James Simpson finds multiplicity where Huizinga found unity, and vibrancy where Huizinga saw decay.[73] Despite the fact that Lydgate universalizes the poem by addressing Simpson's multiple viewpoints and including both men and women, however, his portrayal of the means of death is strangely impoverished, limited only to the tool of pestilence.

Despite that seeming specificity, the universal experience of death lies behind the poem's structure and its generic affiliations. The estates satire's mode of representation, in which individuals stand in for entire occupations, operates successfully here because Death is coming for one and all. In the *Danse*, Death's universal claim obviates the tension between particularity and the general that shadows estates satire; the fact that the generalized category of "Merchant" cannot account for the actions of all individual merchants no longer matters in light of the fact that Death dances with all merchants in the end. The universal call of Death operates not only within individual estates, but also across the various estates. As Lydgate points out, "Dethe spareth not low ne hye degre / Popes kynges ne worthi Emperowrs," and so the wide variety of occupations represented by estates satire can all fit naturally under one organizing rubric (9-10). That rubric is not limited to the confines of the poem itself. Lydgate explicitly points out that, as Death calls all of the estates to his dance, so too will he call to Lydgate's audience. Death's call operates both within the poem and without, and so Lydgate urges his audience to take his poem as an "example that thei yn her ententis / A-mende her life in eueri maner age" (33-34). The purpose of Lydgate's estates satire is the reformation of his audience's lives. He means his audience to keep his work "as in a myrrowre to-forne yn her reasoun / Her owgly fine may clierli

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[71] The mural and accompanying poem are now lost, but there was a version of the poem, and woodcuts made of the mural, printed by Guyot Marchant in 1486. For the original French text see, John Lydgate, *The Dance of Death*.
[72] I should note that Warren and White print parallel versions of the poem, one based on Huntington Library MS Ellesmere and one based on British Library MS Lansdowne 699. Only the group that includes MS Ellesmere contains the frame stanzas by Lydgate, but no critics deny their authenticity. For the relation between the manuscripts see Seeta Chaganti, "*Danse Macabré* and the Virtual Churchyard."
[73] James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution: The Oxford English Literary History, Vol. 2, 1350-1547* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 50-67.

ther be-holde" (31-32). In other words, the universal applicability of death makes this estates satire deeply relevant to every audience member in an explicitly pedagogical way.

Lydgate takes this understanding of his poem as a "myrrowre" from the text he translates. In his source, however, the mirror suggests a more specific audience than Lydgate has heretofore imagined, moving from the general to the specific once again. After Death calls to each of the estates, a dead king delivers a short speech:

> ȝe folke that loken vpon this purtrature
> Beholdyng here all the estates daunce
> Seeth what ȝe ben & what is ȝoure nature
> Mete vnto wormes not elles yn substaunce
> And haue this myrroure euer yn remembraunce
> How I lye here some-tyme crowned kynge
> To al estates a trewe resemblaunce
> That wormes fode is fine of owre lyuynge. (633-40)

The dead king explicitly defines the "owgly fine" that the audience "may clierli ther be-holde" (31-32): becoming "wormes fode." Here, though, the reflection in the mirror is truly complex. The king is a "trewe resemblaunce" of "al estates," and that resemblance is presumably what one sees in the "myrroure." The language recalls both the body politic metaphor for understanding sovereignty and the "mirror for princes" genre, in which an adviser informs the king about the virtues that he needs and the vices he must avoid in order to govern. In the mirror texts, the king is responsible for the well being of his kingdom. In the *Danse*, that responsibility extends even after death. The rotting corpse of the king still acts as a mirror for his people, warning them about their ultimate fate and the need to prepare the soul for death. In most mirror texts, the king is expected to reform the kingdom. But Lydgate's rotting king is powerless in the face of a calamity like the plague. He, like the estates, is reduced to "wormes fode."

The king's lack of efficacy raises the question of the relationship of the *Danse* to the genre of tragedy. Lydgate seems to have had a particular interest in the genre of tragedy, evinced most clearly in his *Fall of Princes*, which spends over 36,000 lines repeatedly demonstrating tragedy in its particularly medieval instantiation—which, following Chaucer's definition from the *Monk's Tale*, involves someone "that stood in greet prosperitee, / And ys fallen out of heigh degree / Into miserye, and endeth wrecchedly" (VII. 1975-77). As Maura Nolan has shown, for Lydgate there is a tension between a Christian understanding of tragedy, in which sin causes downfalls, and a pagan notion of tragedy, in which human life is governed by contingency and the turning of Fortune's wheel. [74] Each of these visions of tragedy comes with a different concept of human agency. In the Christian model, human beings are responsible for their fates; in choosing to sin, they choose their futures. The pagan model, in contrast, there is no space for agency on Fortune's wheel. It turns relentlessly, impervious to any human attempts to stop it. Medieval tragedy often falls between these two ends of the spectrum; in the *Fall of Princes*, for example, Lydgate includes multiple examples that illustrate both the Christian and pagan models. When Lydgate set out to translate the *Danse*, he was confronted by a text for which the tragic model of individual downfall did not suffice as an explanation for suffering. The *Danse* is a poem about the plague and its effects; the continued outbreaks throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in various times under various kings, and the inability of any estate to escape

[74] Maura Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture*, esp. 124-54.

the horrors of the plague would have emphasized the powerlessness of the king, and everyone else, in the face of such an indiscriminate killer. However, at the end of the *Danse*, the mirror for princes genre makes an appearance, which mitigates the sense of royal powerlessness that otherwise pervades the text. The premise of the mirror for princes genre is, of course, that the king can correct what he sees in his reflection through self-governance—and therefore he can correct the realm. In other words, the king has agency over himself and his subjects. Lydgate embraced this turn to the mirror genre by turning away from the plague in his translation and introducing the topic of the Hundred Years War. The war broadens the poem's narrow focus on plague as a cause of death. The war, like the plague, is a universal killer, although its method of killing is experienced in a particular way, with various estates demonstrating various amounts of agency.

With the war in mind, Death's activity takes on a new martial context. The "stroke" in Death's "stroke of pestilence" recalls the iconographic image of death with a scythe, present in the woodcuts that accompany Guyot Marchant's 1485 edition of the French text and which preserve the images from the Parisian mural.[75] Death does not always carry a scythe, however, and other weapons are also swung in a "stroke." In the woodcut with the Constable, Death brandishes a sword. In fact, the entire exchange with the Constable focuses on battle. Death greets the Constable:

> Hit is my right to reste & yow constrayn
> With vs to daunce my maiester sire Conestable
> For more stronge than euer was Charlemayn
> Dethe hathe a-forced & more worshipable
> For hardynesse [n]e knyȝthode this is no fable
> Ne stronge armoure of plates ne of maile
> What geyneth armes of folkes most notable
> Whan cruel deth luste hem to assaile. (137-44)

And the Constable answers:

> Mi purpose was & hole entencioun
> To assaille castelles and my3ty [fortresses]
> And brynge folke vn-to subieccioun
> To seke honowre fame & grete richesses
> But I se welle that alle wordli prowesses
> Deth can a-bate which is a grete despite
> To hym al-on sorowe & eke swetenesse[s]
> For aȝeyne deth is founden no respite. (145-152)

While the interaction with Death, here, could have been discussed in terms of one-on-one combat or a joust, the imagery is broad in its associations. Death compares himself to Charlemagne and the Constable revels in the joys of siege warfare. Their martial exchange spans cities and empires. This is not a single individual fighting with Death; this is war.

[75] For the woodcuts, see *The Danse Macabre, Printed by Guyot Marchant, 1485*, ed. and trans. David Fein (Tempe, AZ: ACMRS, 2013). For a thorough discussion of the imagery associated with the genre of the *danse macabre*, see Elina Gertsman, *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages: Image, Text, Performance* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

The Constable's vision is explicitly martial, but it is not the only place in which Death's stroke is figured as military aggression. Death's initial address to the Bailiff is an exemplary piece of estates satire verse, full of legal jargon. The Bailiff's response, however, is different:

> O thou lorde god this is an harde Journe
> To whiche a-forne I toke but litel hede
> Mi chaun[c]e is turned & that forthynketh me
> Some-tyme with Juges what me liste to spede
> Lai yn my myȝte be favoure or for mede
> But sitthen ther is no rescuse be bataile
> I holde hym wise that coude see yn dede
> Aȝen dethe that noon appele mai vaile. (273-80)

Given the density of legal terminology in Death's call to him, the Bailiff's reply is surprisingly lacking in his profession's specialized language: only the last line and the mention of "Juges" and "rescuse" participate in that discourse. Much of the stanza is given over to a lamentation about the changeability of Fortune.[76] The Baillif's "chaun[c]e" has "turned" and neither "favoure" or "mede" can save him now; he can't be helped for love or money. What's more, the Bailiff also laments his lack of a military option. There will be no "rescuse be bataile," no armed way out or even a trial by combat. The French original of lines 276-78 reads "Entre juges honneur auoye / Et mort fait raualer ma joye / Qui ma adiourne sans rappel" (204-06). Both "adiourne" and "rappel" are judicial terms, just like "rescuse," but the French original lacks any discussion of armed aggression as a possible, although denied, means of escaping death. The English version posits something like a literal "fighting chance." Lydgate has militarized, in other words, the trauma of death.

In Lydgate's translation, the Hundred Years War is the unmentioned cause behind the poem's commission, unmentioned because the sort of agency associated with the tragedy of war implies a social critique. Lydgate tells his hard-hearted audience to keep in mind an "exawmple which at Parise / I fownde depicte ones on a walle" (19-20). There he made the acquaintance of some "frensshe clerkes," "bi whos a-vyse and cownseille ate leste / Thurh her sterynge and her mocioune" convinced Lydgate to make his translation (22-26). Lydgate does not reveal that he is in Paris as a member of the earl of Warwick's household, simultaneously engaged in translating the *Title and Pedigree of Henry VI* commissioned by Warwick in his current role as Regent of France. What is more, the wall on which Lydgate found the mural and poem inscribed was attached to the ossuary, a fact that would have been abundantly clear in periods of high mortality as bones were moved from the graveyard to the ossuary to make room for the newly dead. The war would have certainly qualified as such a period.

In this context, blending the mirror genre with the *de casibus* and estates satire produces a social critique by emphasizing the uneven distribution of agency in the face of this particular event. In war, the sense of agency that the mirror genre presupposes is present, at least for some

[76] Here we can see that Lydgate's deadly stroke also recalls the "unwar strook" from Geoffrey Chaucer's translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*. In the *Boece*, Chaucer asks "What other thynge bywaylen the cryinges of tragedyes but oonly the dedes of Fortune, that with an unwar strook overturneth the realms of greet nobleye?" See Chaucer, *Boece*, in *The Riverside Chaucer* (II, pr 2, 69). For the original, see Boethius, *Theological Tractates and The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. S. J. Tester (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973). For a recent discussion of the importance of Boethius for Chaucer's own literary theory, see Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages*.

of the estates. While the king and the nobility have no control over the plague, they do choose whether or not the kingdom goes to war. The retention of agency by one class, in addition, makes this understanding of the war a typically medieval tragedy, if one broadens one's concerns to the entire social body. The nobility experience the war as a tragedy in which their agency is only sometimes removed; they choose to wage it, and occasionally the unexpected occurs and they die. Despite doing the bulk of the fighting, the other classes lack agency, even before the war makes them into corpses—the rotting king is in fact "to al estates a trewe resemblaunce"—because the war was never really their decision. Lydgate's *Danse*, in the end, reminds us that while we all move together during a plague, during a war one estate leads the dance. The trauma caused by the plague is temporally limited, and one that might affect anyone at any time. The war, however, is ongoing, and the burden of responsibility for it and its traumatic effects weigh more heavily on some estates than they do on others. The trauma of the plague is experienced by and lamented by a whole society, while the trauma of war is a trauma imposed by the ruling classes on everyone else.[77]

Lydgate in the *Danse*, then, speaks from a generalizable position, as a member of a sort of vague coterie, but he addresses a particular class, at least in part. He tells readers he has been pressed into service by nameless clerics, lacking any institutional context or any real specificity, except for the fact that they are French. Lydgate, in turn, implies he is just a simple English cleric. The poem itself speaks with an admonishing tone, as if the clerical classes at large have decided that the war is a social problem demanding the attention of the church.[78] But Lydgate's specific disclosure of the commissioning clerks' and his national identity—as French and English, respectively—disrupts this soothing clerical fiction. It reminds the audience that there is a specific poet, Lydgate, in a specific place, Paris, at a specific time, during the English occupation of Paris at the height of the Hundred Years War. The clerics convince Lydgate to translate the poem "thurh her sterynge and her mocioune," they stir him up and move him, just as Warwick "meved" him to translate the *Title*. Lydgate's address, then, is at once general and particular. He laments, as a general member of a general class, the state of the war; one could imagine that complaint originating from almost any other class as well. His address is also targeted, however, at the nobility with whom he is in Paris and for whom he works. The particular virtual coterie of the *Danse* includes both the nameless French clerics and the unnamed, though intimated through the particulars of Lydgate's biography, duke of Warwick. Speaking to both groups at once, Lydgate can describes the trauma caused by the Hundred Years War in order to critique it for an audience of nobles—precisely those responsible for prosecuting the war in the first place.

Lydgate's dual mode of address in the *Danse*—in which he speaks to a general and a particular audience at the same time—recurs in the *Pilgrimage*, although there he speaks to different coterie and therefore different individuals. The *Pilgrimage*, like the *Danse*, also moves between the general and the particular. It is designed as a poem about everyone's journey through life, which is, at the same time, specific to each and every individual. The *Pilgrimage* begins with a general discussion of Fortune, which proceeds to get more and more specific. Lydgate proclaimes that people in "thys lyff [ne] ben [but as a pylgrimes]," and moves to the

[77] As Lawton says in relation to the *Fall of Princes*, "it seems to me that the *de casibus* genre is directed to princes as a kind of revenge on war, an assignment of ill repute: a divine revenge with the dull poet acting as moral agent;" see Lawton, "Dullness and the Fifteenth Century," 782.

[78] James Simpson understands the genre of tragedy as exactly this kind of clerical admonition to the fighting class. See Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, 68-120.

Boethian position that "the tresovrë wych that ye possede / ys but thyng lent" (2-8). All this is because of Fortune "with hyr double face," who "pryncesse ys of all worldly glorye, / And off al Ioyë that ys transytórye" (19-22). One might imagine that Lydgate's warning, "thing myn to-day a-nother hath to-morwe," would have been particularly troubling to Salisbury, the poem's patron and the current custodian of Normandy (13). Even more worrying would be Lydgate's characterization of military gains:

> ffor worthynesse in Armes nor vyctórye
> Arn in effect but thingës transytórye
> Nor hih conquest, nor domynacion,
> Peplys to puttë in subieccyon.
> It al schal passe as doth a somer flovr;
> In thys world herë, holdyng no soiovr
> No thyng abyt, shortly for to wryte,
> Good lyff exepte, and only ovr meryte. (37-44)

Even if much of the tone of the *Pilgrimage*'s opening discussion of Fortune can be dismissed as Boethian commonplaces, this passage would still be an extraordinary thing to say to one of the English rulers of France. Military victories and political rule are only transitory and will "passe as doth a somer flovr." One must instead lead a good life and cultivate merit, not "worthynesse in Armes." Whereas the *Danse* lamented the general prevalence of death and let its noble readers slowly realize that they could do something about it, here Lydgate critiques the very activity in which his patron is currently engaged. The problem is still a class problem, but here it has found a particular instantiation, a particular member, to blame.

The *Pilgrimage*'s mode of critique, ultimately, places the members of Lydgate's virtual coterie in a different relation to one another than it might initially appear. As I have discussed, one way of understanding Chaucer's presence in the *Pilgrimage* is instrumental, allowing Lydgate to praise his patrons through the proxy of Chaucer and hoping for some remuneration as a result. The critique of the Hundred Years War with which the *Pilgrimage* begins, however, reveals a different set of relations. Deguileville's original poem, written in a monastic context, related in specific ways to the world around it, but here in its translation by Lydgate, in Paris, for one of the ruling English nobles, what was a monastic allegory about living a good life also becomes a political critique that is aimed simultaneously at one member of the ruling class: the earl of Salisbury, who happened to be married to the granddaughter of England's greatest poet, Chaucer. Lydgate understands Chaucer's aesthetic prowess in terms of devotion, with Mary as a proper object of that devotion. Lydgate's devotion to Salisbury, his patron, cannot take on the same form, not only because Salisbury is not as perfect as Mary, but also because Salisbury is actively waging a destructive and ultimately meaningless war. The virtual coterie allows Lydgate to place the living Chaucers in direct relation to their ancestor, to hold up a mirror to the Chaucer family and force them to ask themselves whether their political and social rise has witnessed a strengthened sense of virtue. The *Pilgrimage*'s virtual coterie discloses that, whereas Chaucer's aesthetic excess can take the form of devotion, Lydgate's aesthetic excess must take the form of critique.

Another way of saying that Lydgate uses Chaucer's poetry both to help create an affinity with the nobility and then critique the nobility would be to say that Lydgate uses a Chaucerian aesthetic in order to perform a Gowerian critique. In the *Pilgrimage* or the *Danse*, as elsewhere,

Lydgate's self-presentation associates him with Chaucer, but it is from Gower that he learned the kind of critical moves that give those poems their political edge. In this final section, I turn toward Lydgate's relationship to John Gower. Long understood as a follower of Chaucer's, Lydgate's literary inheritance from Gower has only recently been a topic of critical interest.[79] As a fifteenth-century English writer with an investment in pacifism, however, Lydgate had one obvious place to go for inspiration: Gower's *In Praise of Peace*. In Gower's poem, Lydgate would find a rhetorical stance that addresses multiple audiences at the same time, as well as criticism that is aimed at an estate from someone who identifies as a member of that estate, both essential aspects of the criticism Lydgate carries out in his Parisian poems. In order to effect that Gowerian critique, however, Lydgate has to emphasize Chaucer's aesthetic achievements. Gower might have taught Lydgate how to shape the critique he wants to carry out, but Chaucer is necessary for that critique to be effective. Ironically, then, in order for Lydgate to produce work like Gower's, he needs to praise Chaucer, ultimately emphasizing the importance of the latter poet at the expense of the former.

V. Peace and Literary Tradition

Gower wrote *In Praise of Peace* at the end of his literary career, in either late 1399 or very early 1400, in the years shortly after Richard II's deposition by Henry IV.[80] Several aspects of the poem would have likely piqued Lydgate's interest. First, it is one of only two poems that Gower wrote in English, the other being the *Confessio Amantis*, which Lydgate certainly knew. Second, it is written in rhyme royal stanzas, a verse form Gower had used before, at the end of the *Confessio Amantis* in Amans's "letter" to Cupid and Venus, but that is everywhere in Chaucer's poetry as well as Lydgate's.[81] Finally and more significantly for my purposes here, *In Praise of Peace* is one of the earliest poetic addresses to the Lancastrian dynasty that explicitly discusses their policies. It is contemporaneous with Chaucer's *Complaint to his Purse*, but whereas Chaucer's poem deals with the personal effects of Lancastrian rule, Gower's poem extends its concerns to the entire realm, and beyond.[82] Because it addresses the king with overt praise, it has often been taken as an example of early Lancastrian propaganda, the beginnings of a policy to control literary production in order to help legitimate the usurpation.[83] As I will argue, however,

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[79] See, for example, Maura Nolan, "Lydgate's Literary History: Chaucer, Gower, and Canacee," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 27 (2005): 59-92; and J. Allen Mitchell, "John Gower and John Lydgate: Norms and Forms of Rhetorical Culture," in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture, c.1350-c.1500*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), 569-584.

[80] For a discussion of the issue with dating see Michael Livingston's introduction to the poem. See John Gower, *The Minor Latin Works with In Praise of Peace*, ed. R. F. Yeager and Michael Livingston (Kalmazoo, MI: TEAMS, 2005), 89. All quotations from *In Praise of Peace* will come from to this edition and will be cited parenthetically within the text.

[81] John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, three volumes, ed. Russell Peck with Latin translations by Andrew Galloway (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS, 2003-2006), VIII. 2215-2300.

[82] One might think of these works as an extension, then, of what Andrew Galloway calls Chaucer's and Gower's "debate about how to govern self-interest;" see Andrew Galloway, "Gower's Quarrel with Chaucer and the Origins of Bourgeois Didacticism in Fourteenth-Century London Poetry," in *Calliope's Classroom: Studies in Didactic Poetry from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, eds. Annette Harder, Alasdair A. MacDonald, and Gerrit J. Reinink (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 245-67; quote at 251.

[83] Paul Strohm's work is the best representative of this position. For *In Praise of Peace* as Lancastrian propaganda, see Paul Strohm, "Saving the Appearances: Chaucer's 'Purse' and the Fabrication of the Lancastrian Claim," in *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 75-94. For the Lancastrian concern with legitimation, see Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

Lydgate found something different in Gower's poem, a means to praise the nobility while critiquing their actions at the same time.

In Praise of Peace performs a delicate balancing act, affirming its loyalty to the king and yet all the while critiquing his more warlike inclinations. When Henry IV came to the throne, the Hundred Years War was in one of its most peaceful periods. Richard II had promoted a policy of peace toward the French, a decision that was unpopular among some of the nobility and contributed to their general sense of dissatisfaction with Richard.[84] After Henry's ascension, there was real pressure to once again take up arms against the French.[85] *In Praise of Peace* documents the anxiety that mounting pressure seems to have caused Gower, as well as the uneasy settlement he reaches between admonishing the king and praising him.[86] Gower seems to justify certain aspects of the French war:

> Good is t'eschue werre, and natheles
> A kyng may make werre uppon his right,
> For of bataile the final ende is pees.
> Thus stant the lawe, that a worthi knyght
> Uppon his trouthe may go to the fight.
> Bot if so were that he myghte chese
> Betre is the pees, of which may no man lese. (64-70)

This logic would appear to be all the justification that war in France needs. The English king's proclaimed reason for the war was that his rightful inheritance had been usurped by the French king, that France was Edward II's "right" as it is now Henry's.[87] Because war ends with peace, the English king appears to have Gower's blessing, taking with him the knights that have pledged their "trouthe" to him. As the stanza ends, though, Gower provides an important

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[84] On Richard II's interest in peace with France, see Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), esp. 205-34. Saul sees a general fatigue surrounding the war, exclusively using the evidence of poets, including Gower's earlier work, writing against the war. Saul also affirms, however, that the nobility were generally antagonistic to Richard by the end of his reign, largely due to Richard's reduced largesse, a situation that the war in France could have partially mollified. See Saul, *Richard II*, 405-34.

[85] Much of the political unrest that Henry IV's policy in regards to France occasioned has been surmised from Henry V's policy, which is much more clearly aggressive. Henry IV is in need of a major critical reassessment; his last biography of any kind is in K. B. MacFarlane, *Lancastrian Kings and Lollard Knights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 5-113. On the nobility's warlike inclinations under Henry IV, inherited by Henry V, see Christopher Allmand, *Henry V* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), esp. 66-78. It should be noted that despite Henry IV's relatively peaceful policy towards France, he did supply soldiers to the Burgundians during the civil unrest in France in 1411. See Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War, c. 1300-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 26-27.

[86] Once again the problem of propaganda rears its head. David Carlson's recent work argues that Gower's early involvement with the Lancastrians was largely as a propagandist, in the revisions to the *Confessio Amantis* and in the *Cronica Tripertita*, who then became anxious about the Lancastrains' own tendencies toward authoritarian rule by the time he wrote *In Praise of Peace*. See David Carlson, *John Gower: Poetry and Propaganda in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012). The most important account of the anxieties on display in *In Praise of Peace*, especially as they relate to its form and its interest in exemplarity, is Frank Grady, "The Lancastrian Gower and the Limits of Exemplarity," *Speculum* 70 (1995): 552-75. On the importance of understanding *In Praise of Peace* to Gower's other poetry for Henry IV, see Arthur Bahr, "Reading Codicological Form in Gower's Trentham Manuscript," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 33 (2011): 219-62, appearing in an updated form in *Fragments and Assemblages*, 209-54.

[87] See the discussion in Allmand, *The Hundred Years War*, 7-12.

qualification: if there is the possibility of choosing not to go to war, then peace is the better choice. Who would do the choosing in this instance is not quite clear. The "he" of line 69 could refer back to the "worthi knight" mentioned in line 67 or the king described in line 65. The next stanza obviates the need to decide that reference, however, as it makes the call for peace universal:

> Sustene pes oghte every man alyve,
> First for to sette his liege lord in reste,
> And ek these other men that thei ne stryve;
> For so this world mai stonden ate beste.
> What kyng that wolde be the worthieste,
> The more he myghte oure dedly werre cesse,
> The more he shulde his worthinesse encresse. (71-76)

"Every man alyve" is called upon to sustain peace; both the "worthi knyght" and the "kyng" of the proceeding stanza are equally responsible for making peace. The knights "sette… in reste," or "set in peace," their liege lord; in so doing they take away the need for "these other men" to "stryve," ushering in a kind of Boethian quietism that allows the world to "standen ate beste." Gower expands the advice of Chaucer's *Truth*, that "Gret reste stant in litel besinesse," into a principle of governance (10). The stanza ends by promoting peace as the means by which the king will become the "worthieste," with the anaphora and the parallelism of the two final lines inexorably linking the cessation of war with the increase in the king's "worthinesse." From seeming to promote the French war at the beginning of the earlier stanza, Gower ends with a universal call to pacifism, a position from which he will ultimately proclaim "the werre is modir of the wronges alle" (106).

Gower's interest in both the knights' obligation to their king and the king's obligation to his men stems from the poem's shifting understanding of its audience. From its opening, the poem speaks directly to the king: "O worthi noble kyng, Henry the Ferthe" (1). And yet Gower's poem is one of those in which, as Anne Middleton claims, "the king is not the main imagined audience, but an occasion for gathering and formulating what is on the common mind."[88] As for Lydgate, Gower's "common mind" is not the mind of the commons, but the mind of a group that stands in for the commons, and thinks about the "common good" in turn. For Lydgate, that representative group is the higher nobility. For Gower, it is the nobility in general, those who fight, the king's liegemen. The multiple audiences of Gower's address are already on display in the stanzas above, but the poem's concluding stanzas, which serve as a kind of envoy to the entire work, make the multiple audiences their explicit subject. Here they are in full:

> My worthi liege lord, Henri be name,
> Which Engelond hast to governe and righte,
> Men oghten wel thi pité to proclame,
> Which openliche in al the worldes sighte
> Is schewed with the help of God Almighte,
> To give ous pes, which longe hath be debated,
> Wherof thi pris schal nevere ben abated.

[88] Middleton, "The Idea of Public Poetry," 107.

My lord, in whom hath ever yit be founde
Pité withoute spot of violence,
Kep thilke pes alwei withinne bounde,
Which God hath planted in thi conscience:
So shal the cronique of thi pacience
Among the seintz be take into memoire
To the loenge of perdurable gloire.

And to thin erthli pris, so as Y can,
Which everi man is holde to commende,
I, Gower, which am al thi liege man,
This letter unto thin excellence Y sende
As Y which evere unto my lives ende
Wol prai for the stat of thi persone
In worschipe of thi scepter and of thi throne.

Noght only to my king of pes Y write,
Bot to these othre princes Cristene alle,
That ech of hem his oghne herte endite,
And see the werre er more meschief falle:
Sette ek the rightful pope uppon his stalle,
Kep charité and draughe pité to honde,
Maintene lawe, and so the pes schal stonde. (358-85)

Gower affirms outright that he is Henry's "liege man," although his concerns are not his alone, but those of the third-person plural "ous" that beg the king "to give ous pes" in line 363. In part, the "ous" to which Gower refers include the clerical classes, those that will make "the cronique of thi pacience." More important, though, are the nobility. The final stanza opens the address to include "these othre princes Cristene alle." Taken literally, the "princes" would include the king of France, Charles VI, as well as other monarchs involved in the Hundred Years War, such as Robert III of Scotland, bound to come to the French aid against England through what is known as the "Auld Alliance."[89] Figuratively, though, "princes" could refer in this envoy to any member of the nobility, as it does in any number of envoys to ballads, such as Chaucer's *Complaint of Venus*. The last three tasks that Gower assigns to the princes receiving this poem—to put the right pope on the throne, to keep charity, and to practice "pité"—strongly resemble the description of the responsibilities of the nobility found in book five of *Vox Clamantis*: "Ecclesie prima debet defendere iura, / Et commune bonum causa secunda fouet; /Tercia pupilli ius supportabit egeni, /Et causam vidue consolidabit ope: / Istis namque modis lex vult quod miles in armis / Sit semper bellum promptus adire suum" [First to defend the rights of the Church, and second foster the common good; Third, by their power, support the poor orphans and strengthen the widows' causes: for in such ways does the law wish that knights in arms are always willing to go to war].[90] The "commune bonum" of the *Vox* becomes the "charité" of *In Praise of Peace*;

[89] See Elizabeth Bonner, "Scotland's 'Auld Alliance' with France, 1295-1560," *History* 84 (2002): 5-30.
[90] John Gower, *Vox Clamantis*, in *The Complete Works*, 4 volumes, ed. G. C. Macaulay (London: University of Oxford Press, 1899-1902), here lines V. 5-10. Translation slightly modified from John Gower, *The Major Latin Works of John Gower*, trans. Eric Stockton (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962).

the description of the knight's obligation to help widows and orphans turns into an exhortation to "draughe pité to honde" in the later poem. Along with the formal changes from description to exhortation comes a change in causation: in the *Vox*, the knights accomplish the task of fostering the common good and caring for widows and orphans by going to war, while in *In Praise of Peace* the tasks of "keeping charity" and "drawing pity to hand" are the means of ensuring peace: "so the pes schal stonde."

The concerns Gower displays are both clerical and noble; he is someone who is as likely to make a "cronique" of the king's patience as he is to be invested in the "stat of thi [the king's] persone / In worschipe of thi scepter and of thi throne," that is, in the same hierarchical system that guarantees Gower a position and income. Gower was an "esquire," a member of the landed gentry, descended from a family of the minor nobility in Kent.[91] As a member of the gentry, Gower had longstanding interests in certain domestic policies that secured his position. Peace, then, pertains not only to the war with France. Here, as it does elsewhere in the poem, peace also concerns the realm, where it is manifested as the king's "pité."[92] That "pité" must be directed at certain classes:

> The werre bringth in poverté at his hieles,
> Wereof the comon poeple is sore grieved;
> The werre hath set his cart on thilke whieles
> Wher that Fortune mai noght be believed.
> For whan men wene best to have achieved,
> Ful ofte it is al newe to beginne:
> The werre hath no thing siker, thogh he winne. (113-19)

This plea on behalf of the lower classes stems not only from the text's universal moralizing, but also from a desire for domestic stability and tranquility. The issue with poverty during wartime comes not only from the fact that the peasants are fighting, and therefore not working the land, but also with taxes. Taxes are necessary to fund a war effort, but they lead to no small amount of consternation on the part of Parliament, where they are treated as a perpetual bane on the landed classes.[93] In the context of "poverté," the final line of the poem becomes a pun. The war provides no surety, even "thogh he winne," where "winne" can either refer to one's victory in war or the concept of "winning," or saving, as in *Wynnere and Wastour*.[94] The common people, who are "sore grieved" by "poverté," are in no position to "winne." There is no need to imagine their lot being overturned by Fortune, who has already crushed them beneath her wheel. The language here of having perpetually to start over under the condition of war, and of the vagaries of

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[91] For Gower's social position and family background, see John Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 37-69.

[92] Pity is something of a longstanding concern for Gower, especially as it related to Richard II. See Andrew Galloway, "The Literature of 1388 and the Politics of Pity in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," in *The Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England*, ed. Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 67-104. For further reflections about Gower and Richard, see Frank Grady, "Gower's Boat, Richard's Barge, and the True Story of the *Confessio Amantis*: Text and Gloss," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 44 (2002): 1-15.

[93] On Gower's relationship to Parliament, see Matthew Giancarlo, *Parliament and Literature in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2007), 90-128.

[94] See Warren Ginsburg, ed., *Wynnere and Wastour and The Parlement of Thre Ages* (Kalamazoo, MI: TEAMS, 1992).

Fortune, more aptly describes the position of someone like Gower himself, someone of certain means. The danger of the common people being "sore grieved" is not that "poverté" is bad in and of itself, but that their poverty-induced grief will turn against their superiors, that they will become the agents of Fortune and destroy the property of the landed gentry.[95] Gower's fear stems from the threat of a second Peasant's Revolt, spurred on by degradations that war inflicts on the domestic realm. In the *Vox Clamantis*, he blamed the revolt on the nobility's abdication of responsibility for the peasantry.[96] *In Praise of Peace* once again cautions the nobility against that myopia, even as it extends the critique specifically to the king.

In the particulars of Gower's domestic concerns, then, one can see both what Lydgate took from him as well as the limits of that identification. A particularly important lesson for Lydgate can be found in the way Gower positions himself rhetorically. Gower addresses two audiences simultaneously, the king and the nobility as a whole, and he does so as one of their own, as someone who shares their preoccupations and concerns. He lets them know that peace is not only his particular concern, but theirs as well, whether they know it or not. Despite his voluminous praise of Chaucer, this mode of political interjection is not something Lydgate learned from him. To take the most obvious example of Chaucerian political advice, the *Melibee*, Chaucer's role is as a councilor, an adviser relaying a learned story. Nowhere in the *Melibee* does Chaucer claim that he too has to worry about waging war against his neighbor. Gower similarly displays his erudition, but he does so in order to speak to people of his own class, under the auspices of advising the king. Lydgate's mode of double address, both personal and universal, meant for Salisbury and for the everyman who wends his way along the pilgrimage of life, is something that clearly comes from Gower's capacity to speak to the king and his own class at the same time, though Lydgate imagines both a broader and a more specific audience as his twin audiences. Gower addresses Henry IV and the nobility, but in both cases he appeals to their role as leaders of the realm, as representatives of the state and of their estate.[97] In the *Pilgrimage* or the *Danse*, Lydgate addresses everyone; all of humanity is the appropriate audience to learn about life's pilgrimage or death's dance because those topics pertain to the universal experience of being human. At the same time, Lydgate addresses a figure like Salisbury as a specific individual, as a particular man with a particular job, the custodian of Normandy, and a particular wife, the granddaughter of Geoffrey Chaucer. Whereas Gower addressed the nobility as an estate under the guise of addressing the king, using the ostensible particular to speak to the general, Lydgate addresses Salisbury or Warwick under the guise of addressing everyone, using the general to speak to the particular. Lydgate inverts Gower's

[95] On Gower's reflections about Fortune, see Maura Nolan, "Agency and the Poetics of Sensation in Gower's *Mirour de l'Omme*," in *Answerable Style: The Idea of the Literary in Medieval England*, ed. Frank Grady and Andrew Galloway (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013), 214-43.

[96] Particularly resonant with this claim is the scene where the nobility hid within the Tower of London, which gets converted by the dream logic of the narrative into a rudderless ship of state. See John Gower, *Vox Clamantis*, I. 1593-1636, and John Gower, *The Major Latin Poems*, 84-85. For Gower's sympathy and identification with the peasants, see Maura Nolan, "The Poetics of Catastrophe: Ovidian Allusion in Gower's *Vox Clamantis*," in *Medieval Latin and Middle English Literature: Essays in Honor of Jill Mann*, ed. Christopher Cannon and Maura Nolan (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), 113-33. For a reading of Gower that emphasizes his horror at the Peasant's Revolt, see Steven Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 208-18. For a reading of the *Vox* as an admonition to the nobility, see Ian Cornelius, "Gower and the Peasant's Revolt," *Representations* 131 (2015): 22-51.

[97] On Gower's relation to Henry IV, see two important essays by Frank Grady: "Lancastrian Gower," and "Generation of 1399," in *The Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England*, ed. Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 202-229.

double address not so that he can talk to an entire class as one of their own, but so that he can talk to a particular individual, man to man as it were.

Lydgate's inversion of Gower's address stems from the difference between Gower's estate-based identification and Lydgate's coterie-based identification, which ultimately allows Lydgate to perform a different sort of critique. Gower's identification with the nobility as a whole allows him a more open call for peace, but it is one that is forced to capitulate on certain issues due to the ideological determinations of the nobility as an estate. Gower has to concede that the nobility are "those who fight," that there is a martial component to the nobility's identity, and so he ends up having to allow for certain types of war:

> Thus were it good to setten al in evene
> The worldes princes and the prelatz bothe,
> For love of Him which is the King of Hevene:
> And if men scholde algate wexe wrothe,
> The Sarazins, which unto Crist be lothe,
> Let men ben armed agein hem to fighte;
> So mai the knyht his ded of armes righte. (246-52)

The knight has a right to fight; the sonic resonance of the words, rhymed internally in the last line and as the final couplet in the stanza, emphasizes the almost tautological status of the sentiment under the estates model of governance behind Gower's understanding of the nobility.[98] Given that right, and the inevitability that men will "wexe wrothe," Gower suggests that they at least stop fighting other Christians and instead spend their rage attacking "Sarazins." Lydgate is not in a position to have to make such concessions. Whereas Gower produces a long poem about peace itself, Lydgate's calls for peace, as the *Pilgrimage* and the *Danse* show, are implied. When Lydgate writes that "worthynesse in Armes" or "vyctórye" are "but thingës transytórye," he does not then go on to advise peace; he simply allows his audience to ponder for themselves the implications of the ephemeral nature of military victory. Lydgate's advice is also more personal. His construction of virtual coteries, as I have argued above, allows him to speak to a patron directly even as he addresses a much wider audience. When Lydgate speaks to Salisbury or Warwick he does so by first placing himself in a privileged inner circle, one that calls upon dead poets and living patrons equally, in order to formulate a work that will address some specific issue. When the *Pilgrimage* addresses Salisbury's concern with "grete moralyte," under its universalizing guise, it also speaks directly to Salisbury's actions and position. Lydgate, whispering in Salisbury's ear as a poetic equal, can tell him that the specific actions he, Salisbury, is performing violate the very quality he wishes the poem to showcase. Because he is not addressing an audience consisting of an entire estate, as Gower does, Lydgate does not have to worry about the way his advice would play out if the entire estate took it.

By placing himself as a literary inheritor of both Chaucer and Gower, Lydgate gains something from an intersection of those figures that he cannot achieve by simply identifying with one or the other: a coterie mode of address that tackles general political problems by engaging particular individuals, or vice versa. The way in which the figures of Chaucer and Gower intersect in Lydgate, however, has consequences for how Lydgate presents his relationship to

[98] The classic work on three estates as "those who fight," "those who pray," and "those who work" is Georges Duby, *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). For a discussion of chivalry's military associations, see chapter 1.

each of them. Lydgate performs a Gowerian critique, admonishing members of the nobility using a double form of address, as if he were a member of that estate, although without Gower's overt moralizing. The form of his criticism, implicit rather than explicit, means Lydgate has no real need to refer to Gower, obscuring Gower's contributions to Lydgate's poetry.[99] Chaucer, in contrast, is how that implied critique is carried out. The *Pilgrimage* is symptomatic of this maneuver, a particularly pointed example because it involves Chaucer's descendants: Lydgate mentions Chaucer to show how different his own poetic practice has to be, how far from Chaucer's example, whether genuinely experienced or simply ascribed, the Chaucer family has fallen. By no means does this desire to use Chaucer as an engine for critique account for all of Lydgate's references to Chaucer, not any more than his desire for monetary compensation does. But when Lydgate does use this critical method, he does so by foregrounding Chaucer's contribution to Lydgate's poetic education and achievements, by showcasing himself as the inheritor of a literary tradition that begins with Chaucer, and not Gower. Chaucer's reputation in relation to Lydgate, and not Gower's, is bolstered by the form of Lydgate's criticism. Given the status of the Chaucer family, and the reputation Chaucer already has in Lydgate's work, Chaucer and not Gower can serve as an effective member of one of Lydgate's virtual coteries. Gower might have taught Lydgate how to use the agency such a coterie garners him, but Lydgate must bolster Chaucer's reputation in order effectively express that agency.

[99] For a different model of coterie exclusion, see chapter two.

Chapter 4
The Birth of Tradition: Chaucerianism after Lydgate

As we read in Ecclesiastes, "generatio praeterit et generatio advenit terra vero in aeternum stat," "one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth standeth for ever" (Eccles. 1:4). This image of successive generations, which a late medieval audience would count as part of Solomon's wisdom, neatly encapsulates the concerns of this chapter, which moves beyond Chaucer's immediate inheritors to focus on the generation that followed them at the end of the fifteenth century. By the early Tudor period, the Chaucerian tradition had cultivated the perceived naturalness and timelessness associated with traditions. Of course, that perception is no more accurate than the Earth's permanence; like the generations that inhabit it, the Earth was something that formed and something that will eventually pass away. The same is true of traditions. Over the past two chapters I have examined how writers in the early part of the Chaucerian tradition, specifically Hoccleve and Lydgate, characterized their relationship to Chaucer. In both cases it was personal, produced by the fact that both Hoccleve and Lydgate were contemporaries of Chaucer. Hoccleve claimed to know the man himself and Lydgate established a relationship to Chaucer, partially through his connections to the Chaucer family and partially through the construction of virtual coteries, which allowed for certain kinds of encounters with Chaucer after death. What Lydgate sought from those encounters and what Hoccleve asserted outright was a sense of intimacy. That sense of intimacy, in turn, bolstered their claims to poetic authority. As one looks to the poets who come later in the Chaucerian tradition, the same cannot be said for them. Of the writers who are covered in this chapter—in the order I will discuss them, they are Sir Stephen Scrope, born about 1396; Sir Richard Roos, born around 1410; William Dunbar, born about 1458; and John Skelton, born about 1460—only one, Scrope, was alive at the same time Chaucer was, but not old enough to profit from that coincidence. These are men who encounter Chaucer first and foremost not as an older mentor, like Hoccleve, or the recently deceased father and grandfather of loyal patrons, like Lydgate, but Chaucer as the figure that Hoccleve and Lydgate had created, a deceased authority, the founder of a literary tradition.

Conceiving of Chaucer as the founder of a tradition for these writers, however, should not mean a return to the models of influence constructed by Harold Bloom and Seth Lerer in which the poet is subservient to or derivative of tradition.[1] Such a return would simply shift the characterization of Hoccleve and Lydgate as second-rate poets forward a generation. Just because a poet is part of a tradition does not mean he is any less dynamic than a coterie poet. Coteries and traditions are not oppositional constructs. Coterie poets, as I have discussed, are always part of one tradition or another in addition to their coterie membership. Chaucer was just as much in dialogue with the French tradition as he was with Deschamps and Granson. Hoccleve and Lydgate were also in dialogue with that tradition even as they were creating the Chaucerian tradition through their coterie relationships with the older poet. Coterie membership, in fact, often entails having a certain attitude to a tradition, as Frank O'Hara had to T. S. Eliot or Ezra Pound, or as Chaucer and Deschamps had to the *Roman de la Rose*.[2] Coterie and tradition, then,

[1] See Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); and Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
[2] For the relationship between these figures, see chapter one.

can be mutually reinforcing and the dynamism associated with one can be a large part of the dynamism of the other.

One measure of their dynamism is that, as with a coterie, a poet must announce his or her membership in a tradition. How does a poet signal membership in a tradition? Or, to ask the same question from the point of view of the literary critic, what do we mean when we characterize a work as "Chaucerian" or say that it is part of the Chaucerian tradition? This chapter addresses these questions by turning to a work that is not usually considered part of the Chaucerian tradition, Sir Stephen Scrope's *Epistle of Othea*. My purpose for doing so is not, as one might expect, to make a case for Scrope's work to be counted as Chaucerian. Instead, I will argue that Scrope's *Epistle* demonstrates what it looks like for a text to announce that it is part of a tradition, not in terms of the whole work, but in a very localized instance: Scrope's stanza about Criseyde. Such an isolated moment actually allows the text's relationship to the Chaucerian tradition to stand out more clearly; because the whole work is not overtly indebted to Chaucer, the moment at which it is indebted becomes all the more notable. The stanza's Chaucerianism is not swallowed up by the Chaucerianism of the work as a whole, simply becoming part of the work's form. Instead, the stanza performs its belonging to the Chaucerian tradition by virtue of deliberate choices of diction made by Scrope. In other words, Scrope's choices are performative: they announce his membership in a tradition and constitute his membership at the same time.[3] Tradition's dynamism, in part, stems from the fact that such performative choices are how a poet signals his membership in that tradition. These performative choices are the means by which a poet constructs his understanding of a literary tradition—how certain things should be discussed in certain circumstances—as well as allowing the poet a means by which he might signal his own place within that tradition. This characterization of the Chaucerianism of Scrope's stanza—as a performative and deliberate choice—discloses a few things about tradition that I will trace throughout the remainder of the chapter.

As the characterization of tradition as something that must be performatively joined suggests, there are aspects of traditional poetry that will resemble coterie poetry. One of the ways the text signals that it belongs to a tradition is through allusions to other works in that tradition, although these allusions will not operate like coterie allusions. In a coterie context, I have argued that Hoccleve alludes to the *Legend of Good Women* or Lydgate cites the entirety of the *ABC*. With Hoccleve and Lydgate in their respective coteries, the allusions are personal: Hoccleve expects his audience, whom he knows, to recognize the work of Chaucer, whom he also knew; Lydgate, in his virtual coteries, treats texts like individuals whom he knows personally. Allusions in a traditional context can be more muddled, less specific than coterie allusions; I will term such allusions "approximations." Scrope's work demonstrates this confusion nicely. In writing a stanza about Criseyde, Scrope turns to the Chaucerian tradition. But Scrope's choice is perhaps not fully intentional; as I will show, it may be that he means to cite Chaucer, but he ends up citing Lydgate instead. Such confusion, though, is not only due to the fact that one cannot read Scrope's mind but also because of the way traditions themselves make such determinations difficult. Traditions admit variation, both by mixing with different traditions and by allowing for different aspects within the same tradition to achieve dominance. Such mixtures of tradition are on view as I turn from Scrope to the work of Richard Roos. Roos's text, as a translation of a poem by Alain Chartier, alludes to both the Chaucerian tradition and the French tradition stemming from Guillaume Machaut. Within the Chaucerian tradition, Roos alludes to both

[3] This notion of the performative comes from J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, second edition, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

Chaucer and Lydgate, often in the same passage. It should come as no surprise that Roos's poem blends Chaucerian characteristics with those of the French tradition, because Chaucer himself was in dialogue with that tradition. It should come as even less of a surprise, then, that Roos mixes Chaucerian moments with moments inspired by Lydgate, because Chaucer inspired Lydgate as well. All of these combinations are possible, in other words, because all of these poets share an aesthetic sensibility, usually drawn from the same source. That sensibility will be less personal and specific than a coterie sensibility, which often makes unique claims about the way in which an individual understands his other coterie members, as in the claims Hoccleve makes about his privileged position to judge the fidelity of the Chaucer portrait to the poet. In a tradition, the sensibility will be less precise and more of a general, and generalizable, practice. It will concern itself with what everyone supposedly knows about, for instance, Criseyde.

Such allusions and approximations alone can and often do signal membership in a tradition, although a work can also blatantly profess a relationship to that tradition, and in such moments works in a tradition share one final quality with coterie works: an interest in proper names. Coteries, as I have shown, depend on proper names; such names are how coteries announce their membership and they help determine those who are or are not "in the know." Names in a tradition operate differently, as Chaucer's use of the names of the *auctores* shows.[4] Names are also one way in which members of a tradition can announce their membership, but these names are treated as universally known, in need of no introduction and no explanation about who that person is. Names are used in a traditional context not in order to confer fame, as is necessary in a coterie context, but in order to augment the named individual's already existing fame and to enhance the profile of the poet who is doing the naming in turn. Like some coterie names, that augmentation requires an aesthetic judgment, although traditional naming practices are not as playful as coterie ones, but uniformly and unequivocally laudatory. The honorific position given to these traditional names can then be used to different ends. They can, as with Dunbar's poetry, help establish a literary tradition in which one is included, or they can, as with Skelton, confer a position of honor to the poet himself. Such a highly regarded position, though, presents certain dangers to authors who come later in the tradition, whose works can be absorbed under the name of their poetic forerunners. Indeed, one of the most obvious ways in which a work is considered part of the Chaucerian tradition is the fact that past editors and scholars assigned the work to Chaucer's corpus. For the most part, I will not be concerned with such external naming practices, preferring instead to consider the way that names are used in the poems themselves, although whether or not an editor placed a poem in Chaucer's collected works will occasionally guide my considerations.[5]

I will begin, though, with a text that neither names Chaucer nor ever travelled under his name, Scrope's *Epistle of Othea*, although Scrope uses the name of one of Chaucer's most famous characters. When Scrope mentions Criseyde, he characterizes her in a manner that is broadly consistent with the Chaucerian tradition, albeit not with Chaucer himself. What Scrope does in this instance is not an attempt to form a coterie attachment to Chaucer, nor is it really a way for him to signal his membership in the Chaucerian tradition. Instead, what Scrope's poem shows us is what a tradition looks like when it has achieved both dominance and cultural saturation. Like all translators, Scrope makes choices about how to render his base text into his

[4] See the discussion in chapter one.

[5] For the distinction between external and internal naming practices, see Anne Middleton, "William Langland's 'Kynde Name': Authorial Signature and Social Identity in Late Fourteenth-Century England," in *Literary Practice and Social Change in Britain, 1380-1530*, ed. Lee Patterson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 15-82.

target language, and those choices are intentional acts; he chooses to discuss Criseyde in a way that calls to mind the Chaucerian tradition. However, the exact associations to which those choices allude are not totally within his control, and may even be unintentional; he may mean to refer to Chaucer, but instead refers to Lydgate. In part, such a situation is a feature of language itself, the capacity of language, as Deconstruction insisted, to infinitely signify. But such a situation is also a feature of literary traditions. The possibility that Scrope may not mean exactly what he says is indicative of the way that tradition provides authors with a reflex of thought, those ways of referring to a thing that "everyone knows," patterns and associations that accrue to a tradition and influence the way that later authors represent that tradition and their own place within it.

I. Confusing Allusions

Sir Stephen Scrope's *Epistle of Othea* is not a work that one usually counts as a part of the Chaucerian tradition and there are several good reasons for this, even if moments in the text might be labeled "Chaucerian." First, it does not explicitly name Chaucer as a forerunner; there is no encomium to Chaucer, such as one finds in Hoccleve or Lydgate, or as I will eventually discuss in relation to Dunbar and Skelton later in this chapter. Second, the text never travelled under Chaucer's name. None of the early modern editors and printers of Chaucer's works identified it as one of his. Third, and perhaps most importantly, it is for the most part stylistically quite distinct from Chaucer's writings. Scrope's *Epistle* is a translation of Christine de Pizan's *Epistre Othea*, a massively popular encyclopedic text that follows the example of the *Ovide moralisé* as a guide to a Christian understanding of figures from pagan mythology.[6] Scrope retains the form of the work from Christine's text: after an opening prologue, the text consists of one hundred quatrains, each of which has an associated prose gloss of the text and an associated allegorization.[7] Eleanor Johnson has recently made a persuasive case for the importance of *prosimetra* to Chaucer in particular and to late medieval literary theory more generally, but such a sustained *prosimetrum* as Christine's with such a consistent form and a serious didactic purpose is foreign to Chaucer's work.[8] Perhaps the closest parallel would be Chaucer's *Melibee*, but even there the mode of allegorization is quite distinct; Chaucer has written a sustained allegorical narrative, whereas Christine's text subjects different literary characters to allegorical readings. Given these stylistic differences and the fact that Scrope's *Epistle of Othea* does not mention Chaucer, perhaps it should come as no surprise that Chaucer's early modern editors never assigned the text to him.

And yet, Scrope's translation of Christine contains moments that are stylistically Chaucerian. I will focus on only one, which is not coincidentally the moment most likely to signal an affiliation with Chaucer. That moment is Scrope's translation of Christine's quatrain

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[6] Christine's *Epistre* survives in 47 manuscripts. See the discussion of all the manuscripts in Giani Mombello, *La tradizione manoscritta dell' "Epistre Othea" di Christine de Pizan. Prolegomeni all'edizione del testo* (Torino: Accademia delle Scienze, 1967).

[7] Of course he makes other prominent changes, including his claim that Christine is the patron rather than author of her own work. For a discussion of Scrope's changes, especially as they relate to the status of female authority in the mid fifteenth century, see Nancy Bradley Warren, "French Women and English Men: John of Arc, Margaret of Anjou, and Christine de Pizan in England, 1445-1540," *Exemplaria* 16 (2004): 405-36. For a discussion of the interest in Christine among the English literary patrons and the early printers, see Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380-1589* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 61-107.

[8] Eleanor Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk, and Hoccleve* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

about Briseida, better known as Criseyde in the Chaucerian tradition. Christine's stanza is as follows:

> S'a Cupido tu veulx donner
> Ton cuer, et tout habandonner,
> Gard toy Briseyda n'acointier,
> Car trop a le cuer vilotier.[9]

Scrope translates this as

> If thou wilt yeve þe to Cupido,
> Thin hert and all abaundon hir-to
> Thinke on Cresseidis newfangilnes,
> For hir herte hadde to myche doubilnes.[10]

In terms of the stanza's form, it could be more Chaucerian. Scrope extends Christine's lines from octosyllabic ones to decasyllabic ones, but he keeps the rhymed couplets and Christine's stanza form of the quatrain. The other fifteenth century translation of Christine's work, the *Lytil Bibell of Knyghthode*, maintains no such fidelity; it transforms Christine's quatrains into single rhyme royal stanzas.[11] Here is how it renders this same stanza:

> If naturall inclinacioun prese upon thee soo
> That from thi delyte thou meyst not absteyne,
> But that thou must habandoun thee unto Cupido,
> Beware of Creseida. Thi love from her restreyn,
> Whose fykell hert is of stedfastnes bareygn.
> Thou shalt not ha myn avyse with suyche on thee acqueynt
> As wyl, for thi tre hert, reward thi love feynt.[12]

Both translations follow Chaucer in naming their subject Criseyde, rather than Christine's Briseida. Even so, in terms of content, neither translation wanders too far from its source, which is especially surprising given the added length of the stanza in the *Lytil Bibell*. They both present themselves as advice to stay away from Criseyde, even if one decides to fall in love, because she

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[9] Christine de Pizan, *Epistre Othea*, ed. Gabriella Parussa (Geneva: Droz, 1999), 318. In Jane Chance's English translation, these lines are "If you wish to give your heart / To Cupid and abandon everything, / Guard against acquainting yourself with Briseis [sic], / For she has too roving a heart;" see Christine de Pizan, *Letter of Othea to Hector*, ed. and trans. Jane Chance (Newburyport, MA: Focus Library of Medieval Women, 1990), 107.

[10] Stephen Scrope, *The Epistle of Othea*, ed. Curt F. Bühler, EETS o. s. 264 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 102.

[11] For a sustained discussion of the differences between Scrope's translation and the *Lytil Bibell*, see Misty Schieberle, *Feminized Counsel and the Literature of Advice in England, 1380-1500* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 139-91. Schieberle, it should be noted, argues against any simple notion of Scrope's or the author of the *Lytle Bibbell*'s misogyny or his estimation of Christine. As she writes, "The productive differences in the two versions reveal the degrees to which the male poets identify with Christine's primary figure for wisdom (Othea) and challenge the commonplace that masculine authority should be defined against a feminine lack of authority," 142.

[12] See Misty Shieberle, ed., *The Lytil Bibell of Knyghthode* in *English Translations of Christine de Pizan's Epistra Othéa* (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, forthcoming). I would like to think Misty for providing me with an early version of the relevant parts of her edition.

is unfaithful. Where they differ is in the language they use to characterize Criseyde. In some ways, the *Lytil Bibell* stays closer to Christine's original here. After the opening conditional, the *Lytil Bibell* warns that one should not "on thee acqueynt" oneself with Criseyde, because her "fykell hert is of stedfastnes bareygn" and she will "reward thi love feynt." The *Lytil Bibell* expands Christine's advice, but it retains the same reasoning and the same language of acquaintance. Scrope shifts the concerns ever so slightly in order to draw out Criseyde's characterization. Rather than advising that one should not acquaint oneself with Criseyde, he simply asks that one "thinke on" her "newfangilnes," clarifying in the final line that "hir herte hadde to myche doubilnes." Scrope's concern is still with the action of the second-person addressee—he is simply asking for "you" to "thinke" about Criseyde rather than to "gard toy," guard yourself, against making her acquaintance—but he retains that concern while shifting the focus to Criseyde at the same time. Rather than the single line of characterization about Criseyde's heart as one finds in Christine or the *Lytil Bibell*, Scrope is able to characterize Criseyde over two lines, with "newfangilnes" and "doubilnes" both describing her and providing the rhyme for the second couplet of the quatrain.

"Newfangilnes" and "doubilnes" are terms not drawn out of Christine; instead they are Chaucerian additions, taken from Chaucer's characterizations of love gone wrong, although never in reference to Criseyde. In fact, in Chaucer's works "doublines" or "newfangilnes" are used to characterize how men treat women. In the *Squire's Tale*, the female falcon complains of her beloved, the unfaithful tercet, that he is so "ful of doubleness" that Jason, Paris, or Lameth cannot compare with him (*CT* V. 543). Indeed, she claims

> Ne nevere syn the firste man was born,
> Ne koude man, by twenty thousand part,
> Counterfete the sophymes of his art,
> Ne were worthy the unbokelen his galoche,
> Ther doublenesse or feynyng sholde approche,
> Ne so koude thonke a wight as he dide me! (*CT* V. 552-57)

She ends her lament with the principle that "men loven of proper kynde newfangelnesse" (*CT* V. 610). Elsewhere the falcon's judgment is seemingly confirmed; in *Anelida and Arcite*, the narrator tells us that

> This fals Arcite, of his newfanglenesse,
> For she [Anelida] to him so lowly was and trewe,
> Tok lesse deynte of hir stedfastnesse
> And saw another lady, proud and newe,
> And right anon he cladde him in her hewe—
> Wot I not whethir in white, red, or grene—
> And falsed fair Anelida the queen. (*AA* 141-47)

"Doublines" and "newfangilnes," then, are Chaucerian but Scrope uses them with a twist. Semantically, Chaucer and Scrope are in agreement: "doublines" and "newfangilnes" are, according to the falcon, conceptually aligned with sophistry, counterfeiting, and feigning; and these terms stand in opposition, as *Anelida and Arcite* shows, to steadfastness and being true to another person. But Scrope uses these words to describe a woman—a tendency that is part of the

larger anxiety about women and deceit that is prevalent in medieval misogynist discourse—whereas Chaucer inverts the misogynist expectations and uses the terms solely to describe men.[13] Neither word is used to describe Criseyde, a fact that confirms the narrator's famous love for the false heroine.[14] In fact, "newfangilnes" is never used in *Troilus and Criseyde* and "double" in the sense of having multiple or concealed meanings is only used once, when Diomede is seducing Criseyde, during which he foretells the devastation of Troy and says

> And but if Calkas lede us with ambages—
> That is to seyn, with double wordes slye,
> Swiche as men clepen a word with two visages—
> Ye shal wel knowen that I naught ne lie." (*TC* V. 897-900)

The fact that a man, Calkas, might use ambiguity—double meanings—is imagined by another man, Diomede. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, as elsewhere in Chaucer, "doublines" and "newfangilnes" are the province of men.

But Chaucer's consistent masculine associations with these terms does not run through the entirety of the Chaucerian tradition, and in Lydgate one finds that "doublines" and "newfangilnes" are associated especially with women, including Criseyde. Lydgate's alterations stand in contrast to his self-confessed fidelity to Chaucer. As he comes to describe Criseyde in the *Troy Book*, he writes that

> And ouermore, to tellen of Cryseyde,
> My penne stumbleþ, for longe or he deyde
> My maister Chaucer dide his diligence
> To discryve þe gret excellence
> Of hir bewte, and þat so maisterly,
> To take on me it were but hiȝe foly,
> In any wyse to adde more þer-to.[15]

And yet Lydgate does find a way to "adde more þer-to." He does so by expanding on Chaucer's description of her, of course, but also by describing Criseyde's character, for which Lydgate leaves Chaucer behind to rely on his primary source Guido delle Colonne:

> Also sche was, for al hir semlynes,
> Ful symple & meke, & ful of sobirnes,
> Þe best norissched eke þat myȝte be,

[13] See R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). For Chaucer in this context, see Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); and Jill Mann, *Feminizing Chaucer* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002).

[14] The narrator's love of Criseyde, and Chaucer's sympathetic treatment of her, is famously discussed in E. Talbot Donaldson, "Criseyde and Her Narrator" in *Speaking of Chaucer* (New York: Norton, 1970), 65-83. For a discussion of the narrator's love of Criseyde as characteristic of Chaucer criticism, especially as practiced by Donaldson and D. W. Robertson, Jr., see the chapter "Reading Like a Man: The Critics, the Narrator, Troilus, and Pandarus," in Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*.

[15] John Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. Henry Bergen, EETS e. s. 97, 103, 106, and 126 (London: Kegan Paul, 1906-1935), book II, lines 4677-83.

Goodly of speche, fulfilde of pite,
Facundious, and þer-to riȝt tretable,
And, as seiþ Guydo, in loue variable—
Of tender herte & vnstedfastnes
He hir accuseth, and newfongilnes.[16]

Here is Scrope's Criseyde; it is Lydgate's, through Guido.[17] Criseyde is full of qualities that make her loveable but she is also "in loue variable" and that is the basis for Guido's accusation about her "newfongilnes." Lydgate here does not explicitly associate Criseyde with "doublines," the other term that Scrope uses to characterize her, but Lydgate applies that quality to women in general earlier in the *Troy Book*. In discussing Medea's love of Jason, he writes

For who was euer ȝit so mad or wood,
Þat ouȝt of resound conne ariȝt his good,
To ȝeue faith or hastily credence,
To any womman, with-oute experience,
In whom is nouther trust ne sikernesse.
Þei ben so double & ful of brotilnesse,
Þat it is harde in hem to assure;
For vn-to hem it longeth of nature,
From her birth to hauen alliaunce
With doubilnes and with variaunce.[18]

Women are "so double" that Lydgate sees fit to associate them with that quality twice in the space of just five lines. It is their ontological condition, "vn-to hem it longeth of nature," and as such would be just as applicable to Criseyde as any other women. Ultimately Scrope's association of "doublines" and "newfangilnes" with Criseyde stems not only from Chaucer's use of them to characterize failed love affairs, but also from Lydgate's alterations to the Chaucerian tradition, which allow for such a negative characterization.

So Scrope's Chaucerian moment is not exactly faithful to Chaucer, but it is no less Chaucerian for that. Lydgate, after all, had been inspired by Chaucer as well and his use of "doublines" and "newfangilnes" to characterize impediments to love that bear the markers of that inspiration even if Lydgate uses them in ways that Chaucer would not. Altering a tradition is not the same as departing from it. But there is a difference between Lydgate and Scrope here. Lydgate, in announcing that he is moving from Chaucer to Guido when he discusses Criesyde's "newfongilnes," seems to be fully aware of the alterations he is making to Chaucer's

[16] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, book II, lines 4755-62.
[17] Douglas Gray wonders whether Scrope's "severe view" of Criseyde "had some part in the general decline of estimation of Chaucer's heroine." See Douglas Gray, "'A Fulle Gentyl-Woman of Fraunce': *The Epistle of Othea* and Later Medieval English Literary Culture," in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Rosalynn Voaden, Arlyn Diamond, Ann Hutchinson, Carol M. Meale, and Lesley Johnson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 237-49; quote at 242-43. I think it is safe to say that Scrope's view is a symptom of the changes Lydgate made to the estimation of Criseyde, rather than the sole cause of those changes.
[18] Lydgate, *Troy Book*, book I, lines 1845-54. For a discussion of misogyny in Lydgate's characterization of Medea, see Katherine Heavey, *The Early Modern Medea: Medea in English Literature, 1558-1688* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 40-43

characterization. Scrope demonstrates no such awareness. His characterization of Criseyde has more of a sense of reflex about it; there is no need to specify where he found her characterized in this manner because these are qualities that everyone supposedly would ascribe to her. Whereas Lydgate draws attention to the fact that he toggles between the characterizations found in his sources, Scrope flatly ascribes to Criseyde characteristics in a manner suggesting that he is simply making reference to a consensus view of her behavior. Part of the difference, no doubt, stems from the exigencies of Scrope's tone, which needs to have the didactic quality of self-evident truth, and from Scrope keeping Christine's form, which forces him to be brief. But the difference is also due to a coterie versus a traditional kind of allusion. When Lydgate refers Chaucer, he is thinking in coterie terms, to a specific individual with whom he has a specific relationship. Scrope refers an entire tradition, one in which the referent of one's allusion does not need the kind of specificity that a coterie reference requires. Scrope's muddled reference to Chaucer and Lydgate is not due to the fact that he is a bad Chaucerian, in other words; it is not evidence that one simply should exclude him from discussions about the Chaucerian tradition. As I turn in the next section from Scrope to Roos, whose Chaucerianism has never been questioned, the same kind of unclear reference in allusions will be at work there too. Indeed, as my discussion of Roos's poem will demonstrate, such confusion is endemic to allusions in a traditional setting; it is in fact part and parcel of how a poem signals it belongs to a tradition.

II. Traditional Affiliations

In contrast to Scrope's work, the Chaucerianism of Roos's poem has long been recognized. The most telling qualification for its Chaucerianism is the fact that it was ascribed to Chaucer in the early modern period, a common mistake made about many of the poems in the Chaucerian tradition. William Thynne, John Stow, and Thomas Speght all included it in their editions of Chaucer, although it was left out of the list of Chaucer's works compiled by John Leland.[19] It continued to be ascribed to Chaucer until Thomas Tyrwhitt's edition of 1775-78.[20] These early modern editors were not without their reasons for including the text in the Chaucer canon, and we should not assume that those reasons were only commercial or that they were simply operating according to the principle that "more Chaucer is always desirable."[21] I will argue that one of the reasons they might have thought it was Chaucerian was that its form and content recall Chaucer's work. Such a claim might seem unlikely, given both the work's origins—it is a translation of a very popular French poem and retains many of the stylistic markers as well as the content of the original—and its less than stellar reputation for much of the twentieth century, during which even its most ardent defender, C. S. Lewis, judged it to be "an essentially second-rate theme redeemed by sheer good writing."[22] Part of what Lewis means by "sheer good writing," I will argue, is the work's Chaucerianism, its style, and the way that style transforms its

[19] William Thynne, ed., *The Workes of Geffray Chaucer newly printed/with dyuers works whiche were neuer in print before* (London, 1532) (STC 5068); John Stow, *The Workes of Geffrey Chaucer, newly printed, with diuers addicions, whiche were neuer in print before* (London, 1561) (STC 5075); Thomas Speght, ed., *The Workes of Our Ancient and Learned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer* (London, 1598) (STC 5077). For a discussion of these editions in relationship to works not by Chaucer, see Kathleen Forni, *The Chaucerian Apocrypha: A Counterfeit Canon* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001).

[20] Thomas Tyrwhitt, ed., *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*, 5 vol. (London: T. Payne, 1775-78).

[21] In fact, these editors, especially the very early ones, will sometimes include the work of Hoccleve or Lydgate under their own names, rather than ascribing them to Chaucer. Such care with those texts, but not with texts like Roos's suggests actual confusion.

[22] C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (New York: Galaxy Book, 1958), 246.

"second-rate theme." The poem's early modern editors, in other words, might have included the poem in their editions because it seemed to them to be the kind of translation Chaucer could have written.

Roos's poem is a translation of a poem with the same name by Alain Chartier, the French poet and secretary for Charles VII of France. Chartier wrote the original *La Belle Dame sans Mercy* in 1424 and it became an instant literary sensation, surviving in over 30 manuscripts and inspiring a number of works in the second great literary *querelle* in France during the early years of the fifteenth century, what we now call the *Querelle de La Belle Dame sans Mercy*.[23] Chartier's poem consists of one hundred *huitains*, eight-line stanzas which here are comprised of 8 syllable lines with the rhyme scheme ababbcbc.[24] The first 24 stanzas and the final four stanzas serve as a frame. The narrator is introduced as a grieving lover whose lady has recently died. Some friends take him to a feast, where he notices another melancholy lover whom he follows. The narrator spies on the love-sick man as he tries to win over the affections of his beloved in a debate that occupies the other 72 stanzas of the poem, the vast majority of which see the lover and the beloved trade off stanzas of spoken dialogue.[25] In these stanzas, it is revealed that the lover is melancholy due to the fact that his beloved will not grant him her "mercy," giving the poem its name. In the final four stanzas, the narrator reports that he later learns of the lover's death and draws a couple of morals from the story, telling men to keep their expectations in check and advising women that they should attempt to preserve their honor without any cruelty. The Beautiful Lady's refusal of "mercy" is the focus of the other works in the *querelle*, which go so far as to put the Lady on trial and eventually sentence her to death.[26] The Lady's reasons to deny the lover—the charge that men are unfaithful, the court is full of gossips and her concern with her honor in order to preserve her value within the system of courtly love—are broadly sympathetic with the critique of courtly love's conventions in Christine de Pizan's *Cent ballades d'amant et de dame*, which follows the unhappiness a Lady suffers after giving in to the appeals of her lover, ending in her death.[27] Through Christine's text, one might think of this second *querelle* as an extension of the first, dropping the *Querelle de la Rose*'s concern with vulgarity but maintaining its concern with the way that literature influences actual human behavior.[28] This second *querelle*, moreover, is conducted under a different form. Rather than didactic letters that spell out the different positions philosophically, as one finds in the *Querelle de la Rose*, the

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[23] For a discussion of the manuscripts and these numbers see Emma Cayley, "Collaborative Communities: The Manuscript Context of Alain Chartier's *Belle Dame Sans Mercy*," *Medium Aevum* 71 (2002): 226-40.

[24] For Chartier's poem, see Alain Chartier, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, in *Le Cycle de La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, ed. David F. Hult with Joan E. McRae (Paris: Champion, 2003). All citations from Chartier will come from this edition. This edition also collects the other texts in the *querelle*, although I will only be discussing Chartier.

[25] On the importance of the debate form in Chartier's text and in late medieval France more generally, see Emma Cayley, *Debate and Dialogue: Alain Chartier in his Cultural Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[26] The Lady is first put on trial in Baudet Herenc's *Accusation contre la Belle Dame sans Mercy*. She is sentenced to death in Achille Caulier's *La Cruelle Femme en Amour*. Both of these works are found in Hult, ed., *Le Cycle de La Belle Dame sans Mercy*.

[27] Christine de Pizan, *Cent ballades d'amant et de dame*, ed. Jacqueline Cerquiglini (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1982). The parallels between Chartier and Christine have been noted by Arthur Piaget in his edition of Chartier's text; see Alain Chartier, *La belle dame sans mercy, et les poesies lyriques*, second edition, ed. Arthur Piaget (Lille: Librairie Giard, 1949), ix.

[28] For the *Querelle de la Rose* see Earl Jeffrey Richards and Christine McWebb, ed and trans., *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Routledge, 2007); and, for a chronologically corrected English translation, David F. Hult, ed. and trans., *Debate of the Romance of the Rose* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). I have discussed this *querelle* in chapter 2.

majority of the *Querelle de la Belle Dame sans Mercy* consists of literary texts that extend the interaction and life of the characters from Chartier's text. That is, this second *Querelle* produces texts that self-consciously try to produce a tradition stemming from it. The fact that *La Belle Dame* had the cultural capital to occasion one *querelle* and be associated with another testifies to its importance within the French literary tradition.

Such an impulse to construct a tradition originating in Chartier's poem may come from that poem's own relationship to the French tradition. Chartier's text wears its traditional affiliations on its sleeve; the debate in which the Lover and Lady engage is conducted under terms familiar to the French tradition from the thirteenth century *Roman de la Rose* through the fourteenth century works of Machaut and Jean Froissart, to Chartier and his contemporary Christine de Pizan in the early fifteenth century. The characterization of the Lady's reciprocity as "mercy" stems ultimately from the *Roman de la Rose*'s personification of different aspects of the beloved's mental states. In the *Rose*, these personifications serve the allegorical narrative—they interact with one another and the lover as characters—but in the work of Machaut and those following in his wake these personifications are reduced to passing references that nevertheless are able to allude lyrically to a whole range of actions and emotions.[29] Such Machauldian use of personification is everywhere apparent in Chartier's poem and it is imported wholesale into Roos's translation, although he occasionally expands on the practice. The Lady's beauty is described by the narrator as being "undreneth the standart of Daungere" (180).[30] In the lover "Desire was bolde but Shame it gan refrayne" (209), so that "Ful often tyme to speke himself he payned, / But Shamefastnesse and Drede said ever 'nay'" (213-14). Reason and Fortune also make an appearance (272-73), as do Fayned Chere (391), Fals Semblant and the closely related Trewsemyng (393), as well as Malabouche (741). "Rason, Counsaille, Wisdam, and Good Advise," we are told, "ben under Love arrested every oon," unless that is "Pité breke the mighty bounde atwayne" (653-60). Hope and Pité, then, become figures about whom the lovers spar (677-700). Even as Roos adds to the number of personifications—as he does with Shamefastnesse, Drede, and Trewseeming—he still focuses on the faculty psychology of the lover and the beloved, and thus sticks to the mainline of the post-Machaut French tradition.[31]

But that is not the only tradition to which Roos's poem belongs. Roos's poem is in English, after all, and its strategy for translating French into English places it squarely within the Chaucerian tradition. Roos's Chaucerianism is especially apparent in the added frame that introduces and concludes his translation. I will discuss that frame shortly, but for now I would like to point out that even within the translation itself Roos's Chaucerianism shines through. Early in the lover's lament about his deceased beloved, for example, one finds the following stanza:

> Love hath me kept under his governaunce,
> If I mysdud, God graunt me forgevenesse;
> Yef I dud well, yet felt I noo pleasaunce,

[29] See my discussion of this tradition in relationship to Chaucer, Deschamps, and Granson in chapter 1.
[30] Richard Roos, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, in *Chaucerian Dream Visions and Complaints*, ed. Dana M. Symons (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2004). Here as elsewhere I will cite from this edition parenthetically within the text by line number.
[31] Shamefastnesse and Drede are additions in the English. In the French, this stanza only mentions Crainte, Shame, who appears in the proceeding stanza, as he does in the English. See, Chartier, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, lines 185-86. Trewseeming is an addition in the English. In the French there is only Fals Semblant, or Faulx Semblant. See, Chartier, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, line 365.

It causid neither joye ner hevynesse.
For when she dide, that was al my maistresse,
My good welfare than made the same purchasse;
That deth hath sete my boundes of witnesse,
Which for nothing my hert shal never passe. (69-76)

In the original French, this stanza is

Amours a gouverné mon sens:
Se faulte y a, Dieu me pardonne;
Se j'ay bien fait, plus ne m'en sens.
Cela ne me toult ne ne donne,
Car au trespas de la tresbonne
Tout mon bienfait se trespassa.
La Mort m'assist illeuc la bonne
C'onques puis mon cuer ne passa. [32]

One can adduce many of Roos's general translation practices from this stanza. First, Roos keeps Chartier's stanza form; the *huitain* and rhyme scheme are unchanged for the translation, even if Roos alters the actual rhymes. Second, although he keeps the stanza form, Roos lengthens the lines from the French octosyllable to the English decasyllabic five-beat line popularized by Chaucer. Third, while Roos hews fairly close throughout the translated portion to the content of Chartier's original, the lengthening of the line allows him to interject a few modifications or specifications. To take just the last two lines, Roos specifies that the boundary Death sets is a mental one, "of witnesse," and that it is "for nothing" or "not any thing" that will alleviate his heart's stasis. Usually, as here, these additions do not substantially change the translation, but simply clarify or expand on what is already in Chartier. "Witnesse," for instance, adds a concern with mental states back into Roos's translation after he had dropped the specification that Love controls the lover's "sens" from the opening line.

This stanza's most Chaucerian feature, however, is its rhymes. In rendering the French into English, Roos makes it sound Chaucerian. Ironically, Roos accomplishes this by using a variety of French or French-derived words to create rhymes and, in so doing, uses rhyming combinations favored by Chaucer. Looking back at the French original suggests why Roos might have turned to Chaucer for his rhymes. Chartier's poem is a model of French efficiency and minimalism. Not only does it use the relatively short octosyllabic line to tell its story, but it also makes use of the tendency in French poetry to make rhymes using repeated words, which mean different things in each usage, or using words that contain other words as a part or as a base. In Chartier's stanza above, "sens" rhymes with "sens," "pardonne" with "donne," "tresbonne" with "bonne," and "trespassa" with "passa." Such repetitive play with rhyming pairs is not typical of English practice, and so it is no surprise that Roos turns toward other models.[33] In Roos's stanza

[32] Chartier, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, lines 41-48: "Love has governed my mind: / If there is a fault, God pardon me; / If I have done well, I do not feel it anymore. / All of this leaves me listless, / Because with the disappearance of the very wonderful [lady] / All of my happiness has disappeared. / Death has placed a boundary before me / Across which my heart may never pass." Translations from Chartier's text are mine.

[33] For a discussion of the difference between French and English rhyming practices, see Marie Borroff, "Chaucer's English Rhymes: The *Roman*, the *Romaunt*, and *The Book of the Duchess*," in *Traditions and Renewals: Chaucer, the Gawain-Poet, and Beyond* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 78-93.

above, he has imported only one of the French rhymes, "passa" becomes "passe," but even there he does not rhyme it with "trespasse," a perfectly fine English word with which he could have created a French-influenced rime riche, and instead rhymes it with "purchasse."

For the other rhymes, he uses a group of rhymed pairs with conceptual links that one finds everywhere in Chaucer's poetry. Compare, for instance, the opening of *Womanly Noblesse*:

> So hath myn herte caught in remembraunce
> Your beaute hoole and stidefast governaunce,
> Your vertues al and yowre hie noblesse,
> That you to serve is set al my pleasaunce.
> So wel me liketh your womanly countenaunce,
> Your fresshe fetures and your comlynesse,
> That whiles I live myn hert to his maystresse
> You hath ful chose in trewe perséveraunce
> Never to change, for no maner distresse. (1-9)

This stanza offers one model of how to talk about one's beloved in Chaucer's poetry, a model that Roos followed. The concerns are very much like Roos's, although Roos is discussing a deceased beloved. Memory is what guides the lover's reflections on his beloved, whose beauty holds him in her "governaunce." She is his "maystresse" and serving her is all of his "pleasuance." Stability in love is stressed, even though the lover seems to think that nothing, no manner of "distresse," will alter his feelings. As in Roos, the conceptual work is done in part by rhyming pairs, with "governaunce" and "pleasaunce" rhyming as they do in the stanza from *La Belle Dame sans Mercy* and "maystresse" here rhymed with "distresse" as opposed to Roos's "hevynesse," although the effect is the same. This instance is not the only one in Chaucer where one finds these rhymed pairs and conceptual concerns united. Here is the opening stanza to the *Complaint of Venus*:

> Ther nys so high comfort to my pleasuance,
> When that I am in any hevynesse,
> As for to have leyser of remembraunce
> Upon the manhood and the worthynesse,
> Upon the trouthe and on the stidfastnesse
> Of him whos I am al, while I may dure.
> Ther oghte blame me no creature,
> For every wight preiseth his gentilesse. (1-8)

Again, although this is a female speaker, memory and pleasure are united and "worthynesse" provides a foil for "hevynesse," with "stidfastnesse" being one of the most important ingredients for love. The conceptual work is once again done by the rhyming pairs that are, as above, abstract nouns—formed mostly by nominalizing adjectives—which make for a very abstract poem. Chaucer relies on this kind of nominalization in order to create his "Chaucerian" effect, a kind of signature in his style. I have already discussed the importance of Chaucer's *Complaint of Venus* for understanding his relationship to the French tradition, so it should come as no surprise to find an author later in the Chaucerian tradition turning to it as a model for translating a

different French poem.[34] But, the "governaunce/plesaunce" rhyme in particular is popular in the love poetry of the Chaucerian tradition. Chaucer uses it in *Womanly Noblesse*, cited above, as well as in the *Parliament of Fowls*, when Venus addresses the assembly:

> Ye knowe wel how, Seynt Valentynes day,
> By my statut and thorgh my governaunce,
> Ye come for to cheese—and fle youre way—
> Youre makes, as I prike yow with pleasaunce. (*PF* 386-89)

Not only Roos, but also the anonymous author of *The Floure and the Leafe* imitates the Chaucerian "governaunce/plesaunce" rhyme; its narrator remakers about the courtly lovers he is describing "And to behold their rule and governaunce, / I you ensure it was a great plesaunce."[35] To discuss love while using rhymes that form conceptual links between pleasure, governance, mastery, memory, stability, and mourning constitutes a shared Chaucerian style. Moments like this allow one to see style operating at its three levels of signification. In the very particular choices that Roos makes about his rhyme scheme, where style refers to individual and local artistic choices, one sees a general assumption about how certain aspects of human experience are represented in literature, which represents style as an artist's habit of thought.[36] The fact that these rhymes are drawn from the Chaucerian tradition represents the final level of style, that is style as a shared mode of representation among artists of the same period. Roos's formal choices are also conceptual ones that reveal something about his place in literary history all at the same time.

A Chaucerian style governs more than just Roos's rhyming. His thought is thoroughly infused with Chaucer's, even within the portion that closely translates Chartier. For example, when the heartsick lover in Roos's translation flees the feast, he seems to be following a Chaucerian piece of advice: "Oute of the prese he went ful esely / To make stable hevy countenaunce" (149-50). These lines translate Chartier's "A la foys apart se trayoit / Pour raffermir sa contenance" ("At that time he carried himself apart / In order to recompose his countenance"), although it looks more like the opening lines of Chaucer's *Truth*: "Flee fro the prees and dwelle with sothfastnesse" (1).[37] The crowd, the "prees," is only implied in Chartier, whereas Roos makes it an explicit impediment. Here again Roos provides an association between successful love and stability. One should note, though, that Roos is not following Chaucer unthinkingly and he breaks here with a Chaucerian style to create a style of his own. Chaucer's advice—"flee the crowd in order to find stability"—is broadly Boethian; it certainly could work as advice about love, as it does in *Womanly Noblesse* or the *Complaint of Venus*, but it could also work as advice about getting over lovesickness. The lover's reason for leaving the crowd, "to make stable hevy countenaunce," could be taken a couple of different ways. It could mean, as Chartier's original does, that he wants to compose himself away from the party. It could also mean that he wants to make his "hevy coutenaunce" something "stable," permanent, that he wants to dwell in his own misery, as he it turns out he does through to the end of Chartier's

[34] See chapter one.
[35] *The Flour and the Leafe*, in *The Floure and the Leafe, The Assembly of Ladies, and The Isle of Ladies*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1990), lines 286-87.
[36] Because habitual, style is sometimes also a secret; see D. A. Miller, *Jane Austen, or The Secret of Style* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003). Miller's great interlocutor on this point is Roland Barthes, "What is Writing?" in *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Anne Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 9-19.
[37] Chartier, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, lines 121-22.

poem. Even as Roos follows the broad Chaucerian association between memory, stability, and pleasure, he can use inspiration from his source material to set himself apart. Roos's alteration, then, allows us to see the other side of style, where style does not unify artists within a shared sensibility but distinguishes them. Chartier's poem suggests to Roos a different sort of ramification for the conceptual and stylistic associations between love, stability, and pleasure that one finds in the Chaucerian tradition: a melancholy permanence that might allow him to move the associations of the Chaucerian tradition, and therefore the tradition itself, in a new direction.

In some sense, then, I have returned to something that Scrope taught us as well: style does the heavy lifting when it comes to designations about a tradition. What the label "Chaucerian" denotes is not simply what is said, the content of the work. Content is a necessary precondition, to be sure—calling a single anonymous poem addressed to a king in rhyme royal stanzas "Chaucerian" would require some justification—but content alone is insufficiently specific. For one thing, Chaucer writes too many different types of works in too many different genres; how often do we call a work "Chaucerian" because it resembles the *Parson's Tale*? For another thing, even in reference only to certain genres, content alone would not sufficiently designate what makes a work a part of the "Chaucerian" tradition as opposed to the "Machauldian" one or even more broadly the "French" one.[38] But in another sense, Roos has clarified something about Scrope's muddled referents: that the nature of style allows for variation and change across and within traditions. The fact that style aids one in making determinations about a tradition, of course, does not mean that these concepts are identical. Style is a dynamic and dialectical concept that explains how individual choices are capable of coalescing into general categories, either historical (as with the stylistic qualities that help determine periodization) or transhistorical (as in those qualities that signal belonging to a tradition).[39] Traditions, however, never pertain to the individual alone; they always refer to groups. Even when an individual is making those decisions that announce his membership in a tradition, those decisions are always relational, always about the way that multiple individuals interact with one another. Style, then, helps us make distinctions between these traditions; it is the different stylistic choices that different authors make that sets their works apart, even as those same stylistic choices can also be used to group those authors together in a tradition. One can make a case that Chaucer is engaging with the Machauldian tradition not only because he writes lyric poems in praise of a beloved, but also because he does so using fixed form lyrics such as the ballad and short references to abstract qualities such as jealousy.[40] Roos signals that he belongs to that same tradition through references to those same qualities. However, Roos's

[38] The issue is actually demonstrated quite nicely by Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957). Muscatine, discussing Chaucer's "style," explains how Chaucer works in the "courtly," the "bourgeois," or the "mixed" style, which blends elements from the other two. Chaucer learns these styles from the French tradition. Because he makes use of these styles, Chaucer is to some extent part of that tradition for Muscatine, distinguishable largely only due to the particular way he is able to mix these styles. When Muscatine uses the term "style" he means something like what I would call "generic convention": "by a style I mean a particular combination of literary traits, large and small; by a conventional style I mean one that is relatively stable over a period of time," 2.

[39] See Maura Nolan, "Style," in *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, ed. Brain Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 396-419. Here one might also think of the way Anne Middleton defines style as "a set of social, moral, rhetorical, even political attitudes which together constitute a characteristic kind of perception, a mode of self-presentation, and a manner of speaking;" see Anne Middleton, "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II," *Speculum* 53 (1978): 94-114, quote at 100.

[40] For a discussion of both of these formal features, see the discussion of the "Complaint of Venus" in chapter one.

allegiance to that tradition is not total; he tempers it by adopting a Chaucerian style as well, just as he will temper his Chaucerianism by recourse to his source text. When critics call a work "Chaucerian," they are making reference to its style, although this does not mean that the style will simply mirror Chaucer's practice. Stylistic affiliations are fluid. One of the ways to signal independence from them is to blend one style with another and thus one tradition with another.

III. Traditional Approximations

As Scrope also demonstrated, even a single tradition is not a homogenous thing and different elements of a single tradition can be productively combined or placed in conflict by writers working within that tradition. Charles Muscatine's dictum that "style is not poetry. If it were, only one poem would theoretically be possible in any given style" is apt here.[41] To write in the Chaucerian tradition does not mean that a poet writes exactly like Chaucer. By the time Roos and Scrope are writing, in the 1440s, there was nearly half a century of Chaucerian literature that they could also turn to for literary models. Most importantly, there was Lydgate. As I, along with many other critics, have argued both Hoccleve and Lydgate defined Chaucerianism in a way that suited their own poetic endeavors. As I have discussed in relation to Scrope, for writers in the later Chaucerian tradition Lydgate's alterations are the ones that matter. Lydgate was so well supported and his work was so ubiquitous that he substantially alters the Chaucerian tradition in his wake. By dint of the alterations Lydgate makes to the tradition, when Roos writes Chaucerian literature, he is also writing Lydgatian literature. Such alterations, though, do not make Roos's poem any less Chaucerian. They simply attest to the variability inherent within literary traditions.

Roos's familiarity with these alterations in the Chaucerian tradition is on display even in his most Chaucerian of moments: the opening and closing frame to his translation. Here is the opening:

> Half in a dreme, nat fully awaked,
> The golden slepe me wrapt under his whynge;
> Yet not forthy I rose and, welny naked,
> Alle soudenly myself remembringe
> Of a matere, levyng al other thinge,
> Which I shulde doo withouten more delaye,
> For hem the whiche I durst not dissobaye.
>
> My charge was this: to translat by and by
> (Alle thing forgeve), as part of my penaunce,
> A boke called La Belle Dame sans Mercy,
> Whiche maister Alyn made of remembraunce,
> Chief secretary with the kyng of Fraunce.
> And hereupon a while I stode musing,
> And in myself gretly ymagenyng.
>
> What wise I shulde performe this said processe,
> Considering by good avisement
> Myn unconnyng and my gret simplesse,
> And agaynwarde the streit commaundement

[41] Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition*, 3.

Which that I hade; and thus in myn entent
I was vexed and turned up and down;
Yet at the last, as in conclusion,

I cast my clothes on and went my way,
This forsaid charge havyng in remembraunce,
Tylle I came to a lusty grene valy
Full of floures, to se a gret plesaunce.
And so bolded, with thaire benyng sufferaunce
That red this boke, touching this said matere,
Thus I began, if it please you to here. (1-28)

Roos eschews the *huitains* of the translation for rhyme royal stanzas instead, one of the key formal signals that a poem belongs in the Chaucerian tradition. In the "b" rhymes of the second stanza, Roos again uses a spate of words he would have found in the *Complaint of Venus*. There, Chaucer complains that he is

Wel nygh bereft out of my remembraunce,
And eke to me it ys a gret penaunce,
Syth rym in Englissh hath such skarsete,
To folowe word by word the curiosite
Of Graunson, flour of hem that make in Fraunce. (78-82)

As I argued in chapter one, Chaucer makes this complaint to ironically showcase his own production of "curiosite" through his talent with "rym in English." The rhyme scheme also allows him to set up a joke at the expense of France, wherein remembering that country is a penance. Roos seems to be using these associated rhymes toward different ends. He does not set up a comparison between English and French or England and France. Instead, these rhymes seem to simply be part of the way that one discusses a translation using a modesty topos.

As his use of these rhymes to formulate a modesty topos suggest, the Chaucerian echoes are not only formal but also supply Roos with content. Here Roos introduces us to his sleep-deprived narrator, a familiar figure from the Chaucerian dream visions, especially the *House of Fame*. Rather than read a book in order to fall asleep, as in the *House of Fame* or the *Parliament of Fowles*, the narrator here casts off sleep in order to write the book we are now reading. This book, which Roos acknowledges is a translation of Alain Chartier, is a "charge" he has been given by "hem the whiche I durst not dissobaye" in order to fulfill "part of my penaunce." The reference here is obscure. Roos tells us neither who has given him "the streit commaundement" nor what sins he has committed in order to require this penance. But the obscurity is clarified by recalling another of Chaucer's works. In the prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer's narrator falls asleep in a garden, the traditional *locus amoenus* or "pleasance" traditional to the dream vision and from which Roos's "lusty grene valy / Full of floures" in which the narrator wishes "to se a gret plesaunce" is descended.[42] Once asleep, Chaucer's narrator dreams that he meets the God of Love, Cupid, and his queen, Alceste. The God of Love threatens Chaucer for writing works that disparage love, notably *Troilus and Criseyde* and the translation of the *Roman*

[42] On the *locus amoenus* or "pleasance," see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. William R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 195-202.

de la Rose, which Cupid claims is a "heresye ayeins my lawe" (*LGW* F. 330, G. 256). Alceste intercedes and convinces Cupid that Chaucer should simply have to write the *Legend of Good Women* as a "penaunce," which she tells Chaucer "thou shalt do/ For thy trespas" (*LGW*F. 479-80, G. 469-70).[43] And so, as in Roos, Chaucer is given the assignment of writing by a figure that he "durst not dissobaye" as a form of "penaunce." Roos, however, has no named prior infraction for which he must atone. Instead, Roos's "penaunce" is a pose, a mode of authorizing his poem by allusion to the Chaucerian model. Roos's "penaunce" has neither a historical basis, nor the fictional setting of the *Legend of Good Women*; it is instead solely allusive, a signal that it belongs to a tradition.

The opening is not solely Chaucerian, however. As he did with the concepts of stability and memory, Roos here augments his Chaucerianism with his source material. The narrator's retreat to a green pasture certainly recalls the *locus amoenus* of Chaucerian and other dream visions, but the narrator goes there to write during his waking hours. In Chartier's poem, the melancholy—and awake—narrator stops to rest next to a garden. It is in that garden that he is accosted by his friends and taken to the feast at which he encounters the melancholy lover. The narrator then follows the lover to his meeting with the Belle Dame, a meeting that takes place once again in a garden. The setting in Chartier's poem is part of a pattern of parallels between the narrator and the lover. Chartier's melancholy narrator is mourning his beloved when he encounters another melancholy lover who eventually dies of a broken heart. Roos extends that parallel in order to include his frame narrator, who is translating the poem in the same kind of setting that hosts the poem's action.[44] In addition to the setting, Roos creates an affective parallel between his frame narrator and the narrator in the translation; both could be characterized as "vexed and turned up and down," although the latter is by love and the former by his literary duties. Such identity between narrator and subject is foreign to many of Chaucer's dream visions. The *Book of the Duchess* requires a distance between the narrator and the mourning Black Knight in order for the narrator's misunderstandings to drive the narrative. Similarly, the narrator of the *Parliament of Fowles* says "I knowe nat Love in dede" all the while relaying a story about Venus calling upon birds to choose their mates on St. Valentine's Day (*PF* 8). Even Geffrey, the narrator in the *House of Fame*, chooses to leave the titular house in order to find a place in the "House of Rumor." Chaucer's narrators often operate at a distance from their subjects, a distance that Roos effaces by turning to the model provided by Chartier.

Models from within the Chaucerian tradition likewise shape Roos's poem. Roos might follow Chaucer's lead by using the modesty topos in conjunction with his translation, but his modesty is different than Chaucer's. In the *Complaint of Venus* Chaucer provides specific excuses for his modesty: his age and the relative paucity of rhymes in English. Roos's modesty is typical of the fifteenth century version of the trope in that it deals specifically with his own lack of ability, what he calls "myn unconnyng and my gret simplesse." This excuse looks less like Chaucer and more like Lydgate, whose use of it is too ubiquitous to give an exhaustive account, although one might recall Lydgate's reference to "my ignoraunce" in *The Title and Pedigree of Henry VI*, or his warning from the *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* that "on making I ha no

[43] On Alceste's intercession, see Paul Strohm, "Queens as Intercessors," in *Hochon's Arrow: The Social imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 95-119.

[44] The link between the frame narrator, Chartier's narrator, and the lover is likewise discussed in Melissa L. Brown, "The Hope for 'Plesaunce': Richard Roos' Translation of Alain Chartier's *La Belle Dame Sans Mercy*," in *New Readings of Late Medieval Love Poems*, ed. David Chamberlain (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993), 119-43.

suffysaunce," or the moment in *Virtues of the Mass* when Lydgate refers to himself as "thyne Auctor sympyll."[45]

This modesty and its attendant call for correction are likewise on view in the final four stanzas that serve as Roos's closing frame:

> Goo litel boke, God sende thee good passage;
> Chese well thy way, be simple of manere,
> Loke thy clothing be like thy pilgrymage,
> And, specially, lete this be thy praiere
> Unto heim al that thee wil rede or here,
> Where thou art wronge, after thaire help to calle,
> Thee to corecte in any part or alle.
>
> Pray hem also, with thyn humble service,
> Thy boldnesse to perdon in this cace;
> For ellis thou art not hable in noo wise
> To make thyself appere in any place.
> And, furthermore, beseche heim of thaire grace,
> By thaire favoure and supportacion,
> To take in gre this rude translacion.
>
> The whiche, God wote, standith ful deceytute
> Of eloquence, of meter, and colours;
> Like as a best, naked, withoute refute,
> Upon a playne to abide al manere showres.
> I can noo more but aske of heim socourse,
> At whos request thou were made in this wise,
> Commaunding me with body and servise.
>
> Right thus I make an ende of this prosses,
> Beseching Him that al hath in balaunce,
> That noo trewe man be vexed, causeles,
> As this man was, whiche is of remembraunce;
> And alle that doon thaire faitheful observaunce
> And in thaire trouth purpose heim to endure,
> I pray God sende heim better aventure. (829-56)

Once again, Roos echoes Chaucer, who ends *Troilus and Criseyde* by sending his book off into the world with "Go litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye" (*TC* V. 1786) and asking "moral Gower" and "philosophical Strode" to "correcte" the book if "ther nede is" (*TC* V. 1856-58) before ending with a final prayer to God. Chaucer's call for correction, however, is brief and directed. It

[45] All of these are discussed in chapter 3. See John Lydgate, *The Title and Pedigree of Henry VI*, in *Minor Poems*, vol. 2, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS o. s. 192 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), line 58; John Lydgate, *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, ed. F. J. Furnivall with an introduction and notes by Katharine B. Locock, EETS e. s. 77, 83, 92 (London: Kegan Paul, 1899-1904), line 148; John Lydgate, *Virtues of the Mass*, in *Minor Poems*, vol. 1, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS e. s. 107 (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), line 661.

has more to do with John Gower's and Ralph Strode's capabilities, what Chaucer calls their "benignites" and "zeles goode," than it does with any deficiency on Chaucer's part (*TC* V. 1859). Although Chaucer instructs his "litel book" to be "subgit be to alle poesye," he also places his book in the company of "Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace" (*TC* V. 1789-92). Chaucer asks for Gower's and Strode's correction, in other words, shortly after one of his least modest moments. With Roos, in contrast, the proportion is off. Roos spends almost the entirety of his final four stanzas asking for correction and apologizing for his work. He makes extensive use of the modesty topos, calling the translation "rude" and saying that it is "ful deceytute / Of eloquence, of meter, and colours." He asks for correction not just from those "at whos request thou were made in this wise," to whom he later apologizes, but initially "heim al that thee wil rede or here," the entire audience, that is, of the work. Roos, in other words, seems to follow once again a Lydgatian rather than a Chaucerian model. Lydgate's tendency to use the modesty topos and the associated call for correction in his translations is once more ubiquitous. In the *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, for instance, Lydgate writes that

> I wyl translate hyt sothly as I kan,
> After the lettre, in ordre effectuelly.
> Thogh I not folwe the words by & by,
> I schal not faillë touchyng the substaunce,
> Thogh on making I ha no suffysaunce;
> ffor my wrytyng in conclusion,
> ys al yseyd vnder correction.[46]

Elsewhere, in *The Title and Pedigree of Henry VI*, he specifies who should make these corrections:

> Of rethoryk have no maner floure,
> Yit shal I folow my maistre douteles,
> Calot, and be not recheles
> Liche his writing my stiel to direct;
> Wher I dar pray hem to correct,
> I mene tho þat shall hit sene or rede.[47]

Like Roos, Lydgate asks that all those "þat shall hit sene or rede," the audience of the poem, correct his work. But Lydgate's modesty was seldom genuine and in this characteristic as well Roos follows his model. In the *Pilgrimage* Lydgate claims he is "bareyn of all eloquence" and asks his audience "to excuse" his "rudnessë" before launching into a heightened rhetorical display full of classical references, to "Calliopë," "Cytheron," "Iubiter," and "Ganymede," and figural language including synecdoche, "my pennë," and metonymy, "sugryd tonne."[48] In Lydgate, within the large appeals to modesty and correction are moments of heightened rhetorical flourish. Similarly, albeit much more briefly, Roos follows his apology for a lack of eloquence—that his poem "standith ful deceytute / Of eloquence, of meter, and colours"—with a

[46] Lydgate, *Pilgrimage*, lines 144-50.
[47] Lydgate, *The Title and Pedigree*, lines 66-71.
[48] Lydgate, *Pilgrimage*, lines 167-179. For these examples, I have once again confined myself to passages that I discuss at length in chapter three.

wonderfully evocative simile, comparing his text to "a best, naked, withoute refute" standing exposed "upon a playne to abide al manere showres."

How should one account for these Lydgatian moments in Roos's poem? In order to answer that question, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the argument so far and to sum up what Roos's example has to teach us about the way style works within a tradition. I have just adduced two moments in Roos's poem, and began with one moment in Scrope's poem, in which Roos and Scrope follow the example provided by Lydgate more closely than that of Chaucer. But with Roos especially, these moments are not citations nor are they quite allusions; they are something closer to approximations, shared strategies that denote a shared sensibility. But, one cannot simply claim that we should call Roos "Lydgatian" rather than "Chaucerian" and call it a day. First, because these moments are approximations, to do so would be to overstate Roos's reliance on Lydgate. Second, labeling him a Lydgatian would betray a fundamental misapprehension about the nature of literary traditions. Traditions are not dead things, monuments to the past that erect a certain set of rules that determines what works are included and excluded. T. S. Eliot's vision of tradition as an "ideal order" of "existing monuments" that are already "complete" usefully explains the way in which traditions appear to lack nothing essential when one encounters them, but it risks making it appear as if traditions are indifferent to the appearance of new works, which of course was not Eliot's intention. Quite the opposite: as Eliot explains, traditions are living things, with tropes and forms that change as time passes and subsequent works alter their shapes. [49] The point here, rather, is that allusions or citations within a tradition need not be exact. Instead, they can reflect the accretion of tradition, the multiple and occasionally contradictory ways that different authors within a tradition handle the same material. Such changes are simply one of the ways that traditions innovate within themselves, one of the means by which they perform the alterations Eliot describes, as they persist through time.

There is one other feature to Roos's poem that I have yet to mention that is relevant here—a feature that will bring me back to considerations about the relationship between coteries and traditions—and that is the fact that it appears as if Roos is constructing one of Lydgate's virtual coteries.[50] In another approximation, Roos does some of the things that Lydgate does when he creates virtual coteries. Roos names his source, "maister Alyn," and he claims that the poem is being made at the request of "hem the whiche I durst not dissobaye," who are also mentioned in the closing stanzas as those "at whos request thou [the poem] were made in this wise, / Commaunding me with body and servise." There is a problem with Roos's virtual coterie, however, a problem that is partially literary historical and partially stylistic. It is ultimately a problem of naming. Roos names Alain Chartier but he does not name his patrons, those that initiated the process of translation. This silence is not a problem for the construction of virtual coteries in and of itself. Lydgate himself does not explicitly name the French clerks who supposedly initiated his translation of the *Danse Macabre*.[51] Nor is silence about names necessarily a problem in other coterie settings. I have argued that Hoccleve does not name Chaucer or Christine de Pizan in his *Letter of Cupid* because his coterie audience would not need

[49] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *The Sacred Wood and Major Early Essays* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1998), 27-33, quote at 28.
[50] For virtual coteries, see the discussion in chapter three and R. D. Perry, "The Earl of Suffolk's French Poems and Shirley's Virtual Coteries," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 38 (2016): forthcoming.
[51] See the discussion in chapter three.

the names spelled out for them.[52] But with both Hoccleve and Lydgate, one can make claims about coterie authorship and style because they display their coterie membership elsewhere in their *oeuvres*. If they had not, if Lydgate's *Danse Macabre* and Hoccleve's *Letter of Cupid* were the only poems that survived from each author's corpus, then there would be the same kind of indeterminacy that one finds here in Roos's work: is this a coterie poem or not?

Roos does not give us enough information to answer that question because he withholds proper names. One might infer, given the name that he does mention, that his audience needs an introduction to Chartier, that (like Chaucer provided for Granson) the name "Chartier" needs pedagogical situating in order to make it signify in a coterie setting. Because Roos does not provide the same introduction to Chaucer or Lydgate, despite alluding to their work, one might infer further that Chaucer or Lydgate need no similar introduction. But these are inferences because we know so little about Roos's audience. Ethel Seaton, who has done the most work on Roos's biography, claims that Roos wrote the poem "before 1441" when he was attached to the household of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester.[53] Her dating has been supported by the poem's most recent editor, Dana Symons, who notes that the poem could have been composed even earlier, given the fact that a copy showing textual corruption is contained in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 16, which dates from the late 1430s to the early 1450s.[54] If the dating and the location of Roos during these years are correct, then perhaps Duke Humphrey and members of his household are the "hem" that Roos "durst not dissobaye." If the duke and members of his household are indeed Roos's audience, then they certainly would not need any introduction to Chaucer or to Lydgate; the latter poet wrote the *Fall of Princes* at Duke Humphrey's request, a work that includes a lengthy encomium to Chaucer.[55] Such an audience may explain Roos's reference to Chartier and his silence about Chaucer and Lydgate, but that is still conjecture. Roos does not name his audience here and we have no other poems that we may safely ascribe to him that name his audience. The difference from Lydgate on this point is striking. It is inconceivable that Lydgate would have been commissioned to write a poem by the duke of Gloucester without saying explicitly that such a commission happened. He would have used Gloucester's name, as he does in the *Fall of Princes*, to construct a virtual coterie. Roos might be attempting the same thing here, but without an explicit reference to Duke Humphrey or any further evidence, one cannot say for sure.[56] This is why Roos's gesture to "hem the whiche I durst not dissobaye" is a

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[52] See chapter two.

[53] Ethel Seaton, *Sir Richard Roos, c.1410-1482: Lancastrian Poet* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961), 91. For the connection to Gloucester, see 57-63.

[54] Dana M. Symons, ed., *Chaucerian Dream Visions and Complaints* (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2004), 213. Some of the stanzas in *La Belle Dame* in Fairfax 16 are disarranged, suggesting that there must be an earlier circulation of the uncorrupted copy of the poem. Fairfax 16 is dated to 1450 by the editor of its facsimile; see John Norton-Smith, ed. *Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 16* (London: Scholar Press, 1979), vii. Julia Boffey claims that it could have been written as early as the late 1430s; see Julia Boffey, "English Dream Poems of the Fifteenth Century and Their French Connections," in *Literary Aspects of Courtly Culture: Selected Papers from the Seventh Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Society*, ed. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 113-21.

[55] I have discussed Lydgate's relationship to Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, in chapter three.

[56] Part of the issue, frankly, stems from unreliability of Seaton's book. Seaton seems to be on sure footing in regards to Roos's biographical information. However, she claims that a system of ciphers she finds in various texts demonstrates Roos's authorship of those works, which include everything from Lydgate's *Flour of Curtesye* to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* to lyrics ascribed to Thomas Wyatt in the Egerton manuscript. For a complete list of works Seaton ascribes to Roos, see Seaton, *Sir Richard Roos*, 125-28. Such extreme claims make even the more reasonable associations—such as the relationship between *La Belle Dame* and the *Eye and the Heart*, which is

reference not to specific people but to a literary tradition. In relation to coterie poetics, this reference seems deliberately vague and unspecific; as I have shown, to participate in a coterie, a poet must use proper names. But as a reference to a tradition, this gesture works perfectly well. Traditions can be produced by shared allusions and shared style, detached from any particular person. They can and do make use of names, but in a different manner. In the next section I turn to the poetry of William Dunbar, who uses proper names in ways that signal both coterie membership and allegiance to tradition. Dunbar's use of names allows one to see the similarities between coterie and traditional uses of names—they both present names as something that is in some way known—as well as the differences—the names are known in different ways and in different registers, with coterie naming open for judgment and play and traditional naming associated with reverence.

IV. Naming Names I: Dunbar's Mourning

In a discussion of the Chaucerian tradition, Scottish poetry could very well occupy an entire chapter or even a book on its own. Chaucer was a towering figure for early Scottish literature.[57] He provided the stylistic inspiration for James I's *Kingis Quair*, which also uses rhyme royal stanza, ultimately providing the form with the "royal" part of its name.[58] Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* can be understood as a work of Chaucerian fan fiction, continuing the story of *Troilus and Criseyde*.[59] Gavin Douglas, as I have mentioned, uses Chaucer to address questions concerning the representation of women in literature.[60] For the purposes of discussing the function of Chaucer's name in a manner that denotes affiliation with a tradition, however, I will focus on only one work, William Dunbar's *Lament of the Makars*. Dunbar's mention of Chaucer's name is instructive by virtue of its brevity. Certainly, coterie naming practices can be brief as well, especially in a context in which the poet can expect his or her audience to understand the reference. In more public modes of address, however, coterie names require some sort of definition. Traditional names only require a definition in schoolroom texts; everywhere else, the poet can expect the traditional name to signify appropriately on its own. Like Chaucer's use of Homer's or Statius's name in the *House of Fame*, Dunbar's use of Chaucer's name implies that the name is already a known quality, that Chaucer needs no introduction, only praise.[61]

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also a translation of a French text that likewise turns octosyllabic lines into decasyllabic ones and which only exists in a manuscript that also contains *La Belle Dame*, London, Longleat House MS 258—seem suspect.

[57] For overviews of the influence of Chaucer in medieval Scotland, see Denton Fox, "The Scottish Chaucerians," in *Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature*, ed. D. S. Brewer (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1966), 164-200; and Louise O. Fradenburg, "The Scottish Chaucerians," in *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Scottish Language and Literature* (Glasgow: William Culross and Son, 1981), 177-90.

[58] James I's authorship of the *Kingis Quair* is contested, but accepted by the majority of scholars. For the text, see James I, *The Kingis Quair* in *The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems*, ed. Linne R. Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2005), 17-112. For the claim about rhyme royal's name, see page 22.

[59] See Robert Henryson, *The Testament of Cresseid*, in *The Complete Works*, ed. David J. Parkinson (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2011), 104-119.

[60] See chapter two. See also Gavin Douglas, *The Aeneid*, in *Selections from Gavin Douglas*, ed. D. F. C Coldwell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). For a discussion of Chaucer in Scotland that stresses his influence on the antifeminist tradition, see Carolyn Ives and David Parkinson, "Scottish Chaucer, Misogynist Chaucer," in *Rewriting Chaucer: Culture, Authority, and the Idea of the Authentic Text, 1400-1602*, ed. Thomas A. Pendergast and Barbara Kline (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1999), 186-202.

[61] See the discussion in chapter one.

Dunbar is generally considered one of the more talented lyric writers in English of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and the *Lament for the Makars* provides us with some insight as to why that might be.[62] It is unknown when exactly Dunbar wrote the poem, but based on the biographies of the poets Dunbar lists as deceased it was mostly likely written late in Dunbar's life, in the early sixteenth century, sometime after 1505.[63] Dunbar's poem is 100 octosyllabic lines long, consisting of 25 four-line stanzas rhyming aabB, a stanza form known as the *kyrielle* and used in Old French poetry since the troubadours, but derived from *kyrie* of the Mass.[64] Each stanza ends with the refrain "*Timor mortis conturbat me*," "the fear of death troubles me," a line taken from the seventh lesson in the Office of the Dead.[65] The *Lament* is a poem in the *momento mori* tradition, perhaps related to *danse macabre* poetry, which begins with a general meditation on the transitory nature of worldly joys, "Our pleasance heir is all vane glory, /This fals warld is bot transitory" (5-6), before spending the next quarter of the poem detailing the fact that "Onto the ded gois all estatis" (17).[66] Then, almost halfway through, the poem turns from a general overview of death taking the estates to a detailed listing of members in one profession, poets, with Dunbar announcing "I se that makaris amang the laif / Playis heir ther pageant, syne gois to graif; / Sparit is nought ther faculté" (45-47).

It is in his list of "makaris" who death has taken that Dunbar mentions Chaucer. Dunbar's list of "makers" is resolutely vernacular; he does not begin with ancient poets nor *auctores*, and almost the entire list consists of Scottish poets and writers.[67] However, Dunbar begins his list of dead writers with three English poets:

> He [Death] hes done petuously devour
> The noble Chaucer, of makaris flour,
> The monk of Bery, and Gower, all thre:
> *Timor mortis conturbat me*. (49-52)

Chaucer, Lydgate, and Gower are listed here, although in three distinct ways. Gower is simply named, using only his surname, without the need of specifying a given name, as if there is no need to specify which Gower is under discussion. Lydgate too is only given a passing mention,

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[62] In his introduction to Dunbar's works, John Conlee claims that Dunbar "may lay claim to being the finest lyric poet writing in English in the century and a half between the death of Chaucer in 1400 and the appearance of *Tottel's Miscellany* in 1557." See the introduction to William Dunbar, *The Complete Works*, ed. John Conlee (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 2004), 1. All references to the *Lament of the Makars* will come from this edition and will be cited parenthetically by line number.

[63] The poem mentions the death of Robert Henryson (l82) and John Reid (86), both of whom died in 1405. Dunbar dies sometime around 1420.

[64] For a discussion of the *Kyrie eleison*, "Lord, have mercy," in the Mass, see Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development*, 2 volumes, trans. Francis A. Brunner (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1986), vol. 1, 333-46. See also the brief discussion of Lydgate on the *kyrie* in his *Virtues of the Mass*, written for Alice Chaucer, in chapter 3.

[65] On the Office of the Dead, see Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 29-69.

[66] For the relation to the *danse macabre* tradition, see R. D. Drexler, "Dunbar's 'Lament for the Makaris' and the Dance of Death of Tradition," *Studies in Scottish Literature* 13 (1978): 144-58. For a general discussion of the literature relating to death in medieval England, see Amy Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380-1540* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). For a discussion of Lydgate's *Danse Macabre*, see chapter 3.

[67] For a discussion of Dunbar's tendency to position himself in relationship to other poets and Scottish literature more generally, see Priscilla Bawcutt, *Dunbar the Makar* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

although rather than naming him Dunbar uses Lydgate's most famous epithet, "the monk of Bery." With Gower and Lydgate, then, one sees Dunbar making use of the two most common naming practices in late medieval England: the increasingly common practice of referring to an individual using hereditary surnames and the older practice of referring to an individual using the description provided by that individual's profession and location.[68] Dunbar's use of these two means of naming allows us to see the strengths and weaknesses of each one. Lydgate requires an additional definite article, "the," in order for "monk of Bery" to signify properly; there were of course many monks associated with Bury, so Dunbar uses the definite article to specify which monk—the famous one whose name his reader would already know. Gower does not require an additional definite article—his surname alone does the work of signification—but that is only due to the fact that there are not multiple Gowers who were writers in fourteenth and fifteenth century England; if this were a discussion about landholdings in Suffolk, "Gower" would need some other kind of specification. In both cases, Dunbar relies on the fame that Gower and Lydgate have for a certain audience, one that appreciates and already knows vernacular authors.

Chaucer is represented both by his surname, an adjective ("noble"), and an epithet in apposition ("of makaris flour"). Here too, though, Dunbar relies on Chaucer's fame to do the primary work of description; his adjective and epithet do not confer fmae on Chacuer, but rather represent a fame that already exists. A look at coterie naming practices should clarify the distinction. Although they are similar, one should not confuse Dunbar's epithet for Chaucer here with Chaucer's epithet for Granson in the *Complaint of Venus*, in which he calls Granson the "flour of hem that make in Fraunce" (82). In the *Complaint of Venus*'s coterie practice, the apposition has a pedagogical function: it teaches the audience that Granson is a "maker" who is quite talented and who lives in France.[69] The coterie naming practice combines aesthetic judgment with contextualization; it tells the audience both who the named individual is and what the audience should think about that person. Dunbar, in contrast, only provides aesthetic judgment. He claims that Chaucer is "of makaris flour," but he makes that determination in a list, as he informs us in the immediately preceding stanza, that is comprised solely of "makaris." The epithet, then, only supplies an aesthetic determination that does the work of specification. Dunbar has already told his audience that Chaucer, and everyone named after him in the poem, is an author; all he adds here is qualification that Chaucer is the best author. Traditional naming practices, then, differ from coterie practices because the former rely on the prior familiarity of the named individual to the audience. Coterie names ultimately trade on the difference between what the author and the audience knows—Chaucer knows Granson but his audience does not—whereas traditional names insist upon the identity of knowledge between author and audience, the fact that everyone knows Ovid. Within a tradition, there is no need to teach readers who the named individual is; the name merely showcases an aesthetic judgment, which is always, as it is here, laudatory. Calling Chaucer "noble," the greatest "maker," is hardly an unusual act of praise in the fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries and it is precisely the conventional nature of these epithets that makes them traditional.

Dunbar's stanza also attests to the fact that naming practices within a tradition have an equivalent to the indeterminacy caused by a tradition's stylistic variation, which is the tendency to name several authors at once. Dunbar is far from the only author who names Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate in conjunction with one another, and indeed I will shortly look at an instance in which John Skelton does the same thing. When it happens, as it does here, the effect is to

[68] See the discussion of naming in chapter 1.
[69] See the discussion in chapter 1.

distribute the praise afforded to one of the three to the other two as well. Ultimately, as with the blended style of a tradition, there is no need to separate the names out from one another if praising them is the only thing the author wants to do; the praise garnered by each of the names is both mutually reinforcing and accumulative. Just as one knows that Lydgate is a great author because he can be mentioned in the same breath as Chaucer, any praise that one heaps on Lydgate redounds on Chaucer as well. Dunbar's assessment that Chaucer is "of makaris flour" applies specifically to Chaucer, but the stanza, like death itself, takes Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate "all thre" as its object. Dunbar's praise is directed at Chaucer—as the founder of the tradition it is most appropriately applied to him—but Gower and Lydgate are not excluded from the praise either. The approbations Dunbar confers upon Chaucer spill over, to some extent at least, to those with the good sense to follow in his wake. Such logic of accruing praise is why Dunbar constructs a lineage of vernacular writers: the commendations applied to one reverberate down the line to the others. Such transitivity of praise is, in fact, one of the major things that binds a tradition together.

At this point one might object: I have placed a great deal of weight on one stanza, and a short and highly formalized one at that. But even in such a short form, Dunbar can provide more information when it is necessary, as he does here:

> That scorpion fell has done infek
> Maister Johne Clerk and James Afflek
> Fra balat making and trigidé:
> *Timor mortis conturbat me*. (57-60)

Or here:

> Clerk of Tranent eik he has tane
> That maid the anteris of Gawane;
> Schir Gilbert Hay endit has he:
> *Timor mortis conturbat me*. (65-68)

As opposed to the way he names Chaucer or Gower, Dunbar uses both given names and surnames of three of the four named authors in these stanzas: "Johne Clerk," "James Afflek," and "Gilbert Hay." Gilbert Hay is even distinguished by rank; he is a "Schir." Like the "monk of Bery," the "Clerk of Tranent" is named by occupation and location but, whereas Dunbar apparently felt no need to further specify Lydgate by naming his works, the "Clerk of Tranent" is distinguished as the one who "maid" the "anteris of Gawane." Dunbar likewise specifies what kinds of works John Clerk and James Afflek produce, that they are known for their "balat making and trigidé." In short, Dunbar supplies his readers with more information for each of these writers than he does with Chaucer, Gower, or Lydgate. He does so despite the fact that he is writing in a Scottish context and these are all likely to have been Scottish authors. Even in a local context in which he is describing local authors, that is to say, Dunbar still assumes that Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate need fewer identifying markers than their Scottish counterparts.[70]

[70] Sir Gilbert Hay was a cleric who served as the chamberlain of Charles VII of France; he wrote *The Buik of Alexander*. See Gilbert Hay, *The Buik of Alexander the Conqueror*, ed. John Cartwright (Edinburgh: Scottish Text Society, 1986). We are not sure who John Clerk or James Afflek were, nor do we know who the "Clerk of Tranent" was. The "anteris of Gawane" could be a generic description for romances depicting Gawain's adventures or it could

The extra information Dunbar supplies about these Scottish authors approaches coterie, rather than traditional, naming practices, but by the end of his poem Dunbar more than approaches coterie practices; he actively creates a coterie. Just before the final stanza and its advice that one must prepare for death, Dunbar adds two living men to the list of the dead, Walter Kennedy and himself:

> Gud Maister Walter Kennedy
> In poynt of dede lyis veraly—
> Gret reuth it wer that so suld be:
> *Timor mortis conturbat me*.
>
> Sen he has all my brether tane,
> He will naught lat me lif alane;
> On forse I man his nyxt pray be:
> *Timor mortis conturbat me*. (89-96).

Heretofore, Dunbar has spoken of the listed authors in the past tense. Death "hes done petuously devour" Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate; it "has done infek" John Clerk and James Afflek, "has tane" the "Clerk of Trenant," and "endit has" Sir Gilbert Hay. Dunbar does not mention these individuals, as Lydgate might have done in his place, in order to construct a virtual coterie; there is no sense in which their work in particular is the necessary precondition for Dunbar's work. When he comes to Walter Kennedy, however, Dunbar shifts to the present tense of a more traditional coterie formation. Kennedy "lyis veraly" only at the "poynt of dede;" he has not yet joined the ranks of the departed. Similarly, Dunbar speaks of his own interaction with death in the future tense: death "will naught lat" Dunbar live. Dunbar and Kennedy are uniquely related by virtue of the fact that they are the only living authors in Dunbar's list. Dunbar, moreover, seems to have actually known Kennedy. One can guess that would be the case both because Dunbar applies the qualification "gud" to Kennedy's name and because he expresses regret at the fact that Kennedy is ailing, "gret reuth it wer that so suld be." Such intimacy is further confirmed by external evidence, the fact that Dunbar and Kennedy composed a poem together, the comically insulting *Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*.[71] If Dunbar in the *Lament* constructs a tradition, he ends that tradition with a coterie consisting of Dunbar and Kennedy, a coterie threatened by death, to be sure, but one that represents the living embodiment of the tradition that has come before it.

Dunbar's poem accomplishes what Roos's poem had the potential to do: it combines coterie and traditional practices in one literary text. Roos's poem displays that combination by virtue of his style and his silence about proper names, making a determination about coterie reference impossible. Dunbar does so by naming authors, both in a manner that denotes belonging to a tradition and a manner that constructs a coterie. He combines the two because he is both outlining a tradition and placing himself and other Scottish authors in it. But constructing a coterie is not essential to claiming a place in a tradition. John Skelton, with whom I will conclude this chapter, situates himself in direct contact with his poetic forerunners, Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate. Instead of depicting these past poets as deceased founders of a literary

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be a text related to the Middle English romance in the northern dialect, *The Awntyrs off Arthur*. See *The Awntyrs off Arthur*, in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. Thomas Hahn (Kalamazoo: TEAMS, 1995).

[71] See William Dunbar and Walter Kennedy, *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*, in Dunbar, *The Complete Works*.

tradition, Skelton imagines them as living figures who speak to him directly. But Skelton does not revivify Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate in order to construct a virtual coterie. Instead, he makes himself the living embodiment of the English literary tradition, a poet laureate.

V. Naming Names II: Skelton's Laureates

Like Dunbar, Skelton wrote in a literary context dominated by Chaucer and Chaucerianism, albeit early Tudor England rather than late medieval Scotland. Skelton's contemporaries were those men engaged with what I called in the introduction to this chapter "external naming practices," those acts of attribution in which an authority outside of the text identifies its author or its literary affiliations. Skelton's lifetime coincided with the early printers and editors of Chaucer's works, William Caxton and William Thynne, John Stowe was born just a few years before Skelton died, and just after his death John Leland set about his famous tour of monastic libraries in order to write his *De viris illustribus*, a biographical encyclopedia of English writers.[72] In Skelton, however, I will focus on his internal naming practices, those moments in which a writer within a work avows a relationship to another author. Skelton's *oeuvre* is full of such moments but I will restrict my attention to only one, the one that is most telling for Skelton's relationship to literary history: his interaction with the figures of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate in his *Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell*.[73]

Skelton's *Garlande of Laurell* exemplifies a few features of his general poetic practice. One, it was composed over an extended period of time. Skelton must have begun work on some of the lyrics contained within the poem sometime before 1492, when the dedicatee of one of the lyrics, Margaret Hussey, died. The poem also, however, contains references to Skelton's *Speke Parott* (lines 1188-89), which can be dated through external evidence to sometime after 1521. A version of the poem was eventually published in 1523, and it is probably safe to say that Skelton was working on it up until it is published.[74] Two, the *Garlande of Laurell* is polyglot and metrically varied. There are moments of French and Latin as well as English contained in the work, and it even ends with lines of French, which are then translated into Latin, and then into English. While it is less metrically varied and experimental than *Speke Parrot*, the *Garlande of Laurell* features various metrical and stanzaic forms, including "Skeltonics," even though the vast bulk of the poem is in rhyme royal.[75] Three, the *Garlande of Laurell* is a poem about Skelton. The plot of the poem follows the poet-narrator to Fame's court, where he is first lauded by the poets that came before him and eventually attains laureate status. John Scattergood puts the matter in a positive light when he claims that "few poets wrote more about poetry, about the nature of poetic tradition, and his own role in it than Skelton."[76] Skelton's earlier editor, Alexander Dyce, put it less kindly, writing "the *Garlande of Laurell* stands without parallel: the

[72] For the relationship of these early editors and printers of Chaucer to the Tudor throne, especially Thynne's 1532 edition, see Greg Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 29-99. For a discussion of Leland's project as it relates to the continuity between the medieval and early modern periods, see the chapter "The Melancholy of John Leland and the Beginning of English Literary History," in James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution: The Oxford English Literary History, Volume 2, 1350-1547* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7-33.

[73] John Skelton, *Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell*, in *The Complete English Works*, ed. John Scattergood (New York: Penguin, 1983). All citations will come from this edition and will occur parenthetically within the text.

[74] For a discussion of this protracted process, see A. S. G. Edwards, "Deconstructing Skelton: The Texts of the English Poems," *Leeds Studies in English* 36 (2005): 335-53.

[75] For the most important discussion of "Skeltonics," see Stanley Fish, *John Skelton's Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

[76] John Scattergood, *John Skelton: The Career of an Early Tudor Poet* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014), 356.

history of literature affords no second example of a poet having deliberately written sixteen hundred lines in honour of himself."[77] Surely one can quibble with Dyce's assessment—what work of literature self-consciously intended as a great work is not about the author's aggrandizement? What else are we to make, for instance, of William Wordsworth's *Prelude*?—But the point is fair enough. The poem consists primarily of the poet-narrator's dream vision visit to the house of the Queen of Fame, who asks the famous poets of the past whether or not Skelton should be a laureate. They accept him and he provides a resumé, taking time first to discuss the nature of poetry with Occupation and to write inset lyrics for various dedicatees, such as Elizabeth Tilney, the countess of Surrey, and Lady Elizabeth Howard. The poem ends in an envoy, with the by now familiar "Go, litill quaire" (1533) and final dedication to "Henricum octavum," Henry VIII, and "Cardineum dominum," the Lord Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (1588-89).

More than tone, however, separates Scattergood's and Dyce's assessments of Skelton; they come down on different sides of the vexed question in Skelton criticism about his relationship to literary tradition. The early part of the twentieth century was more certain about Skelton's relationship to tradition: there was none. In 1935, W. H. Auden began his assessment of Skelton with the complaint that "to write an essay on a poet who has no biography, no message, philosophical or moral, who has neither created characters, nor expressed critical ideas about the literary art, who was comparatively uninfluenced by his predecessors, and who exerted no influence on his successors, is not easy."[78] By 1954, C. S. Lewis had an altogether more sympathetic view of Skelton's talent, but still affirmed that "he has no real predecessors and no important disciples."[79] Even Stanley Fish, in 1965, could claim the following about both the period in which Skelton was writing and his thoughts about the period: "that context and that mind are so unique as to be too specialized to interest."[80] The image of Skelton as a unique individual, without predecessors or successors, has something to do with the early twentieth century's interest in the relationship between the individual and tradition, and it also has depends upon the relatively harsh treatment of Lydgate, whose effacement by the critical tradition removes one of Skelton's most important forerunners. Such an assessment might characterize the Skelton of *Philip Sparrow* or *Speke Parott*, but it does not explain such works as the *Garlande of Laurell*, in which Skelton makes his relationship to tradition the conspicuous topic of his poetry.

As the poet-narrator stands before the Queen of Fame, she reminds him that his laureation is dependent on the decision made by the "laureat senate," who enter in procession (225). That senate is composed of mythological individuals, such as Orpheus (272) and Amphion (273), as well as classical *auctores* like Quintilian (326), Homer (329), Cicero (330), and Macrobius (367). In addition to these classical figures, more recent Italian authors "Johnn

[77] See his introduction to John Skelton, *The Poetical Works of John Skelton*, 2 vols., ed. Alexander Dyce (London: Thomas Rodd, 1843, with addenda 1844, reprinted 1965), vol. 1, xlix.
[78] W. H. Auden, "John Skelton," in *The Great Tudors*, ed. Katharine Garvin (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1935), 55-67, quote at 55.
[79] C. S. Lewis *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 143.
[80] Fish, *John Skelton's Poetry*, 258. Both the quotations from Lewis and Fish are discussed in Scattergood, *John Skelton*, 18.

Bochas" (365) and "Petrarke" (379) make an appearance. [81] Finally, Skelton meets the three founders of English poetry:

> And as I thus sadly amonge them avysid,
> I saw Gower, that first garnished our Englysshe rude,
> And maister Chaucer, that nobly enterprysyd
> How that our Englysshe might fresshely be ennewed;
> The monke of Bury then after them ensuyd,
> Dane Johhn Lydgate. Theis Englysshe poetis thre,
> As I ymagenyd, repayrid unto me,
>
> Togeder in armes, as brethren, enbrasid;
> Ther apparell farre passynge beyonde that I can tell;
> With diamauntis and rubis there tabers were trasid,
> None so ryche stones in Turkey to sell;
> Thei wanted nothynge but the laurell;
> And of there bounte they made me godely chere
> In maner and forme as ye shall after here. (386-99)

Like so many other writers before him, Skelton praises his immediate poetic ancestors in terms of what they did to the English language. Gower "garnished" it and Chaucer "enterprysyd / How that our Englysshe might fresshely be ennewed." From these two and their efforts, Lydgate "ensuyd," as will, one is meant to surmise, Skelton himself. As they adorned the language, so too are they adorned, with "diamauntis and rubis" on their "tabers." As with Dunbar, "theis Englysshe poetis thre" are united, "togeder in armes, as brethren, enbrasid." Readings that stress Skelton's singularity, his uniqueness, must rely heavily on the qualification that these poets "wanted nothyng but the laurell," that is they lack the one thing that is about to be granted to Skelton. But Skelton makes explicit the fact that he is in dialogue with these individuals; they are the only members of the "laureat senate" that speak, the only members in that procession of prominent figures with whom he actually talks. Skelton says that they "repayrid unto me" and "of there bounte they made me godely chere." Skelton does not go so far as to embrace them, as he were one of their "brethren" and as he might do if he wished to create a virtual coterie with them. Instead, he characterizes himself in terms of tradition, like Dante meeting his classical forebears, as the one they directly address.

When Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate each address him in turn, they do so as someone who has explicitly followed in their footsteps. Each of these "polite, mutually complimentary dialogue[s] with the author," as Robert Meyer-Lee calls them, does something slightly different, so I will work through them individually.[82] First, Skelton's exchange with Gower:

> *Mayster Gower to Skelton*
> 'Brother Skelton, your endevorment

[81] Vincent Gillespie has pointed out that the authors Skelton lists are well known rhetoricians who work for both the reformation of the individual and the common good of the state. See Vincent Gillespie, "Justification by Good Works: Skelton's *The Garland of Laurel*," *Reading Medieval Studies* 7 (1981): 19-31.
[82] Robert Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 215.

So have ye done, that meretoryously
Ye have deservyd to have an enplement
In our collage above the sterry sky,
Bycause that ye encrese and amplyfy
The brutid Britons of Brutus Albion,
That welny was loste when that we were gone.'

Poeta Skelton to Maister Gower
'Maister Gower, I have nothyng deserved
To have so laudabyle a commendacion:
To yow thre this honor shalbe reserved
Arrectinge unto your wyse examinacion
How all that I do is under refformation,
For only the substance of that I entend,
Is glad to please, and loth to offend.' (400-13)

The terms in this exchange are mutually laudatory; they constitute a closed circuit of praise in which whatever accolades a poet can heap on his predecessor will be returned to him. Gower points out that Skelton deserves a place in the "collage" of laureates. For what work? Gower tells Skelton that "ye encrese and amplyfy / The brutid Britons of Brutus Albion, / That welny was loste when that we were gone." There is a temporal distinction being made here. In the present moment, Skelton increases and amplifies the culture, perhaps, or the status of the brutish Britons, just as Gower and Chaucer had improved the English language. That culture or status was almost lost, Gower claims, "when that we were gone." Gower consigns Chaucer, Lydgate, and himself to the past tense and mentions their deaths. Skelton's response makes use of the modesty topos, telling Gower that it is really "yow thre" for whom "this honor shalbe reserved," and makes the attendant call for correction, submitting to Gower's "wyse examinacion" the fact that "all that I do is under refformation." He even meets Gower's intimate address, "brother," with the more supplicant "master," and ends by assuring Gower that he "is glad to please, and loth to offend," in a line that will be serve as a refrain for Skelton's responses throughout these exchanges.

Skelton's protest that he is unworthy does not deter his predecessors from lauding him. What seems like modesty is in actuality a feint, an excuse for Skelton to actually add to his own praise; it is, after all, Skelton and not Chaucer, Gower, or Lydgate, who is writing these lines honoring him. After Gower, then, comes Chaucer:

Mayster Chaucer to Skelton
'Counterwayng your besy delygence
Or that we beganne in the supplement,
Enforcid ar we you to recompence,
Of all our hooll collage by the agreament,
That we shall brynge you personally present
Of noble Fame before the Quenes grace,
In whose court poynted is your place.'

Poeta Skelton answeryth
'O noble Chaucer, whos pullisshyd eloquence

Oure Englysshe rude so fresshely hath set out,
That bounde ar we with all deu reverence,
With all our strength that we can brynge about,
To owe to yow our servyce, and more if we mowte!
But what sholde I say? Ye wote what I entende,
Which glad am to please, and loth to offende.' (414-27)

"Supplement," here, causes Scattergood some confusion; in the glossary, he defines it as "*n* ? that which is provided to supply a deficiency, ? addition."[83] Skelton's meaning here is obscure, but I would suggest Chaucer's opening means something like "considering your work over that which we began [the English literary tradition] in this supplement [that is, this poem], we are forced to pay you back, by the agreement of our whole collage, so that we will bring you personally present before the noble Queen of Fame's grace, in whose court your place is appointed." Chaucer, then, would begin where Gower ends, by repeating the fact that they are dead but that Skelton has taken up their mantel. Skelton responds this time by praising Chaucer once more for what he did to the English language, and this time acquiesces, saying that all "bounde ar" with "deu reverence" and with "all our strength that we can brynge about" to give Chaucer "our servyce, and more if we mowte!" He ends with the rhetorical "but what sholde I say?" and with his refrain that his intent was not "to offende." Even while he accepts the laureation, then, he encodes a sly, some might even say Chaucerian, joke. In Skelton's own stanzas, the c rhymes link "intend" with "offend," which suggests a wry consciousness about his history as a satirical poet: his laurel crown is a reward for satirically "intending" to "offend."[84] At the same time, of course, Sketlon has learned his Chaucerian lessons well, by encoding an ironic meaning within his end-rhymes. On the surface, "intend/offend" points to his satirical aggression, his habit of critiquing everyone and everything in the world around him. But as an overt imitation of a Chaucerian literary technique, "intend/offend" is actually and ironically an act of praise by Skelton for his illustrious forerunner.[85]

The final exchange shows that Skelton learned a thing or two from Lydgate as well. Lydgate begins by calling attention to the repetitive nature of the praise Skelton is receiving:

Mayster Lydgate to Skelton
'So am I preventid of my brethren tweyne
In rendrynge to you thankkis meritory,
That welny nothynge there doth remayne
Wherwith to geve you my regraciatory,
But that I poynt you to be prothonatory
Of Fames court, by all our holl assent
Avaunced by Pallas to laurell preferment.'

Poeta Skelton answeryth

[83] See the glossary entry in Skelton, *Complete English Works*, 566.
[84] This complicates the notion of Skelton as someone who spent a good bit of time attacking the corruption in the church only to reverse his position and begin toadying for it. For that critique of Skelton, see Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, 380-82.
[85] For an extended reflection on Skelton's relationship to Chaucer, especially in the *Garlande of Laurell*, see Scattergood, *John Skelton*, 356-75.

‘So have ye me far passynge meretis extollyd,
Mayster Lidgate, of your accustomable
Bownte, and so gloriously ye have enrollyd
My name, I know well, beyonde that I am able,
That but if my warkes therto be agreable,
I am elles rebukyd of that I intende,
Which glad am to please, and lothe to offende.’ (428-41)

Oh, Mr. Lydgate, how you do go on. When he is not writing Skeltonics, Skelton can construct fairly aureate poetry. The “b” rhymes in Lydgate’s stanza are particularly amusing examples. Of these three poets, it is only Lydgate who would ever dream of rhyming “meritory,” “regraciatory,” and “prothonatory.” And again, Lydgate’s “c” rhymes sum up the position Skelton’s predecessors present to him: he should “assent” to “preferment.” However, there is in these stanzas a strict division of the hierarchy between Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate on the one hand, and Skelton on the other. Unlike Gower who addresses Skelton as “brother,” Lydgate deliberately excludes Skelton from fundamental fellowship, referring to Chaucer and Gower as “my brethren tweyne.” Skelton responds by calling his interlocutor “Mayster Lidgate;” Gower was also “Maister Gower” and Chaucer was “noble Chaucer.” He is less familiar with them, in the sense of social graces, than they are with him. In keeping with this exaggerated respect, he describes Lydgate’s “accustomable / Bownte,” the generosity that has led the former poet to extol the merits and gloriously enroll the name of his successor Skelton into the list of great poets. And he couples this description of Lydgate’s praise for him with an equally generous modesty topos. What appears at first as pure praise, “so have ye me far passynge meretis extollyd” (“so greatly you have extolled my surpassing merits”), also encodes its opposite: “ye me far passynge” (“you greatly surpass me”). Skelton carries this humble theme forward, suggesting that Lydgate has “enrollyd / My name… beyonde that I am able.” From such a humble position, he re-submits his works for judgment, “that but if my warkes therto be agreable,” even though Lydgate has already pronounced a positive verdict on them. The modesty topos here makes his works the object of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate’s judgment, those works that Skelton will catalog later in the poem, although it is precisely his works for which they are praising him from the beginning.

I do not want to make too much of Skelton’s insistence on calling Lydgate and Gower “masters,” or on his referring to Chaucer as “noble;” these are conventional terms conveying respect that Skelton should be expected to use. However, they are also part and parcel of a hierarchy that he maintains between his predecessors and himself. He needs that hierarchy so that the “bownte” they offer him is meaningful. The more they are held in esteem, the more their praise of him signifies. That is the trickle-down logic of laurels that lies behind the desire to list one’s poetic forerunners, and it is the way that the closed circuit of praise Skelton constructs between these older poets and himself works. It is the reason Skelton uses the naming practice associated with tradition, which tells one little about the individual named apart from how wonderful he is. When Skelton introduces “theis Englysshe poetis thre” he does little more than explain that they are talented in writing in English. He has no need, as with a coterie name, to explain who these individuals are, he only has to offer them adulation. Neither is there the sense, as in the final coterie-based stanzas of Dunbar’s poem, that a rising tide floats all boats. Skelton, instead, praises these poetic forebears in the interest of his own self-aggrandizement, his status as

a laureate.[86] Skelton cared about that status and traditional naming practices helped him achieve and secure it.[87] They provide him with an opportunity to mainline praise, to show everyone that he is as great as he says Chaucer, Gower and Lydgate are, and as great as he says they say he is.

VI. Coterie and Tradition

One can see, I think, how we got from Skelton to "Tradition and the Individual Talent," which in both cases figure an individual relating to dead poets. I mean this as neither a disparagement of Skelton nor against Eliot. My point in distinguishing coterie practices from traditional ones is not to make evaluative claims about how one is superior to the other. Such an oppositional stance, as I said in the introduction to this chapter, misses the point. These two concepts cannot be placed in opposition to each other. Coterie poetry, for one, is deeply concerned with traditions. Traditions aid in the formation of coteries; they allow like-minded individuals to recognize each other as like-minded and they provide coteries with a proving ground, a means of evaluation through which coterie poets can adjudicate their inevitable conflicts. And traditions, too, can benefit from coteries. They can provide traditions with new directions, an aesthetic agreement among enough influential artists to set the course of a tradition off in a new direction. They can also augment an already existing tradition with members whom it had once passed over, reaching back into a tradition's past to affirm the status of a long forgotten member and bringing his or her profile back to light. These two concept can be mutually reinforcing and vivifying.

The fact that coteries and traditions can inform one another stems from two distinct qualities. First, they are both dynamic concepts. Neither are their memberships stable, nor are their internal hierarchies set in stone. In coteries, this is obviously the case because one can see them forming: a critic can often trace their origin and their decline. They are historical entities that announce themselves as such, as groups that are only possible in a distinct time and place. Even Lydgate's virtual coteries—coteries that span generations and are potentially open to the future—need Lydgate or someone like him to construct them. They are dependent on the variety of individuals they contain, be they poets, patrons, sources, or scribes, to coalesce at a certain moments, to announce at one point in time "we belong together." But traditions are historical entities too, coming together, changing, and falling apart as they move through time. This dissertation has traced the development of one tradition, the Chaucerian one, from its earliest moments to the point at which, with Skelton and his generation, it becomes the mainline of the English Literary Tradition as such. Traditions only seem ahistorical from the present moment. In reality, they are as Aage Brusendorff defined them at the beginning of his discussion of the Chaucerian tradition, written almost a century ago: "tradition means the handing down of information in such a way that it is open to the influence of successive generations through

[86] That status is contested. "Laureate" was not a single individual but an academic degree and, in any case, Greg Walker rightly reminds us that Skelton's position at court in the 1520s is not as lofty as he would have one believe; see Greg Walker, *John Skelton and the Politics of the 1520s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Still, the term did carry some meaning, and Jane Griffiths suggests that it "should be read as a way of laying claim to an alternative authority to that provided by association with the cardinal;" see Jane Griffiths, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority: Establishing the Liberty to Speak* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 29. Griffiths is referring to Skelton's troubled relationship to Cardinal Wolsey, about whom he wrote earlier poems that were viciously satiric, such as *Speke Parott* and *Collyn Clout*, but who is eventually one of the dedicatees of the *Garlande of Laurell*.

[87] Robert Meyer-Lee points out that even if the title *laureate* means something different than we usually think that it does, Skelton still takes pains to insist upon it. See his discussion of Skelton in Robert Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt*, 205-19.

which it passes."[88] In this he anticipates the principle that Hans-Georg Gadamer found in our capacity to understand and interpret texts, that "tradition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves."[89] Just as they understood that they could come together in a coterie, the poets I have been discussing understand this dynamism inherent in tradition.

Second, coteries and traditions can dynamically inform one another because they use many of the same strategies to produce their own internal dynamism. This chapter has been about just these strategies: techniques of allusion both in terms of content and of style, as well as the propensity to use proper names within literary works. Texts within both coteries and traditions use these strategies in order to announce their association with other texts; these are performative utterances that produce connections in the same instant they announce that these connections exist. Both coteries and traditions make use of these rhetorical performances because they are both, generally speaking, modes of belonging. Coteries may tend toward the particular and localizable, whereas traditions skew more toward the abstract and general, but both are attempts by artists to place themselves and their work in relationship with other artists. They seek to understand themselves in relationship to these others, whether in the guise of an individual human in a coterie relationship or as the abstract, big "O," Other of tradition. In such a dialectic of self and other, they seek to define themselves, differentiate themselves by, in part, identifying those with whom they have similarities. It is this desire to define themselves that makes names such a potent tool of both coteries and traditions. What else is a name but a definition? What else does an artist do, when he or she joins a coterie or a tradition, than announce by what name he or she should be known? By joining such groups artists tell us what names we should call them.

[88] Aage Brusendorff, *The Chaucerian Tradition* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1924, reprinted 1965), 13.
[89] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second revised edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2004), 293.

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